

transtechnology research:
Public Dialogues 2013

*Dialogues at the Interlude: Between
Body, Artefact, and Discourse*

12-14 July 2013

Transtechnology Research, Plymouth University, UK
& Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth, UK

Program of Events

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Dialogues at the Interlude: Between Body, Artefact, and Discourse

Developed by Transtechnology Research hosted in association with the Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth University, UK from the 12th to the 14th July 2013.

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Transtechnology Research is a transdisciplinary research group situated in the Faculty of Arts at Plymouth University. Its constituency is drawn from historians, philosophers, anthropologists, artists and designers and is led from a historical and theoretical perspective with the objective of understanding science and technology as a manifestation of a range of human desires and cultural imperatives. Its aim is to provide a doctoral and post-doctoral environment for researchers who need to undertake academic research informed by their own and others creative practice. Its over arching research project concerns the philosophical aspects of science and technology and the history of popular arts.

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Dialogues at the Interlude: Between Body, Artefact, and Discourse

Keywords: Embodiment, Historiography, Imagination, Transdisciplinarity, Archaeology

This years Transtechnology Research Dialogues builds upon a contemporary challenge to conventional and disciplinary notions of what can be understood as an ‘historical document’ through questioning the necessity of material evidence to understand the world around us, as well as human activity itself within the world. The questioning of the limits of materiality has further implications for how we conceptualise notions of the ‘artefact’, the ‘body’ and ‘discourse’, across the arts, sciences and humanities as we come to terms with a material world that can be seen to coalesce in many ways with the immaterial dimensions of the imagination.

The dialogues comprises panel discussions, presentations, material screening events, and round-table dialogues chaired by doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, with the aim to question what may have become the discrete domains of the body, the artefact and discourse from a number of different perspectives. It will bring together thinkers and practitioners from a number of diverse practices and disciplines across the humanities, sciences and arts, nurturing and liberating dialogues that may happen at the extremities and within the interludes between disciplinary accounts of the body, artefact and discourse. The dialogues provides a transdisciplinary environment in which thinkers and practitioners from diverse fields can converge and share knowledge, insights and methodologies in order to liberate new questions and concerns.

Between Body, Artefact, and Discourse

Notions of ‘discourse’ are undergoing a contemporary re-evaluation through new historiographical methods within the humani-

ties, re-invigorating the work of thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Friederich Kittler, which recognise a vital re-thinking of both matter and corporeality. Within such a framework ‘discourse’ is seen less as a discrete silo of disciplinary ‘human knowledge’, but as including the agency of the nonmaterial dimensions of human imagination as well as the material dimensions of everyday objects (Bennett, 2007).

Notions of the ‘artefact’ in turn have received increased focus through material culture studies within anthropology, as well as revisiting human artefacts as documentary historical evidence within more contemporary domains of new historicism. Following the work of thinkers such as Michel Foucault, this approach coincides with the further study of the active (agential) powers that everyday objects may have upon the human in everyday life within contemporary strands of the humanities (Bennett, 2007, Coole and Frost, 2009). In particular, the emerging discussion of deep history (Shryock and Smail, 2009) provides a way of thinking through objects in order to expand their use as a document of a dynamically historical and contingent human mind.

What we may understand as the ‘body’ begins to unravel within such a landscape of thinking. A discussion particularly highlighted by a resurgence of interest in the work of thinkers such as Jakub von Uexkull, Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze. Some contemporary ‘new materialisms’ within the humanities are questioning the limits of the body, as the ‘site’ of human agency, of the intermingling between affective objects and humans, of the impact of the body upon the environment, and the environment upon the body are becoming core topics within the contemporary humanities (Coole and Frost, 2009).

Bennett, J., (2010) *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, London: Duke University Press
Coole, D., Frost, S. (2010) *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham, London: Duke University Press
Shryock, A., Smail, D., (2011) *Deep History: The Architecture of the Past and Present*. Berkeley: University of California Press

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Dialogues at the Interlude: Between Body, Artefact and Discourse

Friday 12th July

- 12:00-13:30 *Welcome Lunch and Registration*
- 13:30-14:00 **Opening Remarks**
Prof. Alan Schechner Head of School of Art and Media, Plymouth University
Prof. dr. Michael Punt & Dr. Martha Blassnigg, Transtechnology Research
- 14:00-15:00 **Session 1: 'Intangible Encounters and Artistic Practices'**
Jacqui Knight (Chair), Dr. Jenny Walklate, Guy Edmonds
- 15:00-15:15 *Coffee Break*
- 15:15-17:00 **Session 2: 'Archaeology of Archival Practices'**
Amanda Egbe (Chair), Dr. David Hilton, Christian Gosvig Oelsen

Saturday 13th July

- 08:30-09:00 *Coffee Reception*
- 09:00-10:30 **Session 3: 'Imaginary Materialities'**
Dr. Hannah Drayson (Chair), Matthew MacKisack, Kayla Parker
- 10:30-12:15 **Session 4: 'Between Images, Minds and Discourse'**
Martyn Woodward (Chair), Dr. Lambros Malafouris, Lydia Nsiah, Verena Ziegler
- 12:15-12:30 *Coffee Break*
- 12:30-13:45 **Session 5: 'Ontology, Space and the Boundaries of Historical Artefacts'**
Rita Cachao (Chair), Jasper Coppes, Prof. dr. Sundar Surakkai
- 13:45-14:45 *Lunch*
- 14:45-16:30 **Session 6: 'Artist, Territory, History'**
Edith Doove (Chair), Pascale Weber, Jean Delseaux, Claudia Loch
- 16:30-16:45 *Coffee Break*
- 16:45-18:00 **Session 7: 'Distributed Minds Reading Through Artefacts'**
Marcio Rocha (Chair), Dr. John Vines, Dr. Stephen Thompson, & Prof. dr. Michael Punt

Sunday 14th July

- 10:00-12:00 **Round-up Event: 'A Stockbook of Practices Beyond Death'**
- 12:00-14:00 *Closing Lunch*

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Dialogues at the Interlude: Between Body, Artefact and Discourse

Friday 12th July 12:00-13:30 Welcome Lunch and Registration

13:30-14:00

Welcome and Opening Remarks

*Prof. Alan Schechner Head of School of Art and Media, Plymouth University.
Prof. dr. Michael Punt & Dr. Martha Blassnigg (Transtechnology Research)*

14:00-15:00

Session 1: 'Intangible Encounters and Artistic Practices'

Chair: Jacqui Knight (*Transtechnology Research*)
Dr. Jenny Walklate (*University of Leicester*)
Guy Edmonds (*Film Restorer and Archivist, Netherlands*)

'Generative Encounters and the Frisson: Unified Experiences of Simultaneity'

Jacqui Knight

This discussion is intended as a way of trying to understand and open up a dialogue around some of the conditions and possibilities that constitute the momentary experience what may be termed the 'frisson'; a fleeting physical, sensory moment or experiential event that occurs when the absorbed world ruptures and our attention is forced upon this or that phenomena. Some of the progenitors of this experience can be identified as contingencies, a break-down, glitches, making strange, the sublime, or textually as antinomies, aporias (puzzlement, doubt, perplexity) paradoxes or conundrums.

As an artist my research is practice based and emerges as an expression of the frisson as a generative moment that prompts an artwork into being through its encounter. The frisson, in this way, intimates the trajectory of the artistic process as a way into making work. The orthodox formalist use of this term neglects what I want to call the 'simultaneous other'; dimensions that lie beyond bodily experience. I'd like to define this frisson as a unified experience of simultaneity, by which I mean a generative oscillation or interplay between what Heraclitus saw as the one and the many.

'Unreal City: Simultaneity and Interval in the Temporal Museum'

Jenny Walklate

The thing which joins us with, and separates us from, objects and the material world might appear to be space. But our relationship to the physical environment is nowhere near so simple. Our experiences and our interpretations of those experiences have about them a temporal quality. The raw physicality of the material world, when encountered by sentient minds, is not just a landscape, but a timescape: a describable, relativistic context generated by unique phenomenological encounters and the environment in which those encounters occur. Timescapes, spontaneous and fleeting as they are, will form the basis for this paper. The intention is to define and use the concept of the timescape and a particular method and theoretical background for interpreting it within the context of the museum space to explore the notions of interval and simultaneity.

The analytical method employed has its roots in the tools of the creation, description and analysis of literature. Deployed within the museum environment, narratology, grammar, semantics and prosody can give an acute and nuanced reading of the particular temporal peculiarities of each gallery and exhibition space.

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Museums are particularly interesting sites at which to study the interval and simultaneity, for they are manipulated and manipulative spaces wherein the experiences of the visitor and the nature of the spatial and objectual arrangements are deliberately heightened and accentuated. Examples taken from the University Museums of Oxford will serve as illustrations. The first section of the paper will discuss how things present and absent are brought together and made simultaneous, despite the fact that they may not be contiguous in space, using literary concepts of transtextuality, anachrony, icticity and vraisemblance, and the strange disjunction between language and its designated referent. Secondly, the paper will discuss the interval, using that same linguistic/material rupture, and again using mimesis and vraisemblance, hypertextuality, auracity and framing, to analyse how breaks and gaps are made resonant in the museum environment.

However, analysis of the Oxford Museums points to grey areas and entanglements between the here and the there, the now and the then. In the final section of the paper, we will discuss objects and spaces which, through physical or conceptual state or alteration, complicate the relationship between the simultaneous and the interval: objects made wondrous and heightened by lighting or position, objects which shift their relationship with their interlocutors,

objects which are anonymous, or culturally distanced and impossible for certain individuals or groups to understand.

Discourse, the artefact and the body are all blurred, made complex, and estranged by this analysis. Both material and incorporeal, the combinatory analytical method re frames how the discourses of reality and of the museum space are understood. Temporal and spatial,

imagined and tangible, the artefact is given protensity in many dimensions of understanding. Finally, singular and many, discrete and collective, sanctified and profane, the body and its mind, become an active and passive element in the generation of comprehensible space. Between them, in the interlude, joining and distancing them, is the timescape.

15:00-15:15

Coffee Break

15:15-17:00

Session 2: 'Archaeologies of Archival Practices'

Chair: Amanda Egbe (*Transtechology Research*)

Dr. David Hilton (*Plymouth University*)

Christian Gosvig Olesen (*University of Amsterdam*)

'Media Archaeologies and the Moving Image Archive'

Amanda Egbe

Media archaeologies proliferate concerning early cinematic and image technologies, apparatus, and artefacts, such as panoramas, thaumatropes, zoetropes, stereoscopes etc. from writers such as Kittler, Huhtamo, Mannoni, or Crary. They help us understand these various media artefacts on their own terms, rather than as necessary linear progression to bigger and better technology. But what are the limits of these types of media archaeologies themselves? What are the implications when confronted with the artefact/historical object/document located in the archive (collections, archives,

museums) or as an object for hacking (D.I.Y, underground, gallery)?

This session is concerned with moving image technologies, their archaeologies, and the implications of politics and ethics as part of a broader, network/discourse/meshwork as a way of adding a deeper dimension to work done by media archaeology as a movement in media theory and practice. It invokes a broader network implicating the work of writers such as Von Uexkull, Foucault and others.

'Reframing a Reconstruction'

David Hilton

The paper explores the production and representation of a reconstruction of a reconstruction of film material produced in 1925 - 30

linked to sound recorded in 1973 of narrating the film with hindsight spanning the interval of memory and purpose.

The subject of the 1920s film is the reconstruction of the Great Hall at Darlington and the commentary that of one of its founders, Leonard Elmhirst, describing and recalling events depicted. This is then reconstructed/reconstituted in a 360-degree screen environment as an exploration of the cinematic space, the contemporary space and the possibility of multiple open, and yet distinct, readings. (Shown in Cultural Olympiad by the sea Weymouth July – Sept 2012). As the 360-degree screen can not be wholly seen from any central viewing position as a single entity, so the narrative of the work and its implication cannot be wholly seen from a single perspective and yet the spec-

tle and the lack of certainty feed interpretation; the coming into being of the material, the images and sound - the archive.

Dartington as a place, and a concept in the imagination of its founders and subsequent participants might be seen as a virtual screen onto which many interpretations and 'visions' have been projected. The paper seeks to present and explore this notion of embodied openness in a reading of an aspect of the Dartington story as presented in the new 360-degree work and the living dynamic potential of the archive material in its re-processing.

'Digital Platforms, Film Historical Methodology and the Concept of Dispositif'

Christian Gostvig Olesen

This paper is concerned with recent reconceptualizations of film historical methodology in film archival and scholarly presentations of digitized collections and the forms of knowledge they produce. The proliferation of digital platforms in recent years testifies to a multitude of reconceptualizations and reinvigoration of film historical methodology: historical-critical and annotated DVD editions of films, thematic websites and interactive museum installations. However, while digital platforms reinvigorate reflection on film historical methodology they tend to be understood primarily from dualistic positions with attention to either the problems which digitization raises for film preservation or their emancipatory promises for democratization of the film archive and user access. Seldomly are digital platforms discussed rigorously from a meta-historical perspective with attention to established film historical discourses to understand how they pertain to and reproduce them. This paper suggests a change in perspective to more rigorously understand knowledge production in digital formats from an epistemological perspective to comprehend the consequences of digitization for film historical methodology. In this respect, it argues,

that we need new evaluative frameworks for understanding how the configurations of digital platforms establish film historical knowledge. Departing from this observation, the paper discusses how we could understand and evaluate the production of film historical knowledge in digital platforms. The paper takes its theoretical cue from media archaeology's recent rethinking of Michel Foucault's *dispositif* concept with regard to the scientific epistemology of French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (Albera and Tortajada, 2011). It argues that digital platforms can fruitfully be regarded as methodologically constructed artefacts pertaining to specific film historical concepts which can be identified in the interrelations between user, representation and technology. Within this framework, the paper discusses the digital presentation practices of the EYE Film Institute Netherlands, and its conceptualizations of digitized collections as sources of film history to conclusively branch out to general tendencies in digital platforms in film museums and archives.

Albera, F. and Tortajada, M. eds. (2011) *Ciné-Dispositifs: Spectacles – cinéma – télévision – littérature*. Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme

Chair: Dr. Hannah Drayson (*Transtechology Research*)
Matthew MacKisack (*Goldsmiths, University of London*)
Kayla Parker (*Plymouth University*)

'Imaginary Material: Hypnosis as a Medium for Artistic and Creative Practice'
Hannah Drayson

Hypnosis and guided visualisation are both made use of in practices such as hypnotherapy for the production of therapeutic effects, to produce change in the conscious and unconscious minds of patients and to allow them to explore new patterns of thought and behaviour. This paper seeks to embark from the proposal that if we take the position that an imagined experience has a material, even therapeutic, effect on the body of its their perceiver, as evidenced by placebo and meaning effects in medicine and anthropology, we might turn our attention to understanding the material effects of artistic practices.

Using techniques such as hypnosis, suggestion, and guided visualisation, a number of contemporary artists have made artworks that explore and make use of the audience's capacity

for imagining. Joris Lacoste's projects, most recently 4 Prepared Dreams (2012), Superflex's The Financial Crisis (Session I-IV) (2009) and Mike Chavez-Dawson's The Mind Projected Cinema (2008) have exploited the potential for hypnosis to offer the imagination as a medium for artistic expression.

The presentation will investigate how we might conceptualise the use of the imagination as a site or medium for creative practice, both in existing and proposed practices, within and outside of contemporary and media arts practices. The topic suggests the possibility of raising both methodological and theoretical issues that engage with how we understand artistic and creative practices and their relation to bodily ontology.

'Fingerprints for Confessions: Evidencing Awareness in the Vegetative State'
Matthew MacKisack

Developments in brain scanning technology have enabled the detection of neural activity and inferral of cognitive processes among brain-damaged humans whose impairments prevent outward signs of cognition. For those in a 'vegetative' state - awake but not (apparently) aware - neuro-imaging serves as a diagnostic and even communicative tool. In 2006 a research team led by British neuroscientist Adrian Owen published *Detecting awareness in*

the vegetative state, a paper in which the claim is first made - against medical and clinical consensus on the automaticity of vegetative brain activity - to have demonstrated the presence of consciousness in a patient previously diagnosed as vegetative. When asked to imagine performing certain activities the test-subject produced fMRI scans indistinguishable from those of 'healthy' subjects imagining the same activities. The experimenters conclude that this correla-

tion, plus the patient's apparent understanding of, and compliance with, the verbal request, means that the patient is 'conscious'.

This paper takes Owen et al.'s experiment as a case study in the ascription of subjecthood, exploring its ramifications in terms of the images involved – namely, the 'imagined' activity and the fMRI's representation of increased cerebral blood flow – and their complex relationship with volition. In semiotic terms, the

experimental paradigm grants subject status to a body that makes confessions - voluntarily-made, if non-verbal, behaviour - not to one that leaves automatic, involuntary or accidental fingerprints. But what ideological assumptions regarding subjecthood structure the distinction of fingerprint-images from confession-images? And how, more generally, does the fate of this neuroscientific test-subject resonate with that of the political subject?

'Her Dark Materials: Conjuring the Feminine Imaginary in Practice'

Kayla Parker

My paper explores film-making 'as (a) woman', an audiovisual form of *écriture féminine*, a term used by Hélène Cixous and others to denote 'feminine writing', the transformative practices that come through the body, with reference to Maya Deren's theorisation of cinema and her ethnographic study of Haitian voodoo belief systems.

In creative practice, I take the feminine position through an embodied layering of consciousness, entering a trance or dream state, which for Freud was, "the threshold between life and death ... a space of uncertainty in which boundaries blur between rational and the supernatural, the animate and the inanimate" (Mulvey, 2006).

Deren (1960) has written of the 'invisible underlayer of an implicit double exposure' that is unrolled beneath the stream of moving images when we watch a film. We construct meaning

from the memories and dreams evoked, from the film itself and the space in which the experience takes place. Although Deren refers to the visual realm, reflecting the cultural primacy of the sense of sight, the sonic environment of the film also affects our understanding. The double exposure to which she refers is the unconscious interweaving of imaginary materials - our own subjectivity and the fictive reality we perceive.

As a maker, in giving agency to multiple strata of the self, I conjure the material specificities and repetitive rhythms of light and shadow that form the illusion of moving image. Life and representation entwine to the rapturous beat of animate and inanimate states of being, in the flux of the present moment, within which - to borrow Deren's words - life and death become one and the same. Each material loop of space-time, telling and knowing, woven through its link to a maternal other, continually in process, making and unmaking.

10:30-12:15

Session 4: 'Between Images, Minds and Discourse'

Chair: Martyn Woodward (*Transtechology Research*)

Dr. Lambros Malafouris (*University of Oxford*)

Lydia Nsiah (*Ludwig Boltzmann Institut*)

Verena Ziegler (*Auckland University of Technology*)

'Archaeologies of Deep Time: Images of Tension and Scale'

Martyn Woodward

A contemporary interest in the often neglected *deep time* aspects of the late nineteenth century within the study of human history arises with questions regarding the material and immaterial limits of the development of human cognition, and the methods by which a human history is documented. The recognition of the deep time aspects that emerge during this period appreciate that the human form, development of mind, and creative and technical activity can be understood as distributed amongst a larger developmental system of the active and responsive processes of the earth. A deep history attempts to study the development of such a distributed human cognition and activity through the traces of human consciousness that extend into,

and are left upon, the environment: the material artefacts, objects and materials of a culture.

This presentation, through a juxtaposition of diverse visual ephemera drawn from the late nineteenth century: geological images, biblical depictions, modern painting, satirical illustrations and everyday depictions of emerging technologies, will trace the deep time aspects of a late nineteenth century imagination. A close reading of the shifting sense of human scale depicted within representations of the human form drawn across diverse visual ephemera of this period will reveal an imagination that extends into the affective, active and in some cases destructive processes of deep time.

'Learning to See: Enactive Discovery and the Prehistory of Pictorial Skill'

Lambros Malafouris

In this paper, I will use several archaeological and anthropological examples to propose a view of human perception as an 'open' process of active exploration and material engagement. Building upon the enactive paradigm and the hypothesis of extended mind I will be arguing that perception should be seen as the concerted embodied activity of the whole person that collapses the boundaries between the mind and the material

world. Moreover, I will extend this embodied view further to argue that perception is a highly contextualized bio-cultural construct. An implication of that may be that image and perception are continuous; in changing the one you affect the other and thus you cannot understand them in isolation.

'An Area of Tension Between Art and Life: Rhythm in Sponsored Films'

Lydia Nsiah

Drawing on the implementation of experimental techniques in Sponsored Films, this paper focuses on the aesthetic and efficient potential of rhythm in affecting body and mind of 'the early 20th century consumer'. To reveal this reciprocal area of tension between art and life

(J. Ranci re) as well as the interconnections of elementary design (H. Richter), psychological and embodied efficacy (F. Giese), I will extract rhythmic film techniques (Animation, Montage) from selected sponsored artifacts.

‘Transcending Disciplinary Boundaries’

Verena Ziegler

The project pays attention to the historical emergence of the asymmetrical correspondence between ‘words and things’ (Foucault 1972), ‘descriptions and reality’ (Barad 2003), ‘representation and thinking’ (Foucault 2002) and ‘thinking and doing’ (Kimbell 2012) and considers Husserlian (1900) notions of ‘things themselves’ to grasp and equally include ontological understandings of the world possible and to unravel presupposed limiting viewpoints and disciplinary interests.

This inquiry will address the limitations of disciplinary bounded perspectives and introduces notions of an aesthetic understanding (Baumgarten 1735) towards a more holistic and synergizing way to render academic research investigations and knowledge generation.

Design is attributed an outstanding role in this research, recognizing the ability of design to communicate between implicit, theoretical knowledge and explicit embodied knowledge, seen as an alternative way to engage with disciplinary boundaries, communication problems based on language and the split between theory and practice. Design is seen as having the ability to reveal implicit domain knowledge on a broader scope, which is currently known only to domain specialists fragmental.

Through discursive forms of physical and digital prototypes, using a ‘research-through design’ (Jonas, 2006) approach; the project will attempt to explore and communicate aesthetic informed

transdisciplinary research models as ‘epistemic objects’ (Knorr-Cetina, 1999). The sensual and material experimentations with various physical and digital forms and mediums of research models will investigate existing knowledge framings and investigate possible new interacting ensembles of methodological knowledge formations.

The aim of the research is to help overcome disciplinary boundaries and to offer an alternative way to engage with complementary and relational knowledge from different knowledge fields. Through aesthetic informed ‘epistemic’ transdisciplinary model explorations, significant relationships of theories, concepts and meaning patterns are defined on values of contemporary significance, matter and meaning to enhance a richer understanding of transdisciplinary communication, and mind-sets.

The project will consider the alteration from a separating to a synergizing, transcendent and discursive engagement with different disciplines, perspectives and methodological framings. The epistemic value of design then, is to engage different theories and implicit perspectives in relation to one another, to explicitly visualize and communicate the significance of their ideas and matter.

12:15-12:30

Coffee Break

12:30-13:45

Session 5: ‘Ontology, Space and the Boundaries of Historical Objects’

Chair: Rita Cachão (*Transtechology Research*)
Jasper Coppes (*Jan van Eyck Academie*)
Prof. dr. Sundar Surakkai (*Manipal University*) (via Skype)

‘Space in Processes of Historiographical Categorization’

Rita Cachão

Since the linguistic turn in historiography and philosophy of history the role of narrative has been discussed in depth. Within it a categorization discussion has been happening through the creation of parallels between the construction of historical narratives and the construction of fictitious stories. A categorization process that necessarily could not be detached from a debate on the role of imagination in the making of historical narratives and, consequently, could not also be detached from a reflection about thinking systems through the irreconcilable categories of logic and myth. Such debates have given a new spin on concepts like origin, causality, evidence, proof; concepts that support historical thinking and making, however still heavily grounded on a temporal framework.

How then has the linguistic turn challenged the thinking of history as a time problematic? And how can the thinking and making of history be challenged by bringing in space as a concept that has an intervention on categorization processes themselves, in a reflection on thinking systems as myth and logic beyond a linguistic framework? If an ontological discussion on space is to be brought in as a detour for historiography and philosophy of history, can one push these disciplines to an epistemological limit, and loose their bearings regarding any search of past truth, making myth and logic closer, while at the same time becoming more material, by detaching itself from the idea of written document, of language?

‘Indentations’

Jasper Coppes

During a recent archaeological field trip in a small Belgian town I participated in excavating remnants of what they call the ‘Linear Pottery Culture’. Decorated ceramic shards had been laying 30 centimetres under the orange soil of Limburg for nearly 7000 years. I was curious to learn what aesthetic categories lead one to define a seemingly insignificant object as artefact. But also I had a strong urge to hold some of these bits and pieces made by my Neolithic ancestors in the palm of my hand. According to the Dutch historian Frank Ankersmit relics like these can evoke a feeling of authentic and instantaneous contact with the past. He calls this phenomenon ‘the sublime historical sensation’. The sense of meaning generated

by these relics somehow comes forth from an unmediated contact with their speechless presence. Their stories reach us as silent, tangible, visible and brute material remains. But what, I continued to wonder, constitutes this uncomfortable relationship between mute objects and the stories with which we attempt to support their significance?

I became more and more interested in the aphasia that governs objects, the speechlessness of matter, as opposed to interpretation or representational categories. It seemed that not only within the arts but also in various scientific disciplines a desire surfaced to problematize the opposition of information and physicality, by

shifting 'away from language toward experience'. A desire to move beyond the climate of constructivism and to return to what is real. From a historian perspective, the Dutch theorist Eelco Runia states that the past travels within the present as a stowaway, a secret passenger aboard a ship. As instances of 'presence' they appear precisely when our conventional frameworks with which we relate to the world are momentarily broken. Presence appears in discontinuity because in such instances we stop thinking. 'Presence,' as Runia claims, is 'being

in touch' - either literally or figuratively - with people, things, events, and feelings that made you into the person you are. Runia calls for a turn away from seemingly endless interpretations manufactured by theory and for a return to a relationship with the past predicated on our unmediated access to actual things that we can feel and touch and that bring us into contact with the world.

13:45-14:45

Lunch

14:45-16:30

Session 6: 'Artist, Territory, History'

Chair: Edith Doove (*Transtechology Research*)

Pascale Weber (*University Paris 1*)

Jean Delsaux (*Université d'Auvergne Clermont 1*)

Claudia Loch (*University of Brasilia*)

'And What About the Maker? The Position of the Artist Within World Art Studies'

Edith Doove

While world art studies opens up the way art history is being dealt with from a mainly European vision to a global one, the focus is still largely placed on the object. The history of the maker comes second place due to the fact that art history deals mostly with makers that have been long dead and buried. In a way this is a safer option as dead artists can not talk back and contradict the researcher, making it possible to create mythical artists' biographies that can also serve nationalistic and commercial means, but it misses the fundamental processes the artist goes through in order to make the object. For this reason I would like to introduce the notion of 'the artist as found system' in order to investigate artists and their production as much as possible independently of any restrict-

ing frame work that might not comply with the reality of being an artist. One of the ways of doing this is through Hans Ulrich Obrist's extensive production of interviews with artists, although the published ones mainly deal with well-known names. Another option is to make better use of the curatorial knowledge production that comes forth out of working with a wide range of artists, upcoming or lesser known.

The paper has as a purpose to investigate the usefulness of these options as well as possible alternatives.

‘The Unwound Body’

Pascale Weber and Jean Delsaux

Traditionally in the Art history, there is a gender distribution of the tasks: the woman is the one who is inspiring, the muse, the model and the man is the one who is looking at, as artist, as spectator. In our performances, we are questioning this organisation : I move on the stage, often blind (because the costumes prevents me from seeing) and Jean is recording, looking attentively to what is happening. He gives me indications so that I can move in complete safety, and stay in the field of the recording. The duo Hantu questions the sudden collision of our two experiences, the experience of the noisy and moving body, and that of the regard and the image.

Shot:

“Hantu”- the duo’s name- means “ghost” in Indonesian. The performances explored at first Weber’s recollections of Indonesian ceremonies she witnessed in her childhood and emotional states associated with this time. During the performances, her body in trance is no longer entirely under her control. It breathes heavily, it shouts, jumps, drags itself on the ground etc... Her body searches beyond itself, becoming a channel for collective experience and memory.

Closing her eyes, slowing down the breath, turning her eyes and ears inward. Waiting for the body to calculate the right speed of its movement. By successive undulations, the spinal column twists upon itself. She has to keep her balance and repeat the movement till she succeeds in passing unflatteringly from one table position to another: whether in the snow or on a squeaky wood floor, the temperature, the time, the danger, the tension... It depends also on what the body is carrying: shackled by big anklets, corseted by strips of fabric, suffocating under a mask, a hood or a wig. The body knows the music of

the present time. It invents its relationships with its environment as at the moment of its birth, crawling towards the exit. It pushes away the world around it to make room and find its place. It cries upon breathing oxygen, it sees without seeing, just wisps of light.

Reverse shot:

Before the public representation, performances are first conducted under the eye of a single witness: he records in silence, working to understand what he’s looking at. More than a spectator, he is a partner, a guardian, the only anchor on this side of the world.

Jean Delsaux tries to capture the manifestations of the moving body, with photographs and films. The point of view of the frame, the constraints of video editing inflict strong limitations on the dancing body: the limits of the frame, of the depth of the field, focusing constraints. These limits confine the performance, work against the will for freedom and liberation of the body in the space, of its playing with the space, as described, for example, by Laban or others theoreticians in theatre and dance (Grotowski and Brook)... In reverse shot, by referring to appropriate theoretical references, Jean Delsaux will expose the three developments of his experience of this body in front of him, regarding the space of the visual recording on one hand and the space of the stare on the other hand.

‘Art and Activism’

Claudia Loch

According to the etymology of the word activism, its origin is from the French *activisme*, which arose in philosophy and politics in the early twentieth century. Activism is the action of using vigorous campaigning to bring social change. In the artistic field, it can be described as any work that privileges the actual practice

of transforming reality at the expense of purely speculative activity. This presentation brings examples and discussions about this catalyst art practice, so new ideas and possibilities can emerge and also propagate.

16:30-16:45

Coffee Break

16:45-18:00

Session 7: ‘Distributed Mind(s) Reading Through Artefacts’

Marcio Rocha (*Transtechology Research*)

Dr. John Vines (*Culture Lab, Newcastle University*)

Respondant: Dr. Stephen Thompson (*Cardiff Metropolitan University*)

‘Intelligent Manifestation of Ingenious Devices

Using early Automaton to Improve Human Computer Interaction’

Marcio Rocha

This presentation will merge concepts from the field of cognitive sciences, Artificial intelligence and Human Computer Interaction, using the famous Turk chess player automaton made by Wolfgang von Kempelen in 1770 as an example, to highlight the concept of distributed mind. The ‘Turk’ will be used to illustrate and extend his thinking to suggest that, in HCI practice today, rather than just developing strategies through representations, we should begin to think more about the possibility of users actively thinking through devices in our interaction solutions.

Although the ‘Turk’ was designed as an elaborate hoax, Kempelen’s mechanical chess player speaks eloquently of the harmonic cooperation between the elements (human and mechanical)

responsible to afford the trick in a way that appeared to the audience as a seamless unity and render the trick invisible. In order to introduce some useful concepts for the contemporary development of HCI, the concept of the Turk suggesting a different model of mind and the possibility of interactions consequent upon ‘intelligent’ manifestations of the ‘artificial’ world.

To make this explicit and suggest practical applications, the Turk chess-player machine will be proposed as a real-world interaction — an interaction based in physical reality — amplifying the knowledge of the model of the human mind, which is divergent from the traditional and limited symbolic manipulation approach. This will lead to a discussion of the automata as not only a representation of the desire to

make the rational thought formalised and mechanically possible in order to try to simulate artificial intelligence, but also to represent a symbiotic relation between the master chess player hidden inside of the machine and the machine itself.

The concept of embodied interaction will be discussed as it emerged in the area of HCI as a trend to illustrate not only a rejection of representation, but to suggest that we take the external world and objects into considera-

tion in a way that is more tangible and directly perceived.

Finally, the presentation will draw on these materials to propose how the approach can be used to advocate thinking through devices as a core concern in the theory of Human Computer Interaction. Not just a simulation of the world, but the world itself as its best ‘representation’ and therefore, part of the cognitive process.

‘Participatory Design and the Unwitting Denial of Human Agency’

John Vines

The last decade has seen unprecedented interest across design research in citizen-/public-/ stakeholder-/end-user participation in the design of future technologies. Initially an endeavour of a network of socialist academics in Northern Europe and Scandinavia working with Union groups, co-operative and participatory approaches to technology design have entered mainstream design research and commercial design practice. The often taken contemporary view is that by involving those who will live with a technology in its design then more appropriate, sensitive and “successful” designs will result. Others view participation as an emancipatory and democratising process, wherein the “voice of the oppressed” and socially excluded is raised and impact upon decision-making processes within public and commercially owned organisations. In either view, the aim is to engage groups of people in design-relevant dialogues through meetings, forums, or workshop-like events and envision more desirable futures.

In response to accounts of the distributed and ‘enactive’ mind, I will draw upon prominent examples of participatory projects across design disciplines to problematize these dominant narratives. First, while participatory design emphasizes that human beings are agents with desires

it affirms a view that the wider public are feeble and unable to participate in design processes without invitation by design experts. Second, it privileges linguistic action, treating participant talk and discussion as evidence to drive project ambitions, while ignoring the multiplicity of sensations and experiential phenomena surrounding imaginative engagements. Third, it is deeply materialistic, and the imagination becomes reified in designed “artefacts” from workshops and engagements with the public that make concretely articulate and embody the needs of a highly heterogenic public.

I reflect upon these discussion points by focusing on the notion of the “boundary object” and offering a re-reading of the concept in light of arguments in favor of the extended mind and material engagement. To conclude, I argue that public engagements with design need not be focused on contributions to future technological configurations. Rather, there are opportunities here to study participatory design meetings, forums and workshops and their material outcomes as sites to unearth the existing agency of public participation in “designing things”, and engage design discourse in a more nuanced and subtle understanding of the relationships between people, artefacts and the design of future things.

‘A Stock Book of Practices Beyond Death’

The 2013 transtechnology research public dialogues focuses upon the material limits of the body, artefact and discourse, providing a transdisciplinary environment for practitioners, artists, academics to discuss the material extensions of imagination and the immaterial extensions of artefacts that constitute the world around us. The assumed ‘inert’ and ‘dead’ material world coalesces with the ‘living’ and ‘active’, blurring the boundaries between the life, death and beyond death.

To contextualise the thinking from the first two days of the dialogues and putting into practice ways of ‘thinking through’, rather than about, the 2013 public dialogues will conclude with a round up workshop of activities, reflection and dialogues. The workshop will invite a reading through the materiality and immateriality of death and transfiguration by the participants as a neutral ground between artists, academics and researchers. The limits of the living and the dead, mind and matter, and the human and non-human will frame the workshop in which artefacts of ‘beyond death’ will be examined.

Proceeding from a rare screening of a film by Michael Punt, participants from the conference as well as the invited artists’ community of the Plymouth Arts Centre will be asked to reflect upon and bring objects, pictures, texts, thoughts and stories on the theme of death and beyond death from their own and/or across other disciplines, forming a stock book or almanac of practices of ‘beyond death’.

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