

Performing the Digital

Rethinking Performance Studies under technological conditions

Symposium, 27.–29.01.2015, Leuphana University of Lüneburg

Digital Cultures Research Lab (DCRL), Leuphana University Lüneburg: Timon Beyes, Irina Kaldrack, Martina Leeker, Renée Ridgway and Imanuel Schipper (Fellow DCRL)

In cooperation with Institute for Design Research, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

Concept: Art and Civic Media (ACM), Digital Cultures Research Lab (DCRL)

With: Marie-Luise Angerer (D), Timon Beyes (D/DK), Gerhard M. Buurmann (CH), Scott deLahunta (D), Steffen Fiedler (D), Björn Franke (CH), Karin Harrasser (A), Margarete Jahrmann (CH), Irina Kaldrack (D), Susan Kozel (SE), Martina Leeker (D), Oliver Leistert (D), Jon McKenzie (USA), Claus Pias (D), Renée Ridgway (NL/DK), Marc Rölli (CH), Jens Schröter (D), Imanuel Schipper (CH/D), Sascha Simons (D), Stephan Thiel (D)

Culture as performance

Performance studies are an important method in understanding culture with its different areas of organizations, urban spaces, institutions or performance art, in order to explore bodies and shapes in time and space as well as dramaturgies. Performance studies focus on the materiality of culture as well as on their temporality, ephemerality and transformativity. They also consider the context in which the cultural aspect is visible and the perspective from which it is received. With this reception, one can discover insights into cultural organization: emotions, atmospheres, perception, acting and presence. Yet performativity itself, as the process of carrying out a cultural and political act, reorganises one's perception and order (Jacques Rancière) thereby potentially developing resistances to cultural inscriptions, which could not be experienced with other methods.

Performing the digital?

If it comes to studying digital “worlds” as performance, it seems that this approach is limited. Perhaps because the topics “bodies”, “presence” or “atmospheres” have been altered so that performance studies can't grasp them any more. Even with the “Performative Turn” movement of the 1990s, which initiated an interdisciplinary field of research on the constitution of cultures in performances, the production of a vast quantity of publications, technological conditions of performance and performativity is still overlooked. Therefore it is timely to address performativity in networked datacultures applying a new approach with uptodate dramaturgies.

Rethinking

The aim of the symposium is to rethink performativity and performance studies from their technohistory and their technological relevance in order to investigate questions of the body, emotions, atmospheres, perception, acting and presence in digital technological conditions. Which role do the practices of dramaturgy, mis en scene, embodiment and affect have that could be articulated through a technohistorical reconstruction? From this departure we arrive at the contemporary conditions of the performative with current research methodologies in order to understand more about digital cultures.

Questions

- How and with which effects do performative practices change with digital technologies?
- How do methods, topics (e.g. body, liveliness, perception, presence, participation) and relevance of performance studies change under technological conditions?
- If there are new forms, how do we describe them?
- What do performance studies bring to digital cultures? What is not recognized without their methods and tools?
- How much are we performed by the digital? How much do we perform it?
- How is protest changing in the digital?
- How do we create bodies and affects for the digital?
- How much social is contained within the digital?

Performing the Digital was an event of the research project Art and Civic Media within the EU major project Innovation Incubator.

PERFORMING THE DIGITAL. RETHINKING PERFORMANCE STUDIES UNDER TECHNOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Symposium – Jan 27, 2015 to Jan 29, 2015
DCRL, Leuphana University of Lüneburg: Timon Beyes, Irina Kaldrack, Martina Leeker,
Renée Ridgway and Imanuel Schipper (Fellow DCRL).
In cooperation with Institute for Design Research, Zurich University of the Arts (ZhdK)

Venue: Centre for Digital Cultures, Lüneburg

Address: Sülztorstraße 21–35, 21335 Lüneburg

Concept: Art and Civic Media (ACM), Digital Cultures Research Lab (DCRL)

Registration: paul.feigelfeld@leuphana.de

For further information, please see: cdc.leuphana.com/performingdigital

Program

Tuesday, January 27, 2015

14.00–14.45 **Introduction / Opening statements / Organisation**

Martina Leeker, Imanuel Schipper

15.00–17.00 **Session 1: Body and technological performativity.**

Moderation: Irina Kaldrack

Scott de laHunta (G): "Case Studies in Choreographic Coding: the body/ mind/ machine laboratory"

In the last decade a range of specific artist-initiated projects have emerged from the field of contemporary choreography and dance that have embraced the idea that digital technology offers dance a more powerful and flexible tool for its recording, preservation & representation. We have the unique opportunity now to study the published results of these projects and pose critical questions about the possible role of computational media in the field of choreographic and dance practice. This presentation will focus on a handful of case studies in 'choreographic coding' with a view toward exploring two key concepts: that of dance-related databases and of 'artworks spawning artworks'.

Marie-Luise Angerer (G): "Oscillating Bodies – Between Calculus and Unconsciousness"

The paper will discuss key terms – such as the “bio-mediated body”, data as relationship, the body as filter, and affect as the new centre of a libidinal economy – which have emerged over the last years to re-formulate the notions of materiality and mediality against the background of an encompassing digitization of our society.

Coffee break

18.00–20.00 **Keynote/DCRL Lecture**

Karin Harrasser (A) (Venue: Stadtarchiv): “Obviously Obscure. Poetics of the Hyperfactual”

“There is such a thing as fact psychic. Sometimes in the literature also known as a data mystic, and the syndrome itself as RFI (= Random-Fact Intuition). These subjects’ sudden flashes of insight or awareness are structurally similar to but usually far more tedious and quotidian than the dramatically relevant foreknowledge we normally conceive as precognition.” This is how tax-agent Sylvanshine is introduced in David Foster-Wallace’ unfinished novel “The Pale King”. In her talk, Karin Harrasser will investigate the novel along with recent ones by Don deLillo and Thomas Pynchon that ask the same question: If code is doing what it does (recursive and highly networked processing of data), it routinely outperforms human modes of knowing that are traditionally characterized as “rational”. What modes of thinking and doing, what kind of subjectivities are then still thinkable? The three novels present us with poetics of knowing that are obviously obscure, a mode of thinking that is prominently advocated in Gilles Deleuzes’ Difference and Repetition and that can already be found in Leibniz model of the psyche.

Dinner

Wednesday, January 28, 2015

10.00–12.00 **Session 2: Performing Data and Economy.**

Moderation: Karin Harrasser

Studio NAND, Stephan Thiel (G)

Margarete Jahrmann (CH): “Tagging as Informal Design Technique in Ludic Role Play”

“Injection of a writeable RFID chip can make our judgements stick. The tagged person becomes a blank field in a database craving to be filled in. The tag changes into a target, the roto-relief into a bull’s eye...” (Dr. Aamin Ben Kassim, Cairo (gHack, Munich/Vienna) for Ludic Society, see here: <http://www.ludic-society.net/tagged/>) Tagging the body with RFID tags was enacted as a

performance by Ludic Society members at the so called social hacking festival in Plymouth UK. This performance will serve as evidence for a reflection on Ludic methods, which stem from introduced arts research principles and embrace play, emerging technologies and performance.

Lunch break

13.00–15.00 Session 3: Performing Protest and Sociality in techno-logical conditions.

Moderation: Sascha Simons

Susan Kozel (SE): "Mobile Choreographies: Affect and Encryption in the Performance of Mobile Media"

This talk charts a path from viewing the fine interweaving of mobile technologies in our lives in a positive light as expressive social choreographies, to the critical awareness of mobility as the conduit to surveillance and the resulting increasing control of gestures and affect in urban movement. Combining the philosophical with the artistic, this discussion takes in the Augmented Reality (AR) performances of AffeXity: Passages & Tunnels (see here: <http://livingarchives.mah.se/affexity-passages-and-tunnels/>) and experiments with somatics and archiving. The idea in development is that affect, when understood through improvisation and performance, opens ambiguity and encryption as counter practices.

Oliver Leistert (G): "Mobile Phone Signals and Protest Crowds"

Today, protest crowds are enmeshed into mobile phone signals. These signals are layers of control with performative outcomes such as coordination, confusion, or utter dislocation. In any case, the mobile phones signals are adding more contested layers to the dynamics of protests, bringing their own spatial, temporal and social logics to an already fragile agglomeration of bodies.

Coffee break

15.30–17.30 Session 4: Performing Cities.

Moderation: Heike Derwanz

Immanuel Schipper (G, CH): "From Flaneur to Co-Creator. On collecting, assembling and producing narrations in urban space"

Smartphones with GPRS and online maps changed the way we navigate in cities completely. The constant use of these devices leads to the overlap of two distinguishable layers of information. Visual information originating from the interaction with "the screen" (maps, images etc.) as well as the perceptual information we perceive from the physical and social environments around us. Obviously this double awareness changed the way we act and move in public spaces. Since the contemporary behaviour is influenced by intrinsic and

extrinsic triggers at the same time, it differs from the kinaesthetic movement of (for e.g.) “the Flaneur”, who is driven only by his own experiences, thoughts and interests. Following some recent performative art productions in public space I will discuss how this entanglement of digitally mediated and non-mediated perceptions and interactions evokes a specific experience for the user/performer in urban spaces.

Sigrid Merx (NL): “Mapping the city. The performativity of collective digital mapping”

According to some estimates, roughly 200 million people may be forced to flee their homelands by the year 2050. With this in mind and the current political course, being stateless – that is, not to possess the right papers and to be considered an illegal immigrant – will become a future scenario for many. In a society where visibility and traceability are favoured over privacy, this raises pressing questions such as: what are the hiding places of the public spaces in the city? how do stateless people remain invisible and avoid social control? what strategies do they use? This paper discusses the fresh outcomes of a workshop organized by Platform-Scenography and Frascati Theatre in Amsterdam on January 16th that set out to digitally map the experience of the city of the ‘invisibles’. It will frame the workshop as an example of performative mapping and critical cartography, where a digital tool is being used to engage people with social and political realities that otherwise remain hidden.

In this workshop participants were individually guided through the city of Amsterdam by a stateless person. Prior to the fieldwork a legend was created by the participants which consisted of ‘emotions’ that relate to the experience of hiding, such as ‘fear’, ‘hope’ or ‘stress’. The stateless guided the participant to a place in the city that she associated with the concerning emotions. For the mapping the participants used a web application on their mobile phones that tracked the journey and made it visible on a digital map in realtime. This live animation was a means to visualise the ‘emotional’ journeys that had been made. Moreover the participant photographed places, traces, materials, objects and behaviours along the route that had to do with hiding from reality. These were presented and accessible in an online photo archive. Finally the participants recorded the conversation they had with the stateless. This was turned into an audio map that ‘visitors’ could listen to afterwards (with a mobile phone and headphones) by walking this very same route. The ‘visitor’ could only hear the story and find the places by following the same track as the stateless.

18.00–20.00 **Keynote/DCRL Lecture**

Jon McKenzie (USA) (Venue: Stadtarchiv): “Performance and Democratizing Digitality”

All performance is electronic, shaped by recursive forces found in liminal rituals, change management, and feedback loops. This multimedia presentation

explores the complex relation between performance and digitality. Performance extends from theater to companies to computer systems, while digitality spans the practices, forms, and tools associated with electronic cultures. Drawing of long histories, performance and digitality emerge together as dominant forces in the late 20th-century, becoming increasingly entwined in the 21st and altering both structures of knowledge and power and modes of normalization and resistance, To understand performance as theater is akin to theorizing digitality by the book: yes, it can be done, but why? To paraphrase Marx: theorists have thus far critiqued the world; the point is to change it. How to perform the democratization of digitality? How to intervene in creative industries? How to queer the war machine?

Dinner

Thursday, January 29, 2015

9.30–11.30 **Session 5: Performing Organisations.**

Moderation: Martina Leeker

Timon Beyes (G, DK): "Performing Organisations"

Bernhard Herbordt/Melanie Mohren (G): "Performing Institutions (Catalogue of Performative Practices #3)"

In the archives of the 'Max-Planck-Gesellschaft' documents with proposals for the foundation of new institutes are stored all over the last century. The proposals have never been realised and are often handwritten classified as "nutcase!". The documents are presenting universal archives, institutes for the extension of human knowledge or theories of everything. In their 'Catalogue of Performative Practices' Herbordt/Mohren present scenic set-ups for interrogating the integral parts of narrative apparatuses like archives, theatres and other institutions. The lecture-presentation 'Performing Institutions' envisions performance-instructions to enact non-existing research institutes and is the title of a recently published book on institutions and their actualisations edited by Herbordt/Mohren.

11.30–12.30 **Wrap up / Publication**

Moderation: Irina Kaldrack, N.N.

Lunch