Writing performance : on relations between texts and performances

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1 Chapter: Performances and Texts

In this chapter, the research is contextualized. It is divided into five subchapters.

In “1.1 Mapping the Field” a brief insight is given into the role texts and notations play in the performing arts and in visual art.

In “1.2 Performance Art and Theory” the most important positions in performance theory are introduced. Performance has been defined either in opposition to and disconnected from texts and textualization in the form of documentation, or, on the contrary, via these texts.

In “1.3 Towards a Paratextual Understanding of Performance” I will argue for a paratextual understanding of performance which takes the live-act as well as its (potential) textualizations into consideration without thinking of them as mutually exclusive.

Against this backdrop, in “1.4 Performance as Live-Art/Act,” I will approach the notion of performance as live-art.

In “1.5 Concepts and Practices of Performance Documentation” I will present Philip Auslander’s argument that performance documentation already has a history and conclude this chapter with my view on contemporary performance documentation.

1.1 Mapping the Field

In all disciplines of performing arts, namely theater, music and dance/choreography, texts and/or notations play a role in relation to performances. In the following the role of texts and/or notations in each of these disciplines is mentioned briefly and thereafter I turn to visual art. There will not be an exhaustive overview of discourses by artists and theorists in these fields provided here, but some of the theories will be referred to in the course of this dissertation.

Since ancient times, theater plays have been based on written scripts that contain the texts to be spoken or sung by the actors and the chorus. In addition, there may be instructions included in these scripts that describe how the text should be recited, that suggest other actions that should be performed, and/or what the setting of the play or of a scene is.

Musical notation has also existed since ancient times. In the western world, there developed a classic notational system of formalized language, which is still widely used. However, it must be noted that there are different notation systems in other cultures, and there have always been individual notation systems in use and developed by composers. Notations in music are a multifaceted phenomenon in which all aspects of musical practice are implied: rehearsing, composing, creating artistic work, documenting, performing, archiving.

Choreographic notation has existed since the Middle Ages.[5] Contrary to music, dance never managed to build a unified system that covers different styles and movements. The most advanced systems of movement notation are the Labanotation (by Rudolf von Laban) and the Eshkol-Wachmann system (by Noa Eshkol and Abraham Wachmann), both developed in the 20th century.

In general, one can say that notations in the fields of theater, dance, and music all share three major functions: (1) building a memory aid (which, in music and dance, is connected to codifying and representing movement or sound); (2) supporting the process of creation of a work; and (3) being an artwork in themselves.

Digital technologies add to traditional forms of writing. The most frequently used methods for capturing performances nowadays (either during the process of creation or during the live-act) are digital technologies. In choreography, besides video recording – which has become a standard tool for supporting the working process – advanced techniques like movement-capturing programs are in use.[6] In music, software programs are used for creating compositions. These digital "forms of writing" are used instead of, or in addition to, traditional forms of notation.

In visual art, no formalized notational system as in music or dance exists. From the very beginning, performance in visual art has included elements, methods and techniques from the disciplines of music, dance and theater. This is the case for performances as well as for their notations. Like in music and dance, in visual art,

[5] Cf. Jeschke, Claudia, *Tanzschriften. Ihre Geschichte und Methode. Die illustrierte Darstellung eines Phänomens von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart.* Bad Reichenhall: Comes, 1983.

[6] One of the earliest examples of a computer program assisting an artist to choreograph a piece is LifeForms, a computer choreographic software tool developed at Simon Fraser University in the computer graphics research lab. Merce Cunningham used it to choreograph the dance *Trackers,* which premiered in 1991. Cf. Schiphorst, Thecla, *A Case Study of Merce Cunningham's Use of the LifeForms Computer Choreographic System in the Making of* Trackers. B.G.S. Simon Fraser University, 1986.

notations for performances may contain descriptive, symbolic and depictive elements. Mostly, they are developed individually by the artists to serve their specific needs in relation to developing, communicating or preserving their work.

Since the early 1960s, notations for performances in the visual art field have been referred to as “scores.” In the exhibition catalogue *Happening & Fluxus* by Harald Szeemann, such performance scores are defined as “written notations, symbols and arrangements for the performance of a ‘happening.’”[7]

In both Fluxus and Happenings, performance played a major role. The performances of Happenings were influenced by theater practices. These so called “happenings” took place in gallery spaces or in public space. Fluxus was more strongly influenced by music and Fluxus performances were called “concerts” or “events.” Artists of that generation, such as Yoko Ono, George Brecht, John Cage, La Monte Young, Allan Kaprow, and Alison Knowles, among others, are well known for using scores as an experimental tool for creating performances, and for exhibiting and publishing them. Especially in Fluxus, writing scores were part of experimenting with art forms and trespassing the classical genres. These scores were often circulated in the form of artist-made books and publications. An exemplary publication is *Notations*[8] by John Cage in 1969.

In recent years, the terms “score” and “script” regained attention in visual art. In the following, I will briefly name three examples that appear interesting to me within this context, because they methodically point to the potential of writing.

In 2007, the French curator Mathieu Copeland curated *A Choreographed Exhibition* at the Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen in Switzerland. The exhibition was based on scores that were performed by performers throughout the whole duration of the exhibition. In the exhibition space no objects were present, but only the performers and the audience. Copeland understood this “performance” as a form of exhibiting these scores. In 2013, Copeland published a book that reflected on this project and organized a festival based on a similar principle. The festival, just like the book, is entitled *Choreographing Exhibitions* and took place at the Centre d’Art Contemporain de la Ferme du Buisson in Paris.

[7] Szeemann, Harald, *Happening & Fluxus.* Köln: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970. Inside cover.

[8] Cage, John (Ed.), *Notations*. New York: Something Else Press, 1969.

Another example of a project by a curator working with the idea of the score is the project *Draft Score for an Exhibition* by the French curator and art critic Pierre Bal-Blanc. It is a 20-minute lecture that was first performed in 2010 for a jury of professionals as part of his application to curate the 7th Berlin Biennale. The score was conceived to be performed by its author or by a third party. In 2014, the work was published as a booklet.[9]

An example from the United States is Clifford Owens's solo exhibition *Anthology* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2012. For this occasion, the artist collected performance scores from African-American artists. He exhibited and performed the scores himself in order to show that "African-American performance art has been under-recognized and that its history remains largely unwritten."[10]

In the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the third part of the performance series Stage It! was entitled SCRIPTED. It was intended to "elaborate on the position of the script – or some other variable term – as a key 'object' in historical and contemporary visual art performance."[11] It took place in 2014 and encompassed performances as well as lectures on the role of script in visual art.

In 2011, I examined in and by means of the artistic publication *THE PRESENT AUTHOR. Who Speaks in Performance?* how performances can be depicted, (re)presented, produced, or altered by written notations, scores, scripts and texts, and investigated the role of authorship in this context.

1.2 Performance Art and Theory

At the end of the 1970s, the American-based art historian RoseLee Goldberg stated in her book *Performance. Live-art 1909 to the Present* that performance had become a medium in its own right. However, Goldberg believes that "artists have always turned to live performance as one means among many of expressing their ideas."[12]

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[9] Bal-Blanc, Pierre, *Draft Score for an Exhibition*. Rome: NERO, 2014.

[10] Cf. http://www.momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/340

[11] http://www.stedelijk.nl/en/public-program/visie/stage-it-part-3-scripted

[12] Goldberg, RoseLee, *Performance. Live-art 1909 to the Present*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1979. p. 6.

Regarding the construction of a history of this quite recently acknowledged medium, Goldberg remarks, “the history of performance, like a history of theater, can only be constructed from scripts, texts, photographs and descriptions from onlookers.”[13]

In 1996 the American feminist scholar Peggy Phelan formulated a perspective on performance that became very influential for performance theory. She wrote, “… performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented … once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. Performance … becomes itself through disappearance.”[14]

According to this understanding, performance is ephemeral by nature. With this statement Phelan takes a critical stance towards performance documentation. In her opinion the potential of performance is the capacity to leave nothing behind, to not save anything that can be reproduced and circulate as an object on the market. Performance, according to Phelan, is something that fades in the memory of the audience into the invisible and unconscious realm, where it eludes all regulation and control. She writes, “Performance in a strict ontological sense is non-reproductive. … Performance clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital.”[15]

At the end of the 1990s, when the historicization of performance art and performance practices began, the American art historian, art critic and curator Amelia Jones offered another perspective. She wrote in her text “‘Presence’ in Absentia. Experiencing Performance as Documentation”[16] that one can no longer maintain the belief that only a person who was present at a performance can write about it. Jones herself was born in 1961, so she had not experienced the early performances by artists like Carolee Schneemann, Valie Export, Yoko Ono, Adrian Piper, Gina Parne and Marina Abramović when she became involved in writing about performance in

[13] Ibid., p. 6.

[14] Phelan, Peggy, “The Ontology of Performance. Representation without Reproduction,” in: *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance.* London/New York: Routledge, 1996. pp. 146-166, here: p. 146.

[15] Ibid., p. 148.

[16] Jones, Amelia, “‘Presence’ in Absentia. Experiencing Performance as Documentation,” in: *Art Journal. Performance Art. (Some) Theory and (Selected) Practice at the End of this Century.* Vol. 56, No. 4, Winter 1997. pp. 11-18.

the 1990s. Against the premise that one had to be there to get the story right, Jones argued that the problems raised by her “absence” are logistical, not ethical or hermeneutic.[17]

Her premise is that there is no possibility of an *unmediated* relationship to cultural products and events, not even to those that fall under the category of “Body Art.” The specificity of the knowledge produced by the experience of a live performance should not be privileged over the knowledge that is generated by the documentary traces of the event.[18] With this argumentation, Jones created the basis for the research, teaching and historiography of performance art and for an understanding that the live moment is also accessible through other forms of knowledge than that of the immediate experience.

The American performance scholar Philip Auslander formulates an interesting paradox in this context: performance, which is understood as live-art, and thus is limited to the live-act, ought to stay ephemeral, meaning it may not leave any trace. Yet, in order to circulate as artwork, to reach a discursive status and recognition, documentation of the performed work is necessary.[19]

Phelan’s position could be summarized as: performance is only accessible live; it goes directly to the memory; and recording destroys the essence of performance. Jones’ position could be summarized as: performances can and should be recorded in order to make them accessible to future generations, research and historiography. Performance theory since the 1990s finds itself in the tension between those two positions. Various arguments were developed around these two poles, which I will not follow in detail here.

Rather, I would like to draw attention to practices committing themselves to documenting, archiving, recording and transcribing performances. Besides historians, artists and curators participate in the research, interpretation and analysis of archival and documentary material, and in the processing, visualization, mediation and

[17] Cf. Ibid.

[18] Cf. Ibid.

[19] Auslander, Philip, “Performing Texts,” Lecture at the Department English and the National Endowment for the Humanities, University of Richmond, United States, 2013. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njnAztE5ASY

exhibition of performance history. In the following, I would like to give some examples from the German-speaking area, including exhibitions and conferences I have attended myself.

In Vienna, the artists Carola Dertnig and Stefanie Seibold researched the local history of performance and displayed the outcomes of that research in the exhibitions *Let's Twist Again. If You Can't Think It, Dance It* at the Kunsthalle Exnergasse in 2002, and *Mothers of Invention. Where is Performance Coming From?* at Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (mumok, Vienna) in 2003. In these exhibitions, Dertnig and Seibold established lines of connection between the generation of artists who engaged in performances in the 1970s and 1980s and the younger generation. Historical records as well as contemporary artistic works were shown together in order to contextualize the history of performance art in the here and now. In 2006, the book *Let's Twist Again* was published, delineating a part of the research in the form of interviews, again spanning multiple generations of artists.

A further example is *archiv performativ*[20], a research project initiated by the Swiss artist Pascale Grau in 2010 and executed together with the theoreticians Irene Müller and Margarit von Büren over the course of several years. The project is devoted to the archiving and transmission of performance art, "directing particular attention to the relationship between documentation and transcription."[21] For the presentation of the project, a temporary model archive was established in 2011. In the same year the conference *Recollecting the Act. Zur Tradierung von Performancekunst* was organized and hosted in Basel. Another project in Switzerland is the *Performance Chronik Basel*, in which the artists and theoreticians Muda Mathis, Sabine Gebhardt Fink and Margarit von Büren, working in a collaborative network, researched local performance history and illustrated it in various forms such as presentations, a website and a publication.[22] This project focuses on critical approaches of writing history, and uses oral history, live interviews and collaborative, interdisciplinary

[20] Cf. http://archivperformativ.wordpress.com

[21] Cf. https://www.zhdk.ch/?id=37683

[22] Gebhardt Fink, Sabine; Mathis, Muda; von Büren, Margarit (Eds.), *Floating Gaps. Performance Chronik Basel (1968-1986).* Zürich: diaphanes, 2011.

mapping as methods. The transcripts of interviews are made available on a website.[23]

The German web journal *MAP – Media | Archive | Performance*[24] is solely dedicated to (medial) transcriptions of live performances, and the connected topics of performance recording, documentation and mediatization. Theoreticians as well as artists are invited to write texts reflecting on this topic.

The practices of research, historicization, documentation, exhibition, publication and displaying past performances shift the focus from the fundamental question of whether or not performances should be documented to the practical examination of *how* to deal with performance documentation in a reflective and critical way. They touch upon what Jones calls "logistical problems."[25] For Jones, "the logistical problems are many: obtaining the documentation that is available; getting photographs to study and reproduce without blowing one's tiny bank account."[26]

The logistical problem for Jones as an historian is how to obtain documentary material of performances she did not experience. For artists producing performances the logistical problem also exists, namely: How to make a performance accessible and how to disseminate it after the live-act? This includes finding an appropriate way of conveying a performance in the form of documentation in order to get it from the place and time where it happens to other times and places. There exists no recipe for this "appropriate way"; rather, a certain form has to make sense for a particular performance and must be suitable for its concept and content. The logistical problem for artists does not (only) arise after a performance, but is already present during the working process.

1.3 Towards a Paratextual Understanding of Performance

I follow the work of the art historian and curator Barbara Clausen according to whom, "engaging with performance art … is to be understood as the ongoing process of a

[23] http://www.xcult.org/C/performancechronik

[24] Cf. www.perfomap.de

[25] Jones, op. cit., p. 11.

[26] Ibid.

contingent reciprocity between event, mediatization and reception."[27] Clausen's approach enables one to think of the live-act together with the texts and textualizations of performances this research is dedicated to.

Based on that I will suggest a paratextual perspective on performance. The term "paratextuality" comes from literary theory and was coined by the French literary theorist Gérard Genette in the 1980s. Paratextuality is a particular type of intertextuality that focuses on written texts in the narrow sense – namely, written elements that accompany a text and in doing so make it into a book.

The greek *para,* which is used as a prefix here, means besides, towards, beyond. So, paratexts are texts that enclose a book in order to make it perceptible as such. In Genette's words, "text is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations."[28] He continues:

> "… in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present,* to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book."[29]

Applying this to performance in a similar vein means that the performance (in the sense of enactment or staging) becomes a performance through the paratexts surrounding and presenting it. Also for performances the title, as well as the name of the artist and/or the names of performers, play a crucial role. In addition, printed matter, such as announcements, flyers, brochures and invitations, may be produced by the institution, the gallery owner, curator, or artists themselves may give further information which contributes to the (reception of the) performance in general. This can also be a necessary or constituent part of the performance.

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[27] Clausen, Barbara; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (Eds.), *After the Act. The (Re)Presentation of Performance Art*. Volume 3 of Theory Series. Vienna/Nürnberg: Verlag der Kunst, 2006. p. 7.

[28] Genette, Gérard, *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Transferred to digital printing 2001. p. 1.

[29] Ibid.

Genette differentiates between two sorts of paratexts: peritexts and epitexts. Peritexts like the name of the author, the title of the book, the publishing house, the edition, the cover (image), possibly the indication of genre, and additions like an epigraph, a fore- and afterword, a dedication, or acknowledgements are included in the book. Epitexts are texts external to the book. These paratexts exist separately from the basis text and are often produced thereafter. To this category belong supplementary and accompanying material, as well as published interviews with the author, personal letters, diaries, biographical portraits, or advertising text about the book/author produced by publishers.

In the context of performance, paratexts that circulate after the staging of a performance enable its reception, which is to be understood as an ongoing process as Clausen pointed out. I propose in this context considering performance documentation as paratext as well. Editions or the number of copies, in the sense of the number of stagings, are also interesting paratexts.

Performance documentation affects or even determines the reception and the knowledge of performances after their enactments or stagings. Even when we have witnessed a live performance, the documentation will add to our understanding of it, and influences our memory which alters in relation to it.

The fact that after the staging performances are dependent on texts in a broader and narrower sense correlates with the fact that (para)texts survive beyond the moment of staging. For artists the awareness of the paratextual nature of performance means they have to decide whether to keep to themselves paratexts they have produced and (possibly later) publish them, or throw them away in order to prevent them from appearing later. First, there are texts by the artist, including scripts, scores, written concepts, and visual sketches and drawings, which potentially give information about the performance after its staging, and become epitexts when published. Second, there are classic paratexts in the form of printed matter like flyers, brochures, invitations, announcements. Third, there may be epitexts produced by audience members, critics and historians who witnessed the performance. The publication of the first and the second category of texts can be controlled by the artist during their lifetime.

According to a paratextual understanding, the enactment of a performance maintains its specificity of existing during a time frame at a specific place and no longer existing afterwards. This enactment, however, is mostly connected to texts. It is hard to imagine a performance without any paratext. There are situations, for example, in public spaces in which performances are not necessarily recognizable, without paratexts that enable us to perceive what we see as a performance. If only a single word were related to a performance, it might be interpreted as title, artist name, score, or all at once and would contribute to our understanding of it.

The paratextual perspective I suggest provides a specific view on the relation of text and performance within the context of performance research on the one hand, and on the other hand, it argues for a dynamic understanding of performing, writing and documenting as interrelated practices. In the following, I will show what consequences the paratextual perspective may have for an understanding of performances as live-art/act and for performance documentation.

1.4 Performance as Live-Art/Act

"Sometimes the making becomes doing
and
sometimes the doing become the making"[30] (Francis Alÿs)

Performance is generally understood as live-art – which, as Auslander points out, is a paradox.[31] In his book *Liveness. Performance in a Mediatized Culture* Auslander opposes the idea that live media like performance and theater belong to another realm and are received differently than reproductive media like film for example are. He shows that our mediatized culture has formed our perception of live events, that the production of live and broadcast events economically go hand in hand (Hollywood films, concerts, sports) and are interrelated (big screens at live events' stages).[32]

[30] Alÿs, Francis, *Le temps du sommeil.* Exhibition Catalogue, Secession Vienna. Berlin: Revolver Publishing, 2016. No page reference.

[31] Auslander, op. cit.

[32] Auslander, Philip, *Liveness. Performance in a Mediatized Culture.* London/New York: Routledge, 2002.

I am not aiming to question the term “live” as such; for me, it simply means to share a time and space with the audience. I want to argue that performance in visual art is more than the live-act. In the preceding paragraphs, this argument was elaborated on by means of a paratextual perspective, which suggests to regard the live moment of a performance and the documentation and other remaining texts in association with one another.

For artists, the choice of a particular medium over another in the documentation of a performance always depends on availability, on financial issues, and on artistic decisions on how to handle and conceptually deploy different media. Besides text, photography meaning literally “writing with light,”[33] is the first medium in which performances are captured. Film was used for the purpose of performance documentation as well, but it has always been a relatively expensive material. In the 1970s, video became an alternative to film, which offered new technical possibilities. It was, on the one hand, used in order to document performances that were executed live a limited number of times; and on the other hand, performances were also done exclusively for the video (or film) camera.

Well-known historical examples of performances executed in front of a camera are *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square*, 1967-68, and *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square (Square Dance)*, 1967-68, by Bruce Nauman, an American performance and installation artist. Both performances were executed without an audience in Nauman’s studio. He created a stage setting in the form of markings on the floor and walked along them. In the work *Playing A Note on the Violin While I Walk Around the Studio*, 1967-68, the camera is set centrally in the studio in a stationary position, “so that when he walks outside of the camera’s view at times, only the sounds of the notes and footsteps are heard. Sound and image are out of sync, a situation noticeable only at the end of the film when the sound stops but Nauman continues to pace and play.” [34]

With these works, Nauman made the mediatization and documentation of the performance itself a subject of debate. Other performances took place in public or private spaces and were not directed towards a specific live audience either. Other

[33] The word photography is composed of the Greek words *phōtos,* which means “light,” and *graphē,* which means “writing.”

[34] Electronic Arts Intermix, http://www.eai.org/title.htm?id=2787

well-known examples include *Following Piece* by the American architect, installation and performance artist Vito Acconci, and Tehching Hsieh's five *One Year Performances* by the Taiwanese performance artist Tehching Hsieh.

Acconci's *Following Piece* took place each day of October 1969. Acconci followed people on the streets until they entered a private space. After each performance of the piece he wrote a report about it and sent it to a(nother) member of the art community.

For the first *One Year Performance,* entitled *Cage Piece,* 1978-79, Hsieh locked himself up in a cage for one year. He did not permit himself to talk, to read or to listen to the radio. In the following year, he performed the *Time Clock Piece,* 1980-81, in which he punched a time clock every hour and took a picture of himself. In *Outdoor Piece,* 1981-82, Hsieh spent one year outdoors and was not allowed to enter a building or to sleep at a sheltered place like a car or train. In *Rope Piece,* 1983-84, he was connected to the artist Linda Montano with a rope, but they were not allowed to touch each other. In the last one-year performance, *No Art Piece,* 1985-86, Hsieh neither made art nor looked at any art pieces.

Quite a number of the performances that are considered part of performance art history today were not live-acts staged in front of an audience, or intended as such. Rather, the reception of these works took place afterwards, through documentation in newspapers or in art galleries.

In the following, I will argue that whether a performance or the photographic or video documentation of it is regarded as the artwork is a matter of perspective. In other words, a performance can also be simply a means to an end for the realization of an artwork that includes the body, the embodied subjectivity, emotions, reactions or gestures of the artist (or of someone else).

The American artist Laurel Nakadate, for instance, speaks of performance when she describes her work *365 Days: A Catalogue of Tears* from 2010. In this work, Nakadate cried every day for one year. She took a photo of herself during that action, and uploaded the photo as her profile picture on Facebook. From 2011 on, the work

can be seen as a photographic series in exhibitions.[35] The performance of crying was never done for a live audience.

Another example is the Viennese artist Renate Bertlmann, who did performances in the 1970s and 1980s (at De Appel in Amsterdam, at Franklin Furnance in New York, and other places). Bertlmann revisits motifs from her performances in her staged photographs and vice versa in her work. When I researched her work I found a photograph that I had remembered as being a performance document, but in the photograph no audience could be seen in the background. This made me wonder, on the one hand, if I had remembered rightly; and on the other hand I thought that the fact of not seeing an audience in performance documents is not exceptional in itself: the photograph could have been taken from a point of view from which one simply could not see the audience. However, during my research I found that it was not the same photograph, but rather two images that looked quite similar.[36] From an interview[37] conducted with Bertlmann I learned that she considers this work from 1978 (the same year as the performance) as staged photography. The photograph was taken in her studio with a shutter release. The difference between performance document and photographic work is not evident to viewers, nor intended by the artist: both images have the same title.

Like Berltmann, artists often understand videos or photographs based on performance practices as artworks in themselves, and do not regard them as past and lost performances. It therefore depends on the perspective of whether a video or photograph of a performance is seen as a document, and thus as secondary to the performance, or as an artwork in itself created by the means of a performance. Artists often engage in different media practices parallel to one another, or use them in a complementary way for creating work.

Regarded from this perspective, the paradox which performance as live-act has does not arise. In my view the live performance and the performance documentation

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[35] Cf. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwFhS6ZgZFg

[36] Cf. http://www.bertlmann.com/index.php?im=68&id=11&lang=de&page=performances&year=1978&aa=6a6&bb=78f#picpos, http://www.bertlmann.com/index.php?im=148&id=8&lang=de&page=inszenfoto&year=1978&aa=89f&bb=6af#picpos

[37] Cf. Interview with Renate Bertlmann in this dissertation.

together (as well as the relation between them designed by the artists) constitute the specificity of performance in the field of visual art.

1.5 Concepts and Practices of Performance Documentation

The following will shed light on performance documentation. First, its meaning and history are briefly looked into. I follow Auslander's observation that performance documentation already has a history which he shows by means of Michael Kirby's work. In a second step I will present my own view on contemporary performance documentation on the basis of this argument.

In my view, performances in the contemporary art field are not thought of independently from their possible documentation any longer. This is the case regardless of whether or not documentation is produced on a very general level. On the level of individual practices and of specific performances this means that decisions around performance documentation, as well as the way the performance documentation is designed, have implications and mean something for the performances themselves. With this argument I am staying in the paratextual logic according to which the performance is constituted by the fact that the staging of the performance or the live-act is read together with its paratexts. This means that performances are defined partly through its paratexts and through the performances' relations to them.

Let us take one step back and look at the meaning of performance documentation. What is designated by the term "performance documentation" is not simply the entirety of captured material and recordings of a performance. Rather, the recorded material is selected and processed; in the case of video, this is done through editing, cutting and post-production. The finished version, "signed" by the artist or legitimated by an institution, is called "the documentation." So the documentation is not only one possible perspective on the performance. It has more authority than others, because it is legitimized by the artist and/or institution through the exhibition or publication in which it is shown. Its task is to officially and publicly represent the performance.

In his lecture “Performing Texts,”[38] Auslander states that performance documentation is a specific practice and has a discourse with a history that reaches back to the beginnings of performance art. He describes this history using the example of the art scene in New York from the late 1950s to the beginning of the 1970s, and presents Michael Kirby and his documentation work in the framework of Fluxus and Happenings as a pivotal figure of this practice. Kirby was professor of drama at New York University, publisher of various publications, and chief editor of the journal *PAJ* from 1969 to 1986. In 1965 he published the book *Happenings. An Illustrated Anthology*, which can be seen as the first example of performance documentation, according to Auslander.

Kirby reflects on his own practice of performance documentation in his writings and defines it as a “distinct and self-conscious, discursive practice.”[39] He explains the reasoning behind it is “a concern for tomorrow’s past.”[40] According to Auslander, Kirby made these documentations not for contemporaries, but rather for future audiences, who would have no other access to these performances. These future audiences should be able to understand the experience of the live performance through the documentation. Kirby formulates the goal even as “to experience the performance itself.”[41] He wanted to produce “surrogate performances” through his documentation. These surrogate performances should give future viewers as much of an understanding of the performances as possible and thereby do their duty to the historiography, according to Auslander. He quotes Kirby, who writes: “To the extent the writer consciously attempts to record rather than to evaluate or interpret, the performance will retain its own identity and the reader will respond to the documentation in much the same way as he would have responded to the performance.”[42]

Auslander’s interpretation is that the objectivity proposed by Kirby does not primarily stand in opposition to a subjective position, but rather to the performance critique in

[38] Auslander, Philip, “Performing Texts,” op. cit.

[39] Ibid., 25:25 min.

[40] Ibid., 27:26 min.

[41] Ibid., 27:49 min.

[42] Ibid., 28:30 min.

New York at that time. Kirby's position that performance documentation ought to describe a performance objectively means to not interpret or critique it. Otherwise future viewers would not see the performance "itself," but the artists' interpretation of it. In Kirby's opinion the performance should be interpreted and evaluated by the audience who sees the documentation; this should not to be done ahead by the artist who documented it.[43]

Today artists hardly feel responsible for the historiography of (other artists') performances. Rather, most performance documentation is arranged and/or created by the performance artists themselves, according to their ideas, concepts and needs.

Potentially, recordings, pictures or reports that capture a performance can be produced by the audience that is present (unless it is forbidden, as in most theater and dance locations, for example), by people hired by the institution, by the artists or people they collaborate with. The following will focus on documentation planned and designed by artists themselves.

The argument here is that performance documentation nowadays means something for the performances themselves. The reason is that performance documentation already has a history and its own discourse. Artists from today's generation know about performance documentation; they know early performance films and videos from YouTube or UbuNet; they see them in exhibitions, and learn about them at art universities. So, when (young) artists produce performances nowadays they are aware of the issues related to and the meaning of documenting it.

For artists, this awareness of performance documentation is connected with the necessity of having documentation for economic needs, to be able to sell, to present one's own work, to put it online, to send it around to curators, to institutions, to apply for residencies and for subsidies, to obtain co-financing, collaborators, production partners, and so on.

On a general level, to decide in favor of or against performance documentation means to take a position in the discourse about its definition and understanding. Even not documenting is a statement. The best known contemporary example is the work of Tino Sehgal, who does not produce any documents of his work, neither is the audience allowed to take any pictures.

[43] Cf. Ibid., 37:20 min.

The way in which artists present their performances after their staging(s), the choice of media they use, and the extent to which they collaborate with other artists to produce documentation are dependent on their own artistic practice. This changes the perspective from performance documentation as an objective or ethical practice to an understanding and dealing with it that fits the artist's own practice and individual needs.

An artist who decides against producing any documentation creates the work just for the moment and for the audience who is present. To document a performance means to acknowledge that a performance can be (re)presented within conditions set by other media; that acts and actions do not oppose writing, but that writing, performing and documenting may complement each other; and that performance has the potential to inscribe itself into other media.

Documenting a performance, possibly putting it online or publishing photos or descriptions in print form means defining the work, at least in part, through documentation. Thereby, artists may conceive of the documentation as a further stage of the work, as one step in an ongoing process; or documentation can be exclusively treated as a necessity for practical and economic reasons of selling, exhibiting, making portfolios or presentations, having a website and so on.

I think the awareness about performance documentation and about its meaning has created a "conceptual understanding" among the current generation of artists. By "conceptual" I am referring to two things. First, based on the assumption that art practices and art theory are connected to one another, one could say artists participate in the discourse about performance documentation through their practices, they contribute to what can be said and thought about it. Second, it refers to the fact that artists decide conceptually, meaning dependent on the performance and/or their practice itself, on the form of the documentation. This implies that nowadays there are no general rules, ethics, or aesthetics. Rather the context, content and other specifics of the individual practice and/or specific performance are decisive for the concept of the documentation. Beyond conceptual considerations of the work, questions of budget, of technical possibilities and of authorship may influence the form of performance documentation.

In the following paragraphs, an insight into what kind of choices artists face around performance documentation and what impact these choices may have on the performance itself will be given. With this, attention should be drawn to the wide range of (conceptual) possibilities on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the fact that documentation cannot be thought of as being disconnected from the performance, because it is part of the performance itself.

Most of the decisions concerning the recording of a performance are made in advance. The artist opts for the medium, photography, video, text or other media, and decides whether he or she will operate these media him- or herself, or alternatively, collaborate with or hire photographers, filmmakers or video artists. The act of recording or photographing often cannot be done by the artist him- or herself, because the artist is involved as a performer or is *the* performer. In collaboration-based performance, in which the artist does not perform it is technically possible. However, in my experience as an artist, one cannot fully concentrate on the task of recording or taking pictures like a hired photographer can. A practical reason is that for the artist there are always other things to do, which have to do with organizational matters and social obligation: the need to take care of the situation and to answer questions from the performers, curators, audience, press and others.

In the space in which the performance takes place one has to decide where to place the technology. This affects the performance insofar as the media and/or the people running it have their own physical presence in the space. It makes a difference for the performance whether the video camera is “sitting” in the first row or whether it is “standing” on the stage, next to the performer, for example, and thus becomes part of the image. Depending on the performance the artist has to decide on (against or for) the presence of the technical equipment during the performance. Not only does each medium have its own presence and takes up space, it also produces noises like the shutter or the flash of a camera. Photographers who wander around in a small gallery space, for example, automatically become “performers” in the sense that they attract the attention of the audience. Thus, it makes a difference whether and how many photographers are present; whether they are supposed to stand or to sit; whether they are allowed to move, to enter the stage/performance area, and so on.

In the case of a stable camera position, the most decisive point is whether the camera is directed towards the audience, and whether or not it can pan there. Being

(possibly) in the picture has an impact on the feel and comfort of the audience, and thus on its movements and positioning in the space. When a situation and reactions to it are recorded the audience acts differently than it would without a camera's presence. The visible presence of a camera changes the situation. Depending on the performance this fact might be avoided or deliberately deployed.

All these decisions are part of artistic processes and are mostly made by the artists themselves, or consciously delegated to other people. These decisions influence the creation of a performance already during the work process and also its enactment, even at times, significantly.

2 Chapter Two: Performances in and through Texts

In this chapter, a dialogue between my experience of working with texts related to performances, and considerations of and theories on the characteristics of writing and texts by Émile Benveniste, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Derrida will take place. The text will switch back and forth between theoretical considerations to descriptions of concrete examples from artistic practice. The authors referred to are selected by personal interest. They do not necessarily agree on each other which is sometimes, but not always, made an issue. Rather, my approach is to process different theoretical perspectives in order to view the issue and all the questions coming with it from different angles.

The significance of texts related to performances can be understood on two levels: on the general level of contributing to history and research (touched upon in the previous chapter); and on the level of supporting or enabling the creation of performances, which will come into focus in this chapter.

The thesis inherent to this chapter is that text and performance are related and interrelated on different levels, both before and after the enactment or staging of a performance. I will look at relations which I consider interesting for the topic by "zooming" into specific relations in practices and analyze them in detail. In doing so I aim for a deeper understanding of theses texts.

"2.1 Functions of Texts for Performances" provides an overview of texts connected to performances and their functions within the process of creation. The aim of this overview is to create an awareness of the various roles and meanings texts can take on in relation to performances.

"2.2 (Making a Note in) Writing" is devoted to the characteristics of writing in general by looking at its etymology and at Freud's considerations of writing and memory.

In "2.3 Texts to Be Performed" the functions of texts within the process of creation will be investigated in depth.

In "2.4 Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Critique of Writing" Plato's text *Phaedrus* and the idea of the secondary status of writing will be presented.

In "2.5 Readings of Phaedrus" different readings of *Phaedrus* will be taken into account.

“2.6 Critique of Writing Performances” addresses the question whether or not it is possible to think of relations between texts and performances in a non-hierarchical way comes into focus.

In “2.7 The Potential of Text” will be discussed briefly, following Plato and Derrida.

“2.8 Theories of Performativity” will turn to the theory of performativity of Austin, and Derrida’s critique on it will be presented.

In “2.9 The Role of Intention” I will consider the role of intention, and subsequently the term “différance” by Derrida.

In “2.10 Différance between Text and Performance” will address Derrida’s notion of différance in relation to text and performance.

2.1 Functions of Texts for Performances

Performances are surrounded by texts. Texts are connected to performances on many different levels and have various functions for them: texts conceptualize, produce, present, mediate, announce, explain and make performances understandable. Texts have the potential to make performances memorable, to visualize them, to make them accessible, researchable, teachable and reproducible. Texts preserve and archive performances, they interpret, sell, change, rewrite and keep them alive. In this subchapter, first, texts that matter in relation to performances will be named. Second, the types that are specific to performances and their role in the process of creation will be described.

During the process of creating a performance, texts may serve the artist as inspiration, idea, and form finding. Such texts may include literary prose, poetry, theory, philosophy and texts in a broader sense, such as photographic images, films and paintings. These texts may appear in the final performance in the form of direct or indirect quotations, references, or paraphrases.

Other kinds of texts which play a role during the process of creating performances are texts written by the artists themselves. A first text is often written for the purpose of communicating the concept to a curator or for a subsidy application. Depending on the individual working methods, setting the performance on paper before enacting it

or going to a studio to rehearse is more or is less important. Developing a performance may include descriptive texts, declarations of intent, written forms of the concept accompanied by notes, sketches, drawings, graphics, diagrams, floor plans, spatial layouts, storyboards. In these forms written verbal language is often mixed with visual elements.

In the context of producing performances, the function of written notes in combination with visualizations is not only to support the process, and to reduce the rehearsing time, but also to prevent wrongly imagined or impossible actions. When, for instance, one draws a plan showing the placing of performers, in marking their position on a floor plan one can immediately see which future positions are possible, which directions they can go in, and which directions or steps are not possible from this position. The imagination in such cases is not always reliable, as mentally there are things possible that are not in practice. Texts in a broader sense have the function to correct the imagination in this context.

The last sort of texts which should be mentioned before approaching the function of texts within collaborative performance practice are texts that appear in a direct form during performances. Texts in a narrower sense may be read, spoken, sung or otherwise vocally interpreted. Texts might also be visually present(ed) as image, printed on a display or as projection (subtitles often have this form in theater and performance venues), or in paper form (like handouts), or can take on a three-dimensional form as a sculptural element, as part of the stage design.

Printed texts distributed to the audience at the entrance (like program booklets) or during the performance may have the aim to inform about the performance and might be taken home. Likewise, these texts can be part of the performance, providing the audience with opportunities for participation: audience members may be invited to read aloud a text that has been handed out, to decide on the course of the performance on the basis of the written information (for instance, by choosing scenes to be seen, or topics to be discussed; by selecting or rating a certain element, action or a specific performer; or deciding on the course of the performance or the end of the story, etc.); or audience members can, based on texts, participate on the stage or in the performance itself, join in the action on the stage or do something on their own.

These methods are practiced using written text or likewise spoken language. The advantage of written texts is that they account for a greater sense of commitment. A written instruction is received as being more neutral and hence is taken more seriously than an oral instruction given by a performer, who, after all, plays a certain role, and is read as a certain character. In general, texts can play a role in the work process, during the performance, or both.

In the following, I will turn to the functions of texts in collaboration-based performance practices. In this context texts are primarily used to communicate the concept or tasks to performers, and to structure the course of a performance.

During rehearsals scores, scripts, manuals, instructions, guidelines, rules, written cues and the like may be used in order to develop and/or implement the work with performers. In the rehearsing process prepared textual material may transform itself and might generate other, different texts which include new ideas, tasks, actions or movement material. The rehearsing process may be intended as a (re-)writing process, or the intention may be to strictly stay with a score and rehearse different ways of interpreting it.

In the case of working with musicians it is more likely (possible) to stay with a score and work on the interpretation, whereas notated actions often have to be adapted to the spatial conditions in which the performance takes place. In case of “performative structures” like rules, they are likely to be changed during the rehearsals, because how these rules work in practice and what dynamic they create among the performers has to be tried out and observed. A specific set of rules might work for one group of performers, but not for others. In “2.3 Texts to Be Performed” I will explain what I mean by “performative structures” in detail.

In working with performers, text can be used as a structuring device, in order to (partly) predetermine what happens during the performance. Conversely, texts can be used to deliberately leave open certain aspects. The latter possibility can be achieved for example with instructions providing blank spaces that must be “filled in”/improvised by performers in the situation of the performance or with rules that must be applied or reinterpreted according to the respective situation. This option will be discussed in depth later in this chapter, in the section “Creating Openness through Language.”

However, one aspect should be briefly mentioned here: in the practice (of rehearsing as well as of performing in front of the audience) patterns permanently tend to arise at certain undefined junctures. In other words, even if one tries to keep things open in the performance, there is a tendency to repeat things and to draw on the existing repertoire, be it musical, vocal or movement-based, or to build such a repertoire in the rehearsing/performing process. For example: to repeatedly tell a story in a certain way, because this way has proven funnier than others and the audience always laughed; or to repeatedly use the same movement material when a certain instruction is given, instead of creating a new one in the very moment, because the body automatically favors a reaction according to trained habits. Performers tend to assume familiar roles, to apply strategies and methods which they are used to and feel comfortable with.

Besides working with a deliberately limited rehearsal time or replacing rehearsals with meetings in which one speaks about the performance but does not try things out, a good countermeasure is to give instructions that are not familiar to a performer's field of expertise (like dance, acting, or music). This method of "speaking in another language" can be deployed as a strategy to bring people to do things in a way or manner they otherwise would or could not. Besides mediating between the concept and the realization in general, texts provide important and interesting tools to work with performers in a multi- and interdisciplinary way or field.

After the staging of a performance and in connection with it, texts can potentially be produced by the artist, performers and audience members who were present. The artists themselves may write down various things, noting experiences or circumstances that should be considered next time or analyzing how the piece "worked." They may rewrite their announcement texts, explanations and artist statements, or even the title. They may give interviews, try to mediate their work; give lectures or presentations, update their websites and prepare teaching materials. Performers who participated in the performance but were not directly involved in its conceptualization may undertake similar written, descriptive, representative and reflective activities.

Furthermore, journalists, critics, curators or historians might write a text. Audience members may express their opinions, for example, on the Internet. People may post

feedback, press a “like” button on Facebook or describe their experience in private blogs.

These varying statements influence one another, views are exchanged and some become part of performance historiography. They can also affect how the artists see themselves and their own work. Although artists have a privileged position of reception with regard to their work, this does not rule out the possibility that aspects attributed to the work externally harbor a certain cognitive potential which might be integrated into the artist’s own understanding and future statements about it. “External” statements in this sense add to understanding the work in a historical context or theoretical framework and thus can be the starting point for new questions or for follow-up projects. The research here is confined to texts produced by the artists themselves, and texts by art critics; historians and curators will not be further analyzed here.

Descriptions, Scripts, Scores, Instructions

In the following, the meaning of the terms performance description, script, score and instruction and their usages in collaboration-based performance practice will be briefly outlined.

The function of descriptive texts is to depict processes or objects by means of language as they are or were. This is to say, to find appropriate names and words for something perceived. The term “performance description” usually refers to a descriptive text, which captures a performance that has happened, although notes might be made during it. A description might include the course of actions as well as personal and sensual experiences of what was seen, heard, smelled, and so on.

Performance scripts in performance practices have functions similar to scripts in classical theater. Their purpose is to prescribe and maintain text to be spoken or sung and actions to be done. The term “performance script” attempts to capture or develop something not performed yet. A script might be performed by an artist him- or herself or given to other people who further work with or perform it. Besides the texts to be spoken or sung, scripts may contain instructions concerning how these texts should be spoken or sung and how to use body expressions or gestures in these contexts. Furthermore, there can be notifications on additional actions to be

carried out. The wording of the instructions in scripts is borrowed from mental imaginings, from the author's visualizations of the performance.

Likewise, "performance scores" in collaborative performance practices have functions similar to those of music scores. They are written before and are part of the creation of performances. Once written, a score may be used for several stagings, and by various artists/performers. Scores may contain a range of information, like what to play or do, how to move, where to go and so on. In contrast to scripts they can, but do not necessarily have to, contain text to be spoken. Besides written words, scores can contain symbols, codified and abstract signs. Performance scores often have aesthetic qualities and/or poetic dimensions.

"Instructions" can either be used as a means to produce an action/performance or they can be artworks in themselves which are exhibited or published (as in the case of Fluxus artists like Yoko Ono and George Brecht, a line of tradition which has been revitalized by Hans Ulrich Obrist's project *Do It*).

The main function of instructions is that they be carried out, but likewise they can be read (out loud). This potential is mentioned because reading or listening to an instruction creates in one's imagination a picture of it being carried out. Carrying an instruction out and imagining it being done are two different forms of receiving and experiencing it.

Roughly, there are two different kinds of instructions: those describing actions to be done (mostly stand-alone), and those specifying *how* a text should be recited (mostly a part of scripts and scores). The second tells whether a (scripted or improvised) text is spoken, screamed, whispered or hummed. It defines qualities like fast or slow, or with which emotion it happens. Instructions describing the *how* may not directly appear in the performance. They are interpreted in the performance, through the voice, for instance. Scripted text is not supposed to be negotiable, it ought to stay the same; but in the context of a performance, it is transformed into another materiality, into voice, air and sound waves. In the performance, these texts are transferred from the written to the spoken form.

2.2 (Making a Note in) Writing

Émile Benveniste, one of the most important linguists of the 20th century, offers in his last lectures, in 1969, a detailed etymology of the word "writing." He shows that there exists no common term for the word "writing." Every language developed its own term: "Homer was unaware of the meaning of *gráphō as* '*writing*.' … For Homer, *gráphō* only means 'scratching,' 'scraping,' 'cutting flesh' (e.g. II XVII, 599). Later 'scratch a marking into stone.'"[44] According to Benveniste, in Homer there is only a vague allusion to the existence of writing. This occurs when Homer recounts the tale of the hero Bellerophon: the king of Argos sends him to the Lycians, a people in Asia Minor, with a "folded" blackboard upon which were engraved ominous symbols of an evil message. The Lycian king was to kill him.[45]

Subsequently, Benveniste presents a list of meanings which will be reproduced here, because one can see that the word "writing" has been closely related to drawing, and is partly derived from the same word as "to paint."

> "– In Latin …: *scíbō* means 'scratching,' 'scraping.'
> – In newer German *schreiben,* but in Gothic *meljan* (see the German *malen*): 'blacken,' 'begrime,' Greek *mélas*, 'to stain with color.' It is thus about painted symbols, not about the engraving, but rather the painting.
> – In Old Norse *rita*, in Old English *writan*; meaning: 'to carve.'
> – In Slavic languages, borrowed from Iranian: *pisati*, in the sense of 'writing.'
> – In ancient Persian, *dipi* is the word that denotes 'inscription.' The word for 'writing' is independent thereof. It is made up of the verb prefix *ni* and the root *pis-*. *Ni* denotes the process of 'setting down': 'writing down,' and *pis-* the process of 'painting,' 'pricking' (see the technique of tattooing). The root word was borrowed from Old Slavic and the verb is etymologically related to the Latin *pingō,* 'to draw,' 'to paint.'"[46]

So, on a very general level writing means producing a trace which can be symbolic, coded or idiosyncratic. Why though do we need writing anyway, what is its function?

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[44] Benveniste, Émile, *Letzte Vorlesungen. Collège de France 1968 und 1969.* Zürich: diaphanes, 2015. p. 88f. Translated by LN.

[45] Cf. Ibid., p. 98.

[46] Ibid., p. 89. Translated by LN.

According to Sigmund Freud, writing has the function to supplement memory. In his text “A Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad’” from 1925 he writes, “If I distrust my memory – neurotics, as we know, do so to a remarkable extent, but normal people have every reason for doing so as well – I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing.”[47]

Freud compares our memory with the mystic writing pad of which he notes that it has the same qualities as memory. According to him, the interesting phenomenon is that as opposed to a sheet a paper, which provides limited space, the pad keeps everything ever written on it (which he calls continuous traces). Our memory just like this pad is endless in quantity and holds an innumerable amount of information. Following Freud, every experience is written into our unconscious and is saved there. Put simply, Freud thinks that the unconscious regulates what comes to the surface and what does not. Therefore not all of this information is on the surface all of the time. In other words, we cannot always remember everything that is saved in the memory; and coming back to Freud’s statement we also cannot always trust our memory. Memory changes over the course of time, because it is dependent on the unconscious, on other memories and perceptions. This is why we use and rely on writing. It provides the certainty that the written, the scratched, the trace does not change.

Concerning performance this means that even though we have seen a performance and it is theoretically fully inscribed into our memory, because our memory is endless in quantity, we might not be able to fully remember it, or parts of it, after a certain time. Anticipated by Freud to a certain degree, the fields of brain and memory research have later shown that memory alters over the course of time. So the memory of a performance seen yesterday will not be the same in ten years anymore; it changes.

Therefore to produce a trace in the form of writing is usually interpreted as a fixing, as opposed to the ephemeral process of a performance. Even though this shares a comprehensible differentiation, it does not hold as a dichotomy when looked at closer. In fact, fixing means three different things here: (1) the duration or durability of

[47] Freud, Sigmund, “A Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad,’” in: id., *General Psychological Theory*, *Chapter XIII*. 1925. pp. 207-212, here: p. 207.

a medium; (2) the fixing of information; and (3) a non-processuality. Concerning the first, one could imagine writing in a medium in which the trace does not remain for longer than a performance might last, for example by writing into water or sand. The second, the fixing of content is certainly dependent on the possibility of being read, which applies to performance and text likewise. Concerning the third, it is obvious that a text and performance likewise change in our memory. One could say in memory both become processes.

Anyway, I want to keep in mind the characteristic Freud attributes to writing: what in English is translated as “making a note in writing” is in the German text designated by the word *Aufzeichnung,* which embraces drawn as well as written notes – in other words “text-based” and visual records. What is at stake here is the potential of writing to produce records.

This very general aspect of writing – its ability to record – provides the setting for the following analysis. A closer look will be taken at different forms of texts that are dedicated to be performed, in order to see what role this function of recording plays in which kind of texts.

2.3 Texts to Be Performed

Let us look of an example for an instruction that aims at triggering an action/performance in order to see what it can archive in relation to the performance. I imagine a scene in which someone drinks a cup of coffee during a presentation and at a specific moment spills coffee on their computer. In order to instruct a performer to do this action, I write down, “Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation and spill coffee on your computer.”

It is not too difficult for a text to set a simple action like this with written language. However, when the aim is to describe one’s own visual imagining of the situation more closely, or to define it in detail, for instance, what the spilling should look like, it gets more complex. Taking approaches from dance, this could involve saying something about the quality of movement, e.g. of the mouth’s movement in the moment of spilling. In approaches inspired by theater practices or film direction this could mean mentioning a cause of why the coffee is spilled, e.g. the loss of

consciousness or of facial muscle control, or an emotion that should be expressed by spilling it, such as anger.

In order to specify the instruction one can add timing and write: “Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. Spill coffee on your computer *after ten minutes*.” or: “… *after the second paragraph*.” Or one could specify the action through statements of place and write: “Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. After the second paragraph, take the computer and go with it to the window. Once you have opened it, spill coffee on your computer.” Or: “Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. After ten minutes take the computer off the table, go two steps backwards and spill coffee on the computer.” Questions of placement are tricky though if one does not know the room in which the performance will take place. Two steps backwards might already be the end of the room; something might be standing there or the room might have no windows.

Nevertheless, through precise statements of time and positions in space, the timing and placing in/of a performance can be determined. Specifications like “ten minutes” or “after the second paragraph” do not give leeway for interpretation, they mean something concrete and specific. If there is just one window in the room the same goes for “open the window.” The wording “two steps backwards” does not directly contain any leeway in terms of what it means, but depending on the performers’ physical condition, body size and way of execution, the result can vary.

Making Performances Reproducible

It should be mentioned that every text or notation system in general (in music, theater and visual art) can only record certain aspects or parts of a performance. The performance itself is always also based on the unwritten (tacit) knowledge and conventions the writer and performers share or have. Any attempt to notate every detail of a performance necessarily fails in fulfilling this function because it would become endless and unreadable.

Still, there is the desire to determine and maintain performances using notations, which likewise concerns past or future performances. Descriptive text as a tool to capture (aspects of) past performances has already been mentioned: similar to photography capturing optical phenomena, or an audio recording capturing sound,

text can record the course of actions and other information. In the case of future performances, text can be used for this function as well. In this case, it represents the authors' imagined performance. The author can use text to describe the performance from his or her mind and to communicably capture a certain vision of it. In their most consequential form such notations can be conceived as a record of the author's thought.

Texts with the function to represent and make reproducible a performance hope to achieve or produce a specific result, rather than produce a variety of individual performances, by giving specific time and place statements, clear definitions and concrete naming. This reduces the possibilities of how the text can be read. By the same token of avoiding interpretation this reduces the responsibility of the acting performers in relation to the outcome. Determining the performance by describing it in detail means directing the performer towards the authors' intended way of acting or performing. Avoiding abstraction, generalities and categories further contributes to leaving as little room for interpretation as possible.

"Have a drink during the presentation" offers the performer a choice, whereas giving the instruction "Have coffee in this green doted pottery cup" predetermines the drink and the cup. So it is suitable for reproducing the specific action repeated with the same cup. The accomplishment of detailed scripted actions demands a strong subordination to the text; the subjectivity of the performer plays a minor role.

Although, a record of the imagination differs from the record of something seen or experienced, this difference is not evident in texts related to performances themselves. Texts have the potential to record information and do not mind whether the information is imagined or perceived. The possibility to determine aspects of performances is owed to the ability of writing to represent information.

Creating Openness through Language

> "To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a kind of machine that is in turn productive, that my future disappearance in principle will not prevent from

functioning and from yielding, and yielding itself to, reading and rewriting." [48] (Jacques Derrida)

Yet it is also possible to use language to deliberately create an openness in instructions that has to be interpreted or decided upon in the actual situation of the performance. Here, the interpretation and the subjectivity of the performers come into play.

An example for an instructional statement which has to be interpreted concerning a time specification is: "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. *After some time* spill coffee on your computer." The "after some time" expression requires a decision of how long "some time" means for the performer (or is) within the situation of the performance. (This kind of decision making by performers is also referred to as improvisation in performance practices.) In other words, the fact of not giving a concrete time specification creates some leeway for the performance.

Another example would be to say: "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. Spill coffee on your computer at *a strategically opportune moment.*" Here, the performer can interpret him- or herself what "a strategically opportune moment" means in the context of the respective performance. However, this is not necessarily improvised during the performance, the performer can also decide on her or his interpretation beforehand, and may plan and create a specific situation to happen.

Openness can also be constructed in regard to the action itself – for example, by saying, "Drink a cup of coffee during the presentation. After the second paragraph, *do something unexpected*." Here, the performer can fully interpret the action, because "something unexpected" abstracts from a concrete action. "Something unexpected," is not even necessarily an action, it can also be waiting or saying nothing in a situation in which speech is expected, for instance.

Unlike the previous examples, in which there was more emphasis on determining the action and creating openness regarding specific aspects, in this case the "action" can be largely interpreted. Thus the same instruction carried out by different performers may lead to radically different outcomes.

[48] Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in: id., *Margins of Philosophy.* pp. 307-330, here p. 316.

Besides abstraction, the use of umbrella terms increases the choices performers have towards the execution of an action: for instance, in writing “Have *a warm drink* during the presentation,” instead of stating that it must be coffee.

The German choreographers deufert&plischke, who I studied with as a guest student in the MA Performance Studies program at the University of Hamburg in 2006, taught scores in conceptual choreography as “open arrangements” that are opposed to movement descriptions.

This definition of a score as an open arrangement interested me, partly because in the beginning I did not quite understand how to produce such a score. How can I as an artist not have a picture in mind of what will happen during a performance? How to not control the outcome and still take responsibility for the work? I began to search for this openness in (my) practice. The two most general aspects of constructing openness I found in language are the use of the just mentioned umbrella terms and abstraction.

However, there is another way of creating openness, which I found later, and which I call a “performative structure.” By “performative structure” I mean a rule or a set of rules that, like a productive force or an engine, generates a performance. They can be designed like open or modular systems, just like the rules of a game that are temporarily valid laws necessarily producing a variety of individual outcomes. In the same way that the rules in chess only prescribe the possible moves and produce an infinite number of different chess matches rather than defining a specific match, these rules in performances do not determine the whole course of a performance, but just provide the structure in which it can happen.

Such a performative structure can, for example, be built on the construction “if …, then …” It may sound like this: “whenever … happens, you do…” This simple rule provides a structure for the course of a performance without determining it. It is very useful and thus often applied in performance work with unpredictable parameters, like unrehearsed performances, performative installations, or for an interaction with the audience.

Assume that the idea is that five performers walk around in an exhibition space and speak from time to time. In order to make a precise timing and spacing possible, one has to have a floor plan with exact measurements, and more importantly spend a

long time rehearsing in the space itself.[49] A rule like “Whenever a visitor looks at you, you start to sing,” enables the performance to function without a long rehearsal time. Since this rule counts for all of the five performers, there might be needed a second rule that prevents them from singing at the same time, for the same audience member, or in too close proximity to one another. To avoid this, one can add another rule like, “If you hear the singing of another performer, you turn and walk in the opposite direction.” Or “If you see one of your colleagues you go there and join him/her singing,” and so on. These rules do not determine when and where the performers sing, but they give the performance a structure.

To sum up, one can understand that the aim of a movement description is to capture and represent an already existing movement and make it reproducible, whereas openly designed scores aim to produce something that did not exist before and is not yet defined. To give the same movement description to different dancers, the resulting movement in principle should be more or less similar to the one intended by its author; whereas an open score should produce a non-predictable or not predetermined outcome, which will vary significantly from performer to performer. Working with openly designed scores and performative structures not only involves the subjectivity of the performers, but creates a central place for it in the performance.

Looking back at the general characteristics of text, one could conclude that, besides the function to record, texts related to performances have the ability to be interpreted in and through performances. I will call this characteristic “the interpretative function” of text.

[49] In the field of visual art, it is rare for artists to have the opportunity for a long rehearsal time within the exhibition space, because this is not part of institutions’ time and space management/calculations. Prior to the opening of an exhibition, the set-up in the exhibition space takes place during the day. To work before that, in the morning or later in the evening, is mostly a problem with opening hours and insurance issues.

2.4 Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Critique of Writing

In this section, the text *Phaedrus* by Plato will be introduced and the passages that are decisive for the so called "critique of writing" will be reproduced. Thereafter, different readings of *Phaedrus* will be presented. This text lastingly shaped the idea that text is a record of speech and thus secondary to it, from which a hierarchy between them results. This way of thinking about text still impacts western philosophy and culture, and so I make a connection to the secondariness ascribed to performance documentation.

Phaedrus is among Plato's earliest writings. In this dialogue, two figures appear: Socrates, Plato's former teacher, and Phaedrus, a citizen of Athens, from Socrates' circle of friends. They meet on the street and Socrates lets Phaedrus convince him to go for a walk outside the city gates. Socrates does not usually leave the city, as he believes that trees and rivers can teach him nothing, as opposed to people in the city. The bait that leads to Socrates taking a walk after all is a speech by Lysias, a well-known logographer at the time. Lysias gave this speech the day before, which Socrates had not heard. Phaedrus promises to reprise the speech as best he can if Socrates accompanies him on the walk. It soon becomes apparent, however, that Phaedrus has a copy of the speech under his coat. As Phaedrus and Socrates settle down under a large, beautiful plane tree, Phaedrus reads the speech to Socrates.

In his speech, Lysias makes a case for engaging with a lover who is not in love. Socrates is not convinced by the quality of the speech and holds an impromptu speech on the same point. He covers his head while he gives this speech, so as to not be distracted by shame while looking at Phaedrus. Afterwards, Socrates gives another speech arguing the opposite case, the reason being that he fears revenge from the god Eros, who he believed he insulted in his first speech. The second speech represents a counter-speech, which is meant to recant the first speech. This one is given with his head no longer covered. The speech is very long and excessive. It is about the immortality of the soul and various divine inebriations, one of which deals with amorousness and Eros. After Socrates has finished, Phaedrus admires the beautiful speech.

A discussion develops among them about what makes a speech beautiful, and about the difference between good or bad writing. One question is if the one who speaks

beautifully has to know the truth about what is being spoken. Examples are, mostly, speeches in court or in front of the Assembly, i.e. political speeches. It is said that through the art of speech (rhetoric), wrong things can be presented as true and right things as untrue. The listeners and especially those who don't know can thus be deceived. (Different aspects of rhetoric, and good and beautiful speeches are further discussed, but these will not be elaborated upon here.)

After the discussion about rhetoric, Socrates wants to investigate the qualities of writing. He says that the question is one of the aptness and ineptness of writing, what features make writing good, what inept.[50] He tells the following story,

> "Well, this is what I've heard. Among the ancient gods of Naucratis[51] in Egypt there was one to whom the bird called the ibis is sacred. The name of that divinity was Theuth,[52] and it was he who first discovered number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, as well as the games of checkers and dice, and, above all else, writing.
>
> Now the king of all Egypt at that time was Thamus,[53] who lived in the great city in the upper region that the Greeks call Egyptian Thebes; Thamus they call Ammon.[54] Theuth came to exhibit his art to him and urged him to disseminate them to all the Egyptians. Thamus asked him about the usefulness of each art, and while Theuth was explaining it, Thamus praised him for whatever he thought was right in his explanations and criticized him for whatever he thought was wrong.
>
> The story goes that Thamus said much to Theuth, both for and against each art, which it would take too long to repeat. But when they came to writing,

[50] Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*. Translated by Alexander Nehamas, Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995. p. 78.

[51] Ibid., p. 78, Footnote 177: "Naucratis was a Greek trading colony in Egypt. The story that follows is probably an invention of Plato's … in which he reworks elements from Egyptian and Greek mythology."

[52] Ibid., p. 78, Footnote 178: "Theuth (or Thoth) is the Egyptian god of writing, measuring, and calculation. The Greeks identified Thoth with Hermes, perhaps because of his role in weighing the soul."

[53] Ibid., p. 79, Footnote 179: "As king of the Egyptian gods, Ammon (Thamus) was identified by Egyptians with the sun god Ra and by the Greeks with Zeus."

[54] Ibid., p. 79, Footnote 180: "'Thamus they call Ammon': Accepting Postgate's Emendation of *Thamus* for *theon*. This implies that in Socrates' account Thamus is a god as well as the king."

> Theuth said: '0 King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion for memory and for wisdom.'[55] Thamus, however, replied: '0 most expert Theuth, one man can give birth to the elements of an art, but only another can judge how they can benefit or harm those who will use them. And now, since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so.'"[56]

This story is a myth that Plato himself invented for the sake of writing this text, it does not exist in mythology. Socrates in the text *Phaedrus* adds to it,

> "Well, then, those who think they can leave written instructions for an art, as well as those who accept them, thinking that writing can yield results that are dear or certain, must be quite naive and truly ignorant of Ammon's prophetic judgment: otherwise, how could they possibly think that words that have been written down can do more than remind those who already know what the writing is about?
>
> PHAEDRUS: Quite right.
>
> SOCRATES: You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is

[55] Ibid., p. 79, Footnote 181: "'A *potion* for memory and for wisdom': *Pharmakon* ('potion') can refer to a medicinal drug, a poison, or a magical potion."

[56] Ibid., p. 78f.

> true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support."[57]

Besides the quoted passage that presents the critique of writing, in *Phaedrus*, various themes are present. It deals with the relationship between language and insight, language and communication, the role of rhetoric in political life and the mythological versus a philosophical world view.

Besides these canonically repeated aspects, I would like to remark that not only writing, rhetoric and speech, but likewise the body and sexuality build the main threads of the texture of which *Pheadrus* is made. The text is on the level of narration as well as on the level of content not without the erotic. On the level of narration, it is the (homo)erotic setting of intellectual middle-aged men following handsome young men in order to lie down in the midday heat under the shadow of a tree, of which the translator Kurt Hildebrandt notes in the German Reclam edition that this plane tree is a chaste tree: "a tree similar to a willow whose fruits were used to reduce the sex drive."[58] On the content level they both exchange speeches about love and sex. Due to a lack of deep knowledge in ancient Greek culture I am not able to analyze these aspects and the symbolic language of *Phaedrus*. For now, I can just stay with this passing remark that the discourse (or the critique) of writing is not disconnected from the body and sexuality in the scene Plato's provides for us readers.

The critique on writing can be summed up as follows: Thamus, the god of gods, depreciates writing by calling it a potion not for remembering, but for reminding. Writing is a potion (or "pharmakon" as Derrida calls it) which is useless and external

[57] Ibid., p. 80f.

[58] Platon, *Phaidros. oder Vom Schönen*. Translated by Kurt Hildebrandt. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012. p. 95. Translated by LN.

to the body. It weakens the ability to remember and supplements what Plato calls the "living speech"; it is not alive itself.

2.5 Readings of *Phaedrus*

In the following, different readings of *Phaedrus* that are considered relevant to the context of this research will be presented. I will first look at the deconstructive reading of *Phaedrus* by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, followed by an account of the perspective on this text of the German classical philologist of Kurt Sier, and finally Benveniste's view of the text. Thereafter, the discussion will be applied to performance documentation.

According to Derrida the secondariness of writing is one of the fundaments of western philosophy. In the text "Plato's Pharmacy" written in 1968 and published as a chapter of his book *Dissemination* he points out that the hierarchy between writing and speech can be described as being analogous to "The hierarchical opposition between son and father, subject and king, death and life, writing and speech" which "naturally completes its system with that between night and day, West and East, moon, and sun."[59]

Let us accompany Derrida reading Plato for a bit. We are at the beginning of *Phaedrus*, when Derrida writes, "Operating through seduction, the *pharmakon* makes one stray from one's general, natural, habitual paths and laws. Here, it takes Socrates out of his proper place and off his customary track."[60] The walk leads Socrates and Phaedrus along the river Ilisos where Socrates remembers a myth that purports that this is the place where Boreas is supposed to have kidnapped the virgin Oreithyia while she was playing with *pharmakeia*.

Derrida uses the word *pharmakon* in order to describe an ordered polysemy he sees in Plato's dialogue: On the one hand, it can be translated as remedy, on the other as

[59] Derrida, Jacques, "Plato's Pharmacy," in: id., *Dissemination*. Translated by Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 61-171, here: p .92.

[60] Ibid., p. 70.

poison, drug or magic potion.[61] In Friedrich Schleiermacher's 1817 German translation, which is still used today and upon which Léon Robin's French translation is based, and which Derrida works with, *pharmakon* is translated as potion, to be understood in the sense of remedy, and thus not containing the negative and threatening connotations, according to Derrida.

Derrida writes, "Writing (or, if you will, the *pharmakon*) is thus presented to the King. Presented: like a kind of present"[62] which Theuth, a half-god, presents to the king of the gods. This present, following Derrida, is an artefactum, an artificial creation of uncertain value, for it is the king who can give it value. However, the god-king does not accept the present; he depreciates it by pointing out not only its uselessness but its menace and its mischief.[63] According to Derrida, the "god-the-king-that-speaks" is acting like a father by whom the *pharmakon* is rejected, belittled, abandoned, disparaged."[64] Further he writes, "*Logos* is a son, then, a son that would be destroyed in his very *presence* without the present *attendance* of his father. His father who answers. His father who speaks for him and answers for him."[65] Without the father, the son "would be nothing but, in fact, writing."[66]

This misery of writing needing a father like the way Socrates formulated it, is ambiguous, according to Derrida: it is the distress of the orphan, who has at the same time achieved emancipation from the father, and is self-sufficient. The desire for orphanhood could be read as subversion with the aim of patricide.[67] So Derrida asks: "Isn't this *pharmakon* then a criminal thing, a poisoned present?"[68] About the status of the orphan, he writes:

> "The status of this orphan… coincides with that of a *graphein* which, being nobody's son at the instant it reaches inscription, scarcely remains a son at all

[61] Cf. Ibid., p. 71.

[62] Ibid., p. 75.

[63] Cf. Ibid., p. 76.

[64] Ibid., p. 76.

[65] Ibid., p. 77.

[66] Ibid., p. 77.

[67] Cf. Ibid., p. 77.

[68] Ibid., p. 77.

> and no longer *recognizes* its origins, whether legally or morally. In contrast to writing, living *logos* is alive in that it has a living father"[69].

In this context *logos* means "spoken discussion"; Plato calls it "living speech." Derrida deals with the father theme at length, but I will leave it at that and focus on a second theme, which is pivotal for the so-called critique of writing, namely the secondariness of writing. We will stay with Derrida's text, which again will be cited at singular points.

Derrida interprets Theuth, the god of writing, as a subordinate character: he is of secondary importance, because, when he presented his *tekhnē* and *pharmakon* to the "king, father, and god," he let it drop, and Theuth did not respond.[70] He was not able to defend his invention, but subordinated himself, and the value of writing, to the verdict of the king. Derrida associates Theuth with Hermes, the messenger of the gods who also bears the role of an intermediary.[71] He characterizes Theuth with the following words: "Language, of which he is depositary and secretary, can thus only represent, so as to transmit the message, an already formed divine thought, a fixed design. The message itself is not, but only represents, the absolutely creative moment. It is a second and secondary word."[72] But as a god of secondary language, Theuth is also the god of linguistic difference (between the spoken and the written) who can "become the god of the creative word only by metonymic substitution, by historical displacement, and sometimes by violent subversion."[73] A metonymic substitution means the replacement of an actual expression through another, which corresponds to the first. Derrida writes:

> "One day while Ra was in the sky, he said: '*Bring me Thoth,*' and Thoth was straightway brought to him. The Majesty of this god said to Thoth: '*Be in the sky in my place, while I shine over the blessed of the lower regions* ... You are in my place, my replacement, and you will be called thus: Thoth, he who replaces Ra.'"[74]

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[69] Ibid., p. 77.

[70] Cf. Ibid., p. 86.

[71] Cf. Ibid., p. 88.

[72] Ibid., p. 88.

[73] Ibid., p. 89.

[74] Ibid., p. 89.

Thoth becomes his father Ra's substitute during his absence in the night. In this very moment the hierarchy is turned upside down and Thoth is placed in the position of the god of the gods, his father (Ra). The god of language thus becomes Ra's (the sun god) substitute, in his absence and necessary disappearance. Like the moon is the supplement for the sun, writing is the supplement of speech which can subvert the hierarchy. At this point, Derrida delves further into Egyptian mythology. I only want to note here that the god of language is naturally also the god of death. Likewise the *pharmakon*, writing, was accused of substituting the breathless sign for the living voice.

Sier provides insights to this text from another perspective. He writes that, on the face of it, the critique of writing acts on the assumption that some people insult Lysias as a "logographer," because they take issue with the written pre-formulation of his speeches which in the written form can even be given by others. At the end of *Phaedrus*, however, the use of writing as a medium of communication remains unobjectionable as long as the author is aware of the limitations of the medium, and does not wrongly believe it is able to communicate information and insights with clarity and security.[75]

Accordingly, following Sier – and I fully align myself with this point – Plato's critique of writing is not a critique of writtenness as such but rather a critique of an unreflective attitude towards written texts, and expectations that even oral logoi cannot offer per se.[76]

Another insight is offered by Benveniste's perspective, who summarizes the so-called critique of writing as follows:

> "In *Phaedrus* (27Sc-276b), Plato depreciates writing in favor of speech. What makes writing (*gráphē*) bad is that it equals drawing (*gráphō* means both 'writing' and 'drawing'). What comes from drawing appears alive to us (*zōgraphía)*. Were one to ask these images, however, they would veil themselves in solemn silence. It would be the same case with written words

[75] Cf. Sier, Kurt, "Der Mythos von Theuth und Thamus. Phaedrus 274c-275c," in: *Platon als Mythologe, Interpretationen zu den Mythen in Platons Dialogen*. Markus Janka, Christian Schäfer (Eds.). Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2014. pp. 323-337. here: p. 329f.

[76] Cf. Ibid., p. 332.

(*lógoi*). They could not defend themselves, if one were to go from one to the next; they could only signify (*sēmainein*), but would have left the world of living relations."[77]

Benveniste infers that the close, characteristic relation that language and writing have was not recognized immediately.[78] Our current culture has a close relationship to writing, "We live in a culture of the book, the read, the written book, a culture of writing and reading. Our life is constantly, on all levels, shaped by writing."[79] Further, he concludes, "This creates an ever closer, ultimately internal coherence between writing and language itself, between speaking and even thinking, which cannot be separated from its real or imaginary textualization."[80] Benveniste advocates recognizing an entanglement of language and writing, which reaches far into our ideas about spoken language and shapes it from the inside.

To understand where Plato's idea that writing supplements and even threatens comes from, one has to consider the context in which the text was written. The dialogue *Phaedrus* dates back to 365 BC.[81] At that time a transition from a primarily oral culture to a written culture, as we know it today, was taking place in the Ancient Greece. Writing in general (in fact different writing types) existed long before Plato's lifetime, but it was precisely during his lifetime that writing became central to culture and tradition, which is also to say for the cultural deliverance of knowledge and authority. Plato's examination of the value of writing must be understood against this backdrop of great cultural change, and the politics involved in it.

Derrida notes another aspect which plays a role here: "The structure and history of phonetic writing have of course played a decisive role in the determination of writing as the doubling of a sign, the sign of a sign."[82] This means that the use of phonetic writing, as we know it and with which we are familiar, allows for an empirical

[77] Benveniste, op. cit., p. 90. Translated by LN.

[78] Cf. Ibid.

[79] Ibid., p. 63. Translated by LN.

[80] Ibid.. p. 63. Translated by LN.

[81] Cf. Sier, op. cit., here: p. 323, Footnote 3.

[82] Derrida, op. cit., p. 109f.

conclusion that claims that the spoken word preceded its transcription or recording (*Aufzeichnung*).

Benveniste, however, believes this argument evades the question of the relationship between writing and language. His thesis is that the relationship between the modern language as we know it[83] and writing is not a general relationship, but rather a special one.

From Benveniste's perspective, the problem of secondariness as a philosophical problem does not pose itself, since it is not necessarily a given. Spoken language is not primary and transcribed through writing, but rather, reality can be equally expressed in language (oral) or in writing (text). So Benveniste also opposes "its traditional meaning as a (secondary) graphic system of signs,"[84] but uses another vocabulary for expressing it than Derrida.[85]

2.6 Critique of Writing Performances

The premise here is that the critique of writing initiated by the interpretation of Plato's text has coined also the understanding of performance documentation as being secondary to performance, analogous to the hierarchy between writing and speech. The following will outline what the critique of writing means for performance.

Texts written after performances or documentations thereof are considered secondary to the live-act. This means two things: It means that these textualizations are chronologically in second place and thus subordinated in the sense of being less original. The textualization follows the performance, so it comes, chronologically speaking, second. That is clear and would not be a qualifier in itself. It would not be a problem, were it not connected to a second aspect that Derrida also pointed out in

[83] Benveniste points to Ferdinand de Saussure's sign theory here.

[84] Lüdemann, Susanne, *Jacques Derrida zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2011. p. 70. Translated by LN.

[85] Benveniste speaks of language and writing, whereby language is the spoken language. For Derrida there is the general form of writing, which includes writing (written language) and speech (spoken language). In my vocabulary the more general dimension is called language, which includes the equal forms of expression of writing (written language) and speech (spoken language).

regard to writing, namely that this “second” has not a self-sufficient position: it is always dependent on, and stays connected to the first, because it is derived from it.

In the context of performance this problem is called the referentiality of performance documentation, which means that the documentation always references the (original) performance. Whereas the performance is an “autonomous” (self-sufficient) medium in itself, and an original form of artistic expression, the documentation does not lose this reference, and stays dependent on it. Derrida explained this hierarchical relation with the son and father metaphor: the father can live without the son, the son needs the father in order to come into existence. The chronological first is viewed as more original and thus having more value than the second, which does not only follow but has no identity in itself. Applying Derrida’s wording performance would be in the position of the father, the sun, life, origin, speech which writing/performance documentation, just like Thoth, replaces and substitutes. Thoth has no identity himself; the very act of identity is to distinguish himself from the other, which he imitates, which he becomes the sign of and representative for.[86]

In the context of performance theory Jones suggested dealing with this hierarchy in understanding performance documentation as a supplement in the Derridean sense.[87] Turning the hierarchy upside down would mean saying: documentation is not dependent on performance, but performance is dependent on documentation. When taking this idea strictly the problem arises that a performance that is not documented is not a performance. So Jones argues that both are necessary.

Let’s go back to Socrates who in Plato’s dialog criticizes the idea that writing merely *records* spoken language. What is the problem with that anyway? For Plato, the problem is that the transmission of the truth depends upon the speaker understanding it. The text itself understands nothing and can thus not adequately reproduce the truth. When asked, the text always says the same thing.

[86] Derrida, op. cit., p. 93.

[87] Cf. Jones, op. cit.

Derrida analyses this problem with the following words, “While the phonic signifier would remain in animate proximity, in the living presence of *mnēmē* or *pychē*, the graphic signifier, which reproduces it or imitates it, goes one degree further away”.[88]

The further the signifier (e.g. writing, painting, performance documentation) distances itself from the presence of the living spirit and the being of things in general, it equally distances itself from truth, that is to say it further sinks into the hierarchy of classical philosophy, which Derrida questions.

Applying Plato’s logic to the performance context would mean that the bodily presence of the artist during a performance in front of the audience enables this act (due to the living spirit). From this perspective a text given to someone else in order to be performed would be already a “fatherless” text (disconnected to the intention of the one who speaks through it). But one can pose the question: to what extent does the performer of the text become its new father or mother? I will come back later to the role of intention in texts and performances.

Another crucial point in the context of *Phaedrus* is that the text knows nothing itself, thus it is a pure bearer, messenger. The first problem about this is that it needs the living presence of its author/father in order to explain itself and defend itself against misunderstandings from readers. The second problem connected to this fatherlessness, according to Plato, is that the text does not know to whom it should speak to and to whom not. It circulates uncontrollably and possibly lands in the wrong hands. Both points are well comprehended. Translated to the art context this points to at least two things: first, to the difference of whether an artist is present or not once an artwork is received. The presence of an artist *in* performance that involves him- or herself is self-evident and applies to many, even, most performances in visual art. However, one could argue that this does not guarantee that the artist, *after* the performance, is present in order to answer questions about it. The second point is that the reading of texts defies the control of their authors. This is certainly true, and can also be understood as the potential of texts (which will be talked about in the next section).

Another point that could be read into this as problematic (referring back to Phelan) is that the documentation – written notes, transcriptions, recordings (*Aufzeichnungen*) –

[88] Derrida, op. cit., p. 110.

threatens the live performance because they are identified with reproduction, whereas performance is not. So, reproduction seems to threaten the uniqueness of performances. It fixes it, and thus it is not uncontrollable anymore.

Here, with the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, the question could be posed as to what extent the fixing of meaning is a characteristic of writing only. In the 1990s, against the backdrop of the new interest in writtenness and orality, Gadamer wrote that, we are "invited to inquire into the common basis that underlies the orality of speech and writing. One will ask: Is something like an urge for fixing not always contained in the use of words? Words have their meaning."[89]

According to Gadamer, both written and oral forms of communication are attempts at a fixing of meaning. This means that regarding the production of meaning there is no difference between written and spoken texts. Certainly performances do not necessarily (only) contain words, but to analyze the difference between the verbal and non-verbal form is beyond the scope of this work.

The American performance and theater theorist Rebecca Schneider, according to whom the performance of a text (theatrical script) can be understood likewise as a record of that text, writes:

> "… the villainy that can occur between setting something down and taking it up again is not necessarily delimited to *performance*. The afterlife of a written word, set down and yet changing hands, jumping from body to body, eye to mouth, as text is interjected into text, is not entirely dissimilar to the promiscuous tracks of actorly acts."[90]

Aligning oneself with Gadamer and Schneider one can conclude that this recording aspect not only inhabits texts, but likewise performances. Besides that, speaking from my experience of artistic practice, the aim to fix information about a certain performance differs from the attempt to fix its meaning. Whereas the first is an intentional act and possible, the second is neither possible nor desirable.

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[89]Gadamer, Hans-Georg, "Unterwegs zur Schrift?," in: *Schrift und Gedächtnis. Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation*. Edited by Aleida and Jan Assmann, Christof Hardmeier. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag München, 1993. pp. 10-23, here p. 10. Translated by LN.

[90] Schneider, Rebecca, "In the Meantime. Performance Remains," in: id., *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment.* London/New York: Routledge, 2011. pp. 87-110, here: p. 88.

In my view, the meaning of performances in collaborative performance practices is decisively shaped by using the interpretative function of writing and not fixing all aspects; even though writing potentially has this function as well. The interpretative function is connected to the potential of texts, namely the game; it means creating space for the subjectivity of the performers and the eventfulness of the performance itself.

2.7 The Potential of Text

Although *Phaedrus* was within the history of philosophy mainly received as a critique of writing and Derrida's reading of it as a critique of the critique of writing, there is a positive potential discovered by Plato already and which was perceived by Derrida and performed by his reading-writing. I am interested in this potential of text, because it affects my practice of collaboration-based performance practices.

Plato formulated this potential of writing with the following words: "When he writes, it's likely he will sow gardens of letters for the sake of amusing himself, storing up reminders for himself 'when he reaches forgetful old age' and for everyone who wants to follow in his footsteps, and will enjoy seeing them sweetly blooming."[91]

"He" refers here to anyone, and no one specific is meant. What is called "amusing" here in English is in the German translation *das Spiel*, "game." Derrida refers to it by the Greek *paidia*, in English "game." The game is the positive potential of texts that Plato names. This means that the reader can play with texts in a specific way that he or she cannot play with speech. Derrida takes up the idea of play as the essential feature of texts when he writes,

> "A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible. Its law and its rules are not, however, harbored in the inaccessibility of a secret; it is simply that they can never be booked, in the *present*, into anything that could rigorously be called a perception."[92]

[91] Plato, op. cit., p. 82.

[92] Derrida, op. cit., p. 63.

To name the game as the essential feature of texts means to stress the role of being read. In Derrida's sense this reading is a form of writing. "Reading is not passive. It must '*produce* a significant structure.' Without doubt, it already does this by not duplicating the text, but rather creating its own text."[93]

With his way of reading of *Phaedrus*, Derrida opposes its history. He writes,

> "Only a blind or grossly insensitive reading could indeed have spread the rumor that Plato was *simply* condemning the writer's activity. Nothing here is of a single piece and the *Phaedrus* also, in its own writing, plays at saving writing – which also means causing it to be lost – as the best, the noblest game. As for the stunning hand Plato has thus dealt himself, we will be able to follow its incidence and its payoff later on."[94]

With "nothing here is of a single piece" Derrida means that a text is not a one-dimensional piece, but that a text creates a web (French: *toile*) which can be understood in play with its structure, which is to say, through the activities of reading and re-writing. The reader (author) through his/her reading weaves a supplementary thread that adds to the web, which is simultaneously restored and given to read by this act. Derrida writes: "If reading and writing are one, as is easily thought these days, if reading *is* writing, this oneness designates neither undifferentiated (con)fusion nor identity at perfect rest; the *is* that couples reading with writing must rip apart."[95]

In other words text does not exist without a reader giving meaning to it. In active reading, the reader does not reproduce it, but always has to make a "cut" in order to produce meaning from the text, to give attention to some aspects and to leave out others. This means that the reader (author) is violent to the text in any event. The potential of this violent "play" is owed to the inner logic (the structure) of text.

Although the general potential of text and the intention of an author/artist are two different things, I dare to say they are not completely unconnected. The openness

[93] Lüdemann, op. cit., p. 76. Translated by LN.

[94] Derrida, op. cit., p. 67.

[95] Ibid., p. 63f.

that texts in collaboration-based performance practices are aiming for is enabled through (amongst other things) this potential.

To recapitulate: in his *Phaedrus,* Plato criticizes writing for not being alive. In his view, writing, as a recording of speech, is secondary to it. In “Plato’s Pharmacy”, Derrida reads Plato’s *Phaedrus* in a deconstructive manner and reverses these hierarchies between text and speech. Gadamer offers yet another perspective, according to which not only text, but also a performance of text aims to fixate meaning. In my view, one has to differentiate between the aim of fixating in the sense of preserving information or to fixate meaning in a more general sense. In performance practices, the aim to fixate information is connected to the recording function of texts. It is crucial for performance texts such as scores, scripts and instructions. Schneider offers a perspective from which performance likewise has this aspect of recording. In my view, and now switching back to texts again, the potential of texts in collaboration-based performance practices lies in their function to be interpreted.

2.8 Theories of Performativity: Austin and Derrida

In this section the key points of the notion of performativity, as coined by the British language philosopher Austin who in the 1950s, gave language a new function – acting – will be summed up. He states that speech not only describes, but under certain conditions literally acts within social reality. Furthermore, Derrida’s lecture “Signature Event Context” will be looked at; this was held in 1971 at a conference on the topic of communication in Montreal and draws into question some points of Austin’s theory as well as coins the terms “dissemination” and “iterability.” The latter will be made productive for performances in the art context.

Austin developed the theory of the performativity of language[96] in his lecture series titled *How to Do Things with Words*,[97] which was given at Harvard University in 1955. In the first lecture his considerations involve written and spoken utterances. At the

[96] The lectures were published posthumously in 1962, but the theory developed there remained fragmented. Austin never wrote a book about it himself.

[97] Austin, John L. *How to Do Things with Words. The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955.* Oxford: University Press, 1962.

very beginning then, he considers texts for his analyzes, but he does not pursue this way and soon excludes written utterances and focuses on oral utterances only.

In that first lecture Austin states that philosophers until now have been satisfied by describing reality through declarative sentences, which are considered to be either true or false. In other words, Austin accuses philosophers of reducing their analysis of speech to its truth value. The exceptions – as Austin acknowledges – are philosophers who in recent years have begun to concern themselves with the fact that there are also sentences that are syntactically absurd, and therefore meaningless.

Austin calls attention to the fact that for grammarians questions, exclamatory sentences, imperatives, optative sentences and concessive clauses exist alongside declarative sentences, which means that the declarative sentence is merely one among many other types of sentences.

In order to classify utterances that have not found a place in traditional schemata, Austin suggests the category "performative sentences," "performative utterances," or in short "a performative." He explains: "The name is derived, of course, from 'perform,' the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of just saying something."[98]

These utterances are not merely descriptive, but they are acts when performed in the first person singular present indicative active. He gives examples such as the words "I do" within the marriage ceremony, the "I bet … " in gambling or "I name …" as it is used in the christening of a ship.

In the course of this analyses Austin recognizes that this new category gives rise to a problem, namely that there are no utterances that are pure speech in a strict sense. Utterances are always accompanied by gestures, facial expressions and other physical elements that belong to the conventions of the context in which the utterance is performed.

In his second lecture, Austin examines the prerequisites for the success of performative utterances and possible reasons why they might fail. He calls the cases

[98] Ibid., p. 6f.

in which the prerequisites are not met “infelicities” or “unhappy utterances” and begins to classify them. He creates three groups of infelicities: A, B, Γ, each of which has subdivisions. A and B are misfires: the act is purported, but void. In the case of the third category Γ is abused: the act is professed, but hollow.[99]

According to Austin, performative utterances spoken by an actor on stage and/or in soliloquy are also hollow or void, and therefore belong to the group of infelicitous acts. “Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use-ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language,” [100] according to Austin. He further writes: “Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances.”[101] To sum up, Austin calls acts done by speech within a framework of social conventions “performative utterances” or “performatives.” Such speech-acts cannot be true or false like constative utterances can, but they can succeed or fail, as Austin says.

In his text “Signature Event Context,” Derrida attests to linguistics and communication sciences the general premise that context constricts the polysemy of so-called natural languages and that utterances are thus reduced to a meaning. The fact that the polysemy of words, terms and sentences is reduced by the context means that we know how a linguistic remark is meant because it is said in a specific situation. Derrida doubts this and attempts to show “why a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather in what way its determination is never certain or saturated,”[102] neither in oral, nor in written communication.

Besides this, Derrida looks at Austin’s speech act theory and critiques it for focusing only on oral statements and excludes written material, such as texts, from the category of speech acts. Furthermore he reproaches Austin for focusing on ordinary language and excluding speech acts, which in Austin’s opinion deviate from this daily type of usage and which he calls parasitic. Derrida also disagrees with the possibility

[99] Cf. Ibid., p. 18.

[100] Ibid., p. 22.

[101] Ibid., p. 22.

[102] Derrida, Jacques, “Signature Event Context,” in: id., *Margins of Philosophy*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: The Harvester Press, 1982. pp. 307-330, here: p. 310.

of failure of speech acts, stating that it is the structure of every utterance to possibly fail; otherwise it cannot succeed. Following Derrida's understanding, failure is the necessary precondition of every speech act. Succeeding and failing cannot be separated from each other.

Derrida mainly criticizes Austin's theory of performativity because he recognizes the classical hierarchy between the written and the spoken word in it, which he sees as an essential feature of western philosophy (and thus metaphysics).

The argumentation in "Signature Event Context" unfolds as follows: from the structural unsaturation of the context, Derrida concludes the necessity of generalizing and displacing the classical notion of writing. In order to dissolve the hierarchy between the written and spoken word, he first looks at the core attributes of the weaker part (writing) to subsequently show that these attributes also match the stronger part (spoken language), and thus can be regarded as prerequisite for both. As soon as these core attributes are a prerequisite for both, they cannot be thought of hierarchically any longer; both, writing and speech, are forms of the generalized term of writing.

Following the classical philosophical notion of writing, the absence of the receiver is characteristic of writing. Derrida adds the absence of the sender. The latter leaves behind a sign that survives beyond the present actuality of intention (in French: *vouloir-dire*) and the individual's life. However, according to Derrida, this absence is not only specific for writing: sign language and spoken language also presuppose a structural absence. Every sign has to potentially function in the absence of a sender and a receiver, he argues. He further emphasizes that every sign has the power to break with the context of the origin in which it first appeared and to be read in other contexts.

Derrida describes the characteristics of writing with his own terms "iteration" and "dissemination." The fact that writing structurally does not provide a tool of limiting the proliferation of meaning produced by its context he calls "dissemination." Dissemination is opposed to polysemy in Derrida's view. It does not mean that a word has more than one meaning, but that the production of meaning created by the circulation of the sign in different contexts cannot be stopped, reduced or controlled. He writes:

> "Every sign … spoken or written … can be *cited* … thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring."[103]

Another characteristic of writing introduced by Derrida is "iterability." Iterability means that every sign must be repeatable; it must be citable and it thereby creates a double of itself. Iterability is not (only) the repetition of the same; it is a repetition which has a difference at its core; each time a sign is cited this inner difference is activated.

These characteristics apply in the art context to both text and performance. Iterability means here that a performance is different each time it is performed. Each staging is a repetition and yet it is different at the same time. Let's say a performance was performed on three consecutive days. Empirically this means that it was different each day – for example, the voice of the performer was louder, the performers made a specific movement or played a tone faster, the technician forgot to close the curtain after the first scene, so they had to do this or that in another way. However, Derrida's iteration also means something else. It means that a difference occurs in relation to the meaning of something, which does not necessarily change the empirical condition. Otherwise why should it apply to texts? The fact that a performance is slightly different each time it is performed does not necessarily mean that a difference occurred in terms of meaning. These are two different things. It rather corresponds to the fact that a text and a performance are likewise different each time they are read/seen.

According to the notion of iterability, neither text nor performance can be fixed as to its meaning. For performance, iterability means that the present body like every other sign breaks away from itself in the moment of its emergence (by citing itself), and creates a double that transcends the moment of the performance. It means that the possibility of performance documentation and its repetition precedes the performance itself.

[103] Ibid., p. 320.

2.9 The Role of Intention

John R. Searle, one of the most important proponents of analytical philosophy, who was a pupil of Austin, felt attacked by “Signature Even Context.” He wrote a reply, which together with the English translation of Derrida’s text was published in the journal *Glyph* in 1977. Searle’s defense paper was in parts polemic, which led to a likewise polemical answer from Derrida a few months later, under the title “Limited Inc a b c.”

As for the debate between Derrida and Searle, the focus here will only be on the role of intention – I will not go further than that, and consequently this can involve a certain reduction of some of their points. This debate will be looked into because this research inevitably leads to the question of intention: What role does intention in writing a text to be performed by someone else mean in relation to the one who performs it, and to the outcome?

Derrida writes about the role of intention in Austin’s theory:

> “Austin’s analyses permanently demand a value of context, and even of an exhaustively determinable context, whether de jure or teleological … One of [the] essential elements – and not one among others – classically remains consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject for the totality of this locutory act.”[104]

In classical philosophy since Descartes, intention has been confined to the mind and unconnected to usage and context. The meaning of an assertion is determined by the intention of the mind. When Derrida critiques intentional consciousness he most likely has the work of his teacher, the phenomenologist Eduard Husserl, in mind.

For Austin’s theory, the intention of the speaker does not actually play a central role. On the contrary, the intention of the speaker is not decisive for the failure or success of a speech act. For Austin, the meaning of a word is its usage in language, not the intention of the speaker. The usage is dependent on the context which itself is defined by conventions. Conventions make possible the speech act. It does not matter what the intention of the speaker was, or how the utterance was actually meant, or even if it was honest or not. Austin writes:

[104] Ibid., p. 322.

> "… we shall call in general those infelicities … which are such that the act for performing of which, and are such in the performing of which, the verbal formula in question is designed, is not achieved, by the name MISFIRE: and on the other hand we may christen those infelicities where the act is achieved ABUSES."[105]

For example, "I promise to meet you tomorrow at 4.00 p.m. in a café near Amsterdam Central Station to tell you about my new research project" is an achieved speech act in the sense of Austin. The act of promising is achieved because the conventions of the promise are fulfilled: saying a time that is appropriate for a meeting, naming an existing place that is known to both parties, and that is reachable for both parties, and stating a reason for the meeting that is plausible, and so on. It does not matter if I ever intended to come or not. According to Austin's terms, the given example belongs to the category of infelicities, but is still an achieved speech act.

For Austin, it is not the intention of the speaker but the context that is decisive. The meaning of a word or utterance is its usage in language, and this usage is determined by the conventions of the context in which it is uttered. Concerning the role of the context Derrida has indeed another position. The question that remains open in Austin's theory is: whether meaning is created by the conventions of the context. If this is the case: How has this convention (and the resulting context) produced itself (as meaning and pre-condition for it to appear)?

For Searle, the intention of the speaker plays the same role in spoken and written communication. What fundamentally differs from Derrida's view is again the role of the context of the utterance. For Searle, intention is not behind language, but is realized through it. Intention is in language, language is not used in order to express intention. This would be the "outer relation" of intentional meaning theory which Derrida actually critiques. Searle writes: "To the extent that the author says what he means the text is the expression of his intentions."[106] For him, the meaning is the intention of meaning: "understanding the utterance consists in recognizing the illocutionary intentions of the author … realized by the words uttered." In Searle's theory, the convention used should guarantee that the intention of the author may be

[105] Austin, op. cit., p. 16.

[106] Searle, "Reiterating the Differences. A Reply to Derrida," in: *Glyph*, Vol. 1. 1975. pp. 198-208, here: p. 202.

read by others. The author “just” has to use the conventions in the right way. Misunderstandings that occur are either accidental or owed to empirical circumstances, whereas in Derrida’s theory, they are constitutive of communication and the use of writing and signs in general.

To conclude: Derrida’s concept of signs creating new contexts which in turn influence the meaning of the sign gives reception and interpretation a value in themselves, and thus can be made productive for understating artistic practice, especially in collaboration-based performance practice in which texts are performed by people other than the author of the texts.

Following my definition, the intention of the author is the part of the concept of an artwork that can be put into language. Thus it may contribute to the understanding of an artwork. However, firstly, this is not necessary for reading it, and secondly, it does not at all guarantee understanding.

In my view, meaning is neither produced exclusively in writing a text (to be performed) nor exclusively in its performance. The meaning is produced in and through their mutual relation. In collaboration-based performance practices this very fact is made productive through writing texts with the purpose of not being performed by the author, but by performers.

In my experience, the interpretation (function) of texts can make visible aspects or produce meaning the author did not intend. This means that the reading of texts, and the reception of artworks in general, potentially creates new works. (This aspect will be re-addressed in the next chapter.) Each text/artwork may be made productive apart from the author’s/artist’s intention.

2.10 Différance between Text and Performance

In the last section of this chapter another term by Derrida will be introduced which also touches upon the relation between texts and performances: “différance.”

Différance must be understood in reference to the differentiality of linguistic signs as developed by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.[107] Derrida radicalizes and generalizes Saussure’s idea that the meaning of signs is constituted through their differentiation from other signs. In the case of différance it is about a differentiation in the sense of a production of meaning that spatializes/temporalizes itself.

The difference between the French word différence (as it is written according to proper grammar) and the neologism différance with an “a” is not audible in the spoken language, it is only noticeable in the written form. This is also where the term “space” enters: it is the space that the sign claims for itself in order to become visible. The temporal aspect is called “suspension” in Derrida's jargon. This means, firstly, that the production of meaning, which always includes a shift in meanings as well, is a process (for example, the process of reading); and, secondly, in the case of signs, it is about a reference (to a reference) to a presence, which thereby is suspended. Because one cannot hear the difference, but only read it, it inverts the traditional hierarchy in philosophy between the spoken and the written word.

Différance questions identities which can be substituted in thought through signs. Western logic is based on the “Principle of Contradiction” and the “Law of the Excluded Middle.” The first means A and Not-A cannot be valid at the same time, and the second means either A or Not-A has to be valid – there is no third possibility. These laws both postulate the absolute identity of things.

For Derrida, différance is, “the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation.”[108] As he writes, the

[107] Cf. Posselt, Gerald, “Kommentar zu Derrida, Jacques (1988): ‘Signatur Ereignis Kontext’” in: Derrida, Jacques, *Randgänge der Philosophie*. First Edition, Wien: Passagen. pp. 291-314,” in: *produktive differenzen - forum für differenz- und genderforschung*, http://differenzen.univie.ac.at/bibliografie_literatursuche.php?sp=11

[108] Derrida, Jacques, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” in: id., *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. London/New York: Routledge, 1978. pp. 351-370, here: p. 369.

game “is always [a] play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence.”[109]

The following performance script of mine was written and performed in 2010. It is submitted here in order to illustrate the différance that occurs between text (re)presenting a performance and performance (re)presenting a text.

Winner’s Performance – An Appropriation

[Performance to be done by three female speakers: the author, a performer and an audience member. Props: one small and one larger plinth. Performer – standing beside the larger plinth, it stands upright and is empty.]

PERFORMER: This performance includes quotes and reworked text fragments by: Carl Andre, René Descartes, Marcel Duchamp, Oscar Wilde, Paul Cézanne, Gustave Flaubert, Douglas Huebler, Vincent Huidobro, Michelangelo, Kazimir Malevich, Franz Liszt, Peter Roehr, Sol LeWitt, Richard Serra, Roland Barthes, and Charles Baudelaire.

[Author – standing on the small plinth]

AUTHOR: Questions and answers

1. Who is an artist?

A. An artist is one who says she is an artist

B. An artist is one who has a diploma from an art academy

C. An artist is one who makes art

D. An artist is one who makes money from art

E. An artist is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

2. What is art?

A. Art is what an artist says is art

[109] Ibid.

B. Art is what a critic says is art

C. Art is what an artist makes

D. Art is what makes money for the artist

E. Art is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

3. What is quality in art?

A. Quality in art is a fiction of the artist

B. Quality in art is a fiction of the critic

C. Quality in art is the cost of making art

D. Quality in art is the selling price of art

E. Quality in art is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

4. What is the relationship between politics and art?

A. Art is a political weapon

B. Art has nothing to do with politics

C. Art serves the state and political parties

D. Art serves the revolution

E. The relationship between politics and art is none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

5. Why do I do this?

A. I do this because art is my life's work

B. I do this because art is my commercial business

C. I do this because art will die if I stop

D. I do this because art will continue unchanged if I stop

E. I do this because of none of these things, some of these things, all of these things

[Placing the big plinth on its side and the small one on top of it: winners' rostrum –all three step up.]

PERFORMER: The speakers are:

AUTHOR: The author

AUDIENCE: An audience member

PERFORMER: The performer

[All embrace while standing, building one body.]

AUTHOR: To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.

AUDIENCE: Man should not be present.

PERFORMER: Let us always remember that depersonalization is a sign of strength ... We must be mirrors which reflect the truth outside ourselves.

[End of standing embrace.]

AUTHOR: We don't emphasize enough that the work of art is independent of the artist. The work of art lives by itself, and the artist who happened to make it is like an irresponsible medium.

PERFORMER: What you are saying is that the artist is the picture's way of getting itself painted. To make this claim is quite legitimate and reasonable, but it also implies that the work of art exists in a certain sense before it is there on stage or on canvas.

AUTHOR: Yes, it has to be pulled out … It's a kind of race between the artist and the work of art.

PERFORMER: In art we are interested more in the creative force of the artist than that of the viewer, and besides, the former implies the latter to a greater degree than vice versa.

AUDIENCE: I not only see, but I also watch.

I not only listen, but I also interpret.

I not only think, but I also recognize.

AUTHOR: I feel identical with what I do. In performances I realize in an unrestricted manner everything that is important for me. I believe I am free.

AUDIENCE: Through me and with me; without me is without you, too.

PERFORMER: The artist's will is secondary to the process he initiates from idea to completion. His willfulness may only be ego.

AUDIENCE: The artist's will may only be ego.

PERFORMER: The production process is at best mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its own course.

To work with a plan that is pre-set is one way of avoiding subjectivity. After that, the fewer decisions made in the course of completing the work, the better. This eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious, and the subjective as much as possible.

AUDIENCE: This eliminates the subjectivity of the artist as much as possible.

PERFORMER: What the work of art looks like isn't too important. It can look like anything. No matter what form it may finally have, it must begin with an idea. Once given physical reality by the artist, the work is open to the perception of all, including the artist. The work of art can only be perceived after it is completed.

AUDIENCE: This performance can only be perceived after it is completed. After it is completed, it is open to the perception of all, including the artist.

PERFORMER: The artist may not necessarily understand his own art. His perception is neither better nor worse than that of others. An artist may perceive the art of others better than his own.

A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewer's. But it may never reach the viewer, or it may never leave the artist's mind.

AUDIENCE: This performance may never reach the viewer.

PERFORMER: When an artist learns his craft too well he makes slick art.

AUDIENCE: An artist should never learn his craft too well.

PERFORMER: These sentences comment on art, but are not art.

AUTHOR: I don't make art; I am engaged in an activity; if someone wants to call it art, that's his business, but it's not up to me to decide that. That's all figured out later.

AUDIENCE: Through me and with me; without me is without you, too.

AUTHOR: The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more. I prefer simply to state the existence of things in terms of time and/or space. More specifically, my work concerns itself with things whose interrelationship is beyond direct perceptual experience. Because the work is beyond direct perceptual experience, awareness of the work depends on a system of documentation. This documentation takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings, and descriptive language.

AUDIENCE: The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; the artist does not wish to add any more. The documentation takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings, and descriptive language.

PERFORMER: Through me and with me; without me is without you, too.

[All embrace while standing, building one body.]

AUTHOR: The hand guided by the intellect can really achieve something.

AUDIENCE: The artist who wants to develop art beyond its painting and performing possibilities is forced to rely on theory and logic.

PERFORMER: Today more than ever, it is necessary that the artist also be an intelligent person and know a lot of things outside her own field.

AUDIENCE: All that is beautiful and noble is the result of reason and calculation.

[End of standing embrace.]

AUTHOR: I think, therefore I am.

PERFORMER: I think, therefore I am confused.

AUDIENCE: I don’t understand.

AUTHOR: We acknowledge that: Art is universal.

The work of art should be entirely conceived and formed by the mind before it is produced. Technique should be mechanical. Absolute clarity should be strived for.

PERFORMER: It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to be emotionally dry. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the conceptual artist is out to bore the viewer.

[All step down from the plinth and continue speaking.]

AUDIENCE: An artistic work is a fetish object and this fetish *desires me*. It chooses me, by a whole disposition of invisible screens, selective battles: vocabulary, references, readability, etc.; and, lost in the midst of a text there is always the other, the author. As institution, the author is dead: her civil status, her biographical person have disappeared. But in the text *I desire* the author: I need her figure as she needs mine.

PERFORMER: On the stage of the text, no footlights: there is not, behind the text, someone active (the author) and out front someone passive (the spectator); there is not a subject and an object.

AUTHOR: The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do.

AUDIENCE: I not only see, but I also watch. I not only watch, but I also desire.

[Both plinths are carried into the audience space and placed among the spectators; the cast step up onto them while speaking.]

AUTHOR, PERFORMER, AUDIENCE: Contemporary Authors' Manifesto. They are choreographers, journalists, curators, designers, painters, architects, perhaps scientists. Through their works they position themselves in the social sphere and shape it in the process.

In order to secure the financial means needed to fulfill their yearnings and aspirations, they employ a variety of skills. They work on topics and projects; they work on requests, for applications, for advised positions; they work alone, in groups, with formal and informal managers; they give instructions and ask for advice. They fulfill strict guidelines and open-ended assignments; they seek and shape their own fields of work and activity; they work under time pressure or without any visible output. They work for institutions, for colleagues, and for themselves. They put varying degrees of knowledge, experience, and subjectivity into their work; they identify sometimes more, sometimes less with what they say.

The contemporary authors don't write; they speak! They speak through different media; through their works and within them; their photographs, their paintings and writings, their movements on stage, a monument they erect, a school or city library

they design: they all speak. And the authors know that these things will be heard by society. However, they don't try to say something that means the same thing to all people all of the time; they know that their readers each find different meanings in their works, that they are used differently and that approaches to their works are determined, in large part, independently from them. They try to accomplish their work as best they can within a given framework.

The authors don't believe in their autonomy. They are aware of their construct, of their dependence upon being seen and their yearning for recognition. They know that their artistic speaking is traced back to their persons and that the listeners always want to understand where the speaking is coming from. And that therefore their persons will be always put into relation to their works. They actively shape this relation! Because they know that it is their work on this relationship that constitutes their authorship. The authors don't hide; they speak loudly and clearly. The contemporary authors are present.

[Exeunt, scripts left behind on the plinths.][110]

Winner's Performance is based on this script, which is held in the hands of the speakers during the performance. After the performance, the script was published in the artist book *If Analyses Could Be Poems ... Works between Text and*

[110] This performance script consists mainly of appropriated text material and contains unlabeled quotes from:

Roland Barthes: *The Pleasure of the Text.* Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.

René Descartes: *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Oxford: University Press, 2008.

Marcel Duchamp: quoted in Robert Genter, *Late Modernism: Art, Culture, and Politics in Cold War America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Theo van Doesburg: Manifesto "The Basis of Concrete Art" quoted in Anna Moszynska, *Abstract Art*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1990.

Gerd de Vries (Ed.): *On Art, Artists' Writings on the Changed Notion of Art After 1965*. Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1974.

Wetterleuchten! Künstler-Manifeste des 20. Jahrhunderts. Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 2000.

The German quotes were translated by Jennifer Taylor.

Performance[111] where it can be read as you just read it here. The only difference is that in the book the text is shown in the form of a scan of the script as it was used.

Since the script was held in the hands of the performers, the viewers of the performance knew that this script already existed before the performance, which means that it can be considered primary in reference to the performance. Furthermore, in the first paragraph of the script it is made clear that the script consists primarily of previously existing text material from other authors. That means that the script is a text that not only refers to other texts, but it also quotes from them. From this one can conclude that the text is not a transcript of an oral speech/gesture. The fact that the script is a text which can be read independently of the performance is demonstrated at the end of the performance again. The performers leave the scripts on the plinths and leave the gallery so that the audience can read the text after the performance, look something up in the text and compare the written words with what they remember of the text heard during the performance.

The performance consists of reading the script aloud, combined with a simple choreography in the space, which is communicated via instructions that can also be read in the script. Through the oral recitation of the written text, through the bodily presence of the performers and through the new contextualization, various shifts in meaning arise. Thus in “Why do I do this?” the word “this” takes on a reference to the space-time of the performance, which obviously differs from the original intention of the author being quoted. The word “I” is appropriated by the performer as well; during the performance it refers to her. The original author means his own art production by the word “this”; in the performance it becomes an indicator of the performance itself. Another example is the assertion “Man should not be present.” The statement, which was meant in the original text categorically and metaphorically, takes on an ironic and humorous meaning in the performance. It is ironic because a person is obviously present, who through his presence foils the statement, and it is humorous because the metaphoric statement appears to be taken literally. These changes of meaning can be associated with the différance of Derrida. They are not in the script or in the performance, but they occur between them: they occur during the performance,

[111] Nein, Lilo, *If Analyses Could Be Poems … Works between Text and Performance*. Vienna: Schlebrügge.Editor, 2013.

because of the (present) text, and in the script, because of the (imagined) performance.

In general différance is a movement in which the production of meaning takes place: the movement between reading and writing. The Derridean game of deconstruction is a conscious fertilization of this movement in this performance script. The notion of translation, which will be elaborated on in the following chapter in order to describe a specific relation between text and performance, necessarily exhibits certain aspects of this différance.

3 Chapter Three: Translation from and into Performances

This chapter is dedicated to the issue of “Translation from and into Performances.” The aim is to find out whether or not translation can be used as a term to designate a non-hierarchical relation between text and performance.

The chapter is divided into seven subchapters. “3.1 Translation” is dedicated to the notion of translation approached from the point of view of the German philosopher, translator and literary critic Walter Benjamin. In order to apply his theory of translation to the research subject of translation from and into performances, the theory of musical reproduction from the German philosopher, sociologist and music theoretician Theodor Adorno will additionally be consulted. Benjamin and Adorno, despite philosophical disagreements, were connected in a lifelong relationship.

In “3.2 Possibilities of an Impossible Status” I will briefly address the hierarchy between text and performance regarding chronology.

In “3.3 Fragments of Translation as Collaboration” I will very briefly take Benjamin’s theory of translation in the context of collaboration into account. Even though fragmentary, I believe that this section on translation and collaboration is important for the articulation of my position.

In “3.4 Reading, Understanding and Interpreting Scores” I turn to the role of understanding and interpreting texts for performances and the role this understanding plays in the performance of the text.

In “3.5 Translation Revisited” I address Adorno’s ideas on translation in relation to musical reproduction and I will compare Adorno’s notion of “objectivity” to Benjamin’s “pure language.”

In “3.6 Afterwardsness” and in “3.7 The Force of Law” I will consider the terms “afterwardsness” and “force of law” by Derrida.

I am aware that Derrida and Benjamin take different perspectives on the meaning of language, text, and translation. I consult both of them, because they teach me varying aspects of an understanding of these notions. I will refer to Benjamin’s “sphere of pure language” and apply it in a speculative way for my own purpose. I approach Benjamin in a poetical sense. In reading his texts, my thoughts are carried

to the places and things he talks about. This poetical approach enters this chapter from time to time.

3.1 Translation

In semiotics, translation is a mode of interpretation that modifies and rewrites a text. A distinction is made between “inner language translation” (*innersprachliche Übersetzung*), “translation between languages” (*zwischensprachliche Übersetzung*) and “inter-semiotic transfer” (*intersemiotische Übertragung*).[112] In the first case, inner language translation, one stays within the same language, but translates a text into other words; an example for this kind of translation is a paraphrase. In the second case, translation between languages, one translates from one language to another language. In the third case, inter semiotic transfer, one translates from one semiotic system to another. Examples are translation from a text of written language into musical or visual language. When one applies semiotic categories, the translation from text into performance and the other way round belongs to the third category.[113]

The essay “The Task of the Translator” by Benjamin was written in 1921 and published two years later as a self-reflective preface to poems by Charles Baudelaire, which Benjamin translated from French to German. In this essay, Benjamin establishes a structure based on three terms: the original text, the translation, the sphere of pure language. According to Benjamin, both the original (which I will refer to as the first text) and the translation (the second text) are connected to the sphere of pure language. “Pure language” is an abstract concept which in Benjamin’s understanding embraces and reconciles all languages.

Regarding the first text, Benjamin differentiates between the “intended object” (the message) and the “mode of intention” (how things are meant). The mode of intention is specific to a certain language, so it cannot be translated. In Benjamin’s view, the message is “inessential.” In his opinion, a translation should not be similar to the original because then only the message, the content, would be translated. And a

[112] Cf. Volli, Ugo, “Die Übersetzungsprozesse,” in: id., *Semiotik. Eine Einführung in die Grundbegriffe.* Tübingen/Basel: A. Franke Verlag, 2002. pp. 239-246, here: p. 239.

[113] From the perspective of semiotics, all media including text and performance are considered texts. Although text can be thought of as performance and performance can be thought of as text, from the perspective of an artist, I differentiate between text and performance.

translation should not be poetical itself, which means that it should not try to be a work of art since this would make the message "inaccurate." From there, Benjamin characterizes an inferior translation as an inaccurate transmission of inessential content.

For Benjamin, a translation is a text in its own right. He liberates it from its likeness to the first text, stating that:

> "… no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife – which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living – the original undergoes a change. Even words with fixed meaning can undergo a maturing process."[114]

The German word that Benjamin uses for "afterlife" is *Fortleben.* It literally means "continuation of life." It does not suggest that something is over, rather it implies a transformation of life. Translations are part of the afterlife of a literary text, meaning that a transformation takes place, which, among other things, is owed to the historical changes of language. Benjamin writes,

> "And even if one tried to turn an author's last stroke of the pen into the *coup de grâce* of his work, this still would not save that dead theory of translation. For just as the tenor and the significance of the great works of literature undergo a complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well."[115]

So a translation not only transfers a text into another language, it also actualizes the text in terms of the historical changes in language as well as the maturing of meaning. A translation adds the differences of languages to the first text, because it makes visible the foreignness of languages, which has to do with their incompleteness. Translation makes perceptible what is *in between* languages and therefore untranslatable.

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[114] Benjamin, Walter, "The Task of the Translator," in: *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings. Vol. 1 1913-1926*. Edited by Marcus Bullock, Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge/Massachusetts/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1996. pp. 253-263, here: p. 256.

[115] Ibid.

In order to examine the central characteristics of translation from and into performance, I would like to review Adorno's considerations in *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction*. The book with this title was published posthumously, and so the theory as such was a group of fragments. In one of them Adorno proposes to:

> "… begin with the question: what is a musical text. No set of performance instructions, no fixing of the imagined, but rather the notation of something objective, a notation that is necessarily fragmentary, incomplete, *in need* of interpretation to the point of ultimate convergence."[116]

Two assumptions here by Adorno are especially relevant for the translation from and into performance: firstly, that those texts which aim to make a staging (in German: *Aufführung*) reproducible necessarily remain fragmentary and in need of interpretation; and secondly, that it is not the function of these texts to fix the imagined. To fix the imagined would mean that an author writing a text can already anticipate the performance – or, in other words, that the text has the ability to fully capture or record, and in turn communicate a preconceived performance.

Authors that intend their texts to be performed take responsibility for their texts, but can they also take responsibility for a performance? That will differ. If the author/artist who writes a text hires performers and works with them together on the performance can directly influence its becoming, then the answer is yes. If the author/artist does not work with the performers, but a performance artist decides for her- or himself to work with a text, or a musician performs a score by a(nother) composer, the performing person assumes responsibility for the performance. Another case is when part of the artistic concept is that the performance is only to be based on decisions made by the performers, and the author/artist does not influence their work even though he/she has selected and hires the performers.

Since a musical text is not a fixing of the imagined, as Adorno states, authors who write texts to be performed (by people other than themselves) cannot fix the text's meaning and determine the outcome even when these authors are involved in the working process. The reason is that the texts themselves must be interpreted (in the

[116] Adorno, Theodor, *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction. Notes, a Draft and Two Schemata*. Malden: Polity Press, 2006. p. 3.

sense of read) before they can be translated or otherwise worked with by the performers.

The moment of interpretation precedes the staging of a text and belongs to the sphere of understanding and reflecting on a text or notation before the actual performance. For example, a musician can read the notation and consider different interpretations of it before playing it. Or, another option is that the text is interpreted in situ: the musician receives the score and plays it without having read it and reflected on it beforehand. In this case the interpretation and the translation fall into one action, and the interpretation is also closely related to improvisation, the act of performing itself. In both cases, the subjectivity of the translator comes into play with/in the interpretation.

Following my own experience of working with performers (including dancers, actors, musicians and audience members), the factor of time also has a decisive impact on the interpretation (reading) of a score. In practice one can deliberately employ this factor and experiment with it, because the same score given to a performer five minutes or two weeks before the performance leads to totally different outcomes. An in situ interpretation is not better or worse than a well-reflected interpretation; improvisation bears its own qualities. Which deployment of time leads to an envisaged outcome depends on the work as well as on the skills of the performer.

The fact that there is always more than one possibility of interpreting and translating a text has a subjective and an objective aspect. The subjective aspect comes into play with the decisions made by the translator (performer), or likewise when improvising in his/her individual style. The objective aspect is owed to culturally and historically shifting meanings, which alter modes of reading and translating a text. One can say that within the act of translation, these different meanings are produced and exhibited at the same time.

In performance practice when both text and performance are present at the same time, or the text is known to the audience, the position of the translator (director, artist or performer) towards the text becomes apparent. For instance, if one knows the text and/or its stagings (*Inszenierungen*) by other directors of a classical theater play one can “read” the position of the director towards the text. A similar phenomenon occurs

in music, when a musician listens to the concert of a score he/she knows well and has played him or herself.

3.2 Possibilities of an Impossible Status

Text and performance can be, and are usually thought of as being hierarchically related to each other, as in the sense of being a means-to-an-end relationship. A means-to-an-end relationship is hierarchical, because the means is not equal to the end. The end is a self-sufficient outcome, which does not need the means in order to be read and understood. In this sense it is autonomous. In art, this implies that the end is considered to be an artwork and the means is merely considered as the working process needed in order to arrive at the work. This is the case when a text leads to a performance, and is a helping device for it, but not an artwork in itself.

In this section, the question is: How is it possible to think of the relation between text and performance in a non-hierarchical way, and what would this require? In a non-hierarchical relation each would stand alone, complete in itself and thus independently readable from the other one. This implies that a text as well as a performance (related to each other) fully expresses its meaning.

The German media and communications theoretician Norbert Bolz and the German-Dutch philosopher Willem van Reijen write about Benjamin's concept, "The talk about the original and the translation suggests that what is called the original is the primary work from which the translation is derived. Were this true at the level of the presentation, then on the other hand it is true that the original itself is a translation."[117]

The reason is that the first text and the translation are both translations (secondary texts) in relation to the sphere of pure language. With regard to this sphere, both are derived, which at the same time means that "in the intention of pure language, original and translation are equally original."[118] Applied to translation from and into performance, Benjamin's argument means that a performance is as primary as the

[117] Bolz, Norbert; Van Reijen, Willem, "Die Magie der Sprache," in: id., *Walter Benjamin*. Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1991. pp. 41-54, here p. 50. Translated by LN.

[118] Ibid., p. 51. Translated by LN.

text preceding it, and the other way round. So, using his notion of translation, one can think of the first and second texts without any hierarchy concerning their status.

The American artist John Cage offers another perspective on the problem of how texts before performances, such as scores, are thought of prior to their performances. In an interview in 1966, he responded to Richard Kostelanetz's question whether someone else performs his role in the concerts or if he has to go on all the tours himself:

> "CAGE: I'm not always present.
>
> KOSTELANETZ: Who is the author of *Variations V* [1965]?
>
> CAGE: It is published under my name.
>
> KOSTELANETZ: Did you conceive all the parts or were they written independently?
>
> CAGE: You haven't seen the score?
>
> KOSTELANETZ: No.
>
> CAGE: Well, the score is *a posteriori* – written after the piece. Do you see the implications of this?
>
> KOSTELANETZ: But then that's not the score.
>
> CAGE: Nonsense, that changes our idea of what a score is. We always thought that it was *a priori* and that the performance was the performance of a score. I switched it completely around so that the score is a report on a performance."[119]

With the term "a posteriori score," Cage questions whether a score necessarily has to be written before a performance. This fundamentally changes the understanding and extends the functions of a score in relation to the performance(s). Cage's term a posteriori score creates an inversion of the relation, previously thought to be stable, between a score and the interpretations derived from it.

[119] Kostelanetz, Richard. "Conversation with John Cage (1968)," in: id., *The Theatre of Mixed-Means*. London: Pitman, 1970. pp. 50-63, here: p. 62.

Applying Cage's thought means that a text written to be performed must not necessarily temporally precede the performance. This also means that the reader (and possibly translator) of a written performance does not necessarily have to know whether the performance already took place, or was only imagined by its author; thus its written form was/is purely projective.

This thought inspired me when I produced the artistic publication *TRANSLATE YOURSELF! A Performance Reader for Staging*[120] in 2009. This publication contains a collection of thirty written performances by visual artists, choreographers and activists. I invited each artist to write a performance using one page. There were no further formal criteria given. The only condition was that the text can be translated into a performance. The published performances can simply be read and imagined, or performed by everyone who wishes to do so.

My idea was that the written performances presented in the publication are at the same time documents of past and scores for future performances to take place. In the book it was not defined, whether or not the performance has already taken place. The very general idea that a text written after a performance can potentially become a textual basis for a(nother) performance again was put into practice. Furthermore, the project gives expression to the ideas that text and performance can enter into a reciprocal relationship with one another without a hierarchy between them, and that the one can be translated into the other. These are ideas to which I return in this dissertation.

I think, even in the case of a text preceding a performance in a specific chronological alignment, one could still argue that there were previous stagings (*Aufführungen*), performances, cultural and historic events, pictures and texts that shaped this text, its meaning and possible performances in an intertextual way. This is certainly true on a theoretical and very general level, and it provides a way of showing that an artistic work is not rooted in itself; it has its origin in other works preceding it, with which it is connected and related. But still this does not say anything specific about the relation one text has to another one.

[120] Lilo, Nein (Ed.), *TRANSLATE YOURSELF! A Performance Reader for Staging,* Vienna: Self-published, 2009.

So if a (first) text does something to a second one, how can a second text be considered valuable for the first one? In other words: if the first text has an impact on a second one (or on a performance), how is it possible to think this the other way round? Adorno states, “The musical work undergoes similar change through being heard, renowned, exhausted, to the image under the scrutiny of the countless people who have pored over it.”[121]

The scrutiny, which in German is *Blick* (“*unter den Blicken der Unzähligen die darüber gegangen*”[122]), can be understood as the reception. This means that an artistic work undergoes a change because of its reception, because of being viewed, heard and read. Reception is more general than interpretation; interpretation is a specific form. Adorno’s statement is reminiscent of Benjamin’s comments on the transformation of language and the maturing process of literary works over time which shapes the translation. The only difference here is that Adorno does not refer to another medium in which these changes become visible.

If one regards artworks, here, performances, as not independent of their reception, and more specifically even of their interpretation, it is possible to understand a text that was written after a staging (*Aufführung*) for the purpose of restaging (*Wiederaufführung, Wiederaufnahme*) as an update of the performance via a score, as being analogous to Benjamin’s transformation and maturing process of words.

Production and interpretation of art appear in a reciprocal light here; this provides a good basis for a non-hierarchical way of thinking about text and performance relations. So, the interpretation can, under certain circumstances, be the actualization of a thought that precedes the artistic work. In other words, each translation retrospectively inscribes itself as a possible interpretation of the first text into its history which is a history of interpretation.

I conclude from this that in the context of translation from and into performance, not only the one who writes a score bears responsibility for the possible outcomes, but also the one who receives and performs it. As Adorno writes, the reason is that these (musical) texts are *in need* of being interpreted, and with this interpretation, the

[121] Adorno, op. cit., p. 5.

[122] Adorno, Theodor, *Zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Reproduktion. Aufzeichnungen, ein Entwurf und zwei Schemata.* Fragment gebliebene Schriften, Vol. 2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001. p. 14.

translator/performer takes responsibility of his/her interpretation and becomes its author.

So if one thinks of writing and performing not as mutually exclusive positions, but as structurally exchangeable positions, one can think of production and interpretation, and of writing and translating in non-hierarchical terms. (Even though this stays on a theoretical level which not necessarily meets the social and institutional realities in which art is produced and shown.) In the words of the contemporary philosopher Jacques Rancière: "It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story. An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators."[123]

How though do performance and text see this problem themselves? Is the community of spectators the answer to their equal relationship, or are there still other points open to debate?

I eavesdropped on a conversation between text and performance, in which they negotiated their status and discussed the questions that came along with it. I will try to reproduce it as well as I can remember.

Text sees a Performance of himself and is pleased. He sees himself reflected in her, and almost feels a bit flattered. He likes her and wants to meet her. Performance doesn't even know he exists, let alone that he is here this evening. After the show, he approaches her. When she sees him, she is irritated and doesn't really know what to make of him.
TEXT: Hello, Performance! Delighted to meet you. Let me introduce myself: I am the Text.

PERFORMANCE: Um, hello, Text. Yes, well, as you obviously already know: I am the Performance. Or, to be more precise, I am *a* performance.

TEXT: No need to be so humble! You were fabulous. I really recognized myself in you.

PERFORMANCE: What do you mean you recognized yourself? I didn't even know you, I don't recognize you, and you can't possibly recognize me.

[123] Rancière, Jacques, "The Emancipated Spectator," in: id., *The Emancipated Spectator*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. London: Verso, 2009. pp. 1-23, here: p. 22.

TEXT: I didn't mean to question your independence. I would never do that. You are absolutely unique.

PERFORMANCE: Yes, that's what I think, too. But I don't need you to remind me of that. And you? Who are you? You saw me and immediately thought you knew me.

TEXT: I just wanted to show my appreciation for the wonderful performance.

PERFORMANCE: Good. But I also want to learn something about you.

TEXT: Yes, well, I am a performance.

PERFORMANCE: Hmm, you too, then? With all due respect, I see a text here before me.

TEXT: That's right. Well observed. But in principle, I'm actually a performance.

PERFORMANCE: Just now you implied that I was derived from you. And now you admit not existing without me. Very funny! By the way, I am also a text. So we no longer need to talk about mistaken identities … We could actually get along with each other.

3.3 Fragments of Translation as Collaboration

In this section translation will be interpreted as collaboration. For this purpose one more passage from Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator," will be consulted. Benjamin writes:

> "Whereas content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds. For it signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien. ... For any translation of a work originating in a specific stage of linguistic history represents, in regard to a specific aspect of its content, translation into all other languages. Thus translation, ironically, transplants the original into a

more definitive linguistic realm, since it can no longer be displaced by a secondary rendering."[124]

It is remarkable that is not poetry or art (in its original form), but the translation that inhabits the more definite linguistic realm. Concerning artistic practice, I think that the state of a translation in which content and language do not form a unity has a potential that directly points to collaboration. The translator here is someone who collaborates either with the text of another author or with the author/artist directly. The third option is that the collaboration involves the meta-position of a choreographer, director or conductor who is in charge of giving their interpretation of the text in order to be performed by actors, dancers, or musicians. In this case, the author of the text is often not involved in the collaboration.

The German literary scholar Uwe Steiner writes about Benjamin: "Like the philosophy of language in a narrower sense dating back to the middle of the 18th century, Benjamin considers language not as a means of communication, but as a constitutive condition of thinking."[125]

In the context of collaboration-based performance practice, language has both functions: it is a condition of thinking as well as a means for communicating tasks or ideas to performers. As a condition of thinking, artistic language, including an individual's personal vocabulary used to describe it, is the condition of developing artistic work.

Whereas in individual art practice a concept can be directly performed by the author/artist, in collaborative work communication plays a major part: each working step must be communicated beforehand; it may be executed by someone else or implemented together. In both cases, there has to be a shared language, which is not merely to say there is communication. In interdisciplinary collaborative work, which performances often are, and in which, for example, musicians, dancers and visual artists communicate with each other in order to realize a work together, each discipline has its own (technical) language and terminology. In such working

[124] Benjamin, op. cit. p. 258.

[125] Steiner, Uwe, "Die Magie der Sprache," in: id., *Walter Benjamin*. Stuttgart Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2004. pp. 43-50, here: p. 46. Translated by LN.

processes, one has to translate the tasks and ideas between the languages or create one shared language among the collaborators.

From an overall societal standpoint, the Italian philosopher Paolo Virno argues that work has recently become more and more collaboration-based in general. In his view, language has become a more and more important means of production and is at the same time one of the common places that serve to give the multitude a shelter in times of precarity. Virno writes:

> "… that the communication industry (or rather, the spectacle, or even yet, the culture industry) is an industry among others, with its specific techniques, its particular procedures, its peculiar profits, etc.; on the other hand, it also plays the role of industry of the means of production … However, in a situation in which the means of production are not reducible to machines but consist of linguistic-cognitive competencies inseparable from living labor, it is legitimate to assume that a conspicuous part of the so-called 'means of production' consists of techniques and communicative procedures."[126]

The fact that contemporary labor invests linguistic-cognitive competencies is highly relevant and true for performers understood as laborers in the art field.

3.4 Reading, Understanding and Interpreting Scores

The following section is dedicated to the question: Can one interpret a score in any way one likes or are there right ways of reading it? I do not want to open the whole field of hermeneutics here, but I feel the urge to quickly jump into the question of understanding and then out of it again.

In general one can say that the more open a score is, the stronger the question arises as to what degree a text has the potential to determine a performance. In other words, how much leeway for interpretation does the text offer?

Although Adorno believes in a polyvalence of musical texts, he would clearly say, no, one cannot interpret a score in any way one likes. The interesting point concerning

[126] Virno, Paolo, *A Grammar of the Multitude. For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004. https://libcom.org/library/4-labor-action-intellect-day-two, no page reference: "4.6. Language on the stage."

Adorno's position here is the explanation he gives for it: Adorno thinks that polyvalence is not produced through the interpretation, but is found in the texts themselves. That is to say, the interpreter reads it out of the texts, not into them. Adorno states, "There is such a thing as *genuine* textual polyvalence, i.e. several objectively immanent interpretations, but even the polyvalence is *determinate*,"[127] and further he explains, "The subjective component of objectivity is interpretation."[128]

Here Adorno's perspective starts to become even more interesting, and questions such as, "What role does the understanding of a score play in this context?," and "Does one have to be able to recognize, name and list the various possibilities of interpretation, in order to subjectively choose one?," become even more burning.

Let us first quickly look into what "understanding" means. (In the next section under the heading "Translation Revisited" this thought of Adorno will be returned to in detail.) Gadamer for whom hermeneutics is the universal phenomenon of understanding writes: "The nature of the hermeneutical experience is not that something is outside and desires admission. Rather, we are possessed by something and precisely by means of it we are opened up for the new, the different, the true."[129] Following Gadamer, the hermeneutical experience does not mean that something outside aims to enter "our" inside. The aim of understanding is not for something external, or other, to become internal and one's own.

This also means that reading does not necessarily lead to understanding, unlike repeated reading which at some point leads to knowing a text, at least a word or sentence, by heart. The second happens automatically. One cannot do much for or against it. But one cannot actively bring about understanding. In this regard understanding differs from knowledge, which can be collected and actively appropriated. Knowledge is a form of ***technē.*** This ***technē*** provides the condition for artistic work and understanding, and in the research context, specifically for reading and interpreting a script or a score. A musician, for example, must be able to read

[127] Adorno, op. cit., p. 65.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem (1966)," in: id., *Philosophical Hermeneutic*. Edited and translated by David A. Linge. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1976. pp. 3-17, here: p. 9.

sheet music, be familiar with certain styles, have technical knowledge about the instrument which she or he plays, and so on.

However, understanding comprises other dimensions as well. It takes place on various levels simultaneously: conscious, unconscious, intuitive, rational, subjective and personal (or individual). In contrast to knowledge, understanding is something that can be actively searched for, but not actively found. Rather, it finds us: it gets us when we are brushing our teeth, in our dreams or while joking, and suddenly we understand what the artist or the philosopher meant.

Since understanding always also takes place unconsciously and intuitively, it will never be utterly alienable. At least a part remains unnamable. That is to say, one can explain the facts, the historical context, the content of a text or an image, but understanding something while reading or watching is an experience everyone must make for themselves. So, understanding is thus necessarily more than its namable parts or aspects of communicable knowledge. What I would like to describe as understanding is something that can neither be displayed nor proven, neither controlled nor measured. For reading and interpreting scores, understanding in this sense as well as aspects of knowledge and *technē* are needed.

3.5 Translation Revisited

Adorno, in his theory of musical reproduction, also refers to Benjamin's theory of translation. At one point, he writes: "One can apply what Benjamin remarks concerning the relationship between literature and translation, where he develops the idea of the 'original', to music: '… in living on, which would be a meaningless phrase if it were not the transformation and renewal of something alive, the original changes'".[130]

Adorno quotes Benjamin in order to explain that changes in musical works signify more than the fact that the same symbols are interpreted differently at different times. Analogous to Benjamin's considerations concerning the "living on" of literary works, Adorno suggests, in regard to musical works and their notation that not only the use of symbols changes over time: "In truth, the change undergone by the works goes far

[130] Adorno, op. cit., p. 191.

beyond this. It affects the music itself through the character of the score's appearance and dissolves the notion of something absolute and timeless that is meant by the written notes."[131]

But at another point, Adorno introduces a difference between translation and musical reproduction:

> "The fundamental difference between musical reproduction and translation from a foreign language, however, lies in the fact that music requires interpretation to this day, whereas literature has no need of a translator. An untranslated poem loses nothing of its beauty, and it should sooner fear – to follow the pun – the *traduttore* as a *traditore* than make use of him. A score, however, which is radically removed from the possibility of its performance at once seems senseless in itself."[132]

Adorno means that music requires interpretation in order to be received, whereas literary texts can be received through reading (in the original language).

The Italian word *traduttore* means translator, while *traditore* is traitor. So translation thus also implies a danger. However, this danger as an intentional act of the translator is not of relevance here. Rather, the following will be dedicated to investigating the difference that Adorno introduces between the Benjaminian conceptualization of translation and his own theory of musical reproduction. To do so, I will first go back to Benjamin, and thereafter work out what these theories have in common.

Undoubtedly, there are an endless amount of differences between music and poetry, but still I would like to argue that there is an *equal necessity* for *living on*.[133] When Adorno writes that what Benjamin says about translation is valid for music, he cites Benjamin at precisely the point at which Benjamin speaks about the "living on":

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[131] Ibid., p. 191.

[132] Ibid., p. 166f.

[133] The German word *Fortleben* is translated as "living on" in the English translation used by Wieland Hoban who translated Adorno's theory. He used: Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations.* Translated by Harry Zohn, 1942, in: *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, Vol. 1 1913-1926.* 1996. pp. 253-263. In this version *Fortleben* is translated as "afterlife" as previously used. In the following, the words "living on" will be used.

Poetry needs translation for the sake of remaining vital. Just as music lives on through its performances, literary work survives and is spread through translation.

According to Benjamin, translation is a form, a proper form. “If translation is a form, translatability must be an essential feature of certain works.”[134] This, however, does not mean that a translation has an effect on an original text once it takes place: “It is evident that no translation … can have any significance as regards the original.”[135] According to Benjamin the translation means nothing for the original. So, from the perspective of the first text, it is true that translations are not needed, as Adorno points out.

Yet the situation is different when looking from the perspective of the second text. Through translations literary works are updated – in Benjamin’s words “actualized.” Translation actualizes the original text from the perspective of the other language, and in this regard the translation means something for the living on of texts.

Furthermore, Benjamin sees a functionality of translation that is not found in the relation to the first text, but is found in the inner relation between the languages. He writes about translations: “In them the life of the original attains its latest, continually renewed, and most complete unfolding.”[136] Even if this unfolding does not mean anything for the first text, because it does not affect it, the translation “ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the innermost relationship of languages to our answer.”[137] Translations cannot “reveal” or “establish” this inner relationship between languages, “but it can represent it by realizing it,”[138] which means that “languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express.”[139] Kinship among languages does not consist of the similarity of poems or words, for Benjamin: this interrelatedness is a kinship which is supra-historical and based on the fact that “in every one of them as a whole, one and the same thing is meant. Yet this one thing is

[134] Benjamin, op. cit., p. 254.

[135] Ibid., p. 254.

[136] Ibid., p. 255.

[137] Ibid., p. 255.

[138] Ibid., p. 255.

[139] Ibid., p. 255.

achievable not by any single language, but only by the totality of their intentions supplementing one another: the pure language."[140] So whereas individual elements, such as words and sentences, are mutually exclusive in different languages, the intentions complement one another, according to Benjamin.

This also concerns the task of the translator: "Just as translation is a form of its own, so, too, may the task of the translator be regarded as distinct and clearly differentiated from the task of the poet."[141] Following Benjamin, this consists "in finding the particular intention toward the target language which produces in that language the echo of the original."[142] The intention of the poet is "spontaneous, primary, manifest; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational,"[143] he writes. The task of the translator is one in which "the languages themselves, supplemented and reconciled in their way of meaning, draw together."[144]

In Benjamin's theory, besides the first text and the translation there is a third element, the sphere of pure language, which is located at a superior place. To this place the other two, the first text and the translation, are both equally related.

Hereafter, I will show that this superior place, which builds the sphere of pure language in Benjamin's theory, also exists in Adorno's considerations on musical reproduction. Based on this, I will argue that "Benjamin's" literary texts need translation in regard to their living on just as much as "Adorno's" musical texts need their performances – that is to say, their translation to music.

I cite Adorno in order to go to this superior place (again): "There is such a thing as *genuine* textual polyvalence, i.e. several objectively immanent interpretations, but even the polyvalence is *determinate* … The subjective component of objectivity is interpretation."[145] So, the subjective component, the interpretation, is the manner in which the (polyvalent) musical texts are performed, translated to performances. But why is this objective?

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[140] Ibid., p. 257.

[141] Ibid., p. 258.

[142] Ibid., p. 258.

[143] Ibid., p. 259.

[144] Ibid., p. 259.

[145] Adorno, op. cit., p. 65.

I interpret Adorno's perspective as follows: interpretation is objective insofar as the subjective is included in the objective. This is to say, insofar as the subjective is a part of the objective. This is, however, not to be understood in the sense of quantity, but rather in the sense of a relationship to the objective that arises in the act of interpretation. The interpretation is subjective, but only in relation to the objective; it is the subjective part *of* the objective.

In other words, the objective, which is contained in musical texts as polyvalence, is not tangible in this form, and thus needs the subjective act of interpretation. This is crucial for Adorno's considerations. Musical performances are necessary for the objectivity (of musical texts) to appear, and which can only appear as the subjective of the objective, i.e. as a part of itself, which at once means the whole; the subjective is a part and not a characteristic of the objective.

The same is true for poems and translations in regard to pure language. Translations are necessary forms of the appearance of this "language of languages." This is the place that seems familiar with Benjamin. What Adorno means by "objectivity" Benjamin calls the sphere of "pure language." This is the place to which the first text and the translation, and the musical text and the performance are equally related.

Pure language comprises all possible languages in the same manner as the objective comprises the subjective. The subjective is thus dependent on the objective. Earlier, it was said that the objective is dependent on the subjective as well. The objective does not just exist somewhere, but it needs interpretation to emerge.

When Adorno writes: "A score, however, which is radically removed from the possibility of its performance at once seems senseless in itself,"[146] he does not neglect the fact that one can read scores as well. He, himself, proposes to introduce "the mere *reading* of music as a conceptual extreme."[147] Provided one is knowledgeable about notation, one can imagine the music and hear it in one's inner ear without physically playing the notes. But while he considers reading "enough" for poems, this does not count for music. This is because Adorno locates the nature of music in musical reproduction, that is to say, between the musical text and the

[146] Ibid., p. 166f.

[147] Ibid., p. 5.

performance of the music. A score that is not performed is senseless in regard to its nature, which is not found merely in playing, nor in writing/composing music. It unfolds itself in the relations between musical texts and performances.

This also means that neither playing nor writing music stand for themselves, which leads to the paradoxical structure of the previously analyzed equality of text and performance, of the first and the second text. The paradox exists in the simultaneous autonomy (independence) and dependence of both sides on one another.

Adorno's need of musical texts – "The necessity of interpretation [which] manifests itself as the neediness of musical texts"[148] – can be understood as the need of being received. Although interpretation is a specific form of reception, one can say that each form of art needs to be received. This reception has to "materialize" itself, it has to take shape in a form or medium in order to participate in the living on of an artistic work. Be it in the form of a translation, a poem or a critique which enters into dialogue with the first text – there is no living on without a manifestation of itself.

From this perspective, the difference is not that musical texts have to be played and poems read. Rather, reception is a part of both, and reading is the precondition for musical interpretation as well.

I will summarize what has been said. From my perspective, the general equality of translation towards its first text and of the musical performance towards its score derives from their connectedness to an undefined place, which both sides equally share. Benjamin calls this undefined space "pure language" and Adorno "objectivity."

This general equality has a paradoxical structure in itself, which is based on autonomy and dependency. Musical texts and performances, as well as poems and translations, are autonomous in the sense of being proper forms, as Benjamin calls them. This autonomy is owed to the fact that the first, as well as the second text/performance, are independently receivable as such: one does not need to know the original poem or score in order to read the translation or listen to the concert, although reading and listening are different forms of reception.

The dependency among the two sides emerges in regard to the nature of music, which takes place in the relation between musical text and the interpretation of it, as

[148] Ibid., p. 180.

Adorno writes. In my opinion, the same is true for texts and their relation to translations, because the nature of language also unfolds in the relationships between languages, according to Benjamin.

Considering this paradoxical structure, texts and performances can be seen as equal, and texts after performances can be thought of as potential texts before performances.

Based on this equality, one can think of an equal relationship between texts and performances in visual art. This certainly do not hold up for all texts connected to performances. The announcement text of a performances is not equal to the artwork and independent of the performance itself. But I think this theoretical possibility can be considered for texts whose relationship to performances is intrinsic, in other words which have the potential t become performances and at the same time can be read independently from them.

In the context of visual art, this living on of performances is given in the form of exhibitions, performance documentation, videos circulating on the Internet, and through restagings and reenactments. Likewise, the living on of texts to be performed is given by performances.

I would like to come back to the initial question concerning the role of the need to understand a text to be performed for the interpretation/translation. Adorno would probably say that this understanding is connected to objectivity and Benjamin would say it is connected to the sphere of pure language. From my perspective, understanding is connected to an undetermined place. This, however, does not mean that it is not relevant; on the contrary, since understanding takes place at this undetermined place it cannot be pointed out – it can only be pointed to.

3.6 Afterwardsness

Under chapter three's heading "Translation from and into Performances," use was made of Benjamin's theory of translation and Adorno's theory of musical reproduction. Benjamin speaks about translation from one language into another; both have the form of text. Adorno speaks about the reproduction of music on the basis of musical texts and their performances.

In order to understand my own concerns and to write the first part of this chapter, I brought together these two theories. Since Adorno's writing remained in fragments and partly repeated itself in the German edition, I worked with the fragments that I was intrigued by and did not read the whole book at once. When I went back to Adorno's writings after a while, I read his considerations in regard to the context that I had established for myself, namely in connection to Benjamin's theory of translation. Bearing this in mind, I had the feeling they were speaking about similar things at some points, which brought me to the idea of searching for a key word that registered in all of the passages in which the name "Walter Benjamin" is mentioned. In this way, I discovered that Adorno had made the connection to Benjamin's theory of translation himself,[149] and my intuition had been correct.

At that point, I could have gone back to the already written section about translation and placed the quote at the spot where Adorno states that one can think of musical reproduction as being parallel to Benjamin's theory of translation. This would have had the effect that my own act of (violently) reading them together would be legitimized for the reader from the beginning. Not doing this has had another effect, one that could be described by the term "afterwardsness."[150]

Afterwardsness means that one event changes (the meaning of) another event that happened in the past. It is a logic of time that does not follow chronology. In chronology, a first event is the *cause* of a second event, and has certain effects on it. This cause-effect logic of chronology implies a hierarchy of first and second: the first can exist without the second, but not the other way round, a point that has already been spoken about.

Afterwardsness enables one to dissolve this hierarchy and is therefore especially interesting for performance and all the issues involved in writing it which are haunted by the logic of chronology. The term afterwardsness provides a logic of time with which to think about the relation of text and performance without the hierarchization that "the first" and "the second" implies. It explains the fact that a second event can change the meaning of the first one which explains that the performance (of a text) can change the meaning of the text itself.

[149] Adorno makes other parallels to Benjamin's theory and philosophy of language, which will not be discussed here.

[150] Afterwardsness is a temporal logic discovered by Sigmund Freud in the case of Emma Eckstein. It was used and radicalized by Jacques Lacan, among others.

For this text here, afterwardsness means that finding the connection between Adorno's considerations and Benjamin's theory of translation changes the meaning of what is written above in section "3.1 Translation." It also sheds light on the previously quoted passage from Adorno: "The musical work undergoes similar change through being heard, renowned, exhausted, to the image under the scrutiny of the countless people who have pored over it."[151]

3.7 The Force of Law

In the following, Derrida's notion of "the force of law" will be introduced and applied to the research topic. In order to explain some terms around and key points crucial to the Derridean force of law I will return again to Benjamin.

Benjamin's text "The Task of the Translator" was written in 1921. That same year, he wrote the essay "Critique of Violence."[152] The main issue of the latter text is defining a critique of violence (*Gewalt*) in relation to law (*Recht*) and justice (*Gerechtigkeit*). The German word *Gewalt* not only means violence and force, but also has the connotation of ruling (*walten*). In German, law is *Gesetz*, and it is used in the sense of law as well as in the sense of right (*Recht*). The German word for justice *Gerechtigkeit* includes the word *Recht*. It literally means something like "the realized right/law."

For Benjamin, *Gewalt* (violence, force) executed by individuals or by the state in order to implement the constitution and enforce the law is unjust. For Benjamin, only the messianic force which removes violence itself from history can be just.

Derrida suggests a quite different analysis of the relationships between law, justice and *Gewalt*. In his essay "Force of Law,"[153] he critiques (and deconstructs) Benjamin's view. Derrida interprets justice as a law to be realized, but can never be fully realized. It has an aporetic structure. But the aim here is not to analyze the differences between Benjamin's and Derrida's approach; rather, my interest is in

[151] Adorno, op. cit., 2006. p. 5.

[152] Benjamin, Walter, "Zur Kritik der Gewalt," in: id., *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und andere Aufsätze*. First Edition, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965. pp. 29-65.

[153] Derrida, Jacques, "Force of Law. The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" in: id., *Acts of Religion*. Edited by Gil Anidjar. New York/London: Routlege, 2002. pp. 228-298.

what the law and its force (*Kraft*) mean for the relation of text and performance in general and for translation specifically.

Derrida considers not only the constitution, but also, in the broadest sense the law "of which it is hard to say whether it is a rule of decorum, politeness, the law of the strongest [*la loi du plus fort*], or the equitable law [*loi*] of democracy."[154] According to him, enforcing the law is a necessary *Gewalt*, and force is necessarily inherent to law: it must be enforceable. Derrida writes, "The word 'enforceability' … reminds us that there is no law that does not imply *in itself, a priori, in the analytical structure of its concept*, the possibility of being enforced, applied by a force."[155]

This force can be "direct or indirect, physical or symbolic, exterior or interior, brutal or subtly discursive – even hermeneutic."[156] To apply the law by force means to interpret the general rule and apply it to a specific case. This application to a specific case necessarily implies the deviation from this general aspect. In turn, to abstract from specific cases in order to make it a general law includes a force too. Through its application the law itself necessarily gets trespassed. It represents itself in the deviation from itself, which is to say in the application.

Benjamin writes, in order to comprehend the form of translation, "one must go back to the original, for the laws governing the translation lie within the original, contained in the issue of its translatability."[157] Translatability is the precondition of translation, and the law of translatability is the precondition of translatability. The law of translatability is in the first text, it does not lie behind or before it (for example, in Benjamin's sphere of pure language). It can be understood as the structure that provides the possibility of understanding a text, and is thus the precondition of translation. Through the translation this structure can be made visible, likewise through writing in the sense of the Derridean game, or in the artistic context through the performance of a text.

In the context of translation from and into performances, the application of translatability as well as the application of the force of law is in the translation itself. However, the law of translatability and the force of law is not the same. Whereas the

[154] Ibid., p. 232.

[155] Ibid., p. 233.

[156] Ibid., p. 233.

[157] Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," op. cit., p. 254.

law of translatability is the structure of a text (which Derrida and Plato speak of as “game”), the force of law is something more general. It is what is made out of this structure. The force of law is the precondition of language in general and of text specifically.

So, the law governing translatability is, to a certain degree, connected to the authorship of the writer of the text and to the intention. The force of law in a text (to be translated or performed) is not connected to the intention of the writer nor to the activity of writing. It is a general characteristic of text that enables it to be read, translated and performed and brings with it the authorship of the interpreters.

According to Derrida, the law gains its force through its application and the interpretation trespassing it. In other words, a text as law gains its force through the action of being applied. In my field of interest, text gains its force from a performance that realizes it, which is its enforcement, application, interpretation and specific case.

Furthermore, one could say that the force of law is specific to texts that must be enforced, applied, performed or otherwise translated to actions, and thus can be understood as the movement between text and performance. The force of law is the eventful aspect of the relation between text and performance in general, which can be found in translation specifically.

Conclusions

First Conclusion

The first conclusion is that one can roughly differentiate relations between texts and performances of extrinsic and of intrinsic nature. Extrinsic relations are external relations in which text and performance stay besides each other and come together only in the reception, as in the case of most paratexts. Intrinsic relations are inner relations of texts and performances; as in the case of scores which reach far into the performances themselves. Intertextuality in general as well all the texts that are written before a performance with the aim of being performed belong to this category. In the case of intrinsic relations, we can speak of *interrelations* between text and performance.

Second Conclusion

The second conclusion, which I consider to be more important, is that texts have two functions in relation to performances: an interpretative function and a recording function.

The interpretative function explains the potential of a text to be read in different ways. This potential was emphasized by post-structuralist thinkers like Derrida. [158] It can be identified in a broad sense with the Derridean notions of dissemination, iterability, différance, force of law and game. These terms all stress the idea that text has a meaning which cannot be determined by the author and her or his intention. The interpretative function means the potential of being read, and this includes generating meaning beyond the intention of the author, that is, it is caused by the subjectivity of the performers and/or by the inner logic of a text. The meaning of a text to be performed lies in its potential performances and is made visible through them and amongst others in collaboration-based performance practices.

The recording function means the ability to store, fix, represent and maintain information about a performance. This function plays a role in communicating the

[158] It was emphasized not only by Derrida, but by other post-structuralist thinkers like Roland Barthes, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva as well.

concept, the intention, images and/or thoughts that an artist has of an upcoming performance, and potentially enables its reproduction; further, it enables one to "record" a received performance or aspects of it in the form of descriptions, reports or audio/visual recordings.

The specific concern of this dissertation has been to answer the question whether it is possible to conceive of the relation between text and performance as non-hierarchical or not. The general conclusion is that a non-hierarchical relation between text and performance is practically and theoretically possible. But this is only valid in regard to the interpretative function of texts related to performances. In order to answer this question it is was necessary to distinguish between the recording function and the interpretative function.

Like literary texts, texts related to performances can have an autonomous status and be read as unconnected to the performance it is referring to. This counts for texts that have the interpretative function. The fact that a text can be read in itself, and be further developed through interpretation (or translation) makes something autonomous out of it.

Texts that have the function of recording (information about) a performance do not have an autonomous status. They refer to what they attempt to represent and fix it. The recording function makes something secondary out of a text. It cannot be read in the sense of being interpreted beyond the scope of the recorded performances.

For realizing performances, both the recording function, which maintains, and the interpretative function, which generates, are necessary, often at the same time. For example, the generative rule "Whenever someone looks at you, start to sing," appeared in the performance,[159] together with the text to be sung. This text is written down in order to be maintained. Besides the fact that for the production of a performance texts from both categories are often needed, there are also some cases in which both functions appear in one text, and determined elements and open elements are combined with each other.

Moreover, these functions themselves cannot always be clearly separated; there are transitions, variations, combinations and gradual differences. Their purpose often lies

[159] "Self-Portrait," Lilo Nein; shown within the exhibition *Self-Timer Stories* at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (MUSAC) in 2015. https://vimeo.com/user68591043

somewhere in between determining how a performance should look or sound, and making this act reproducible on the one hand, and on the other, producing a score or a text that is open to interpretation and improvisation, and thus triggering as many different performances as possible. However, usually it is possible to say which of the functions is more prevalent in a text.

Third Conclusion

The third and last conclusion is that a categorical division into texts before performances and texts after performances does not necessarily make sense. The aim of describing a past performance is akin to the aim of determining a future performance and/or making it reproducible. Although the purpose of maintaining an existing performance differs from generating something that is not imagined and/or has not happened yet, writing is neutral in regard to the material it captures. For writing it makes no difference whether the material is derived from the physical world (the sensible) or from thought or imagination (the intelligible). Therefore it does not matter whether or not a performance has already been performed, and likewise whether a score is written a priori or a posteriori. This neutrality is not dependent on the function; it applies to the recording function and likewise to the interpretative function.

In closing, I briefly want to recall the most important connections between these conclusions and the literature I have drawn upon. Concerning understanding the role of the recording and the interpretative function of texts, Plato and Derrida were the most important sources. In *Phaidros* Plato points out that one cannot rely on the recording function of writing, and that writing also has an interpretative function that we should be aware of. In “Plato’s Pharmacy,” Derrida deconstructs the recording function of writing. He emphatically points to the interpretative function, which he describes as being in the form of a “game,” and which he applies in his own text through his way of writing.

For determining the specific characteristics of texts related to performances such as scores, instructions and rules, Derrida’s notion of the force of law provided valuable insights. One key characteristic of text to be performed is the fact that they define

themselves via the praxis of their "applications," that is to say through their performances. The force of law emphasizes the eventful aspect of the relation between texts and performances, which also applies to translation.

Translation was used as a term to designate a non-hierarchical relation between text and performance, which is possible, but only in relation to the sphere of what Benjamin calls "pure language," and which I interpret as being an undeterminable place. The use of the term translation is possible, but not necessary after all. Rather, the places where the equality of texts and performances could be encountered is simply reading, understanding and interpreting that is enabled by the non-intentional aspect of writing – which is a future place to go from here.

The last conclusion I would like to draw concerns my artistic position. This research, including all the components of: 1. reading theory and engaging into a written dialogue with them from the perspective and experience of my artistic practice, as well as 2. to realize research-related projects, and to design and implement the final artistic project, as well as to give presentations during these processes in the PhDArts program and the feedback thereof, has brought me to the conclusion that I perform different roles in relation to the text I write.

Epilogue

TEXT: Yes, I admit that we first had to get to know each other. Or better still: to learn to love one another. After all, we could really use each other's help! Side by side, each as the complement of the other. Isn't that a nice thought?

PERFORMANCE: Well, if that is all our relationship is going to be about ... I, for one, certainly imagined love to be something completely different! What do I need a text tugging[160] at me for when I'm already a text myself?

TEXT: You're right. Why should I love a performance when I myself am a performance? And if I'm so wrapped up in self-love, then who will love you?

[160] The text was originally written in German language. In German, *ziehen* means "to tug." It is part of the word *Beziehung*, which means relation or love affair. *Beziehung* literally means to be related to one another (*aufeinander bezogen sein*).

PERFORMANCE: Admittedly, in the act of performance I am you; you appear in me. However, we are not united from the start. You should think about that.

TEXT: Are you talking about a separation?

PERFORMANCE: I just want to say that you were not already me before me. That's why we could only get to know each other before you saw me. Maybe we should go have a drink, and you can tell me about you and I can tell you about me.

TEXT: I don't understand. How am I supposed to recognize you before you exist? And don't tell me that that won't be a problem for me.

PERFORMANCE: That's just what I wanted to tell you, and one more thing as well: As long as you don't start thinking for yourself, I will always have existed in your imagination long before we met.

TEXT: I don't want to dream you up for myself. And I don't want you to appear for me. I wish we could agree on a place where you could reveal yourself. I just want to know where I can wait for you.

PERFORMANCE: I can tell you the place. It will be the place where you would still have been Performance and I would still have been Text.

TEXT: Okay. Then you'll wait for me there, and I will rediscover myself in you.

Summary

In art history, performance is categorized as performance art and defined as live-act. However, performance is no longer conceived of by artists as live-act only. Rather, the art of producing performances, according to artists, also includes considerations of their documentation and mediatization. In these contexts a paratextual perspective would enable considering documentation practices as part of performance art, which would also mean to acknowledge that performance is a practice associated with other practices that go beyond the enactment or staging which precedes or follows it.

I have attempted to show that performances cannot be thought of as independent of their documentation anymore, and thus this documentation has implications for the performances themselves. The first reason is that performance artists nowadays produce or conceptualize documentation themselves. Performance documentation therefore enters into performances' production. Second, it enters the reception of the performance, and impacts the interpretation of the situation.

It is my claim that the potential of performance in visual art lies exactly in this ability to divest itself of a stable medial identity. This is going one step further, because it is to say that performance does not only have the practical need, but also the general potential to connect itself with other media, such as texts and audiovisual records.

Performances in visual art cannot be viewed as distinct from the intermedial and paratextual issues with which they are connected. They engage, intermingle and enter into reciprocal relationships with these issues. So, one should understand performances in and through their relations to texts.

In writing this dissertation and investigating these relations, I carried the questions that I had in my artistic practice into various theoretical fields. More specifically, I searched *where* in theory my questions had previously been addressed, and I engaged in a dialogue with these points. This process led to my conclusions.

The conclusion that texts have a recording as well as an interpretative function in relations to performances first enhance the understanding of my artistic practice, and second I hope they will also contribute to an enhanced understanding of text and performance relations in general.

After I carried the questions *from* my artistic practice *into* various theoretical fields for the written part, the idea for the practical project was to carry the insights gained *from* the theoretical work back *into* artistic practice. Besides “testing” the recording and interpretative function, the project engages with the reception of the “living on” of an art work. The crucial role of reception and of interpretation in the after- and continued life of an art work, which unexpectedly entered the research through reading Benjamin and Adorno, is played with and given material form in the project. This I consider as the final step in closing the circle of my research, which started from my individual artistic practice and – through a dialogue with other fields – has returned to that practice, while opening the practice up to a new and broader dimension. The aim of the artistic project is not to illustrate the research, but to once again enter unknown terrain in order to raise new questions for new research endeavours.

Dutch Summary

In de kunstgeschiedenis is performance-kunst gecategoriseerd en gedefinieerd als live-act. Performance wordt door kunstenaars evenwel niet langer alleen gezien als live-act. In plaats daarvan omvat performance-kunst, volgens kunstenaars, ook overwegingen over documentatie en mediatisering van de performance. Een paratekstueel perspectief op performance-kunst betekent dat documentatie-strategieën worden gezien als onderdeel van ervan. Deze benadering houdt in dat performance een praktijk is die geassocieerd wordt met andere praktijken, die verder gaan dan het uitvoeren of ensceneren van de performance.

In deze dissertatie laat ik zien dat performance niet langer los gezien kan worden van de documentatie ervan, en dat deze documentatie gevolgen heeft voor de performance zelf. De eerste reden hiervoor is dat hedendaagse performance-kunstenaars zelf hun documentatie conceptualiseren en produceren. De documentatie van de performance krijgt daardoor een plek binnen de productie van performances. Ten tweede beïnvloedt de documentatie ook de receptie van de performance en beïnvloedt de documentatie de interpretatie.

Mijn stelling is dat het potentieel van performance in beeldende kunst precies gelegen is in dit afstand nemen van een stabiele identiteit. Met dit vermogen tot het loslaten van een stabiele identiteit wordt gezegd dat performance niet alleen de

praktische behoefte, maar ook het vermogen heeft om zich te verbinden met andere media, zoals tekst en audiovisuele documentatie.

Performances in beeldende kunst kunnen daarom niet los gezien worden van inter-mediale en paratekstuele kwesties, waarmee ze wederkerige verbanden aangaan en waarmee ze zich vermengen. Men dient performances daarom te begrijpen in en door hun relaties met tekst.

In het schrijven van deze dissertatie en in het onderzoek naar de genoemde relaties heb ik de vragen die ik in mijn artistieke praktijk stelde in de context van verschillende theoretische velden gebracht. Preciezer geformuleerd, ik onderzocht *waar* in verschillende theorieën mijn vragen al eerder waren geadresseerd en ik trad in dialoog met de uitkomsten daaarvan. Dit proces heeft geleid to mijn conclusies.

De conclusie dat tekst zowel een documenterende als interpreterende functie heeft in relatie tot performances heeft ten eerste het begrip van het functioneren van mijn artistieke praktijk verbreed, en ten tweede hoop ik dat dit ook zal bijdragen aan het verbreden van het begrip van de relaties tussen tekst en performance in het algemeen.

Nadat ik, voor het geschreven deel van mijn onderzoek, de vragen *vanuit* mijn artistieke praktijk *in* de context van de verschillende theoretische velden had gebracht, heb ik voor het artistieke deel van het onderzoek de verkregen inzichten weer terug geplaatst in het artistieke werk. Naast het “testen” van de documenterende en de interpreterende functie, engageert mijn artistieke project zich met de receptie van de manier waarop het kunstwerk ‘voortleeft’. De cruciale rol van de receptie en de interpretatie van het ‘voortlevende’ kunstwerk werd onderdeel van het onderzoek door het lezen van Benjamin en Adorno. In het artistieke deel van het project heb ik met deze inzichten gespeeld en ze materiële vorm gegeven. Ik beschouw dit als de afsluitende stap in het sluiten van de cirkel van mijn onderzoek, dat begon bij mijn individuele artistieke praktijk en dat -doormiddel van een dialoog met andere velden- terug is gekomen bij die praktijk en deze praktijk opent naar een nieuwe en bredere dimensie. Het doel van het artistieke project was niet om het onderzoek te illustreren, maar om opnieuw onontgonnen terrein te betreden, waar nieuwe vragen kunnen leiden tot nieuwe onderzoekswerkzaamheden.

Glossary

WRITING: leaving a trace in or on a material. The material which captures the trace can be of analog or of digital nature.

TEXT: written language. It stands for itself. It can be read disconnected from the presence of its author and his / her intention.

PERFORMANCE: a work of visual art, which is realized by people present during a certain time frame.

STAGING:[161] the act of presenting a performance in front of an audience. The staging and its reception happen simultaneously, although the reception of a performance does not necessarily ends when the staging ends.

MEDIA OF AFTERLIFE: media in which a performance is presented to an audience after the enactment, the time frame in which it was realized.

SCORE: a specific form of written text or notation with the aim of being performed. It possibly contains written language, symbols and abstract elements.

INSTRUCTION: a guideline for acting which is given for the purpose of being executed. Its forms range from manual to order.

RULE: a directive in order to produce regularity in behavior. It is based on agreement and only valid in a certain, mostly defined area.

DESCRIPTION: oral or written statement that attempts to depict processes or objects as they are or were.

NOTATION: written words, symbols or abstract signs which designate objects or processes within written form.

RECORDING: the capturing of visual or audio visual material with the help of analogue or digital media.

[161] In German language staging is *Aufführung*. It can be used for visual art, for music, dance and theater performances likewise.

Interview with Marga van Mechelen

The following text is the transcription of a recorded interview with the Dutch art historian Marga von Mechelen about her historic view on the relations between performance and other media. The interview was conducted in May 2013 at UVA, University of Amsterdam.

Lilo Nein: I read your book *Performances, Installations, Video, Projects, 1975 to 1978*, and I have prepared, first, some questions about the relations between performances and texts. Let me give you a quick overview before we go into the details. My main questions will be these: What role do announcement texts versus spontaneity play? The second question concerns publishing and publications; the third, audiovisual documentation; and the fourth, the archive. My fifth question concerns the relation between performances and exhibitions. Afterwards, I will have four general questions, which are more related to the last chapter of your book. On the conceptualization of performance, my questions come from my own perspective – that is, from the here and now, me as an artist; but of course I am concerned with your background as a historian and how different attributes were attached to the term "performance" and how apparent they might be. This refers to performance ontology and written pieces about performance. This will be my program.

I will start now with a short statement from my side, so you also know what I am doing. I am interested in the relations of live-acts to other media – namely, text and documents. For me as an artist working with performance means negotiating those relations. Negotiating between different media within the live situation: the body, as I also work with performers; space, but also visual media; and types of presentations: presentation on the internet, the live presentation again; and finally, publications as another kind of format. How can all of this create an entire overview; or, what then is the object at the end of performance art? Can there be one, or is this even necessary? Is it only the experience? Maybe this is fine, I don't know. I have the feeling that performance artists have always had to deal with other media being around and with the relation to them; but my guess is that in the beginning, in the early time of performance, this was not deeply reflected upon. I think the reflection came during the 1990s, after the period we'll mostly be speaking about. So, I am kind of on the other side, so to speak. I am interested in you as a historian, and I have the

feeling that the relations were always there. I will try to develop an understanding that is not reduced to the live-act, but rather understanding the performance within those many relations.

I am interested, finally, in talking with you about the historic dimension of those relations, especially the performances at De Appel, which you wrote about in your, and although I have the feeling that your main concern is performance, you have named some different terms in your title; they may form an associative chain that links them in some ways. Maybe we could start with that then – with your decision to already link performance to other terms, other media, other formats.

Marga van Mechelen: Yes, it's quite problematic in a way, in different respects. You mention this book, but my latest book also has the subtitle *Through Performance and Installation Art*, but the main title is *Art at Large*; the title is based on a statement that is considering the development in the 70s, especially in this field of new media art. You cannot speak any longer of media-based or media-specific art forms; my statement – which may seem to be in contrast to the subtitle of this book – but my main statement in this book, as well of the articles I published afterwards and in my latest book, is that performance and installation art were intertwined right from the start. The examples that I give in this book are the examples of two Dutch artists, Ben d'Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker, who would not use the concept of performance or installation – that is to say, they would not say "this is a performance I am doing" or "this is an installation I made." They used another concept, namely "event." Of course, I know one of the artists quite well, Gerrit Dekker; he's still alive and I have written about him before, but Ben d'Armagnac has been dead now for already a very long time. However, it is still very unclear to me why they chose that word, that concept. It is a concept that we know from Fluxus, but it is also a concept that recently has become more topical as it is a concept of Alain Badiou, the French philosopher. Of course, he is quite topical and popular at the moment, in the Netherlands especially because a lot of his publications have been translated into Dutch and many articles have been written about him. He is a philosopher in his seventies, I suppose, but I am not entirely sure. But, anyway, he is quite an old philosopher who had already published about the "event" and of "l'événement" already in the 60s, I think. So, there is another connection there.

LN: I do not know this concept of Badiou; I only know the concept of event in Derrida's sense and also Deleuze's, and it is always connected with a revolutionary aspect or as a singularity that happens at a certain time. Does this count also for Badiou?

MM: Of course, there are different traditions and lines of thought for the event. There is a notion of event as it is used in Fluxus, but it is also used in connection to the Situationists. We also had in the 60s a group called the Event Structure Research Group, and there was also a connection with the French Situationists. Also in England there was a connection. From the Netherlands to England, from England to France. So, it is a concept of the 60s, the concept of the event. However, they applied it to their work, which we would now conceptualize as performance or as installation art. It is my point of view that if you really look at those projects – of course, this is really my speculation on it – there is always a development in time in a certain place, which gives meaning to that certain place, and then at a certain time there is a confrontation with a certain public. You can say both are performative in a way, but the communication with the certain public is, you could say, more the moment of the performance. So, the example I give in this book is that Ben d'Armagnac got a commission from the Goethe Institut – the Goethe Institut had a building here in Amsterdam, it was not yet the Goethe Institut, but it would become so – it was an empty space still. The artist was invited to live and work in that space on his own without any public, but he was free to show things that he was doing there to the public at a certain moment. So, there was a kind of cage and various things were bought into that space, into that cage. He was, in a way, moving from his house and the way he had lived in his house, and moving that into that performance space. Of course, it wasn't really a performance space; it was just an empty building. What people at that time found so interesting in that person, that artist, Ben d'Armagnac, was that his house was a kind of artistic room. He was always reworking his surroundings, building his surroundings.

Of course, there were people at that time who were building their own chairs and furniture, but then there were ways that he would build his bed. I think there is maybe a photo of it; he made an installation in Germany of three beds that were really very simple beds, made of about eight shelves. Four shelves like this, four shelves like that, making three boxes like three beds: one for himself and two for his women, as

he was living with more than one wife. That was not really so very exceptional in the Netherlands at that time; there were more communities around in which men had more than one partner.

LN: The other way around – woman having more than one man – was not so common at that time, I guess.

MM: Yes, this was not so common at that time, but to show that in a way – to make it public by showing three very simple beds for one person – it was not a double bed, it was three singles beds beside one another. It looked more like a stable you could say, more a place for animals than for human beings. Very elementary, you could say, very basic.

LN: So, this was used as a performance rather than as an installation or a sculpture?

MM: You could see it as a sculpture, or as installation, but in your imagination it represents a performance – a performance of a way of living. That was interesting to a number of people from the art world at that time, such as Ritsaert ten Cate, and Johannes Gachnang, who was the director and curator of the Goethe Institut, and they wanted him to bring his way of living from his home place to an artistic surrounding and to continue his way of living for moments, such as two weeks, for example, in another area. Not really an artistic place but coined as an artistic place for a certain moment in time. So, he was again performing and making a kind of installation, doing something with the space and bringing things into the space, and then at a certain moment the audience, the viewers, the public, were invited to come into that space and to watch not only what he was doing but also to become aware of the things that he had done so far, and really see the connection between what was actually there and his way of living. So, you could of course say that the performance artist is an actor, especially because Marina Abramović stressed this even later that the performer is an actor in his performance, but what was interesting to people at that time – people like Richard de Carter, Johannes Gachnang and a number of other people – was that they got the idea that there was another reality other than the normal reality of … how does one call that?

LN: The artificial space of an exhibition?

MM: No, I mean more the setting of a normal family situation – there is normally a man, a woman, a father, mother, children, et cetera. They have an ordinary house, they buy their stuff in IKEA and those kind of stores, but the way of living of Ben d'Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker was different from that. It was their reality – you could look at it as being a kind of artistic practice, but still is was their reality. Art and life intertwined. They came together. So, they bought their reality and their way of living to a place where an audience could see it and could watch it.

LN: And what happened at the opening? Did they perform themselves, did they present themselves or did they try to hide [their personal relation to the artwork]?

MM: I think that is the important issue, because that is the main problem with contemporary reception compared to the reception in that time. Someone like Marina Abramović stresses today that because there is always a level of representation it is not reality – you bring it [one's reality] to another context, another audience, and in that sense you are representing your life and not presenting it. However, part of the myth of performance art and its reception at that time was that it was reality – that the performance was reality, that the artist was not performing, that you really had contact with a living being.

LN: I would say that both are true – but what did he do at the openings? Did he prepare a presentation?

MM: I saw the installation, but I was not there at a moment when he was. The public could go and see what he has actually done without him being present. Let's take another example of Ben d'Armagnac – the box.

LN: I think you wrote about it.

MM: Yes, the white box. In the white space of De Appel, people entered the room not knowing anything about what would happen in that white space. In relation to scores and text, there was a lot of information about Ben d'Armagnac and people knew already about what he had done so far and they knew about his Goethe Institut performance-installation. They knew about the motifs in his work and they knew about his personality, about his personal background and the problems related to that personal background. Of course, all that kind of information was there, but that was not the score yet – that was not the plan yet. It was a point of reference for the

public. So, when they entered the room it was not, I think, clear for anyone there what he was going to do; maybe it was not even clear if there was someone inside that box. You could, of course, expect that there would only be an object – an installation, that box – and not a performance. Of course, you enter nevertheless a performance space.

LN: So, it was not announced at all?

MM: It was an announced as an "event."

LN: Ah, as an event.

MM: As an event, not as a performance or as an installation; that is such a concept that could imply different kind of things.

LN: That could also imply an environment without acting.

MM: Yes, of course.

LN: Were all the performances at De Appel announced as events?

MM: No, only those of those two artists, as it was their concept. Of course, the concept was not solely of those two artists, as it had already been used in different contexts, and I am not sure what kind of contexts influenced their conceptualization, but they both used the word "event" and not the word "performance," and of course not the word "installation" as it was not really a concept at that time. You had concepts of environments, and so it was De Appel described it as an "environment" and Gerrit Dekker described it also as an "environment." So, the title was *Event*, and of course a title like "Event" describes also a type of art form, and in that sense it is something different than if you were to say the title is "Love," "Intercourse," or something else.

LN: And there was no title of the artwork either?

MM: There was only the title *Event*. So, you saw a white box and you knew nothing besides the fact that it was a white box. You could come close to it as you weren't prevented from walking around, and then you could see the materials of the box – plastic and glass – and maybe you could also see that the glass was painted white. You saw the scissors and maybe then you would have the association, as with zips,

that this is a box that can be opened, so maybe there is someone inside. Of course, there are all types of associations that you could have, and they bring you to the idea that a performance will take place there. So, the expectation related to what you could actually see, and also to that certain location – the performance space of De Appel – make people expect that what will take place will be a certain kind of performance. So, after a while, people begin to notice that there is someone inside the box – that person was scratching at the glass window and was removing the paint – after a while, people could recognize him and see that it is Ben d'Armagnac inside the box. Of course, that is not so much of a surprise. The moment you know that there is someone inside you know it will be the performance artists, as at that time most of the performances were done by the artist themselves. However, at quite a lot of performances at that time the people did not know how long the performance would take. In the end it took around two hours and people could see more and more – he had removed the paint and people could see that he had bandages all along his arms, that he had wounded himself, and of course that had a connection to the things he had done before – it fitted very well into the biography of this artist. They saw that there were thousands of flies in that same box and that there was a kind of liquid and that the flies were moving towards the liquid or the wounded arm. You can have a kind of imagination as to what kind of liquid that may be, what may be more attractive – blood or perhaps honey, something like that. So, then you are making a kind of story, a kind of narrative out of it, and at the same time you are experiencing on an emotional level a relationship with the artist, who is presenting part of his emotional life. That's the difference with theater, in which the actor plays a role and the content is written and made by someone else. You are really made aware of the fact that these are elements of the biography that is being bought to public space.

LN: So, now let's get back to the title of your book.

MM: Yes, it is therefore I say that it is very problematic. I choose those titles for different reasons. One reason is because we are still talking about performance and installation, and we use the concept of installation as a kind of umbrella for things that were mentioned in the past – for example, situation art, environments, events, different kinds of assemblage, but essentially all kinds of concepts that are related to or combine physical objects and certain spaces. Installation has that connection to physical objects and spaces. So, I use a concept that has its origins in the late 70s –

1978, 1979 – although it was of course used before, but not in the exact same sense; I used it now because it is now a familiar concept, and of course I could have used the words “assemblage” or “environment” instead of “installation,” but because the concept of installation was introduced in the Netherlands in the context of De Appel as a new concept I thought it was important to have it in the title.

LN: And was it also introduced in connection to performance?

MM: It is described in a way as “*Übergang*”

LN: I understand, as “transition.”

MM: The transition of artists who had been working with performance to a new situation, a situation that you could say was the situation of installation art.

LN: From the 80s to the 90s?

MM: From 1977 to 1978 or to 1979. Every year De Appel made a program – for example, ten events and ten performances; five were subsidized by the local government and five by the national government. They were mainly introduced as performances, but in 1978 for the first time they used the concept of installation. They used it, for example, for a project by Marina Abramović and Ulay, a project – or an installation – called *Installation One*. So, in the title the word “installation” is used for the first time. There was also a project by Vito Acconci that used the word “installation.” For Marina Abramović and Ulay, who were of course, very influential for De Appel, it was introduced as a means of saying goodbye to the medium of performance.

LN: Did they perform live?

MM: They did performances until 1978 – a lot of performances – but then they announced that from their perspective the medium of performance had been exhausted.

LN: But my question is that within the installation did they include performances or not?

MM: Yes, that’s the way I look at it. On the one hand, they said at that moment that the medium of performance is for us exhausted – *uitgeput*, we say in Dutch – so we

are going to develop in another direction, and the first sign of this is *Installation One*. A lot of other artists were following them; there were artists from De Appel who did performances at De Appel in the mid-70s – the years before – who also started to work in a direction that was called "installation art." However, from my perspective, when you look at that work they named "installation art" – and I look at it in the same way that I have looked at the examples that I have discussed so far, of Ben d'Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker – it is still a combination of performance and installation. For example, that project of installation art, *Installation One*, took place in two different spaces of De Appel – the performance space and the exhibition space. In the performance space, there was a propeller turning around and around. It was very difficult for people to walk around a propeller; you have to take care you don't touch it. So, the propeller, although an object, was a different figure – it was a dangerous figure. It was, you could say, a kind of performer – replacing the dangerous elements of the performances of Marina and Ulay. In the other space, the exhibition space, there was a large projection of a film and that film was recorded in that same space – the exhibition space. You could see in that film Marina and Ulay sitting in front of each other; Ulay with an erection and naked and Marina also naked. So, in that exhibition space, there had been a performance and that performance had been recorded; that recording was projected and integrated in that exhibition space. It was not just a projection of a film. It was, of course, an installation in itself, and at the same time it was part of a more abstract installation together with the propeller in the other space. This is one of my propositions or theses within this book – that the concept of installation is not the concept of an art form that has to have a physical feature as a crucial, elementary feature or as a sign of the art form – rather, installation is more a mental concept. In this way I discussed a work of Madelon Hooykaas and Elsa Stansfield, *Memory Window*. They also used different spaces in the building of De Appel – the entrance space, the performance space, and the exhibition space. They brought something into those spaces, but the installation as a whole was a combination of all those physical things and experiences. The work of *Memory Window* is made by the onlooker; the onlooker, the viewer, makes in his head a kind of concept, a kind of image out of all those ingredients bought into the different spaces by the artists.

So, for me, the concepts are not really physical art forms, but they have, as I have said, an intertwinement, and they also have a more conceptual existence. In the

beginning, De Appel said that “video” is an object, it is a tape, video you can collect, you can show it in the museum or whenever you like, but if you look at the way artists were working with that medium of video there’s no difference between how they were working with video than how performance artists worked with intestines or other human organs. The video artists were also working with live situations and with their own histories, their own biographies; they were not only making an object, there was also a kind of process going on and for that reason they needed a kind of institution like De Appel where your process – the way of working – was accepted as the artistic practice. So, not the painting or video tape – that’s not the output, that is not the main thing – the main thing is, you could say, the conceptual way of working, or the scientific way of working, or the personal autobiographical way of working, any way the process was the main thing. Also the concept of “project” is more an umbrella concept that was introduced by De Appel the moment that they realized that artists don’t want De Appel as a building any longer, not the four walls in between everything that can take place; artists want to go to a public space, want to go to historical spaces, and they don’t want that traditional division any longer between an artist and a scientist. They want to do artistic research, which is what we have nowadays. “Project” is a kind of pre-figuration of our contemporary concept of artistic research. Also, of course, the artists who were doing those kind of projects were different from the performance artists of the early and mid-70s, because they were more orientated towards science and conceptual things. It also has to do with the new generation.

You can look at all those concepts in different ways, you can look at how they were applied, how they became part of a myth. You can look at it also as a development: out of performance to installation to projects. You could defend that the name “projects” is more fitting to the new generation of the early 80s, but on the other hand, you could also defend the idea that the things that took place in the 70s were more performance, or that at the end of the 70s the installations were also projects. But as a historical concept, projects were introduced later on and installations were introduced later than the concept of performance.

LN: And would you say that they all have things in common that are opposed to the old conception of autonomous artworks, such as in sculpture and painting? I ask because it seems that there are two ways of thinking and those are connected, but it

is maybe not yet clear how [they are connected], as we are still moving on in history. But still, they both seem to have performative aspects, including a more open concept of authorship, for example.

MM: Yes, yes, to take an example that is quite illustrative I think: Jackson Pollock. Up until that moment when that film was made of his action painting everyone was talking about him as a painter and as a maker of paintings. Of course, everyone knew that you could see the signals – the symptoms – of an action; the drippings are the traces of an action. But the moment that the film was made and all those photos were distributed of that filmmaking, and a new generation was integrating that way of receiving Pollock, Pollock was no longer a traditional painter.

LN: Yes, but it depends; I mean, it's a working process, and every artwork has involved the body of the producer as part of its working process.

MM: For example, when you look at Kurt Schwitters and other Dada artists you could say that they were making poems but the [published] poems are the remains of the poems spoken in the performances. The main thing was the performance, in which they used sounds and words. When you have a book and there are those poems in it they are only a remainder of the performance. So, it is the other way around: usually, you are interested in scores as the textual thing that forms the basis – the starting point – for the performance, and usually you are interested in all the different ways of documenting a performance by texts, by video and so on. However, if you take that example and you look at it from a traditional perspective, usually a writer writes poems – and, of course, everyone knows how good an experience it can be if a poet reads his own poems – but still one has the idea that the published poem in the book is still the artwork. But if you look at Kurt Schwitters and Tristan Tzara, I would defend the idea that if you really want to talk about what really is the artwork – if you want to have a moment in time in which to say: "that is the artwork" – I would rather say that it is the performance that is the artwork and not the published poem.

LN: Of course, I as an artist always think: what is the artwork? So I think what the artist decides and says is that is the artwork. But you have a broader [historic] view…

MM: I have a semiotic view, which I think is important to explain a bit. For me it is quite a simple way of looking at things. It makes things easier for me, because I can say that our perspective on those artworks, or those performances, is what Umberto

Ecco calls the “intention of the viewer,” which is for him more important than the intention of the author, the artist. From the point of view of the semiotician, there are only two things that important: the intention of the opus – the work – and the intention of the viewer. There is a supposed intention of the *modus operandis*, but what kind of ingredients does the work have that make signs for the viewer? When I look at an artwork, I figure out these kind of signs, I see a number of signs and they are signs because I know that there are other people who have the same idea about what is significant in the work. What are the signs of the work? The concept of the sign is derived from the idea that it can only be a sign if there are at least two people who think that this is a sign of something.

LN: Yes, but you can only look at an artwork when it is presented to you as an artwork. So, when we ask now if what Pollock did was a painting or a performance, or if what Kurt Schwitters did was a poem or if it was it a theater piece or a performance, this is the whole historical dimension. It is why I wanted to talk to you because at certain periods certain things are understood as particular things, and the artist needs this terms – I need the term, the notion of performance and everything that is connected to it historically in order to understand what it is that I do.

MM: But also the viewer needs that – or at least, you could say that it is implied in the way that the viewer looks at a certain thing. As I said to you about the example of Ben d’Armagnac, when you enter that performance space at De Appel and you see that box there are a number of signs. There are a number of recognizable things that are meaningful, but the viewer – and, of course, one viewer is different from the other viewer – brings his knowledge, his context, his references with him or her, and that influences the way he looks at that piece of work and forms his interpretations of that work. As I said, at that time there were a number of people and also a number of viewers who were inclined to negate the fact that the artist was representing his life in that specific situation. They were more inclined to think that he is showing us his way of living and that he has brought his way of living to us. But a young generation who was not present during that performance and was not representative of that generation but rather a younger generation, who are maybe influenced by what Marina Abramović wrote in the 90s about presenting and representing, will have a very different interpretation because they will say that it is not a presentation but a representation of the artist and his way of living. So, for me, there’s not one truth; it is

not that truth of the contemporary viewer in 1975, who looked at those performances and installations, is more useful or a better way of looking at it than someone who has only read about the performance and made an interpretation of that performance only by what he saw in the form of documentation: texts, video, photos, and so on. Of course, you will want to end with my last chapter because there all those theories in it – I am quite critical of Peggy Phelan, for example.

From my perspective as a semiotician, there are two things important: the signs of the work and the additional knowledge and experience that the viewer brings with him, which forms part of a certain context for a certain generation. It informs his way of looking and that makes another interpretation of the work than the interpretation of someone from an older generation or from another background. So, from the point of view of semiotician, the intention of the artist is really less important. Of course, I am aware of the fact that all the information I have about the artwork is information that is partly given to me by the artist and in different forms – by other works, performances or installation, by what he wrote beforehand or afterwards, in the form of a score or a report – and all that information is of course important and influences me. That is also a semiotic point of view – that all that information is bought to me in a different language: the language of a score, the language of an actual performance that I watch, the language of a visual recording or the language of a written report. These are all different languages and they have all a different relation. You cannot say that that there is only one thing – it is a combination in the interaction.

LN: So the definition of the artist – the fact that I say now that this is performance, or a painting, or my life, or whatever – this would be for you one bit of information in a net of other information?

MM: Yes, in my dissertation, I discuss extensively in Chapter Three publications of two semioticians, Felix Thürlemann and Jean-Marie Floch, a Swiss art historian and a French semiotician, not an art historian. Both of them are semioticians who wrote about Kandinsky. Kandinsky is an artist who wrote a lot about his work and there are a lot of publications that have some relation to his paintings, but it is interesting to see what exactly the word-image relation is in his work. Are those texts a kind of score? Or are they a kind of report? And how do they relate exactly to the image structure? To the power system of his work? Or the level of abstraction? One semiotician is inclined to say that you should not look to the development of his work to really have

a good understanding of his abstract work. Of course, you can say he developed slowly from figurative work to more abstract work, and you can understand his abstract work by looking back to his more figurative work. That's possible but you should not do it, otherwise why should the artist have made those abstract works? The abstract work is an intentional decision of the artist. So, you should look at that abstract painting as a new way of giving meaning to an artwork, and not try to explain it by comparing it to the works he made before.

LN: So it's not reducing in meaning, but it's another relation to meaning?

MM: Yes, another relation to meaning. The other semiotician has a different approach. There's a nice discussion between the two; I construct a kind of discussion between those two points of view and I also give my own opinion about that. That is, I think, an interesting case to look at for the question of "what is the artwork and how does it relate to other ways of communicating about the work, such as the score, video documentation, and so on?"

LN: I would like to continue by asking about the different texts – we already mentioned a few of them – that are around performances. Maybe we can start with announcement texts, as I am especially interested in these announcement texts; it can be the title, what will happen or is going to happen, or also what it is: is it a performance? Is it an event? What are the expectations connected to or arise from these titles? Did De Appel – we are speaking now about this time, these early performances that happened in the Netherlands – did they also send out or print a small description of what will happen? It also has to do with the curatorial concept, whether the director, Wies Smals, curated particular performances or invited artists. It has to do with what is communicated to the audience.

MM: There are a few principles that I could prescribe. Of course, those principles were always in the background, but the practice was sometimes quite different. I think there were two principles that were very important to Wies Smals and also to the other members of staff.

The first principle was that they felt a responsibility towards the audience – to the visitors – to inform the visitors and in quite a broad way: to give personal information about the artist, to give information about the development of the work of the artist, and to give information about the broader artistic and sometimes cultural context of

the work of art or the artist himself. She studied art history, she worked within the museum, and although it was not really so obvious that the museum presented artworks and gave a lot of information about the artwork – it could also just be hanging on the wall – for her personally it was quite important to have that role as a mediator between the public and the artist, and the artwork. Maybe more the artwork than the artist. That was an important principle to her.

The other principle, which was also one of the reasons why she founded De Appel, was that this generation – this type of artist, if you would like to call him – needed a different platform than the platforms that were there before. The gallery space was not a good platform for the artist, a museum was not a good platform, the theater was not a good platform. For a number of reasons – I won't elaborate upon that – but you could imagine that there are reasons why they were not a good platform for this type of artist. So, De Appel offered a place within which the artists were really well placed. It was a safe place, it was a closed space – people could not just enter the space, they had to ring the bell. Of course, that is more on a concrete level, but in a broader sense De Appel wanted to offer to the artist a really free mental space. So "you can do whatever you like within our institution." Of course, that is the principle. The practice was sometimes different. There is one example in the book that was really quite different. It was the work of a German artist. So, there are two, sometimes conflicting principles: one, the responsibility for your public, for your visitors; and two, the responsibility towards the artist; you want to give him all the possibilities to develop things the way he would like to do it.

LN: Yes, but was it communicated in advance what people wanted to do?

MM: Of course, the artists were invited by the institution, De Appel, and then there was a discussion between the artist and the curator, or the director. We cannot know what those discussions were, so it is more second-hand information, but what I do know is that there was really, as I said, a discussion between them because there was always the need to find a kind of compromise between those two principles. So, even if artists said "I don't want to know anything about what I am going to do," De Appel would accept that, but the moment that De Appel got the impression that it would be very harmful for the visitors the discussion would continue. And there is one example in which that happened – that De Appel did not accept what the artist intended to do.

LN: The kidnapping?

MM: Yes, kidnapping. Of course, it is a very exceptional example, but, on the other hand, it is very illuminating because the artist noticed that he was not able to convince De Appel of his project, and the only possibility to realize it was really to suggest that he had accepted the limits they had drawn, and then to kidnap the staff in order to do his original plan, but that was really an exception. In all the other cases there was a kind of negotiation between the staff and the artist, in which De Appel, on the one hand, wanted to realize the principle about information in relation to the viewers, but also give the artist the room he needed, literally and in a metaphorical sense, for his project. So, there was always an announcement of the performance, but the content of the announcement was, of course, the result of the discussion between the artist, the director and the staff.

De Appel was really quite convincing, I think, towards the artist, that it was really necessary to inform the public beforehand, but also to have documentation about the work afterwards. They had a photographer who was almost always present and made photos and documentation. De Appel, already in the very early stages, was aware that for that time frame it was important to make moving images, and that film was not the most suitable medium anymore but that video was, because you can turn it on, work in daylight, and you can make a recording from the moment the performance starts until the end. That is of course not possible with a film. So, they got money from the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds to buy a Sony camera and they taught themselves how to work with it; although not always, a lot of the performances were recorded on video. So, they thought that there is not just one way of recording, documenting. Photos are important, videos are important, and then, later on, they also asked a number of people – art critics and such – to make a written report of the performance, a written description.

That is obviously a very clear choice to not choose just one medium but to think about the combination of different media for the recording of the performance, because that generation – especially the European performance art generation – was not so eager to repeat performances. The idea of “once only” was part of the whole concept of performance art in Europe, in contrast to American performance artists, who were also working more in a theatrical context. In theory, you can have sometimes hundreds of performances of one theater play; although, of course, every

performance is slightly different. In that way you can have a large audience who have all seen that specific Hamlet performance.

They always asked the performer if he was accepting to do it at another time, to not do it once only.

LN: And did artist do performances twice at De Appel?

MM: There are some examples when the artist did it another time. But, in general, you could say that this generation of European artists had some difficulties with doing it another time.

LN: What about the relation to the video documentation? Did De Appel ask the artists…?

MM: To give permission? Yes.

LN: To give permission to the photographer. Did they work together? Did the artist inform the photographer in advance what was going to happen? Did the artist select [photographs to be published] afterwards?

MM: I don't think so but I am not sure. Oscar van Alphen was the photographer … He is not alive anymore, otherwise we could have asked him. I don't know if he got information beforehand about the performance.

LN: Was he free to move, for example?

MM: He was free to move, yes. He was free to move, that is for sure.

LN: This is also something that could be disturbing for the artist.

MM: Yes, yes.

LN: And some artists don't like the documentation, so…

MM: When I say "he was free to move" it is from the perspective of De Appel. But, of course, if an artist said "I don't want a photographer," or "I don't want the photographer to use the flash light" or whatever else … Then they had to accept that.

LN: Okay, and then what about the copyright afterwards? To whom did these photographs belong?

MM: To the photographer, but there are a few examples in which it was quite important. They were not the examples of Oscar van Alphen as the photographer, but of Gina Pane, who brought her own photographer with her. She was already quite an important artist before she became a performance artist. She worked with a gallery in France. The drawings she made in relation to her performance, and also the photos she let her own photographer make of the performance, were considered artworks in a way. At least, they were considered to be commercial objects.

LN: And in this case the photographer of De Appel would not be allowed to take pictures?

MM: No, he would not be allowed to make additional photographs. But that really is quite an exception.

LN: And apart from that, did every artist agree to give the photographer of De Appel the rights of the pictures? Would De Appel pay the photographer?

MM: Yes.

LN: But still the rights belonged to him?

MM: Yes, the negatives are still with the photographer. The negatives were not bought by De Appel, but when I was working on this book there weren't any problems with using his photos, because the photos are owned by De Appel. But there is another photographer who worked on commission – not as the photographer of De Appel – and he always wanted to be paid twice for his photos. He was paid in the past, but he also wanted to be paid when the photos were used again. I was really angry about him because in the beginning he said something like: "I was already paid, so you don't have to pay so much; if you want just fifty photos I'll make a good price," and then the moment we said: "yes, we need all of those photos," the price became higher and higher. But, anyway, the mentality of Oscar van Alphen was a different case, he was really different. He of course considered himself as an artist photographer, but what he did for De Appel was considered by himself to be a tool – an instrument – for the artist and the institute to document the performance. So, it was a very different attitude.

LN: Hmm, interesting, and what about the video documentation? Who did it?

MM: The De Appel staff themselves.

LN: So, it was different people?

MM: In the beginning it was always Wies Smals, the director, and when Josine van Droffelaar became a member of staff – she came from the Stedelijk Museum – she had quite a lot of experience working with video already and she did it quite a number of times.

LN: And what about the authorship of these documentations?

MM: It belonged to De Appel.

LN: They owned it?

MM: Yes, they own it and later on there were different institutions concerning video art. One was founded by an artist, René Coelho. Video was still a difficult topic for De Appel; as I said, the artist felt the necessity to have an institution like De Appel for their development, but De Appel from the beginning had the feeling that video art needed a different institution, so then they founded a new institution: Time Based Arts. So, in the Netherlands there were two institutions – well, there were more institutions but in Amsterdam there were at least two institutions – MonteVideo and Time Based Arts. Those two institutions became a combination, a fusion of both, and that is the Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst. It was an archive, it was a research institute, it was a production house and an exhibition space in the Netherlands until a couple of years ago. Because of the cuts it was necessary to close that building, the institution. So, it was really a big institution with different divisions, and in the collection of that institution there were different smaller collections, and one of those collections was the collection of the videotapes of De Appel. So, it was the Dutch institution for video art. It was a collection of the Lijnbaan Centre in Rotterdam – De Appel, Time Based Art – of the videos themselves, et cetera.

LN: And these documentations, they were part of the video art collection? But it was a document, so the author in that case is Wies Smals or…?

MM: Wies Smals was, of course, the director of the video.

LN: Was it cut, or was it just as it was recorded?

MM: It was recorded mostly from the beginning to the end, but later on there were cuts made.

LN: And who did this?

MM: I think … I'm not sure. Gina Pane, *Discours mou et mat*, that performance was recorded by De Appel, and as I said she worked with her own photographer but not with her own videographer. So, that was done by De Appel, and it could be that the cuts were done by, or not done by the artist but on the initiative of the artist, that's possible, but I'm not sure …

LN: But there is no authorization from the artist? If the rights belong to De Appel, the artist never authorized the material, I guess …

MM: Yes, I guess, but I'm not sure. I think I could mention a few names who may know this …

LN: Maybe I can write down these names afterwards. Let's move onto the next topic: publishing and publications. Could you say a few words about this?

MM: Yes, there were a number of regular publications in art journals, and also in Dutch newspapers. This was not too difficult for the De Appel, on the one hand, because the close circle around De Appel – the people who were really interested in things going on in De Appel – consisted of people who were art historians or art critics. A number of them were regularly publishing in the Dutch art journals and newspapers. For example, Antje van Graevenitz and Paul Hefting. So, they had direct access to the main art journals and newspapers in the Netherlands and, as you said you read the book, maybe you have seen that I published small photos in the book of covers of a very important Dutch art journal, financed by a number of contemporary art museums in the Netherlands, called *Museumjournaal*. Until 1980 to 1981, most of the covers bore photos related to things in De Appel or things that had been organized by De Appel, or the same artists that had presented in De Appel. Anyway, there was a connection between the covers of the *Museumjournaal* – most of the covers – and De Appel. The reason was the editor-in-chief of the *Museumjournaal* was also a member of the board of De Appel, so there was really that close connection.

So, those were the huge platforms in the art world that they had access to. Besides that, there was a small art journal, an initiative of an artist, art critic and translator – it was one of the artists doing performances in De Appel, who was also an art critic and an English person who did a lot of translations and who also translated this book – Michael Gibbs. De Appel gave a commission to that art critic to publish written reports of the performances in that journal, *Artzien*, that was the title of the journal. So, that was a kind of channel for De Appel to make recordings – written recordings of the public. So, of course, it is a different way of looking for a platform, because there were those connections, these personal relations between De Appel and those important art journals. Still, of course, the art critics had their own responsibility of what to write, and how to look at the performance, et cetera. In general, they were quite positive, as you can imagine, but it was still their responsibility. But *Artzien*, as I said, commissioned by De Appel, so that was a different story.

LN: And when did the idea come up to build an archive?

MM: From the start.

LN: If it was from the beginning was it connected to the idea that performances require a bigger need to have an archive.

MM: As I said, it was the feeling of being responsible. For the future, you have a historical responsibility. You are a part of things that have a historical meaning, so that was really quite important. Also, there were, of course, a number of artists involved at De Appel who felt the same need to let future generations be informed about performance art. Marina Abramović is the main example. What she is doing now – or rather, lately in the last couple of years – you could, of course, say that it makes her even more famous, but you can be quite critical about the glamorous side of it. I think that her motives are really much related to her feeling of being responsible for the survival and maybe even the future of performance art. She as a performance artist and performance art as something that is not exceptional, not to only to be placed in the 70s and in the 90s, but as an art form with its own possibilities and its own meanings and it owns effects and affects, it has a history, it has a future – and she as a key figure in performance art, she as Marina Abramović, feels that responsibility. She does reenactments as a form of giving performance an

afterlife. She will find a situation for performance art – what she is working on right now – she does workshops, she teaches, et cetera.

LN: Back to De Appel, it has now changed the whole area of this understanding, and also Abramović was a key figure in changing this understanding. I am interested in what was there from the beginning. How did Wies Smals, or the board of De Appel, how did they conceive the connection between archiving, documenting and the performances?

MM: Yes, of course they were aware of the "once-only" character of performance art as being part of its contents – an important part of its content. But as I said, there was that relation to art history; not only Wies Smals but also members of the board were art historians and art critics at the same time. It was also a period that was quite important in the development of educational practices in the world. Art teachers were very active in public debate; there were interesting conferences, there were side-programs in art schools, there were lectures, et cetera. So, it was really – and there were remains still of this echo of 1968 – the feeling of responsibility that what you are doing should be accessible to anyone. That political attitude was very much alive in this generation. Besides that, Wies Smals worked in the library of the Stedelijk Museum, so she was really used to collecting, to documenting, to archiving, et cetera. It was so obvious for them. She asked me in the beginning of De Appel … I was a student still at that time … I said she studied art history for a moment, not so very long as she had not the right diploma and she could not have official access to the university, but just because she was motivated she was accepted to follow a few lectures at the university. She could not read very well, nor write very well, and so she asked me as just a good student to be an advisor for publications that could be relevant for the library of De Appel. Not only books, but also art journals, international art journals. I remember that, for example, a Canadian art journal, *Parachute* was advised by me to collect for the archive. A number of other things I was advising on. So, she was really eager to be up to date in a way. Also in more theoretical aspects.

LN: But she was not into theory?

MM: She was not into theory because she was dyslexic; she was not really able to read all those things. But she still was really eager to give other people the

opportunity to give suggestions as to what to collect. Of course, that's possible at the same time.

LN: Yes, interesting!

MM: Even if you're not capable yourself, you can be convinced of the necessity of building an archive.

LN: Interesting … And was there a clash? Because this educational trajectory and everything that has to do with documenting and archiving, this is certainly a clash with the myth of performance art. I wonder if that was ever discussed.

MM: Yes, I think that on the one hand, De Appel did not really build the myth in a way intentionally because, as I said, they wanted to give as much information as possible as permitted by the artist. But, on the other hand, if you were going to that building, De Appel, you will see that there are really small spaces, so the public was also a very small public, and even if a performance happened twice there were not more than eighty people who could actually attend the performance. But, of course, a lot of people who weren't actually there talked about it, and then a second-life developed after the performance – of all the stories and of all the telling about experiencing, et cetera, and a lot of performances had no clear content. It was based upon experience and of feeling – maybe even shivering and whatever else, you know – it was not something that you could only look at from a rational perspective. People felt the identification, the empathy, et cetera. So, if you want to make that clear to an audience that was not there, it is very difficult to avoid a kind of growing of myth, as you can imagine. Of course, De Appel, when they asked art critics to write that written report, there were number of descriptions and facts, et cetera.

LN: How long were these reports?

MM: It depends, what was published in *Art Scene* was maybe about six hundred words, something like that. Not more than four hundred to six hundred words. But there was another art critic who also wrote the monograph about Ben d'Armagnac.

LN: What is the name?

MM: Louwrien Wijers. She is still alive, you could go and see her. She does not live in Amsterdam, she lives quite far away, but often she is here. What she did was, on

the one hand, make a lot of interviews with artists – not only performance artists … well, Joseph Beuys was also a performance artist – but with people like Joseph Beuys. She knew him very well and she was also one of the very close friends of Ben d'Armagnac and, as I said, she wrote a monograph about him. She made a lot of interviews with those artists, in which she gave the artist a platform to say whatever he liked. They were not really critical interviews; it was more a way of giving the floor to the artist.

LN: And were those interviews published?

MM: Yes, they were published. They were made into collections, those interviews. But they were distributed also just by making prints of them. We have now all kinds of methods of printing on demand, and although it was technically different back then it was a kind of print on demand.

LN: Was it copied?

MM: Yes, copied and distributed; those texts were of the interviews and text with descriptions. Though she was quite a holistic figure, and she still is a holistic figure, they were really descriptions and not so much interpretations. She was very informed with hardly any distance to the art.

LN: Okay. The last relation I am interested in is the relation between the exhibition space and the performance space. I read in your book that when an artist would be invited to De Appel he or she had both floors, and on one floor there was the exhibition and on the other floor there was the performance.

MM: That was possible. In fact they were three different spaces: there was the office part of the building, and the office part of the building was divided into three, you could say. So, you had the desk when you entered, then you had a square table in the back.

LN: Ah, yes, there is a picture.

MM: Yes, and there were also the shelves and all the documentations, the library

LN: And also the tapes?

MM: Yes, the tapes and a video monitor so you could also watch recordings or videotapes of the artists. So, that was the second part of that room, and then you had the wall – one large wall – and there was always an exhibition, but then that was an exhibition of documentation materials. So, for example, reviews in newspapers or art journals of performances the artist did before, or the working material of the artist – in any way, information, just information, context information. Then the artist could use the performance space to do the performance, but some artists also used the exhibition space to do performances. Some artists did not use the exhibition space at all and did only performance. There was always that possibility to make use of different spaces.

LN: And did those two spaces have a different lighting system?

MM: They were quite different because the exhibition space had a very close ceiling; it was a very rectangular space, with only one or two doors for access and there were windows on one side. Usually the windows just let in daylight. The performance space had the balcony; it was a kind of cellar. On the ground floor, the measure of the ground floor was about the same as the height of the room. You had the floor and a kind of balcony inside the room, so there was a kind of balcony. You could watch also from the balcony down to the performance floor. There were windows, but they were almost always closed, so there was no daylight. It was a white space but they were bricks were painted white; it was not the walls of a museum, it was not that clean, white space of a museum, it was brick.

LN: That was why it was not so good to exhibit there?

MM: So, you could enter by just one door, or you could go by a few steps to that balcony, that balcony, and watch down, but that was an exception that people watched from that position. That space, that balcony, was used as a sleeping bedroom, so the artist could stay there. So, it was more the private space of the artist usually.

LN: So, sometimes it was open to the public and sometimes it was not?

MM: Sometimes it was open, and sometimes it was allowed for the photographer to go and make pictures from above. That was possible. So, there was no daylight, there was just one door to gain access to it. So, it was also possible to prevent

people from entering up until a certain moment, like in a theater in a way and unlike the gallery space. In that way it is a little bit comparable to a theater, but for the rest it was not really a black box, although there was no daylight. I think most people did not compare it with a theater, but they also did not compare it with a museum or an exhibition space. It was really a warehouse and it was turned into a performance space. So, it had its own identity in a way, you could say.

LN: Okay, and when a performance happened in the performance space and in the other space the artist had decided to make an exhibition, after the opening and after the performance evening would the exhibition stay? And would the other space, the performance space, be closed?

MM: No, not always.

LN: So there would be left the traces?

MM: Yes.

LN: And the other exhibition?

MM: Yes, I could give a few examples of artists who did a performance and left the traces as a kind of installation, you could say. Of course, those traces were traces back to the performance.

LN: Could you mention a few examples? I remember the wet floor …

MM: Yes, the wet floor, but I am thinking about these sound environments, maybe? The performance/installations of Sef Peeters and Servie Jansen would be other examples.

LN: So, this installations was produced during the performance, one could say?

MM: Yes, and partly before the performance. There is another example that I am thinking about. This is an example of what you could call an environmental installation, for which the artist, Marco Bagnoli, used the whole building, so it went through the whole building. He denied the specific characters of the rooms.

LN: Okay, then I start with my first general question. I will read it, otherwise it will be too confusing: to work with performance for me precisely means to cope with the paradox of performance as live-art stated by Philip Auslander. It means that it has to

be ephemeral in order to be a performance, but it also has to be recorded to be a performance, which creates a paradoxical situation. It also means to cope with its ontology – I refer here to Peggy Phelan – and also with exploring and questioning those preconceived things with performance, and I was wondering how artists conceived of performance before its ontology was defined as live. Would you say that historically the artists' understanding of performance positioned it as an authentic, unique live experience? Which, for me, kind of burdens performance till today at least performance in a visual context. Or do you think that it is more the other way around, that this live experience and authentic moment was ascribed later to the performances and also from "outside"?

MM: My opinion is that you could say that until maybe about 1973, and then I am only talking in the European performance tradition. Of course there were artists doing performances in Europe, like Der Wiener Aktionismus, and those Actionists had no idea of what you are describing, of the "once-only-ness" and the ephemerality, and that particular kind of conceptualization of performance art. They had an elaborate score.

LN: The Viennese especially? Or do you have other examples?

MM: Yes, and Carolee Schneeman is also a good example. Of course she is an American artist, but she worked quite a lot in Europe, in France and in England especially. You could say that the generation of the 60s, that they came with something completely different compared with theater plays, but I don't want to see this as the birth of the real performance art, in that sense. In the sense of the "once-only-ness," the being ephemeral, et cetera.

LN: So this came later?

MM: This came later, yes.

LN: When?

MM: An important turning point is about 1972 to 1973, I think. There was that exhibition in Luzern, *Transformer*; the artists who were there all dealt with their personal – and personal in the largest sense: sexual identity and the idea of transforming one's identity, the in-between-ness of gender, et cetera. When Wies Smals became informed about these developments and these type of artists who

realized it and who were an important representative of this kind of new development, she immediately saw that this was really quite different from the art so far. So, it had everything to do with vulnerability, identity, intimacy, et cetera. Of course, the Viennese artists were always looking for a large audience. They had different motives for what they did, it had to do with the memory of the Second World War, it had to do with Georges Bataille's transgressive and abject conceptions, and with Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*; it had to do with Viennese Expressionism. It had all kinds of cultural backgrounds, and, of course, Artaud was a soldier during the First World War. They had also their personal histories, but I think their personal histories were less important than their cultural knowledge and the cultural messages that they felt important to communicate. They really looked for a large audience.

LN: They prepared, but then they pretended that it was spontaneous, for example. This tension interests me.

MM: Yes, it was not spontaneous. Of course, it was also, in the case of Hermann Nitsch, based on the principle of a ritual. The ritual is, of course, based upon repetition: repetition within one performance and repetition of one performance to another performance. So, yes, repetition and ritual is something you can teach your audience – your audience learns quite quickly to see a kind of pattern in a performance – and in the actions of Otto Mühl and Hermann Nitsch there is a kind of pattern.

LN: The ritualistic aspect?

MM: Yes, the ritualistic aspect. In the case of performances, for example, by Marina Abramović, there are two main concepts therein – and also in the book – the fact that how long a performance will last and when a performance will end are uncertain features of the performance and these are important features of the performance.

LN: For her?

MM: For her, but also for the audience.

LN: But this concept of unfixed duration doesn't belong to all the early performances, right? I guess some artists had fix duration … or not?

MM: Yes, it could also work the other way around. For example, I mentioned a Hungarian artist in the book, Tibor Hajas, and he wanted his performance in Warsaw to last forty minutes, but he lost so much energy during the performance he was not able to end the performance in the way he had planned to. That was something out of control. Marina Abramović planned to be out of control.

LN: But still it is a plan.

MM: Yes, still it is a plan, there are rules. But the implications of those rules are that the audience is in an insecure and unsure position. Of course, you can have a lot of confidence in the artist and think they will manage to fulfill their plan – or you have no confidence in the artist, that is something an audience can have – but it was still completely different from a theater play, in which you know there will be a break at half nine in the evening. There is still that big difference.

LN: But, when would you say that this authentic was only live-experience, which also has to do with it being a kind of myth – not only true – at what time was this ascribed, attached or connected to the notion of performance? Now you have said that the really early performances in the 60s did not have those things. That they would be either ritualistic or there would be other examples of just actions – doing something in public space would be an example – one could do it again, it doesn't matter for the action itself. For example Valie Export's *Tapp und Tastkino* or the action that she made with Peter Weibel as a dog, it is not part of the concept that it is once only, and it's not that important I would say. It's an action, and for the ritual …

MM: I still think that Peggy Phelan is very important for this …

LN: Ah, you think so late?

MM: Yes, it was very late. As I said, that people who were not attending the performance were getting the idea themselves or via the people who told them about the performance and who were actually present during the performance, they really missed something that could not be replaced. That element was already very present during the first years of De Appel. But it was not really made part of a theory, or part of conception at that time. I would just look at myself: I lived in Arnhem during that time, I was not yet working in Amsterdam – the first years I was a student, later on I had a job in Utrecht – so, I was not able to attend all the performances, especially

when they were on Thursday evening, for example. The weekend was a different case, but on the Thursdays I missed quite a number of performances, but every week I went to De Appel to see the recording. So, for me, I still had the feeling that the recording was enough, was useful, that I could imagine how the performance was to be experienced yourself, that you could use your imagination to bridge the gap between the video recording and the actual performance.

LN: Do you think this has to do with the fact that you watched it right one week after …

MM: One day after sometimes!

LN: … and also in the same space? Because if I would go now … for me it would not be so close.

MM: No … and there were still people there; for example, there would be Wies Smals who could tell me a lot about the performance. Of course, that was a different case, but still, if at that moment the staff of De Appel or the people around De Appel had really worked on the mythologization of the performance art, like Peggy Phelan did later on, I probably would have behaved a bit differently, I think.

LN: You would not watch the documentation?

MM: Maybe not …

LN: Because you had the feeling that you had missed it and it was not worth seeing?

MM: Or maybe I would have decided to see all the performances whenever possible.

LN: Interesting, I think it's also interesting that you watched the document but still you were quite close to the performance. From the point of ontology, we would say the medium is always the same. The recording itself doesn't change, so it doesn't matter when you watch it. But actually, it matters, because the performance seems to live longer within the space also because of the memory of people, because of traces, of people around, of those things.

MM: Yes, yes.

LN: Okay, yes, good. So, then, the second question is again, a mixture of statement and question: in theater before the post-dramatic period, the written text – the drama

– was the preceding and also remained the unchanged original of each performed piece. And, I guess, but this is also a question to you, the denial that there was no script or score for early performances had to do with the fact that artists wanted to differentiate their work from then theater performances. I was wondering why artists didn't say "well, we are building new relations to text and theater," but they just said that there is no text, which is a bit … there's always text, a concept. Everything that we know and spoke about today, context is text. Could you tell a little bit about how this opposition between text and performance came about? Do you think it's the same answer with Peggy Phelan?

MM: No, no. Marina Abramović first made statements about this from a very early date.

LN: From when?

MM: I think 1974 or something like that.

LN: Okay, and what kind of statement?

MM: So, the "anti-theater" attitude …

LN: That this has to do with the relation to text, of performance to text?

MM: To texts, because it's an obstacle when you want to keep the performance as real as possible. The theater, as you said, has a text, and the text is performed and it is brought into a different reality, it is not reality itself, the actors are of course acting. There are fake elements.

LN: Of course, there are differentiations, but I'm interested in the point between text and performance, in that relation. I was wondering when this division came about and why artists needed to claim that there is no text. Now we know that they drew before, they wrote down, they did know in advance what they were going to do. These are all scripts. These are all texts. So, I was wondering when and why artists need to deny that there is a text.

MM: I think it has everything to do with how texts are an obstacle, or at least diminishes the level of experience of the performance, whether that be the physical experience, the visual experience of the performance. For example, Benjamin Buchloh had a very different context and sense about artists in the 90s. They really

wanted to hit – those artists in the 90s – they wanted to hit the viewer between the eyes, so that means to not give the viewer the opportunity to distance himself from what is happening, to confront the viewer directly with what is happening in time and place.

LN: But this is also a concept: this is my text, when I am a performer, then this is my text, my concept, is to hit between your eyes. This is my score. The performance – how I do it and how this is then experienced live – I don't know because I have never rehearsed it before and it may change depending on what space we are in – if we are in a bigger space then maybe it will be a bigger distance – this is really a unique moment. But what I don't understand is where this division comes from.

MM: Because, as I said, if you have that information and you have a score … For example, if you're a theater critic, you read Shakespeare's text and you have seen director A make a performance out of that text, and director B is doing it in a different way. Then, when you watch that second performance of *Hamlet*, for example, you are comparing the performance with the other performance and with the text.

LN: But then I could say that I do this score only once, then it is the same. Or I could not hide the score, or say that there was concept. I do know what I am doing. Also, when an artist paints a painting, the artist does not say: "I have no idea who did this painting," but in performance it is "it just came out of me and I don't know."

MM: But that's not the problem. Of course, it is possible that an artist makes some notes, some drawings and has some plans, but what kind of information do you want your audience to have beforehand? What kind of information prevents your audience from having the kind of experience you want them to have? That, I think, in the case of Marina and Ulay, for example, is a really important issue; as they were really working for months and months, there is no actual rehearsal for the performance, but there is such a training in a mental and physical sense, they really made as much effort as a theater actor. Only, they don't want themselves to rehearse it, they want to maintain something of a spontaneous act. The presupposition of that is that they think that the audience will have a different feeling when there is no rehearsal than if there had been.

LN: Okay, do you think that the relations that live-performance has to its documentations, or performative acts to their medializations, do you think this relation

has changed since the early performance works? When we talk now about performance documentations we already talk about a genre, and I was wondering how artists did deal with it before it was coined as such, before it was called performance documentation. I don't ask if it became more or less … I am interested in how the awareness changed the medium or the way it was dealt with it.

MM: In the beginning you had a feeling that in the 90s a lot had changed, and I think that we should be aware of the influence, for example, of the internet. We have become used to communicating in quite different ways since the internet is there. It is not only the direct application of the internet, but the idea that there is no longer something like the "real place" and other places, because the internet is everywhere. So, everything is everywhere present in a way. Of course, it is a fiction, but that is also the implicit method of the internet – that all the information you can get is everywhere. I think also it has two reactions: on the one hand, the revival of performance art has everything to do with that, that there was a kind of longing of a time in which there were those experiences – those real and once only experiences, that things still matter – while now, since the internet, everything can be changed for something else, you know. There are no things anymore that have intrinsically more value than anything else. So, that reaction, that response to the longing for real experience, is one reaction to the age of the internet, but the normal effects of communication since internet is that we don't take care so much about the quality of information and the way we get the information, the medium of information.

LN: Do you mean by "information" the documents?

MM: Yes, the documentation. So for example if a student at the university or secondary school writes a thesis or paper he collects information from books and from the internet till the moment where he thinks I have enough information. The quantity of the information ranges much more than it did before. So, in the past, people were probably more developing themselves in small environments and surroundings, this was an obvious choice and a choice they made because these are the kind of ideas they wanted to identify with – they wanted to belong to that group of people that have those kind of opinions and viewpoints. Then you of course add information, but at the same time you value that information, so it's more information that is selected by criteria – was more often selected, rather – by quality rather than quantity. I think that's quite important.

LN: So, do you think there is a lot of performance documentation today, or too much?

MM: I don't say too much, I think more that people at a certain moment have the idea of … Well, you are interested in comparison between different documentation media, so "comparison" means a qualitative way of looking at the intrinsic qualities certain ways of documentation have – what can I attain with one medium in comparison to another? – but I think in general people are satisfied as long as they get information. What kind of medium doesn't matter so much, but the quantity of the information to get a certain picture, and to maybe have enough, have a certain amount of material to communicate about that subject. So, the experience is not so important anymore as the information level you need to situate something and to maybe communicate with others about it.

LN: But when we talked about De Appel, you said that there would more or less always be the camera and I guess it would be in the middle of the room, or…? So there seems to be an awareness of the document, but it doesn't seem that much reflected or talked about how this looks, who makes it, how it is made, who owns the rights, where it is shown afterwards – all these questions that we have today as young artists working with different media. I was wondering about this awareness, these kind of things … I thought that in the 90s it might have changed because in the 90s performance became broadly exhibited and performance documents were being sold. So, yes, I think the relation between performance changed in this moment of talking about it and looking at it through these mediums.

MM: At that time, up until 1983, I am quite sure, that the more commercial – I call it commercial marketing – aspects of documentation were really not an issue or topic of De Appel. So, we were discussing their feeling of responsibility towards the future, towards history, that's an important issue, but that's something of the long-term. On the short-term, they used those video tapes to go to art schools – mainly to art schools but also university – and to tell students about performance art and to show them that videotape so that they can get an idea, or clue, as to what performance art was or is.

LN: And it was not yet an issue that what we see we see through the medium, which means that this also immediately changes …

MM: The video is the most transparent medium we have right now.

LN: This is what I thought, that this relation in the beginning was kind of natural or unreflected, it was done, in the doing, in the practice. Now, and maybe since the 90s there is a kind of ontology concept …

MM: There was a certain reflection, because otherwise De Appel would have not asked people to write the written report. They had an idea that video recordings may not be the ideal … It was new and it's better than film, but still of course they had the idea that you could not miss a written report of a performance.

LN: I remember you write in the introduction that, in your opinion, a performance should not be repeated. Is this right? And I guess you said so, because the context cannot be repeated? I don't recall the argument entirely.

MM: Yes, I mean it in a semiotic way. Every performance has its own meaning, so in a semiotic way a performance can be repeated but every repetition is not the same as it was the day before. There is always a difference. Only the difference, or the focus, the emphasis within performance art when a performance is repeated is still … the character or the level of repetition, and the … how is called it? …the measure, to how far it or what extent it is a repetition …

LN: Yes, I understand.

MM: … is dependent upon the artist himself, and to his capacities.

LN: Also by the performance itself, because by my performance I can put this … move an object one meter, and then it is quite easy to repeat it. I can come tomorrow and I can do this more or less the same. But when we try to repeat the entire conservation tomorrow it would be a bit much …

MM: Yes, but at the same time you realize that in a performance a performance artist can make the decision not really to repeat the performance, to make changes. Not only because he feels different than the day before, but because he had another intuition or a different conceptualization of the performance.

LN: But isn't it then another performance?

MM: If it is, of course, a repetition. People first start with that idea, and then maybe they have information and they notice that it is different from the day before or later

on they recognize that it is different from the day before. Nobody cares, in a way. Nobody goes to the artist and says “please give me my money back.”

LN: Yes, because the performance has no value anyway – only the document. The document you can only sell once.

MM: But also because you are aware that you don’t pay for the repetition. You pay for the performance.

LN: I don’t understand the difference.

MM: When you go to the theater play.

LN: I pay today ten euros and tomorrow I will also pay ten euros.

MM: Yes, you will pay ten euros tomorrow. But when the actors decide during the break: “we will not continue after the break” … then people will say: “give me my money back.” But still, if a performance artist promised to do the performance again, but changes the content of his performance instantly …

LN: Yes, instantly, but when I change the concept of the work I also have to change the title usually, because then it is a different work.

MM: But still I think it is possible that artists make the decision to do it, halfway through a performance to come to a different ending or whatever else. Not only because they are physically incapable of doing the same thing, or they have a different emotion, a different charisma, maybe also because they just don’t want to … don’t want to again that very emotional element, that pathetic element, it was too pathetic.

LN: A little bit of censorship?

MM: Yes, a little bit of censorship. But I think that is the autonomy of the visual arts, that tradition especially of performance art, makes it so that people will accept those changes and won’t say that they want their money back.

LN: So, you would say that performance has no autonomy in the sense that a picture does? When I have a picture I can exhibit it twice and no one will say: “hey, that’s another context.” Context always matters and makes a difference – where I exhibit the picture: in my flat, in your bedroom, or at the Stedelijk museum – but everyone

will say that this picture is of Lilo Nein and it is autonomous and she can exhibit it here and there but the picture is always the same.

MM: Michael Fried, for example, says that every good picture has its meaning and its importance and its significance wherever it is exposed, wherever it is shown.

LN: This is the autonomy of an artwork.

MM: Yes, but of course there are a lot of artists who have a different view, because we think that context matters.

LN: But I just wonder when we compare this now to performance, everyone would say: “you did this performance in the bedroom of Marga van Mechelen, so this is the performance, you cannot do it in Stedelijk museum now.” I wonder if performance from the beginning was against this autonomy, or is it more dependent on the context, or would you say it is not autonomous anyway … or can it be different?

MM: I think that is more the autonomy of the artist. Not of the artwork but the artist, that it is accepted of a performance artist that he, on the one hand, has his own ordeal. There is a kind of vow there: I want to reach this, I want to attain this goal, I promise you that I want to attain that goal, I promise it to myself, it is a chance for me to get there, to achieve that goal. But if an artist does not succeed, like for example Tibor Hajas, who wanted to hang on the ceiling for forty minutes but was not able to do it more than twenty minutes, I did not go to him and say I want my money back. When I go to a circus and an acrobat is not able to do any performance then I would go to them and say I want my money back. That’s the difference. Of course a circus is an acrobat theater in a way. I mention that example because these things are connected more to performance art than to traditional theater. But still, when you go and see an acrobat, you have confidence that he will survive, you know that it is a kind of ritual, he’s done it twenty or thirty times before and there has been a lot of repetition. But still, the fact that you are really concentrated when you watch the acrobat is because there is still a lot of risk. But, as I said, when an accident happens during that act, you accept that; there is still an element of risk in circus, yet when the acrobat really doesn’t succeed in any act you want your money back because that is not part of the deal. I think your audience has a really different attitude as a performance artist because of the fact that he probably did not repeat it. It’s a mental vow.

LN: Do you think this still is, or do you only talk about this period?

MM: As I said, there has been a reaction, especially in the 90s, of artists and of the audience also, who long for that old performance art. Here in the Netherlands there is a performance artist who founded a foundation … I don't know the exact title of the foundation … it is something like Performance No Tech. What she wants is to organize performance – and she is doing performance herself as well – she wants to organize performances of performance artists who do not use technology, props – a little bit of props, but not very dominant props or technology in the performance art – who stay close to their own physical possibilities and limits. That is her idea and that you could say is quite romantic in a way; it is romantic because it goes back to that earlier idea of performance art. So, there are those kinds of performance artists, and at the same time in the 90s you had a number of reenactments. Often the reenactments, certainly in the beginning, were a kind of "ironization" the performance art, making it ironic, to play with it.

LN: Do you mean reenactments by the artists themselves?

MM: No, these were by other artists. Although, I must say that the reenactments by Yoko Ono of her performances were not as serious as her old performances. I would not say that there was a lot of irony or cynicism in her reenactments … more neutral … a more neutral way of doing the reenactments.

There are a number of younger generation performance artists who actually play with the old concepts: sometimes literal reenactments, or almost literal reenactments, but sometimes also with a play on the crucial themes of performance art, and sometimes also with different layers. One example was a performance artist who had cream –not cream that you use for mixing things – and she took her arm until about here into that cream and clotted the cream until it was really clotted cream. Of course, that is really funny to see someone doing that for an hour, making clotted cream out of it. But there was a moment also when the audience would realize how much pain it would cause, so people felt pity towards her at a certain moment, and she was very anxious to realize her goal. She was not laughing at the public, saying: "see me doing this." At the beginning there was a kind of laughter for a moment, and then there came a moment of identification for the pain. So, this is a typical example of the 90s and how they worked with traditions of performance art.

Then you had the twins who did performances – they are anorexic, these twins, Liesbeth and Angélique Raeven – they did a performance in which they used the Bologna performance of Marina and Ulay, in which Marina and Ulay stood opposite each other naked and everyone who wanted to enter the art gallery had to go pass the body and touch either the male or female body. The twins were also standing in the same position although they were not naked, of course, but you could see that they were anorexic, you could still feel their bones if you passed them, but of course that is quite an experience. As soon as you passed them, you did not notice but your own weight was projected full screen for the whole audience. The artists they had hardly any weight – forty-five or forty-two kilos – and then you had to go between them and then you would see your own weight projected. That is funny to have again those different emotions, and I think that is quite typical for a lot of performance artists that started to do performances again in the 90s. On the one hand, really aware that you want to reach a real emotion, but then on the other hand being aware of the fact that you have distance to that history [the 1970s] and that spectacle look of the history.

LN: And, also, wanting to create that emotion is also a concept or is also an artwork. Also, the performance ontology came up at the end of the 90s. Maybe you can say the last little bit about this? What is your feeling and what is this term, or how its claim changed the way of how we look at performance art today.

MM: Quite a number of people are asking me, for example, a radio program asked me: can you deliver a performance artist who we can talk about, a performance artist who is doing still such awful things, something like that, you know. There still is a kind of image of performance art that is still related to all those very risky performance artists of the 70s, especially Marina Abramović. I must say, that on the one hand I am also responsible for that when I teach about abjection and transgression and I take as examples of the 60s and 70s the Viennese Actionists, Marina Abramović, Carolee Schneemann, Ana Mendieta, et cetera. Then you confirm that picture of performance art, and in confirming that picture you also confirm that there is also something like an ontology of performance art. Then on the other hand – and this is also my response – when people ask me to deliver a performance artist and ask are there any performance artists left, I tell them that there are hardly any exhibitions nowadays in which there are no performance artists present in the exhibition itself, during the

opening of the exhibition, in the course of the exhibition, et cetera. It is so integrated in everything, but that does not imply that those performances have the same character as the performances of the 70s. They are very different, the variety of subjects within performance art nowadays. I think because it is so normal now, that is perhaps the reason why people are looking for performance art now. Because they are looking for the 70s art, the 70s performance art and they are not aware that it is actually everything and is very visible in a way.

I think that's … I cannot imagine it will be over within a couple of years, performance art. I don't think so … Also because there is a completely another argument for it, the same argument as for installation art: art is a global art and artists are travelling from one place to another, and most art that is going on in contemporary art is shown in contemporary exhibitions; for example, the Biennales all over the world, exhibitions that are bound to a certain location and time period, where artists are going to and they are there and they don't have anything with them. They go to a shop and they buy their stuff and they make their installation, and after their exhibition it goes as rubbish, it goes away, and they travel by plane or whatever else and go to the next biennale and make a different thing, or make the same thing. So, today, installations are also ephemeral, the main part is ephemeral. The same thing happens with performance. Performance also belongs to that global art world. That is also a reason why I don't think performance will be over in a couple of years.

LN: And then the museums started to buy the written stuff, they collect now all the scripts. Okay, well thank you very much for the long conversation!

Interview with Renate Bertlmann

The following text is the edited version of a recorded interview with the Austrian artist Renate Bertlmann about the relation of live performance and photography in Bertlmann's work in the 70ties and 80ties. The interview was conducted in Vienna in August 2014 in German Language.

Lilo Nein: We might take a photograph of *The Pregnant Bride in the Wheelchair* (*Die schwangere Braut im Rollstuhl*) from 1978, which I found during my research, as the starting point of our conversation. When I saw this picture, I was sure that I had seen it before and that it documented a live performance. The only irritating thing was that there was no audience in this one. I asked myself whether the photo had been taken from a different perspective, whether it had been deliberately framed without the audience. Or had the audience simply been airbrushed out? Later on, I found two photographs on your website, each part of a different series: one of the bride with an audience – documenting a performance – and one of the bride without an audience, a studio photograph. Both pictures are indeed quite similar, but it becomes clear within the series that each image has a different status with regard to your artistic practice. A performance took place in both cases – a performance that was captured on camera, so we have an action and a materialized view of this action – and yet one of them is a staged photograph and the other is a live performance documented by someone else.

What is the relationship between photographic and performative practice in your art?

Renate Bertlmann: It's a complex relationship, because these media interlock in many different ways, and these interrelationships change in the course of time. I consider my staged photographs performances as well. They're studio performances. I made them mostly in the 1970s and the live performances afterwards, in the late 1970s, early 1980s.

I did my first studio performance in 1969, entitled *Transformations* (*Verwandlungen*). In this work, I used different clothes and utensils that belonged to my mother and posed for the camera with them. The reason I did this was that my mother forced me to wear certain clothes as a child. She told me which clothes to buy or sewed clothes for me, which I then had to wear: from nightgowns all the way to costumes. In this

photo series, I reflect this situation and try to interpret it ironically. For me, this was an action, as they used to call it in the 70s, an action before the camera. It gave me joy to act this out; this action was primarily about the feelings I had when I did this private little fashion show. The material output of my action – that is to say, the photographs – was not that important to me. The medium of photography has always accompanied me; I grew up with it and took it for granted. The camera has always been the extension of my arm. I used it like a pencil or a brush. My uncle was very artistic; already as a young man he had taken photographs. He gave me my first camera and helped me develop my first photographs as a child in the bathroom. Our bathroom was a witch's kitchen ... I have always also explored my objects photographically, circling them, so to speak, to see what I was doing there or to unlock a level of meaning that I had not been conscious of. I was able to analyze all this with photography. Of course I also photographed my performances in order not to lose the moment entirely. But these pictures were never about the photography, and always about the reflection of what I was doing. In the pictures, I saw what I was doing then and there, and what these actions were transporting.

LN: Could an attending audience have taken over this function of the outside look? Would performing this action have been thinkable before an audience?

RB: No, an audience could never have given me this outside look. The camera is more objective; it merely produces a statement of fact. If I ask ten people from the audience how they perceived my action, each person would make a different statement.

LN: Ten different camera angles would also make ten different statements about the action.

RB: Yes, that's true. But the camera does not judge me. It shows what I am doing in that instant. While the camera is also a weapon, it basically does not do anything to me. I was incredibly vulnerable in those moments, but nobody was there who could have hurt me. The intimate space of the studio has given me the opportunity to perform this action. I was able to move around freely, to truly expose myself.

LN: How has your relationship between photography and performative action developed in the following years?

RB: From 1969 to 1974, I only used photography for documentary purposes. I used the photographs from my series of *Transformations* for collages. Additionally, I made quite a few objects or parts of objects at that time. In 1974 I made a worm that I used for an object as late as 1980. I used this worm to improvise in my second studio performance. I just wrapped it around my neck and twisted it. That was when the photo series *Skinnings* (*Häutungen*) was created. One might say that my performances evolved from my object-making activities. I always acted with my own objects as well as with ready-mades. I collected a large number of sex toys, mostly dildos. I also made photo series with them later; *Chanson d'Amour* was one of them, for instance. There are many cross-references between the objects, photographs, and performances: The double-headed dildo with the vibrating handle – a ready-made I played with in this studio performance – was reused in a live performance *Sling Shot Action*. In 1976, I made *Tender Pantomimes* (*Zärtliche Pantomime*) in the studio. That was a very intimate work in which I sat on the floor, at times with legs spread-eagled. I had pacifier-fingers on my hands and a mask-object on my face or between my legs that was also made of self-cast latex pacifier objects. I processed these latex objects into other objects and also reused them in the live performances later on.

LN: What is the main thing you had in mind in these studio performances: improvising with your body and its impulses or the photographic image that was to be created in that instant?

RB: Both. I had no strict stage direction, no instructions to myself, but I had carefully selected the objects beforehand. Performing in the moment, I let myself be inspired by the objects. It was a kind of spontaneous action that was guided and led by the choice of objects.

LN: How would one picture this situation in which the photography does not interrupt or disturb the playful exploration process?

RB: Well, it didn't, because the act of taking photographs corresponds with my personal work rhythm. I'm a very fast worker; I just go with the flow of the shutter button's click. Then it goes, pow-pow-pow, click-click-click! As soon as I think about the process, it's over for me. Of course, I knew what I was doing there, why I was doing it, and what I wanted to express. I was very clear and open about what I

wanted to do from the get-go. But in the process, I use a lot of intuition; instants when "reason" crept into my process were very rare. What's remarkable about this is that there was no photographic waste in these works: every photo worked, always! One time, a photo inexplicably turned out to be out of focus, but apart from that, every image worked, also the framing. Even in the *Renée or René* (*Renée ou René*) series from 1977, in which I am posing in menswear in front of a table. I always went back and forth to the camera to click the release button, and without making a mark on the floor, I always returned to the correct spot.

When I was doing the *Renée or René* series, I never thought about exhibiting the photographs, because topics like masturbation, seduction, and rape are so intimate. I could only do this series at home. Afterwards, I left the output at home for two years as contact prints, looking at them with a magnifying glass. When I had enough of them, I decided to have them all enlarged to life size.

LN: There were five performances from 1977 to 1982. How did you go from intimate acting for the camera to a direct confrontation with the audience?

RB: I had become more courageous, and I wanted to confront the audience, see their reactions. The difference to a camera, among other things, is that you can feel the atmosphere in the room, the contact with the audience. My contact with the audience has slowly intensified. For my first performance, *Defloration in 14 Stations* (*Deflorazione in 14 Stazioni*), I acted behind a wall and all the audience could see were my hands. Somehow that wasn't enough for me, though, and I tried to actively involve the audience more in subsequent performances. In hindsight, I was quite pushy in doing that. I had conceived the performances in such a way that the audience had to participate. In *The Pregnant Bride in the Wheelchair* I had a big belly and sat in a wheelchair, which had a sign attached that read, "Please push" ("*Bitte schieben*"). When nobody from the audience pushed me, the baby in my belly began to scream so loud until somebody pushed me. The baby in my belly was a loudspeaker … I had a cassette recorder by my side, which I turned on whenever I needed. People weren't able to take the screaming very long. In this performance, I used many different objects I had developed in my three-dimensional practice: attached to the cassette recorder was a rope that I laid around the room, building an arena for myself. The rope was wrapped in umbilical cords made of cast latex. And I always wore parts of my objects: a pacifier mask, a pacifier crown, pacifier hands.

In the performance *The Pregnant Bride with the Collection Bag* (*Die schwangere Braut mit dem Klingelbeutel*) at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in 1978, I used a collection bag in the shape of a huge condom – which again was a latex object I had cast myself – to collect money from the audience for the *Relic of St. Erectus* (*Reliquie des Hl. Erectus*). St. Erectus was mounted to the wall, a collection box mounted beneath it. I kept going through the crowd, importunately collecting their money, which I then put in the collection box. In return, I gave the donors a small devotional picture of St. Erectus. When people did not donate, the baby in my belly started screaming at the top of its lungs.

The performance *Let's Dance Together* had me tied to a wheelchair. I tried to free myself, which wasn't easy, because I had made sure the rope was really tight, and I kept trying until someone from the audience had mercy and helped me. In the *Sling Shot Action* at Franklin Furnace in New York in 1980, I forced the audience to dance with me and a doll. This element of interaction was very important in my live performances; it played a central role in these works.

LN: Have your live performances also caused you to reflect on the objects or to perceive them differently, like the photographs have done for your studio performances?

RB: Yes, that's exactly what happened. One example was the pacifier crown the Pregnant Bride wore instead of a flower crown, which caused different associations with headgear through my acting in the performance. It led to my large photo object *When Will the Theologians Finally Tell Us Something About Tenderness…* (*Wann werden uns die Theologen endlich etwas von Zärtlichkeit erzählen ...*), where the pacifier crown became Jesus's crown of thorns … This association was triggered by my acting with the object in the performance.

LN: How did you go about documenting your live performances? Had you planned or conceptualized the recording process beforehand?

RB: All my live performances were photographed, each and every one of them. My most faithful photographer is my husband Reinhold Bertlmann. He was always there; I could really depend on him. He is a good photographer, and he likes taking pictures. I didn't have to explain much to him, because he knew my work inside and out. I have had some bad experiences with other photographers: either the photos

weren't very good and didn't show what I wanted them to show, or they were underexposed, or the photographer was so busy watching what was going on that he or she forgot to take pictures altogether. If it wasn't for my husband, I wouldn't have all that many records of my performances today.

LN: Have these documents changed in significance for you over the years? What is their value to you today? Was it important to you that these pictures showed someone else's perspective on your work?

RB: Though there are many great shots, the value of these photographs is not so much artistic as it is nostalgic: they remind me of how I did what I did back then, and how the performances played out. Beyond that, these photographs have a functional significance: you can exhibit them and use them for catalogues, publications, and so on. In the exhibition *Aktionistinnen* (Female Actionists) at Forum Frohner in Krems back in 2014, I showed one photograph of each performance that someone else took. One of the photographers was Margot Pilz, who took some great pictures of the performance *The Pregnant Bride in the Wheelchair* at the Galerie Modern Art in Vienna. She is an artist herself, and of course I list her as the photographer. The handwriting of the person who took the picture is all over the image. You just have to accept that.

LN: You have described photography as the medium in which you reflect on and document of your performances. Both functions become relevant after the performance. Have you ever used photography before a performance, like sheet music?

RB: At the beginning, you asked me about the *The Pregnant Bride in the Wheelchair*, pointing out that it is mentioned twice on my website. If you don't have all the information, you won't know which of the two is the studio performance and which the live performance. I have, in fact, made studio performances and taken photographs before and after live performances. Beforehand it wasn't always necessary, but sometimes I practiced or tried certain parts at home to see how it would go and what I actually wanted to do. Afterwards, I repeated the performances in the studio to get a little more out of them or to understand something that hadn't been clear or coherent to me initially, something I hadn't been aware of. I circled my performances with photography, also in terms of time.

Bibliography

The literature that is incorporated in the bibliography includes the literature that was read as well as the literature that is quoted. When the same literature is listed in the bibliography in German and in English, this means that I first read the text in German language and then looked up the passages to be quoted in the English version.

If an English translation of the literature existed, it has been used. When no translation of the quoted passages existed, I translated them myself and marked this in the footnote with “translated by LN.”

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https://www.zhdk.ch/?id=37683

Biography

Marlis Reissert was born 1980 in Vienna. Her artist name is Lilo Nein. She works with and on performance and its relation to texts, sculptural installation and other media.
From 2003-2009 she studied Fine Arts with Prof. Monica Bonvicini and Prof. Marina Gržinić at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (Diploma with Distinction). In 2013 she enrolled in PhDArts doctoral programme at Leiden University.

Her art works were shown at Austria Cultural Forum New York, Museum of Modern Art Salzburg, Salzburger Kunstverein, Künstlerhaus Wien, Vienna Art Week, MA*GA Art Museum Gallarte Italy, MASS MoCA Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, MUSAC Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Castilla y León.

She received the Start Stipend (2010), the State Stipend (2013) for Fine Arts by the Austrian Federal Chancellery and the Performance Award H13 of Kunstraum Niederösterreich (2012).

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