

Does It Matter? Composite Bodies and Posthuman Prototypes in Contemporary Performing Arts

DAY 2 – Wednesday March 18th, 2015: Response-ability: Ethics and spectatorship

Location: Campo Nieuwpoort

- **Matthew Causey (KEYNOTE)**

This abstract falls outside the specific concerns of performing arts and instead engages with an analysis of a performance of trauma which can reflect usefully, I argue, on the effects and means of posthuman and digital performing arts. 'It is unknown how many victims of child pornography exist worldwide. It is estimated that there are over five million unique child pornography images on the Internet and some offenders possess over one million images of child pornography'.

Nowhere is the ethics of spectatorship more challenged than the presence of child pornography on the net. Victims of this process find the original abuse to be only the beginning of a ceaseless victimization and a resultant non-delusional paranoia in which the digital circulation of the images of the event of abuse and trauma are exploited and distributed. The composite body of the victim remembered digitally and circulated electronically creates a bio-virtual exchange in which the original trauma is replicated and re-experienced. The spectatorial subject of this techno-performative abuse may consider their position to be without responsibility or guilt, but the act demonstrates the troubling ethic at the heart of digital culture. When we are watched and watching, engaging and accepting of surveillance, forwarding and retweeting, we partake in a careless conflation of daily life and virtual existence in which rights to privacy and personal space are radically reduced. There is a porous gap between the virtual and the real with each embedded in the other altering their course and configuring the users, abusers and subjects.

In this paper I intend to explore the technological rememberings of trauma as performed by users of child pornography, the ceaseless virtual (but nonetheless real)victimization of the abused, and how participants of digital culture engage in thiselectronic and panoptic space. I will suggest how these phenomena position a newposthuman, composite subject and how the fields of art and technology are configured in the wake of this new situation.

Matthew Causey is Director of the Arts Technology Research Laboratory at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, where he is Associate Professor of Drama. He is the author of *Theatre and Performance of Digital Culture: from simulation to embeddedness* (Routledge 2009) and co-editor of *Performance, Identity and neo-Political Subject* (Routledge 2013) and the forthcoming *The Subject in the Space of Technology: from the virtual toward the real* (Palgrave 2014).

- **Marina Gržinić & Aneta Stojnic – Race, class and gender in the post-human era**

Where do we stand from decolonial perspective? Our paper will address the 2nd cluster of conference topics which deals with the questions of response-ability and ethics. The presentation will take a format of a theoretical / artistic / philosophical dialog in which we intend to question what kind of political intervention is introduced by (pro)claiming the post-humanism, as well as what kind of new subjectivities are produced in this process? Our standpoint is that in order to historically understand the actuality of new subjectivities it is necessary to analyze the present conditions from decolonial perspective. It is a perspective which takes into consideration historical continuity of colonial power relations in current processes of racialisation, as well as categorization and representation of gender, class, migration and citizenship.

In other words, in this paper we want to investigate what post-humanism means for the performativity of race, class and gender in the conditions of global neoliberal capitalism. We shall do so by looking at examples of artistic performative practices that focus on transfeminist, transmigrant, and politically queer positions in order to critically challenge and dismantle the existing power-relations as well as hierarchical concepts of the materiality of natural body.

Marina Gržinić is a philosopher, theoretician and artist from Ljubljana. She is one of the major contemporary theoretical and critical figure in Slovenia. She received her BA in analytical sociology in 1985, completed her MA in 1991 at the Faculty of Arts in Slovenia, and received her doctoral title in 1995 at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. The topic of her dissertation was Virtual Reality: achronic time, paraspace and simulation. Gržinić was one of the first, if not the first in Slovenia and maybe ex-Yugoslavia with a doctorate in philosophy and virtual reality, cyberspace, cyberfeminism (Haraway), postcolonial theory (Trinh T. Minh-ha), French structuralism and media theory (Baudrillard, Couchot, Klonaris/Thomadaki, Virilio, etc.). Since 1993 she is employed at the Institute of Philosophy at the Scientific and Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts (short ZRC-SAZU in Slovenian and SRC-SASA in English). Today she holds a position of professor and research adviser. For her scientific work she has received the Golden SASA sign in 2007. She is as well Full Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Austria from 2003. She publishes extensively, lectures worldwide and is involved in video art from 1982.

Aneta Stojnic is a theoretician, artist and curator born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia (1981).

Her professional work is characterized by strong connection between art theory and practice as well as interdisciplinary approach to art practices that affirm critical thinking.

She obtained her PhD at University of Arts in Belgrade (Interdisciplinary Studies - Theory of Art and Media) defending a thesis: "Theory of Performance in Digital Art: Towards the New Political

Performance". She was a post-doc researcher (Basileus) at Ghent University, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy Research centre S:PAM (Studies in Performing Arts & Media) and visiting scholar at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Conceptual Art study program, IBK where she taught a seminar on Conceptual Art and Techno-Bodies "Cyborg and Queer in the New Technology Environment". Aneta was Artist in residence in Tanzquartier Vienna in 2011, and writer in residence at KulturKontakt Austria in 2012. Authored a number of international publications on contemporary art and media, as well as various artistic and curatorial projects. She collaborated with institutions and organizations such as: Tanzquartier Wien, Open Systems (Vienna), Les Laboratoires d'Aubervillier (Paris), Quartier21 (MQ Vienna), Dansens Hus Stockholm, Odin Teatret (Denmark), BITEF Theatre (Belgrade), TkH Walking Theory (Belgrade), October Salon (Belgrade), Pančevo Biennial and many others.

- **Pedro Manuel – Reality Check – the epistemics of withdrawing the actor**

In my PhD research, I am studying contemporary performances without actors, firstly, by framing the intention of withdrawal of the human living presence within the field of theatre and, progressively, observing how these performances are playing out emerging critical paradigms of posthuman perception. By considering works by artists such as Kris Verdonck, Denis Marleau, Heiner Goebbels, Annie Dorsen or Rabih Mroué, it will be proposed to look at the withdrawal of human, living beings from stage as instances and acts of posthuman perception. By surrogating or delegating the physical presence of the human and professional actor to non-human animals, objects, machines, matter and landscape, performance makers seem to be interested in withdrawing the mediacy of human agency and to create renewed conditions of access to reality. Through the withdrawal of the actor and the devising of modes of access, such performances constitute epistemological acts within a posthuman paradigm (Hayles, Braidotti), as conditions of perception and knowledge of the world being experimented through the staging of non-humans. In this sense, emerging critical theory becomes more adequate to address performances without actors, namely: 'postindexicality' (Saltzman) as the shaping of traces without its real markers; 'animism' (Francke, Verwoert), by revisiting the relations of projection between humans and objects; 'object-based philosophy' (Latour) observing objects as entities and subjects and expanding definitions of agency; 'speculative realism' (Harman, Meillassoux) reviewing the philosophical grounds of epistemology and theories of access; and 'new materialism' (van der Tuin, Dolphijn) proposing a transdisciplinary view of matter, beyond dualism.

Pedro Manuel is a Portuguese theatre maker and PhD researcher at the Theatre Studies department of Utrecht University, with a scholarship by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (Portugal).

Pedro studied Philosophy at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of New University of Lisbon, his final thesis focused on the theme of dramatic illusion and research on the notion of mimesis. Followed by an MA in Theatre Studies at the University of Lisbon, he developed his work around the notion of "death" from Tadeusz Kantor's suggestion of an historical lineage of this concept which, in the end, proposes the withdrawal of the actor from the stage.

- **André Lepecki (KEYNOTE) - The offense of things**

In this talk, I will discuss the work of three visual artists who, at a certain point in their very different careers, found in performance an irresistible attractor and discovered, through performance, the unruly potentiality of things. These artists are Robert Morris, Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark. I will describe how in their works we can find moments when things go on the offensive against the dyads subject-object and artist-work. Neither posthuman nor neohuman, neither parahuman nor prehuman, the offense of things names an act of insubordinate interanimation, revealing what is always underlying those dyads: an ongoing revolt against the majoritarian dispositif of entrapping subjectivity and objectivity, the organic and the inorganic.

André Lepecki is Associate Professor at the Department of Performance Studies, New York University and Artistic Professor at Stockholm University of the Arts/ UNIARTS. He was chief curator of the festival IN TRANSIT (2008 and 2009), Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; co-curator of the archive Dance and Visual Arts since 1960s for MOVE, Hayward Gallery (2010). AICA Award for Best Performance for co-curating and directing the authorized re-doing of Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (commissioned by Haus der Kunst and presented also at Performa 07). Editor of *Dance* (Whitechapel / MIT Press 2012), *Planes of Composition: dance, theory and the global* (Seagull Books 2009, with Jenn Joy), *The Senses in Performance* (Routledge 2007, with Sally Banes), *Of the Presence of the Body* (Wesleyan University Press 2004). His single authored book *Exhausting Dance: performance and the politics of movement* (2006) is currently translated in 9 languages.

- **Małgorzata Sugiera / Mateusz Borowski / Mateusz Chaberski – Spectators in Laboratory. Between Theatre and Technoscience**

The recent onset of the post-humanist paradigm has brought about a decisive change in the perception of the disciplinary division in human and natural sciences as well as artistic and cultural practices. Part of this sweeping change is the emergence of hybrid forms of social interaction on the border of scientific and artistic practice (technoart, bioart, recycling etc). Typically they do away with the notion of the artifact and take the form of a process or an event, with all participants are included as co-creators. These new forms, when treated as performative arts, need to be analysed from performative point of view, which treats artistic events as emergent systems, networks in the sense of Bruno Latour's ANT theory, in which each element can become a momentary mediator in web of interconnections and relationships. This perspective is connected with the assumption that contemporary art links elements of traditional aesthetics with scientific discovery and advanced technologies, to create a specific environment, with participant-witness as its constitutive element. Therefore these environments can be regarded as laboratories, in which – quite against the dominant conception of hard science – scientific discovery goes hand in hand with artistic/aesthetic creativity. They develop and question the metaphoric use of this notion in theory and practice of theatre in the 20th century. It is through the notion of laboratory that we would like to address the problem of the changing roles of spectators and their political response-abilities in the framework of new hybrid cultural forms.

The panel will consist of three interdependent papers (20-25 minutes each) devoted to the following problems:

1. The historical genealogy of laboratory in the 17th century, at the onset of the humanist paradigm from the point of view of contemporary questioning of the borders of scientific and humanist disciplines. The paper will address the problem of early laboratory created by Robert Boyle as a performative site in which the spectators and a particular format of protocols fulfill a significant function, confirming and spreading the dominant view of the world (Małgorzata Sugiera).
2. The metaphor of laboratory of social processes in the performative arts in the 20th century from Brecht and Stanislavski to Heiner Müller. The paper will focus on the question of the changing role of theatre and its audience when the performative event was modeled on laboratory. It will focus on specific types of interaction between demonstrators and onlookers in those theatre forms and the question of engagement and participation (Mateusz Borowski).

3. Participation and spectatorship in the latest site-specific art forms with particular emphasis on phantom experiences which turn the spectators into both observers and material of observation and study. The paper will demonstrate how recent technological advancements of the cyber-era have modified the terms of the contract between performers and spectators and questioned the received notion of liveness and direct contact as the basis of interaction in a laboratory on stage (Mateusz Chaberski).

Mateusz Borowski teaches cultural studies, queer theory and translation studies at the Department for Performance Studies at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków. He is also active as a translator. He published *In Search of the Real. New Developments of the European Playwriting of the 1990s* and, together with Małgorzata Sugiera, *In the Trap of Opposites. Ideologies of Identity* (2012).

Mateusz Chaberski is a Ph.D student at the Department for Performance Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. His academic interests range from performance studies, memory studies to translation studies. In 2014, he defended his M.A thesis entitled *Ghosts and Hosts. Modifying the Collective Memory of Space in Site-Specific Performance*. He is currently working on his PhD dissertation on the experience of the spectator/participant in contemporary performance art.

Małgorzata Sugiera is a Full Professor at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, and the Head of Department for Performance Studies. Her main research fields are performativity theory, cultural studies and queer studies. She is active as a translator. She has published ten books in Polish language, recently *Ghosts and Other Returns. Memory – History – Drama* (2006), *Other Shakespeare. New Readings of the European Canon* (2008) and, together with Mateusz Borowski, *In the Trap of Opposites. Ideologies of Identity* (2012).

- **Maximilian Haas & David Weber-Krebs – Does the Donkey Act? Or, Balthazar as Protagonist**

In this dialogic lecture presentation we focus on the process behind our ongoing artistic research project *Balthazar*, in which a confrontation is staged between one animal and a group of human performers. A non-trained donkey – *Balthazar* – is the protagonist, the centre of the action. Three performance productions have been realized so far (Amsterdam, Brussels, Hamburg). David, the director of the performances, reflects on the means and ends of the theatrical productions, Maximilian, dramaturg and theorist, unfolds the conceptual propositions that informed the process or resulted from it.

In the presentation we address the following questions: Can we claim that the donkey *acts*? In which sense of word? How can we distinguish between human and nonhuman agencies in a performance

situation? Is the donkey's participation to be understood in terms of (artistic) cooperation? Drawing on the work of A.N. Whitehead, Jakob v. Uexküll, Bruno Latour, and Donna Haraway in order to relate to the broader problems of a pragmatic aesthetics, we propose *aesthetic ecology* as a model of performance that renders different types of agency and action visible and highlights their interdependence.

David Weber-Krebs is an artist and a researcher based in Brussels. He studied at the University of Fribourg (CH) and the Amsterdam School of the Arts. David explores various contexts as a basis for an experimental process, which questions the traditional relationship between the work of art and its public. Recent works are the performances *Tonight, lights out!* (2011/2013) and *Balthazar* (2013) with Maximilian Haas, and the installation *Immersion* (2014) at the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt. David collaborates on a regular basis with different artists and theorists and he teaches at visual arts and performance academies.

Maximilian Haas is a cultural theorist and dramaturg based in Berlin, Germany. He studied at the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen, Germany. He is currently writing a practice-based PhD project at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne on *Animals on Stage: An Aesthetic Ecology of Performance*. The project was supported by the DFG-Graduate School *forms of life + knowledge of life* (Potsdam, Frankfurt/Oder). Haas has worked as a dramaturg for performance, theory and music at the Volksbühne Berlin and collaborates with performance-makers and choreographers. He teaches in art academies and universities. His research interests and publications primarily address the field of Animal Studies and Performance Aesthetics as well as Poststructuralism, Actor-Network-Theory, New Materialism and Pragmatism.

- **Benjamin Vandewalle, Helena Lambrechts, Dieter Brusselaers – Analog Embodiment: Benjamin Vandewalle's Peri-Sphere and (Pre-) Cinematic Technologies of Embodied**

During the last few decades, technological aspects of embodiment in performance and visual arts have become an established area of research in the humanities (e.g. Jones 2006), focusing mainly on contemporary and specifically postmodern artistic praxis. Nonetheless, it could be argued that such concerns should be retraced to the myriad of (pre-) cinematic technologies that have governed sensory experience since modernity, as “perception in modern life became a mobile activity and the modern individual body the subject of both experimentation and new discourses” (Charney and Schwartz 1995).

This historical focus resurfaces in the oeuvre of choreographer Benjamin Vandewalle, and intersects with typically postmodern concerns about technologically enhanced simulacra – as performances such as *Birdwatching 4x4* and *One / Zero* attempt to recreate the bodily sensation of cinematic immersion through analog means. *Peri-Sphere*, a collaboration with researchers Dieter Brusselaers and Helena

Lambrechts that was initiated at the beginning of 2015, will investigate the tension between postmodern, digitalized and cinematic immersion and its possible analog variants. Using optic devices and performer-operated technologies in a one-on-one performance/ installation, this project sets out to explore the borderlines of direct experience and a mediated gaze, activating sensory awareness in the participant.

At *Does It Matter*, the three researchers will present a preview of this installation. A prototype of the installation will be presented where the participant will become immersed in the technical apparatus, along with an elaboration on the early progress of the research project.

Benjamin Vandewalle studied at the Royal Ballet School Antwerp and graduated from P.A.R.T.S. in 2006. During his artistic training, he created the installation *Théâtre de La Guillotine* and *We Go*, a duet with Vincenzo Carta. In 2007, the two joined forces once more for the performance *Inbetween*. For *Birdwatching* (2009) and *One / Zero* (2011), both inquiries into the perception of space and motion, he collaborated with visual artist Erki De Vries. His internationally acclaimed performance on location *Birdwatching 4x4* (2012) is still on tour. In 2013 he made the performance *Point of View* in collaboration with CAMPO (Ghent).

Vandewalle also teaches workshops and is active in dance education. He was a guest lecturer at KASK and at MUDA and created a choreography for *Passerelle* (Kortrijk). He collaborated with dance training Nyakaza in South-Africa, founded the project *Comfusao* in Mozambique and attended a P.A.R.T.S. exchange to Senegal. With philosopher Jan Cnops and a group of children from Molenbeek, he made the documentary *(un)usual*.

Dieter Brusselaers studied Theatre and Film Studies as well as Literature of Modernity at the University of Antwerp. He currently works at VDFC (Vlaamse Dienst voor Filmcultuur) as project curator for *Verbeelding in Context*, a recurring live event connecting early cinema to historical sites from the nineteenth-century. In 2012, he presented a paper on *féerie* in Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* at a colloquium at the University of Erfurt, and wrote, with Kurt Vanhoutte, an article on this subject for the journal *Lendemains*. He served as a dramaturgical assistant and production intern for Theater Zuidpool (*Empedokles*, 2014) and Stefanie Huysmans (*Werkkamp 010*, Scheld'Apén).

Helena Lambrechts is a student of Theatre and Film Studies and Visual Culture at the University of Antwerp. In 2011 she worked as a production and dramaturgy assistant for Antwerp theatre collective De Roovers (*Onvoltooid Verleden Tijd*). In fall 2014, she became a trainee as researcher and curator in performing arts for *If I Can't Dance I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution* in Amsterdam.

- **Jasmine Zaloznik, Nika Arhar, Katja Cicigoj, Martina Ruhša – A Speculative Glossary**

Maska's research-group is proposing a lecture-performance involving five (speaking) persons and video-projections in which a number of neologisms will be introduced. The lexical in(ter)ventions comprise terms such as in0wasting, zenacceleration, and pregnant boredom. Our accelerated

temporality generates multiple strategies of dealing with the demands of our hastened time. It seems necessary to enrich our vocabulary with terms that will allow for some differentiation. Lexica are not static representations of words but tools for negotiating and intervening in the social field. Terminology is approached here as a poetic and at the same time productive moment of thought, as well as a speculative endeavour of lexical fiction. written and performed by: Nika Arhar, Katja Čičigoj, Martina Ruhsam, Jasmina Založnik in collaboration with Janez Janša and Pia Brezavšček – all more or less loosely related to MASKA.

Nika Arhar is working as a freelance critic in the field of performing arts, as a publicist and moderator of talks and roundtables.

Katja Čičigoj is a freelance writer in the fields of film, contemporary visual and performing arts and theory - currently completing a phd at the Justus-Liebig University in Gießen.

Martina Ruhsam is a choreographer, performer and writer. She has developed artistic works and published numerous texts on the performing arts - currently completing a phd at the Justus-Liebig University in Gießen. mag.

Jasmina Založnik is a freelance dramaturge, critic and curator in the field of performing arts. She co-creates festival and researches issues concerning the knot of politics, aesthetics, questions of labor and subjectivity.

- **John McCormick / Steph Hutchison – Emergence**

Emergence, a dance performance created by John McCormick and Steph Hutchison, scholars in the areas of dance, motion capture, agent – dancer performance co-creation, real-time 3D, artificial intelligence, neural networks, performance, choreographic practice and external frameworks.

John McCormick's, *emergence*, features collaborations between a human dancer (Hutchison) and an artificially intelligent performing Agent. The Agent has learnt to dance through a rehearsal process with its human dance partner, Hutchison, sharing her movement and style. Visualisations of their interactive semi-improvised dance performance are projected in glorious passive Stereoscopic 3D. Emergence uses a portable motion capture system to allow the agent to sense and recognise the dancer's movement using its Artificial Neural Network. The agent is able to follow the dancer's movement, create movement based on the vocabulary it has learnt from the dancer in rehearsal, generate movement phrases using the current movement of the dancer as starting points and can also recognise short full-body movement phrases or "gestures" which prompt the agent to inject verbal commentary on the dancer's performance.

Emergence uses the framework of distributed cognition to allow the agent and dancer to form an interactive, inter-dependent relationship from which the co-creation of the performance evolves. The

agent is not explicitly programmed with set behaviours, as in traditional software programming, its capabilities come about from the unsupervised learning process and have the inter-dependent relationship with the dancer embedded in that learning. The behaviours emerge from the learning process allowing the agent and dancer to develop a complex, co-created dance performance.

Steph Hutchison's *meta*, riffs off the knowledge gained from performing with the Agent in McCormick's *emergence* to create an intriguing new dance vocabulary through the practice she has developed while working collaboratively within external frameworks. A fair trade for the movement she originally taught the agent.

Emergence is the result of McCormick and Hutchison's collaborations with Motion.Lab and the Centre for Intelligent Systems Research (CISR) at Deakin University, Melbourne Australia. The artists have created a performance environment in which an artificially intelligent performing agent and the dancer speak the same artistic language and collaborate in the co-creative process of performance making.

John McCormick is one of the pioneers of new media dance, motion capture and telematic performance. John has collaborated on works worldwide, including at peak festivals ZERO1SJ, SIGGRAPH, Melbourne Festival, Venice Biennale, Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) London, Ars Electronica and Monaco Dance Forum. John was a founding member of Company In Space, Dancehouse and Squartriangle. He was awarded an Australia Council Fellowship in 2007-2008 for real-time motion capture and networked performance. John has collaborated with the Motion.lab team on many stereographic motion capture and augmented reality projects and has also worked on visualisation projects at the Centre for Intelligent Systems Research. John's current research centres on intelligent agents that can learn to dance from human dancers and use this learned behaviour to recognise movement and create appropriate movement responses. The agents can dance with a human dancer or with each other and are currently attempting to take over physical robot bodies.

Steph Hutchison is a choreographer, performer, artist-researcher and teaching-artist. Her current practice is informed by the collaborative and artistic potential of contemporary dance, improvisation, circus arts and physical theatre. From 2006 - 2011 she was an Artist in Residence at Arts Centre Melbourne. Her own work has been presented in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, and received commissions to create works for Arts Centre Melbourne, fLiNG Physical Theatre, Melbourne Dance Company and Little Devils Circus. She has been the recipient of Space Grants from Dancehouse and a Young and Emerging Artists Grant from the Australia Council with which she undertook mentorships with Legs on the Wall and Jodie Farrugia, as well as aerial arts tuition with Helene Embling at NICA. She has taught for Arts Centre Melbourne, Deakin University, NICA, National Theatre Ballet School and Dancehouse. Her dance film works have been screened at the Astor,

ACMI, Federation Square and Dancehouse. Collaborators include: Claudia Maharaj, John McCormick, Simone Litchfield, Stephen Sewell, Kathryn O'Keeffe, Kim Vincs, Jane Thompson, Megan Beckwith and Gorkem Arcoglu. Steph has just commenced her PhD research at Deakin University's Motion.Lab – Sampling: choreographic interventions for dance and circus.