

TIME, TRANSCENDENCE, AND PERFORMANCE
DAY ONE - 1/10/2009
notes by Josh Harle

KEYNOTE #1

Excess and Indifference: Alternate Body Architectures

Stelarc

Renowned Australian-based performance artist, Stelarc, has visually probed and acoustically amplified his body in his work exploring the body and its relationship with technology. With an interest in alternative, intimate and involuntary experiences, Stelarc's study of human-machine interfaces incorporates medical imaging, prosthetics, robotics, VR systems and the Internet.

Regine at We Make Money Not Art has done a good job of recording a very similar talk Stelarc gave at Transmediale in February 2007. It is available at <http://www.we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2007/02/stelarc-talk-a.php>

Now is a time of body hacking, neural implants "flesh circulating", where we can sustain a comatose body, perform face transplants.

Cadaver, comatose, chimeric bodies – mixed realities

"Fractal Flesh" electronically commented, supported bodies. "Phantom flesh"

Stelarc: Suspension → exhaust body. Expose hollow, involuntary, uncertainty

Stretched skin: gravitational landscape, choreography via swinging.

Stelarc talks in predominantly in 3rd person about himself: "the body moves", and "as the body is pulled into the window the police ask to see its ID"

"Third hand" work. Prosthesis: symptom of excess rather than lack for Stelarc: "extended apportional system"

One work captures the sound of brainwaves and heartbeats, amongst other things.

Obsolete body, augmented. 3D person.

"site specific" stomach installation. Focus on the empty spaces of the body; Stelarc's body a "Host for a sculpture". Explore performing involuntarily. "empty body"

Touch-screen remote control of his body: "Telepolis" choreograph it at a distance.

"In a posture of indifference, the body's awareness is extruded and its operation is extended".

Indifference allows performance to move in its own direction at its own rhythm. With expectations it collapses into something else.

Walking robot. Reframing choreography of robot: autonomous interactive chimeric structure as interface. Stelarc shows us robot designs from Case Western University, featuring "wlegs"; half-wheel half leg.

Zombies; bodies without mind and thus involuntary. While a is Cyborg human/machine system tending toward automaton.

Blender work mixes bio-material from Stelarc and another artist. Machine is host for material, the opposite of stomach work.

Ear project: growing cells. Seeding them on a bio-degradable scaffold. At RMIT they scan Stelarc's arm and ear to virtualise growing. Stelarc talks of a Bluetooth connection for the microphone in the ear growing in his arm. It is not currently internet enabled, but it will be.

Facial motion capture (2002). Head extension, articulated LCD screen on robot arm.

"Eartial face" grown from living tissue. Start-up company is preparing to print organs from living cells, from work by Vladimir Mironov at MUSC.

More info at www.stelarc.va.com.au

The Strange Intruder: Towards a Politics of Pure Feeling

Brian Massumi

C.S. Peirce begins his 903 lectures on pragmatism from the premise that the starting point for pragmatic philosophy as he envisions it must not be a concept of Being but rather of Feeling. Pragmatism, he explains, will be “an extreme realism.” Its first category will be “immediate consciousness” conceived as a “pure presentness” whose self-appearing is elemental to feeling. In the course of the lectures, a most curious conceptual character bursts upon the scene: the “Strange Intruder.” The arrival of the Strange Intruder is an attempt by Peirce to dramatise what he says is the fundamental point about his philosophy and logic. It is an idea which, he confesses elsewhere in “despair,” was also the point he had proven least successful at conveying: the First category, that of immediate consciousness of pure presentness, cannot be couched in terms of recognition, cannot be contained in any first-person accounting of experience, and most of all can in no way be construed as being “in the mind” of a subject, however the subject is conceived. Peirce extends his injunction against interiority, through his Second and Third categories, to thought, volition, and the semiotic process. Peirce's “extreme realism” dovetails on these points with James's “radical empiricism,” Whitehead's “critique of pure feeling”, and Deleuze's “superior empiricism.” This paper follows some of the byways of Peirce's thinking on this issue in order to map a shared problematic field these thinkers differentially cohabit by virtue of their explorations of a constitutive field of pure experience prior to subject/object determinations. The Strange Intruder will be welcomed as the germinal figure of the political, already agitating the field of pure feeling.

Pragmatism → radical empiricism: “pure experience” prior to object/subject. Junction between thought and bodily feeling. Opens potential to first person thought.

Peirce. Birth of politics at “pure expression” James's lecture on Pragmatism. No doctrine of being (Kantian). For pragmatism beginning through feeling. “The world is of pure experience”...

“Strange Intruder” for exposing a point; if nothing behind. semiotic process signs effect “upon a person”.

Peirce: “Abduction” 1st, “induction”, “deduction”

Deleuze and Guattari: “micropolitics”

Quality, nothing else. Not building blocks (empiricism: sensory data) “Sensationist” is metaphysical question begging. Assumes; implicit assumption about world/associative laws. Not intended by Hume, but allowed, says Peirce. Deleuze and Guattari: Phantasm = monism

Quality is relationship between parts you would otherwise parse out. Gift: unfolding series of phases.

Becoming into strangeness “first person present”. Time is the abyss of Qualitative existence. Between/across discontinuity.

“Struggle” different basis for politics. Pre-emptive in warfare – priming for action. Carl Schmitt: Politics creates a real possibility for differentiating friend and enemy.

KEYNOTE #2

Time Out of Joint

Jack Reynolds

In this paper, I discuss some of the findings coming out of neurology and cognitive science regarding our experience of time, particularly Benjamin Libet's account of the so-called user-illusion (analyses of the brain suggest that decisions are made well before volitional or self-conscious awareness of them), as well as some of John Sutton's research regarding the reaction-time of cricket players. Both are rendered more explicable by a Merleau-Pontian account of embodied intentionality and shown not to undermine his account of freedom. Whether creativity is best understood on this model, however, is debatable and something that I want to explore by contrast with the Deleuzian account of time, which suggests that genuine creativity involves/requires a rather different experience of time, a form of time that the "excesses" of sadism and masochism better capture, and which he and Derrida might call "time out of joint".

Cognitive Scientist John Sutton: Cricketers watch ball out of hand, and anticipate. They are not watching the ball all the way. There is no time for conscious decision making. A combination of procedural memory and anticipation.

Husserl; similar point regarding listening to music, memory of notes, and anticipation. "Retentive and Protentive" element

Deleuze: Problem with this time: time-out-of-joint

Derrida: repetition.

Event can only occur when time is out of joint. Interrupt the now moment. Contre-temps: untimely, contra to teleological history. Deleuze: Habitual, memorial, futorial.

Habitual: Hume ABAB

But Present passes.

Futorial: Transcendental condition

Learning to swim, example. Not merely overcome.

Become a nomad. Nomads change habits so not change habitat. Immigrant is opposite.

Typologies of Sado Masochism: Repetition runs wild of its own accord. For its own sake.

Repetition as not tied to identity. Living presence for sadist is compressed to be obliterated. Patience for masochistic time; impatience for sadist. Masochistic related to artistic → ethical evaluation. Aeon and Cronos. Aeon breaks open living presence.

Timing Space - Spacing Time

Jeff Malpas

Can we think temporality without also thinking the spatial? Might not the thinking of temporality always implicate the thinking of the spatial along with it? What is at issue here is not merely a question concerning the nature of the temporal alone, but of the unity of time with space, and so also of event, action, performance, as spacings no less than timings. The idea of the unity of time with space, expressed in the notion of "timespace" [Zeitraum] is a central idea in the development of Martin Heidegger's thinking as it moves away from the problematic treatment of time and space that is evident in *Being and Time*. On this account, there is no temporality that does not bring a spatiality along with it, and no spatiality that does not bring a temporality also. Understanding the unity of timespace is to understand the unity of place. Moreover, it is only in and through that unity, which is also always a working out of plurality, that there is any possibility of transcendence.

Reversal in thought of temporal over space. Looking through Heidegger: "Time as horizon of being". Time over spatiality.

Shellings work through Heidegger. Time as activity, performance. Ordering. Dynamic ↔ static. Movement ↔ structure.

Tendencies to disposition of privileging temporal: Spatial as conservative.

Donald Davidson (analytical): Engagement with artistic work. "Blind time paintings". Robert Morris. Potential gap between action and intention.

Called "Drawings" even though they are temporal-spatial.

Kant: Time carries no determination outside of spatiality.

1935 Heidegger realises mistake of primacy of time. Looks at them inseparably.

Inevitable tendency towards subjectivism in temporal privileging. Performance is a working out of time-space. Transcendence opening up of time-space as our own potential. We treat temporal + spatial as measurable: emphasis on measurable mode of spatiality, vs. conjoined place: topos → not measurable.

PAPER

An Immanent field: listening, time & space

Bruce Mowson

The Birdland research project inquires about audio-visual art practices. It questions the aesthetic dimensions of the auditory and the visual in relation with lived existence, and about the ways that listening might shape subjective experiences. In this context the embodying and emplacing spatio-temporality of sound bears a special relationship to the philosophical concept of immanence. In this case, the medium of virtual space is suggestive of questions of transcendental relations within the mind and body's temporal experience.

RMIT Design Research. 3D sound movement → immanence. Birdland presenting a psychic space (from Adam Nash work on image/body).

Deleuze and Guattari: "Plane of immanence"

#3 NARRATIVE MULTIPLICITIES

'Mr Johnson is a man of a most dreadful appearance': Boswellian manipulations of time & the portraiture of Sir Joshua Reynolds

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This paper will examine the various manipulations of time in James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and his use of Sir Joshua Reynolds's 1756-57 portrait of Dr Samuel Johnson. Part 1: In dedicating the *Life of Reynolds*, Boswell relied on the painter to establish his biography as the authoritative text on his subject, the essayist, biographer, and lexicographer, Dr Johnson. Despite Reynolds's centrality to the text through the Dedication and, indeed, through the pervasive recounting of Johnson and Reynolds's relationship throughout the *Life*, the depiction of the relationship is, ultimately, only through isolated fragments of time of 'noctes caenaeque Deum' (nights and suppers of gods) rather than as a coherent sub-narrative. Moreover, Boswell disrupts the chronological conventions of biography by staggering Reynolds's introduction through several stages of the *Life's* narrative. This is achieved by making use of the proper noun "Sir Joshua Reynolds" as a binary: one aspect is the atemporal Reynolds who, for Boswell's purposes, is the arbiter of Johnson; the other, obversely, is Reynolds as one of the *dramatis personae*.

Part 2: In his *Samuel Johnson's Attitude to the Arts* (1989), Morris Brownell argues that Reynolds's portraits are an 'intellectual biography' of Johnson or, alternatively, a 'history of Johnson's mind'. However, despite the parallels between portraiture and biography to view Reynolds's portraits of Johnson diachronically is misleading since they do not form a coherent whole or a sequential narrative as often used in biography. Rather, Reynolds's portraits as an oeuvre can be viewed synchronically, providing disparate perspectives, aspects of various modes of Johnson. Lastly, this paper will examine Boswell's radical obfuscation of time in his use of Reynolds's 1756-57 portrait in what is arguably the most momentous occasion in the *Life* – the meeting of Johnson and Boswell.

Through the 'I's' of Lost Time: Proust's Performative Fugue of Temps Perdu

Dr Ruth Skilbeck

Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* is written as an extended narrative/speech-act of memory. The labyrinthine, non-linear narrative of search unfolds in the guise and form of a first person contrapuntal auto-dialogue. This is a paradoxical, 'impossible' conceptual dialogue between the narrator, his former selves evoked in recollection, and *temps perdu* itself, the past, which – we are told – was once lived and which is now brought back, re-lived, or rather articulated, reflexively, in fictional form through the author's narrative voices. Deleuze (1964; 2000) describes Proust's notion of 'Lost Time' as 'not simply 'time past'; it is also time wasted, lost track of' (Deleuze 2000:3). It might be more accurate to see *temps perdu* as in no structural or imaginative sense 'wasted' but as the conceptual transcendent zone or space of writing which Proust, the author, enters when he is writing, the arena of the literary narrative which is created through and in the modality of his writing. The almost interchangeable mechanisms of time and space suggested by Bergson's notions of time as *le temps* and *la durée* and his related notion of *élan vital*, or creative animating energy can also be used to apply to the contrapuntal mechanisms – or textual counterpoint – of Proust's fugal text. The notion of *Temps perdu* goes beyond this to articulate the conceptual space of Proust's writing, of memory and imaginative creation, contained and inscribed within the narrative text which is accessed, or capable of being accessed and set into motion by, and through, the writer's and reader's attention. The paper discusses ways in which Proust's act of writing transcendence is performatively realised through uses of techniques of musicalisation associated with the fugue form, including development and variations on his subject themes, recurring motifs, and the subtle polyphony of multiple 'Marcel' narrative voices.

Proust's fugal text: polyphonic, flight, "multi-modal" research.

Most radical form of deterritorialisation.

Quincy "dream fugue"

Synaesthesia → multi-modal.

Chora: counterpoint musical reworking of melodies. Democratic – everyone joined in.

Andrew Newman

"All moments, past, present and future have always existed. The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. They can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone, it is gone forever." - Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse 5

Non-linear time is stretched across our computer screens like the Rocky Mountains. With the advent of hard-drive based video recording, consumers and home video enthusiasts are no longer required to fast forward or rewind, where they wait for the time to pass in order to reach their remembered moments. I propose that the home video enthusiast's cutting up of time in the digital video editing suite has changed their experience and visual perception of time. On the computer screen we can jump across time just like the Tralfamadorians, yet back in the real world we are left waiting, waiting for the moment to pass. Our body rebels, it is stuck in beads-on-a-string time, but it yearns for the freedom of Tralfamordian time, so the body succumbs to a glitchy shake, an anxiety caused by the digital rhythm.

Experience of video editing is informing a different conception of time.

Editing time - play god, techno-romanticism

Digital rhythm is an extension of montage

frustration of non-linear video in real-time

no beginning or end - looped video

priming for medium -> Paul Virilio

self portrait is writing oneself. Sequencing symbols

Borrows-style cutups (Deleuze and Guattari: even the completely cut up appeals to an extra dimension that joins the folds together)

"Slipping out of the moment"

"Charlus takes the narrator's chin and slides his magnetized fingers up to the ears "like a barber's fingers." This trivial gesture, which I begin, is continued by another part of myself; without anything interrupting it physically, it branches off, shifts from a simple function to a dazzling meaning, that of the demand for love. Meaning (destiny) electrifies my hand: I am about to tear open the other's opaque body, oblige the other (whether there is a response, a withdrawal, or mere acceptance) to enter into the interplay of meaning: I am about to make the other speak. In the lover's realm, there is no acting out: no propulsion, perhaps even no pleasure -- nothing but signs, a frenzied activity of language: to institute, on each furtive occasion, the system (the paradigm) of demand and response."

— [Roland Barthes \(A Lover's Discourse: Fragments\)](#)

Pathos - desire for absent being