

Playing with (my)Self: Reconfiguring 21st Century Performance Art as an Emerging Encounter amongst the Becoming-Stage, the Becoming-Actor, and the Becoming-Audience

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During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.”

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Catherine Alexander", written over a horizontal line.

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Abstract.***“Playing with (my)Self: Reconfiguring 21st Century Performance Art as an Emerging Encounter amongst the Becoming-Stage, the Becoming-Actor, and the Becoming-Audience”***

This practice-based PhD revolves around the stage, the actor, and the audiences as three primary locations where performance emerges via an encounter between those entities: the interplay between the stage, the performer, and the audience feeds back on itself to create the conditions with which it is possible for these encounters to generate emerging performance.

This PhD relocates the stage onto the surface and intensity of the performer; creates multiplicity within a single performer/space; and produces a new sense of aesthetics through techniques of improvisation, use of costume, props and constructed spaces, led by notions of becoming and immanence, as both object and action of performance itself. In the context of performance studies, theatre technique and theory are explored to contribute to new performance in its expanded field, including theatre, moving image, and live performance, and works through notions of archetype, humour, and staging to create several new works of art as research.

Theatre theorists and practitioners researched include Konstantin Stanislavski, Lee Strasberg, Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, Bertolt Brecht, Richard Foreman, and Tim Etchells.

The main contribution and intention of this PhD is to show how theatre theory and technique positively inform fine art performance practice, in that builds a new sense of self, in that the actor or performer becomes one part of many co-emergences amongst the stage, the actor,

and the audience, and seeks to add knowledge in the field of performance studies by establishing a new condition for the stage as an encounter with the performer, who is positioned as a structure from which performance emanates, and includes practical research into the mechanics of acting including the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky along with Lee Strasberg's 'Method Acting' technique, and examines the space between the audience and the performed event as co-producers, with a particular emphasis on Bertolt Brecht's 'Alienation Effect'.

By putting myself in the role of actor in this research, I am examining how such a role can be decoupled from the actor in question, and how it can be totally linked within the co-emergent space of stage/actor/audience; in this way performers within performance can be viewed as one element among many within the constellation of performance-making.

This research situates itself among Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys' moving image work; Diane Torr's "Man For a Day" workshops; Andy Kaufman's "Foreign Man" persona; Liz Magic Laser's "I Feel Your Pain"; Marcus Coates' shaman practice; Keren Cytter's moving image work; Mike Kelly's musical "Day is Done"; Tino Seghal's performance "These Associations"; Lindsay Seers's photographic and installation practice; Ryan Trecartin's video "Center Jenny"; Anna Deveare Smith's verbatim theatre; and Cindy Sherman's character-based photographic practice, among others. Bruce Nauman and Paul McCarthy, whose physical and conceptual spaces have been important points of departure researching sculpture as stage, and thresholds as they relate to perception and audience engagement are also examined. This research is also indebted to the performance practices of New York-based theatre artists Mabou Mines, Richard Foreman, and

The Wooster Group, all of whom worked towards an aesthetics in theatre which bumped into the conceptual and practical space of performance art since the 1970s.

Important theoretical contributions include Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy*; Sartre's essay *The Look*, Bertolt Brecht's *A Short Organum for the Theatre* and particularly the Alienation Effect; Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*; Deleuze's essay *One Less Manifesto*; Strasberg's *A Dream of Passion* with particular reference to Method Acting; Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares*; Ranciere's *The Emancipated Spectator*; Bogart and Landau's *Viewpoints*; and Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy*.

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Introduction.

This practice-based PhD seeks to identify a new ground for performance-based practice, one which lies in the negotiation between the performer and the event of performance, and between performer and viewer. This new ground is a play of intensities along which the performer makes their way towards developing characters and new pieces of performance with a focused practical research on how certain established schools of acting, including ‘Method Acting’ developed by Lee Strasberg (Strasberg, 1987), ‘Viewpoints’ developed by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (Bogart and Landau, 2005), and Bertolt Brecht’s ‘Alienation Effect’ (Brecht, 1964) can be adjusted and used to create new images of performance, as well as developing a new awareness in the performer and the viewer so that they may approach the performance event as co-conspirators in its understanding and revelation.¹ The new works created and the established works researched for this PhD encompass sculptural/spatial works, video works, theatre, and photography in order to begin to put together a wider sense of performance-based research; this wider ground for performance-based practice is focused upon how the maker and the viewer meet the event of performance, rather than on how it operates in individual media. Those works include “Love Kills” (theatre); “Bluebeard” (live performance); and “The Adam Series” (photographic series) which will be looked at in Chapters I, II, and III

¹ Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* (New York: Plume Book, 1988, [1987]); Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (New York: Theater Communications Group, 2005); Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht On Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, “A Short Organum for the Theatre,” trans. by John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964). These represent 3 distinct systems for performance-makers, ranging from an internal, biographical approach (Strasberg), an external, physical approach (Bogart and Landau), and a distanced, representational approach (Brecht). These are examined as they relate to how performance may arise from a series of encounters between actor/performer, stage, and audience.

respectively. In this way this research seeks to provide a method for making and viewing which can be beneficial for practice that situates the artist's own identity and body as the basis for work, be that actors creating a character or visual artists turning the camera upon themselves, and for viewers whose relationship to an event becomes one of co-authorship rather than passive observer.²

There is a gap in performance theory and in performance art practice where the foregrounding of intensities and improvisation as a means of producing both the stage-ground and the representation of types (largely male/masculine archetypes) that play upon that stage weren't developed to the level which would in fact rethink performance itself. This gap includes the further question of how audience can meet performance in a co-productive way, excluding and short of directly participatory practices.³ The thesis unfolds arounds three axes which firstly locate the ground of performance as a system of intensities and mood, then upon the encounter between the performer and the stage as a meeting of improvisation and rehearsal as it creates character representation, then the final encounter of audience and event which is bridged through the "look", and the self-consciousness via Brecht's Alienation Effect.⁴ This

² Terms which are exercises developed by and found in Strasberg include 'private moment', 'sense memory', and 'emotional recall', and are quoted in this way throughout when they specifically refer to those terms. The terms Viewpoints and Method Acting are capitalised throughout, as they refer to methods and techniques created and named by Anne Bogart, Tina Landau, and Lee Strasberg respectively. The Alienation Effect is also capitalised throughout, mirroring its use in Brecht's original introduction of the term. See further: Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht On Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, "A Short Organum for the Theatre", trans. by John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964).

³ The idea of co-productive performance space is largely taken from readings of Jacques Ranciere, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009) and Brecht's 'Alienation Effect'.

⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1943). The "look" is understood as a means through which the subject comes to feel self-consciously an object; here it is used as a bridge between performer and audience who, when encountering the performance, gain the awareness of

creates an emergent event which is made manifest through its encounter; this encounter reveals the already emerging process of the event of performance as it meets stage-ground, performers, and audience and both constitutes and produces the performance event. This self-producing ecosystem, which finds expression through its encounter with its constituent parts (stage, performer, audience) is partly inspired by the “plane of immanence” as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari:

“The plane is like a desert that concepts populate without dividing up. The only regions of the plane are concepts themselves, but the plane is all that holds them together. The plane has no other regions than the tribes populating and moving around on it. It is the plane that secures conceptual linkages with ever increasing connections, and it is concepts that secure the populating of the plane on an always renewed and variable curve.”⁵

Stage, performer, and audience become concepts within the creation and reception of the totality of performance which interconnect and find expression through the immanent plane that secures them.

Actor’s techniques developed by Lee Strasberg (Method Acting) and Anne Bogart and Tina Laundau (Viewpoints) are reworked to create a new way of developing character and place, one which oscillates between an internal focus upon the personal narrative of the performer (Strasberg) and the external world in which the performer sits (Bogart and Landau).⁶ This

simultaneously looking and being looked at. This self-consciousness enabled by the “look” underscores Brecht’s ‘Alienation Effect’ as a tool towards audience/performance co-production.

⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “The Plane of Immanence” in *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (Columbia University Press, New York), 36-37. Immanence is used here to refer to an embeddedness as opposed to a transcendence; this allows the units of stage, performer, and audience to remain within their own system and self-refer, as opposed to a system which acts to make an image outside of its ecosystem, as might be seen in representational theatre where stage and actors are used to produce an illusion for an audience.

⁶ See footnote 1 which provides references to Strasberg’s and Bogart and Landau’s texts.

juxtaposition, alongside its focus upon how new ideas and associations are created within it, contribute to a new development in the use of actor training as a new method for making work. This method privileges process and improvisation which in turn creates new associations and new behaviours; ultimately unravelling established tropes of representation, particularly archetypes of masculinity, and gives them a new lease of life via explorations in camp humour, erotica, and imitation. The practices of Paul McCarthy (“The Saloon”), Jeff Koons (“Made in Heaven”), and Vito Acconci (“Seedbed”) are examined and afford a glimpse into how eroticism and irony can be staged to effect a heightened self-awareness in the viewer, constructing moods of sensual engagement.⁷

Improvisation is used throughout this research, both as a methodology in discovering the new ground it seeks to identify, and as a practical technique developed in theatre training.⁸ This research brings theatre techniques, specifically Strasberg’s Method, into the wider field of performance-making and seeks to imbue the art of mimesis with a vision of truthfulness that is created within the performer. Strasberg’s Method Acting technique, which looks into the performer’s own personal narrative history as a source of creating truthful fictional experiences is one way in which concepts of realness and truth are usefully rethought, which offers a way

⁷ Paul McCarthy, “The Saloon,” video, 1995, Bomb Magazine online, accessed June 7, 2019, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/paul-mccarthy/>; Jeff Koons, “Made in Heaven,” installation, 1989, Jeff Koons’s website, accessed January 10, 2019, <http://www.jeffkoons.com/artwork/made-in-heaven>; Vito Acconci, “Seedbed,” performance installation, 1972, The Met online, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/266876>.

⁸ This technique of improvisation differs from stand-up improv, where performers create narratives on the spot with audience participation. The technique used here comes from actor’s training techniques as taught at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute, where actors focus on developing behaviours which seek to build the characters they are wishing to portray in a given scene.

for performers working in visual art to further develop their craft and process.⁹ Strasberg's Method is reworked to set in motion an emergence of character through the performer as they inhabit a flow towards a representative image; this emergence is a method towards reshaping acting as a relationship amongst performer, environment, and audience which animates and discloses its sense in the process of its emergence, as it brings performer and the image (its representative habits, culture, archetypal patterns forming notions of masculinity, eroticism, humour, etc.) of a character into sync.

Readings of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of 'becoming', 'multiplicity', and 'rhizomes' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) are developed to help underpin this theatre research as it relates to creating a ground for performance which privileges process and improvisation as its goal; Deleuze's essay on theatre director Carmelo Bene *One Less Manifesto* is a key text which helps to flesh out these concepts as they directly meet theatre performance (Deleuze, 1997).¹⁰ Lyotard's *Pagan Theatrics* (Lyotard, 1974) is another key text which helps to develop this research in terms of how intensities and desire can become focal sites of performance, and how the movement through intensities can achieve new images of performance when put through the practical work of theatre improvisation. "Making a performer a Body Without Organs" is

⁹ The Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute was founded in 1969 and continues to operate both in New York and Los Angeles, California. I studied acting in the New York school in the early 1990s, following the traditional Strasberg Method Acting technique which is examined in further detail throughout this research.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 1987); Gilles Deleuze, "One Less Manifesto" in *Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime, the Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, edited by Timothy Murray (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 239-258; Gilles Deleuze, "One Less Manifesto" in *Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime, the Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, edited by Timothy Murray, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997) 239-258.

introduced at the end of Chapter II, a concept initiated by Antonin Artaud and later taken up by Deleuze, reworked through the lens of Strasberg's Method.¹¹

The following thesis begins by locating the stage as a kind of 'ground' enabling performance to emerge as an event, embodied within the performer.¹² It seeks to show how the performer meets the event of performance through improvised action. Where they meet, performer and event, is an encounter that creates the stage where the performance can come into existence and be experienced by both viewer and performer. The space where this event takes place is a further area this research explores and examines sculptural and spatial work which produces a participation between viewer and artwork, wherein the viewer's attention and actions acts as co-author in the full expression of the artwork. This co-authorship acts as a meeting ground between viewer, performer and performance, and extends the ground of performance outward, now including both an active performer and an active viewer. These two main moves, which seek to find a new ground for performance between performer and performance, and then additionally between viewer, performer, and performance, constitutes a major area of this research. The encounter between the audience and the event is developed in Chapter III, wherein bridges between audience and performance are created and co-authorship of the event is elaborated through Sartre's "look" and Brecht's Alienation Effect.

¹¹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Pagan Theatrics," in *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993 [1974]). The concept of "a body without organs" was first declared in Antonin Artaud's 1947 radio play "To Have Done with the Judgement of God" and subsequently picked up by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*. See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (The Athlone Press: London, 1990).

¹² The meanings of terms 'stage' and 'ground' in this context is a complicated one and will be discussed later. They are not intended to connote literal stages for plays/theatres. See also: Lee Braver, *Groundless Grounds* (MIT Press: Cambridge, 2012).

“a collaborative, multidimensional empathy neither ‘given’ nor ‘received’ by individual beings per se, but productive and enabling nevertheless... whose exchange/circulation economy produces the generosity of respect, not only without losing the love of self in the process, but by strengthening it.”¹³

The encounter, as demonstrated above and as is being examined throughout the research, is a concept which describes a productive enabling, rather than a finding or seeking, between and amongst independent entities which are already filled with the potentialities for their expression. The encounter is a movement, sufficient in itself within each of its elements, that is, the stage, the actor, and the audience, and one that enables these elements to co-emerge as they encounter each other. The actor is not playing on a stage; these entities co-exist as independent structures which find expression through their encounter with each other. This movement of co-emergence includes the audience, who becomes integral to the creation and expression of the performance as it is encountered by them.

“Do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think...”¹⁴

Here Deleuze shows how the elements of an encounter gives rise to expression, and how meaning is made through an encounter with difference. The entities stage, actor, audience can be viewed in this context as sufficient, individual elements in performance which may endlessly integrate and combine when their difference is encountered in performance, rather than the stage being an inert state whose job it is to be played upon by the actor.

¹³Johnny Golding, “Friendship,” in *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies* (EUP: 2018), 272. The empathetic co-production here is useful in terms of determining and creating the bridges between audience and performance; this co-operative, co-produced activity among audience, performer, and stage is vital to this research as it claims a space for the encounters between these elements as a primary concern.

¹⁴Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Bloomsbury, 1994 [1968]), 183.

Treating them in a network of difference charges their individual states with dynamic potential towards integrated expression, where the dynamic actor encounters the dynamic stage, and so does the audience, flowing together within this network, making meaning within a loop of encounter.

In addition to re-examining 'ground-as-stage' so that the performance 'emerges' out of that encounter, this research develops how the manipulation of humour (primarily camp humour), erotica, and masculinity can act as devices to amplify a productive self-awareness in the performer and the viewer.¹⁵ Many of the original works created during this research utilise all three of these appearances and manifestations, and employ archetypes/ stereotypes/ representational figures to create an anchor point and then begin to send it up; this use of irony enables an intensity between the actor, environment and audience and to begin to create a new stage-ground that is composed of those intensities as the event of performance met and conducted by actor/performer, stage/ground, and audience/co-author.¹⁶ The performances of these ironic twists find an actor playing at being various types of male characters, and use erotic gestures and costume, gags, and deadpan humour within the construction of these characters as a way to simultaneously disrupt the archetype and demonstrate their construction.¹⁷

¹⁵ This is examined in relation to texts *Notes On Camp* (Susan Sontag), *The History of Sexuality* (Michel Foucault), *The Arena of Masculinity* (Brian Pronger), and my own artworks "cowboyplaycowboy", "The Adam Series", and "The Stripper and The Pig".

¹⁶ Supra Chapter II, "The 'I am' (playing with one's self)" where archetype is used to show how 'actor' emerges.

¹⁷ The demonstration of construction is an important aspect of Brecht's Epic Theatre, which utilised techniques such as placards for scene changes, actors introducing themselves as actors who are playing their roles, etc. These practical staging techniques grew out of Brecht's Alienation Effect. See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht On Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," trans. John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964).

Putting this in motion enables the beginning of a new method in contemporary performance art, which will be elaborated in Chapter II, aims to show how types themselves are equally constructed and malleable and are a performance in themselves composed of imitation, improvisation, and live in a non-fixed state of expression. Ultimately this will go some way toward further destabilising notions of masculinity not just within the subject of gay and queer culture vs hetero culture, but as a more basic understanding of identities as performances in themselves, or, in the case of this research, as rehearsals towards a dynamic interplay between actor and character-type, rife with potential for new images of representation.¹⁸ This rehearsal, which is identified also as ‘improvisation’ in the sub-chapter “Improvising as a condition of becoming” in Chapter II, seeks erotica, and camp humour as a means to create the experience of thresholds; these are seen here as the edges of experience in a work of art, where the viewer meets the work halfway. The viewer is given a glimpse of a certain kind of self-awareness within the work, and the production of that awareness, be it a knowing look from the performer directly at the lens of the camera, or a Pinnochio prop nose that doubles as a double-vision of sex and truth, or a deadpan inhabitation of cowboys and Biblical Adam -- all of these work towards establishing the subject as an ongoing construction of identities. The artist as an actor perpetrates these constructions for an audience, and in doing so reveals a threshold for experiencing both the procedure and the emotional/social/aesthetic of the content of the work.

¹⁸ Judith Butler’s conception of gender as a performance rather than as essential to being in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) is an important starting point from which to develop my own practice-knowledge here as an engagement with the rehearsal of the self as the performer encounters archetypes and figures in the work of creating a dynamic reciprocation between existing cultural constructions and their embodiment within the performer. The actor in this research, within the context of straight/gay/camp/masculine/feminine appearances moves beyond performances of gendered or masculine/feminine types as such and engages with a notion of a performance as an ongoing encounter between culture and subject, actor and character type.

This operation begins with research into Brecht, and aims to develop his theatre technique of Alienation in a modern context, exploring contemporary themes of self-hood, which have new relevance in terms of ongoing discussions around gender fluidity and gendered expression, particularly as that relates to the presentation of masculinity in performance.

This dissertation, and the practice that underpins it, establishes a new concept of the actor as emergent materiality dealing with the encounter of the various elements within performance (i.e. stage, script, action, audience) as an encounter with a series of minor structures, equally central to the creation of the whole as opposed to a grand, narrative structure under which they may be subsumed. This new materiality moves towards inventing a new concept of actor for the 21st century in performance art, one which is a network of emergences and encounters with character type and the wider environment of the event of performance, which goes on to explore how artifice and authenticity in performance can begin to exist simultaneously.

Contemporary artists important to this research who explore and disrupt narrative, fiction, and construction in their work include Anna Deavere Smith's verbatim theatre (2015); Lindsay Seers' video installation *It Has To Be This Way* (2009); Keren Cytter's film *Untitled* (2009 Venice Biennale), Liz Magic Laser's multi-media theatre piece *I Feel Your Pain* (2011 Performa Commission); Jos de Guyter and Harald Thys' video installation at Raven Row Gallery *Fine Arts* (2015); Tim Etchells' Forced Entertainment theatre company (1984-Present); Gillian Wearing's film *Self-Made* (2010), which makes direct use of Method Acting as methodology for creating performance; Marcus Coates' Shamanic performances (current and ongoing). These works are important research departures for investigating how artifice and acting can afford great scope in the creation of new performance work. This will be developed in Chapter III, and will primarily emerge through the context of the following works "Crush", "RHINO", and

“cowboyplaycowboy”.¹⁹ These artists’ practices and the original works made to research this line of inquiry go some way toward further establishing the actor, and acting in art more broadly, as a useful presence for rethinking notions of authenticity.²⁰ In this context, the actor is a threshold at which viewers are confronted with a construction of artifice; the decision to cross the threshold may allow for greater engagement with the construction of the artwork and therefore contribute to a finely attuned experience with the work, creating a strong dynamic between mood/aesthetic and intellect/concept in the viewer.

Alongside the contemporary artists mentioned above, this research is indebted to the works of established artists who came into their influence around the 1970s-1980s including Bruce Nauman’s “Slow Angle Walks” (1968) and “Square Depression” (1977-2007); Vito Acconci’s “Seedbed” (1972); Dan Graham’s “Performer/Audience Mirror” (1975); Paul McCarthy’s performance and kinesthetic sculpture practice; Mike Kelly’s film installation “Day Is Done” (2006); Cindy Sherman’s self-portraits (1972 - Present); Spalding Gray’s performance a film *Gray’s Anatomy* (1996); Andy Kaufman’s “Foreign Man” persona (1978-1983); as well as similar generation theatre artists Richard Foreman, Mabou Mines, Robert Wilson, and The Wooster Group.²¹

¹⁹ Anna Deavere Smith, “Notes from the Field,” play, premiered at Berkeley Rep Theatre, California, 2015. Lindsay Seers, “It Has To Be This Way,” video installation, Matt’s Gallery, London, 2009; Keren Cytter “Untitled,” film and installation, Venice Biennale, 2009; Liz Magic Laser “I Feel Your Pain,” multi-media theatre piece, Performa, New York, 2011; Jos de Guyter and Harald Thys “Fine Arts,” video installation, Raven Row Gallery, 2015; Forced Entertainment, founded in Sheffield in 1984, directed by Tim Etchells; Gillian Wearing, “Self Made,” film, 2010; Marcus Coates, “Journey to the Lower World,” video, 2004, and “The Plover’s Wing: a meeting with the Mayor of Holon,” video, 2009.

²⁰ “Performance is real”, is a quote by Marina Abramovic as she declares the difference between performance and theatre. This research into the role of the actor in art will in some way challenge what is supposed authentic reality in performance. See *Marina Abramovic: What is Performance Art?*, The Museum of Modern Art YouTube Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcyYynulogY>, 1 April 2010.

²¹ Bruce Nauman, “Slow Angle Walks,” performance and video, 1968, Ubu Web, <https://vimeo.com/user3539702/ubuweb/video/121813096>; Bruce Nauman, “Square Depression,” Sculpture,

This new approach towards contemporary performance as a matrix of flows and intensities enables a recombinatory rethink between Strasberg and Bogart and Landau, as a three-dimensional flow, which enables the first step of emergence from the encounter. This first step of emergence arrives before the stage; it is precisely what enables the stage to come to light and meet the new images of performance that it encounters. This position is prefigured in the theatre work of *Buddies in Bad Times*, Toronto (Sky Gilbert, Johnny Golding); *Ontological-Hysteric Theatre*, New York (Richard Foreman); and *Mabou Mines*, New York (Lee Breuer, Ruth Maleczek, Fred Newman, Joanne Akalaitis, original founders).²² It is hoped that this new ground can become a stage upon which new images of performance, particularly performance which prioritizes process and improvisation, may play out as both method for creation and object of pursuit. The becoming-actor is precisely the naming of a new embodied method that takes as a given the encounter between and amongst elements on a stage, including archetypes, sexualities, stereotypes, so that what emerges is the stage, and the stage is a feedback to the actor, so the actor is always already a becoming-actor. This plays a crucial role as they investigate established representations of characters and archetypes; by acting upon

1977-2007, Skulptur Projekte Archiv, accessed May 25, 2019, <https://www.skulptur-projekte-archiv.de/en-us/2007/projects/21/>; Vito Acconci "Seedbed," performance and installation, 1972, The Met, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/266876> ; Dan Graham "Performer/Audience Mirror," performance, 1975, Video Data Bank, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.vdb.org/collection/browser-artist-list/performer-audience-mirror>; Mike Kelly "Day Is Done," musical, 2006, Art 21 "Extended Play," accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjINHhbfqMI>; Spalding Gray "Gray's Anatomy", film, 1996; Andy Kaufman "Foreign Man" persona, "Johnny Carson's Tonight Show", 2013 [1978-1983], accessed July 5, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McYBatcm-0Y>.

²² *Buddies in Bad Times*, founded in 1978 by Matt Walsh, Jerry Ciccoritti, and Sky Gilbert, Toronto, Canada, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/>; *Ontological-Hysteric Theatre*, founded in New York in 1968 by Richard Foreman, accessed June 7, 2017, <http://www.ontological.com/>; *Mabou Mines*, founded in New York in 1970 by David Warrilow, Lee Breuer, Ruth Maleczek, JoAnne Akalaitis and Philip Glass, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://www.maboumines.org/>.

this stage of non-fixed intensities they can rip apart expected images and behaviours, particularly around masculinity and male representation, through various methods of acting techniques which seek to build up original portrayals of these types.

Original works made during this research will be discussed amongst the broader context of conceptual concerns which relate to how the performer, the event of performance, and the audience create a system of potential co-production. They act as exemplars of these potentialities and are situated alongside works by other artists that have been researched to give a sense of their place within the contemporary and recent historical sweep of performance and theatre that offers novel and seminal experiences related to performance, theatre, and art experiences that foreground the system of flows that are inherent in the concept of “becoming” suggested by the title of the thesis. The works chosen for discussion in Chapter I. include Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Mike Kelley, Bruce Nauman, Doris Salcedo, Miroslaw Balka, Tino Seghal, Lindsay Seers, Vito Acconci, Jos de Gruter and Harald Thys, and Keren Cytter; they are discussed in terms of how encounters amongst staged elements begin to create what is being identified as the becoming-method as a system of encounters amongst performers, mise-en-scene, and audience. As a group they represent a selection of current artists in the 21st century and influential practitioners emerging in the latter half of the 20th century across a range of media; as a group they give historical reference points to contemporary practice and show a deliberately broad range of media in which the “becoming” concept can be viewed and worked through. In Chapter II. the works of Bruce Nauman, Marcus Coates, Ryan Trecartin, Daniel Graham, Tim Etchells, Paul McCarthy, Diane Torr, and performance techniques of Konstantin Stanislavski, Strasberg, and Anne Bogart and Tina Landau are grouped alongside original works to discuss and show how the newly-formulated stage-ground meets the body/performer in

performance. In Chapter III. Cindy Sherman, Jeff Koons, Anna Deveare Smith, Andy Kaufman, and the Wooster Group are examined in combination with original works and theories of Bertolt Brecht and Jacques Ranciere to examine the newly-formed ideas around the audience as potential co-actor in the event of performance. Original works created for this research are used throughout the thesis as exemplars of how thinking around the becoming-actor, becoming-stage, and becoming-audience are expressed through performance-based works in theatre, fine art performance, and lens-based media. They sit side-by-side the above-referenced artists' works, showing where contemporary outcomes of this thinking are located historically and conceptually.

Chapter I. Configuring a new ground for performance (Becoming-Method).

This chapter shows how encounters create emergences; this emergence is itself the 'becoming-method'. The realms of stage, actor, and audience, which are sufficient in themselves, materialise as expressions which we then call acting, theatre, and performance when they approach and touch each other as an encounter with one another. A stage is not merely a space upon which performance occurs; rather, it seeks to understand the stage-ground as a holistic event composed of intensities which circulate through the performer. Key areas which produce these holistic events include Method Acting techniques developed by Lee Strasberg.²³ Lee Strasberg's Method, derived from acting techniques created by Konstantin Stanislavski, is a systematised method of techniques for training actors in the pursuit of creating naturalistic performances by rigorously applying the actor's own biography onto the character they are creating, and ultimately sketching out a like-for-like scenario which invests realistic outcomes and behaviours in the resultant portrayal of that character. This chapter will examine how the exercises employed in the Method to construct characters, particularly the animal exercise, a foundational exercise in Strasberg's Method Acting technique, taught at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in New York and Los Angeles, which involves observing an animal that most closely expresses the psychological and physical aspects of the character an actor is portraying.

²³ Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* (New York: Plume Book, 1988, [1987]). Strasberg is notable for the system of acting called Method Acting, which was based upon principles originally laid out by theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski. Strasberg was an original founding member of The Group Theatre in 1931 alongside notable theatre practitioners Stella Adler and Sanford Meisner, both of whom have become well known for their own interpretations and systems of acting after Stanislavski, with the Meisner Technique and the Stella Adler Studio of Acting respectively. The Method, which serves to create a naturalistic style of performance, continues to have a profound influence in actors' performances today, and remains the default standard by which a performance is judged to have been a success.

The actor begins to embody the behaviour of the animal in question before eventually bringing the most appropriate physical and behavioural characteristics of the animal to the character that is being developed, and improvisation, both taught practically at the Lee Strasberg institute and systematised in Strasberg's publication *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method*, can be used as pursuits towards expression and behaviour which is decoupled from scripted theatre and joined up with the flows of intensities identified in Jean Francois Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy*.²⁴ Of special importance are the chapters "Pagan Theatrics" and "Turning of the Bar" which introduce us to the Moebius band, and the process by which intensity can run hot or cool along a never-ending surface with no stops or starts, fronts or backs, and for movement and intensity to act as a central focus rather than as a means to an end destination. Applying Method-based exercises which seek to find and create expressive moments as fully-realised spaces of expression alongside Lyotard's 'Moebius Band' is a means to simultaneously create the expressive state of performance and to give it flight, along a path of warmer or cooler intensities, as a constantly circulating apparatus that is itself the motor and realisation of the stage that is being built in this research.²⁵ The Moebius Band is defined here as "...infinite, and contrary to the representative cube..." and is useful for this research as an image of a theatre which emphasises process and improvisation as integral parts of the assemblage of the performance event and its expression.

Ultimately this stage is located onto the performer, who acts as both substrate and expression.

Works examined include Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysterical Theatre; Bruce Nauman's

²⁴ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993 [1974]).

²⁵ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 1993[1974], 4.

“Slow Angle Walks (or Beckett Walks)” and “Square Depression”; Vito Acconci’s “Seedbed”; Marcus Coates’ performance practice, including “Journey to the Lower World” and other performance-based works; and original works “A Romance A Stage” or “SLIP,” “Bluebeard,” “The Stripper and The Pig,” and “cowboyplaycowboy.”

i. Expanded theatre as a system of intensities and mood.

“It seems to me that two essential aims of the arts should be the subordination of form to speed, to the variation of speed, and the subordination of the subject to intensity or to affect, to the intense variation of affects.”²⁶

In writing about the theatre of Carmelo Bene, Gilles Deleuze offers an image of representation in performance whose focus is on the construction of that representation, as opposed to presenting a fully-formed character that is then sympathised with and followed by audiences. The movements and speeches made by the actors are not there to create a system of recognition for their audiences; rather, they choose to disrupt the system of empathetic theatre by becoming part and parcel of the total machine of the performance. They do not stand as representative of a certain character or morality or narrative.²⁷

The Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, the company that is directed by Richard Foreman, presents an opportunity for examining how intensities of speed and sound, sets styled as actively enclosed spaces, styles of over-acting, and a new negotiation with spoken language can create

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto (1979),” in *Mimesis, Masochism & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. Timothy Murray (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 249.

²⁷ In “One Less Manifesto” Deleuze refers to Bene’s theatre production of *Richard III*, in which the actor is seen visibly applying his deformities on stage, literally inventing his own historical representation as a hunchback. This is an example of how the actor can create not only the representation of a character for an audience, but also how that construction can be revealed and then utilised as a wider thematic and conceptual form within the entire apparatus of the performance itself.

a ground for performance which seeks to always invent itself as it unfolds itself.²⁸ It pulsates and radiates affective mood and meaning without ever settling upon one narrative idea or even a moment-by-moment discernable use of verbal language, even while permeated with the spoken word.²⁹



Richard Foreman, *Idiot Savant*, Theatre Performance, Public Theater, New York 2009.

²⁸ Richard Foreman is the former director of the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre in New York from 1968-2013. His work consists of a catalogue of over 50 original plays, performed at the Ontological as well as The Public Theater, among other venues. The Ontological-Hysteric is a theatre this researcher has worked in in a professional capacity in the 1990s, and has witnessed first-hand many of its productions as well as speaking and working with the director. Further research was afforded by visiting <http://www.ontological.com> and in Richard Foreman, *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theatre* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992).

²⁹ See for example Foreman's play "Idiot Savant", referenced in Chapter I, which develops this point directly. In my piece *Bluebeard* this begins to inhabit or play with the tools offered by Foreman.

“And so the spectator’s question should not be, What does this play mean? The question should be, In response to which of the world’s possibilities and tensions is this play created? That is its meaning. The meaning is the externalisation of those impulses that have no external home in the world as it is now constituted.”³⁰

The actions that take place on the stage do not intend to illustrate the spoken text, nor does the text intend to create a set of characters and plots; instead, the action and music play out like dreams just tethered to the dream-like flow of references that are delivered by the actors who are embedded in this mesh of energy that floats out towards the audience and asks them to flow in a new way as they make their own approach towards its meaning and affect.³¹ The visual elements in a work such as the “idiot Savant” and “What to Wear”, referenced above and below, constitute a language of their own; they sit adjacent to the spoken text performed by the actor and the music that permeates them. In this way they resemble the empowerment of a performance language which is “becoming-minor” as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari; that is, a language which is not subordinate to an official language, but rather one which rests adjacent, affective in its difference and non-conformed statelessness.³² This kind of interconnected flow, exemplified in Foreman’s manipulation and counter-manipulation of form as it meets its new meaning, is one of the ingredients in the becoming-method towards creating a new stage-ground which this chapter is developing.

³⁰ Richard Foreman, *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theatre*, 30-31.

³¹ This approach is the beginning of a co-productive audience, which is expanded upon in Chapter III.

³² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming Imperceptible...” in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 232-309.



Richard Foreman, *What to Wear*, Live Theatre Performance, CalArts, Los Angeles, 2006.

The act of dissociating text from its literal meaning and giving it a new lease of life that Foreman is enacting is an extension of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre, which gave birth to the term *verfremdungseffekt*, or Alienation Effect as it is commonly translated, though in Foreman's hands the technique is closer to an aesthetic and conceptual tool rather than Brecht's original design, which was avowedly political in content. Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre famously employed distancing techniques in an effort to keep the audience removed from an empathetic engagement with the story and characters they followed onstage. Breaking the theatre's fourth wall, breaking out of character, speaking stage directions, and the use of placards onstage are all primary examples of Brecht's techniques to produce this distancing, or alienating affect in his audiences. These techniques were intended to wake up the audience and actively engage them in the event as it unfolded, creating an actively participating audience.³³

³³In 1949 he founded the Berliner Ensemble and developed his techniques there, beginning with his production *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (Mother Courage and Her Children).

“A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar.”³⁴

Foreman’s theatre deploys Brecht’s techniques of Alienation as a saturation of language, both verbal and visual, along different speeds of intensities. Doing away with naturalistic narrative language and embedding it within a mesh of non-illustrative visual associations creates a ground for performance which is composed of oblique associations and slippery perception.

“I want a theatre that frustrates our habitual way of seeing, and by so doing, frees the impulse from the objects in our culture to which it is invariably linked. I want to demagnetise impulse from the objects it becomes attached to.”³⁵

It is first activated by sound, light and set design, and then brought to action by performers who use bodies, words, and props to make new images. This method of embedding all aspects of theatrical devices onto one plane can be seen to create a non-hierarchical space in which no one aspect is subordinate to another. Foreman’s contemporary Robert Wilson, who is equally indebted to Brecht’s breach with naturalism, infuses the ground of performance with a similar mesh of atmospherics, though in the case of well-known works such as *Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* (1973) and *Einstein on a Beach* (1976), the intensity of time and the scale of the operas are slowed and enlarged to epic proportions, in a mode that appears to move beyond human timescale, addressing something more cosmic.³⁶

³⁴ Bertolt Brecht, “A Short Organum for the Theatre,” in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (New York, Hill and Wang, 1966), 192.

³⁵ Richard Foreman, *Unbalancing Acts: Foundations for a Theatre* (New York: TCG, 1992), 4. In many of Foreman’s productions stage objects are used in contradiction to their intended use, or their use is offered a series of outcomes, which focuses the action and the object upon the impulse behind the object or action, rather than what will happen with them in a narrative sense. The effect of this is a performance which privileges potential, drive, and underlying impulse as its driver and its destination.

³⁶ Robert Wilson, “Life and Times of Joseph Stalin,” opera, premiered at Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, December 14, 1973; “Einstein on a Beach,” opera with Philip Glass, premiered at Theatre Municipal, Avignon, France, July 25, 1976. Robert Wilson website, accessed May 2, 2019, <https://robertwilson.com/2021/11/20/mp2f9k9pudphati5npj6dyf51kfgw>.

“What is performed and witnessed doesn’t translate into anything. I often knew, even when I was paying close attention, that I wasn’t actually “following.” ... In a sense it is a projection of Wilson’s head. But it deliberately goes beyond that, calling itself a school, initiating devotees, reaching back to a deeper level of theatre. What Wilson is making is mysteries.”³⁷



Robert Wilson, *Times of Joseph Stalin*,” Opera, Brooklyn Academy of Music, 1973.

These two artists serve as two sides of the same coin in terms of how scale and speed can produce a ground for performance which deeply embeds their meaning with the terms on which they are structured: Foreman with quick speed, micro-adjustments, and multiple variations, and Wilson with epic slowness and scaled-up tableau vivant. Both produce a space where performance meets its unfolding and declares this encounter to contain the world and meaning of its efforts.

“In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work are each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely, that which also gives artist and work of art their names—art.”³⁸

³⁷Michael Smith, “The Village Voice,” December 20, 1973 (© by The Village Voice, Inc., 1973), reprinted in <http://www.robertwilson.com/the-life-and-times-of-joseph-stalin>, accessed July 28, 2021.

³⁸Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” ed. by David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, [1936], 1977), 143. In the forward to this collection of lectures originally delivered by Heidegger in Frankfurt in 1936, Krell defines Heidegger’s approach to discovering the origin of the work of art as an inter-relation amongst artist and art.

Pursuing this encounter as a *third thing* may produce the stage upon which this meeting of qualities of performance (speed, scale, intensity) and their revelation (performance set in motion to/with a viewer and performer) come into presence.

“...the coming to presence of things, is the original self-showing by which entities emerge from hiddenness; by the constancy of their relation to concealment beings show that they have an origin.³⁹

This *coming to presence* enables the intensity and flow and speed to begin to show themselves, allowing the performance to gain its own agency, and set the becoming-actor process in motion.⁴⁰ In this way performance can be viewed as an event that unfolds within its own structures, and makes itself known within that declared space. Perhaps this automatism can become its new ground, and can begin to be approached as a dynamic stage-ground for performers and viewers to treat as a lively source for declaring new images of representation, narrative, and forms of staging.

³⁹ *Ibid.* Forward to “The Origin of the Work of Art”, 140.

⁴⁰ The term “becoming” is derived from Deleuze and Guattari’s use of it as a concept which describes a “multiple and constant process of transformation.” Rosi Braidotti (1993) “Discontinuous Becomings. Deleuze on the Becoming-Woman of Philosophy,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 24:1, 44-55. In this way, the concept of becoming is used as a tool to reconfigure both the state of the performer as an emerging state, and the stage as well, as two independent, emerging locations which are encountered by each other and so gain expression in that instant when the becoming-performer meets the becoming-stage.



Cradeaux Alexander, “Love Kills,” Durational Performance Installation, London, 2017. Featuring actors, musicians, text, and projected video.

The original work “Love Kills”, based on the text from Rainer Fassbinder’s 1972 play *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, was reconstructed as a performance landscape, distributing its text and imagery across a constant space in which audience and performers entered and exited at will.⁴¹

The piece employed original music which was set to readings of text from the original script, and various videos were shown throughout, depicting filmed scenic encounters between the characters projected on various walls throughout the space. The arrangement of this

⁴¹ Rainer Fassbinder, “The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant,” in *Plays*, ed. and trans. Denis Calandra (New York: PAJ Publications). The play depicts an obsessional relationship between Petra, a fashion designer, and Karin, a new aspiring model. The attractions are unequally felt between the two, and Petra falls into disastrous despair when her passion isn’t returned.

performance installation was intended to research how elements of staging can be given equal authority, and how narrative structure could be remodeled to depict a flow rather than a built-up sequence of events resulting in a climax and resolution. This installation afforded no resolution or climactic points, and instead offered an encounter of its elements as the total drama; it intended to produce a performance whose ground circled constantly, offering nodes of experiences which contributed to an all-in re-interpretation of Fassbinder's original script.⁴² This new treatment of the original was developed by studying the power structures between the characters, their relationship to each other and to society. In Fassbinder's original, there is a succession of subordination and power play between Petra and her mute assistant Marlene, who appears poorly subordinate but later declares herself unwilling to accept an equal relationship with Petra when offered; between Petra and her object of romance Karin who will not reciprocate; and between Petra and her Mother, who cannot understand her daughter's obsession with another woman.⁴³ In "Love Kills", these structures of domination, subordination, and inequality are deliberately flattened and arrayed upon one equal ground. By reconstructing the power structure in this way, "Love Kills" seeks to illuminate how the playing of parts and development of narratives begins on a stage whose ground is non-fixed; the ground itself is

⁴² Reorganising the ground is an affective tool, already found in Deleuze, which calls upon the disruption of "automatic emotion" which "...the unfamiliar and defamiliarising affect is capable of taking the ground away." Anthony Uhlmann, "Expression and Affect in Kleist, Beckett and Deleuze," in *Deleuze and Performance*, ed. by Laura Cull (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 65-64.

⁴³ The power games and relationship between Petra and Marlene may be seen as echoes of the master/slave relationship found in Samuel Beckett's "Endgame," wherein the seeming subordinate turns out to display the true mastery within the relationship, employing their own strength of will to leave the relationship when their role of servant becomes upset. Samuel Beckett, "Endgame," premiered at Royal Court Theatre, April 3, 1957.

already an active state of representation, and no longer an inert ground upon which action transpires.⁴⁴

Mike Kelley's 2005 "Day is Done" also explores the dispersal of narrative in time and space, though entirely through video and sculpture.

"Day Is Done" is a feature-length "musical" composed of thirty-two separate video chapters... a large-scale video installation consisting of sets and projection screens. Various scenes will be programmed to turn off and on prompting the viewer to follow the action throughout the presentational space. Several scenes will run simultaneously in order to promote the effect of filmic cross-cutting in actual space."⁴⁵



Mike Kelly, "Day is Done," Musical, 2005, Gagosian Gallery, New York.

⁴⁴ See the previously illustrated works by Richard Foreman "Idiot Savant" and "What to Wear" as examples of the ground as an active state of representation, utilising all aspects of its surface, props, lights, and sound to activate its potential as it encounters the actor.

⁴⁵ Gagosian Gallery, <https://gagosian.com/exhibitions/2005/mike-kelley-day-is-done/>. Accessed 2.5.2020. The installation will exist in various forms; this version is exclusive to the Gagosian Gallery's New York exhibition space. Its flexible installation design adds a further dimension to its qualities of physically dispersed narrative, embedding that quality in the conception of the work.

The 'becoming-method', which links together the separate elements of performance within a network of encounter, is examined here in Mike Kelley's work, which provides an important look into how such an encounter between audience and narrative can operate as the elements are physically dispersed amongst a stage which is navigated and informed by the audience via their presence and participation among its elements.

The video works, which are recorded interpretations of found images of extracurricular activities from high school yearbooks, are dispersed and activated in such a way as to suggest a narrative through line, while also containing simultaneous video which suggests a cross-cutting throughout the space. These two lines of distribution act to disrupt the flow of narrative language and time, affording a glimpse into the mechanism of their distribution. This glimpse reveals the encounter between the work of art, its ground, and its eventual consumption.

"My interest in popular forms wasn't to glorify them, because I really dislike popular culture in most cases. All you can do now really, I'd say, is work with this dominant culture, I think, and flay it."⁴⁶

Kelley's urge to flay the culture he is representing in his work is mirrored in the execution of "Day is Done"; recorded bodies, music, and sculpture are enacted throughout a space that is

⁴⁶ Mike Kelley, Art 21, "Extended Play: Day is Done," accessed June 20, 2020, <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/mike-kelley-day-is-done-short/>. June 20, 2020. Quote taken from interview with Mike Kelley concerning the making of his musical "Day is Done," in which he reveals his attitudes towards the images and culture he incorporates into his oeuvre. Of particular interest is how the interest in "flaying" the culture being addressed finds its formal apotheosis in an equally flayed presentational style.

guided by the turning on and off of videos, indicating passage through the ethnographic terrain he is pulling apart and redistributing.

These rearrangements to spatial and narrative construction can be seen as attempts to redefine how performance operates as a producer of representational images, and within the 'becoming-method', how this operation emerges as an event co- by the audience, the visual elements, the narratives within the videos, and their physical disbursement. If the ground itself is a dynamic one, as in "Love Kills", "Day is Done", and the theatre of Richard Foreman, and charged with the properties of intensities, multiplicities, simultaneity, and abstraction, then the images it produces can begin to stand inside of that space and be fed with their own new possibilities for dynamic images of representation which are manifested through the becoming-method encounter.⁴⁷

ii. Activating the threshold as a feature of time.

The ground for performance is a stage encountered as thresholds by the viewer, and certain spatial-sculptural work can demonstrate how this produces a ground which is activated by the viewer's passage through the work. Bruce Nauman's "Square Depression" examines the stage

⁴⁷ The ground for performance being defined here refers to its individual elements as they are contained within a self-producing structure. This structure and the interplay upon it is informed by the 'Moebius Band' as defined by Lyotard in footnote 22.

as both an object and a space for audiences to navigate.⁴⁸ Unlike his 1967 performance-based work “Slow Angle Walks” or “Beckett Walks” examined later in this research, this piece relies on a new participatory register. “Square Depression” is a structure that invites viewers to physically explore its seemingly solid surface; alongside its invitation to explore it also signals a warning as to the impermanence of such a ground, and, as in Beckett’s TV play *Quad*, described as a “hyperstitional work...that is composed of...symbols without significance and superstition without belief”.⁴⁹

“Pacing out the same piece of ground over and over again, like the woman does in *Footfalls*, or the hurrying, robed characters do in Beckett’s TV play *Quad*, draws the ground up into the figure, and its action of walking. Stop walking for an instant, and the fear is that the ground will shear away, and one will be left in agonised mid-air, between one step and the next. In *Quad*, as in a number of Nauman’s pieces involving repeated walking round a track or carrying out of a controlled set of movements, the place is brought into being by the action, space precipitated out of time.”⁵⁰

“Square Depression” explores the stage as a shifting ground which tests the permanence and trustworthiness of its physical and metaphorical structure:

“The passing of time always dematerialises the ground. Walking over the ground lengthens the body into duration. A central principle of Beckett’s and Nauman’s work is that of balance, and a central shared problem is that of how to bring the space and place of the ground into balance with what is enacted in time across its face, how, in other words, to give temporal existence a shape. Neither Beckett nor Nauman can quite trust the ground. There is in both an impulse to walk through or walk out space, as

⁴⁸ Bruce Nauman, Art News, “Square Depression,” 2007, accessed July 30, 2021, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/bruce-nauman-munster-sculpture-removed-1234576435/>. Installed at Skulptur Projekte Münster in 2007. On 12.11.20 Art News reported that the installation will be removed from its current location and relocated.

⁴⁹ Baylee Brits, “Ritual, Code, and Matheme in Samuel Beckett’s *Quad*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 40, no. 4 (2017): 122-33, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jmodelite.40.issue-4>. Samuel Beckett’s “*Quad*” was first broadcast in Germany 8 October 1981. The piece involves a series of 4 robed figures traversing a square space in a choreographed walking pattern alongside 4 percussive instruments. The installation at Skulptur Projekte Münster is designed for viewers to enter and walk across its surface, choreographing their own patterns.

⁵⁰ Steven Connor’s website, “Shifting Ground,” accessed January 10, 2018, *StevenConnor.com*

though space would fade unless repeatedly made to start forth by the tread of the foot. Rather than the ground merely preceding and permitting the application of the foot, it comes to depend upon it.⁵¹

The curators of Skulptur Projekte invite us to enter into a charged psycho-physical relationship with the sculpture, which may or may not involve stepping foot onto its stage.

“...a walk-in object made of white concrete, its edges extending downwards and crossing at the lowest point in the center, from where an observer could only just glance over the sides. Bruce Nauman’s title for the work is a play on the word “depression”.

Depressive, helpless, to be at someone’s mercy is how the spectators may feel when they stand at the center of this sculpture. It is about the formal qualities of space and the vanishing point; at the same time Square Depression represents the spatial construction of a psychological state below the level of the vanishing point. As a sculpture, Nauman’s work shows us just how much perspective can be regarded as constraint – and to what extent it can actually inflict violence. Square Depression is a staged threat...”⁵²

⁵¹ *Ibid*, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://www.StevenConnor.com>.

⁵² Skulptur Projekte, accessed June 3, 2019, <http://www.skulptur-projekte.de/archiv/07/www.skulptur-projekte.de/kuenstler/nauman/index.html>. “Square Depression” was originally conceived in 1977 after an invitation to exhibit in the newly formed Skulptur Projekte Munster by Kasper Konig. It ultimately wasn’t completed and installed there until 2007.



**Bruce Nauman, "Square Depression," 2007.
Installed at Skulptur Projekte Münster 30 years after its original installation date.**

It took 30 years to finally install "Square Depression", the same year that the Turbine Hall Commission program at Tate Modern installed Doris Salcedo's "Shibboleth".⁵³ This marks a shift in public appetite towards work which invites a physical exploration of its surface, which re-orientates the viewer's attitude from one of contemplation to one of activation. Walking over the surfaces of these two works in their different ways asks the viewer to approach sculpture as a stage, to navigate its physical surface while experiencing its mood, history, and atmosphere. This tendency to bodily infiltrate a work of art continued to be explored in the Turbine Hall Commission program with Miroslaw Balka's "How It Is", installed just 2 years later in 2009, and

⁵³ Bruce Nauman, "Square Depression," sculpture, 2007, Skulptur Projekte Münster, accessed June 6, 2019. <http://www.skulptur-projekte.de/skulptur-projekte-download/muenster/07/www.skulptur-projekte.de/kuenstler/nauman/index.html>; Doris Salcedo, "Shibboleth," installed at Tate Modern, London, 2007.

ultimately with Tino Seghal's *These Associations*, installed in 2012.⁵⁴ This program of works marks a strong trajectory of intensifying the relationship between viewer and artwork via specialised requirements of spatial participation, beginning with traversing a crack in the ground (*Shibboleth*), then entering into a black void (*How It Is*), then finally engaging with flesh and blood humans (*These Associations*). In this final work it is evident that theatre has fully begun to infiltrate museum culture, complete with actors.

“Responding to a set of questions we were meant to ask ourselves (such as ‘When have I experienced a sense of arrival?’), ‘conceits’ relied on an initial hook or arresting image to capture the visitor’s imagination in an opening gambit and then progressively draw them into the conversation. These moments of intimacy were nodal points in a work conceived as a meditation on the individual in relation to the mass.”⁵⁵

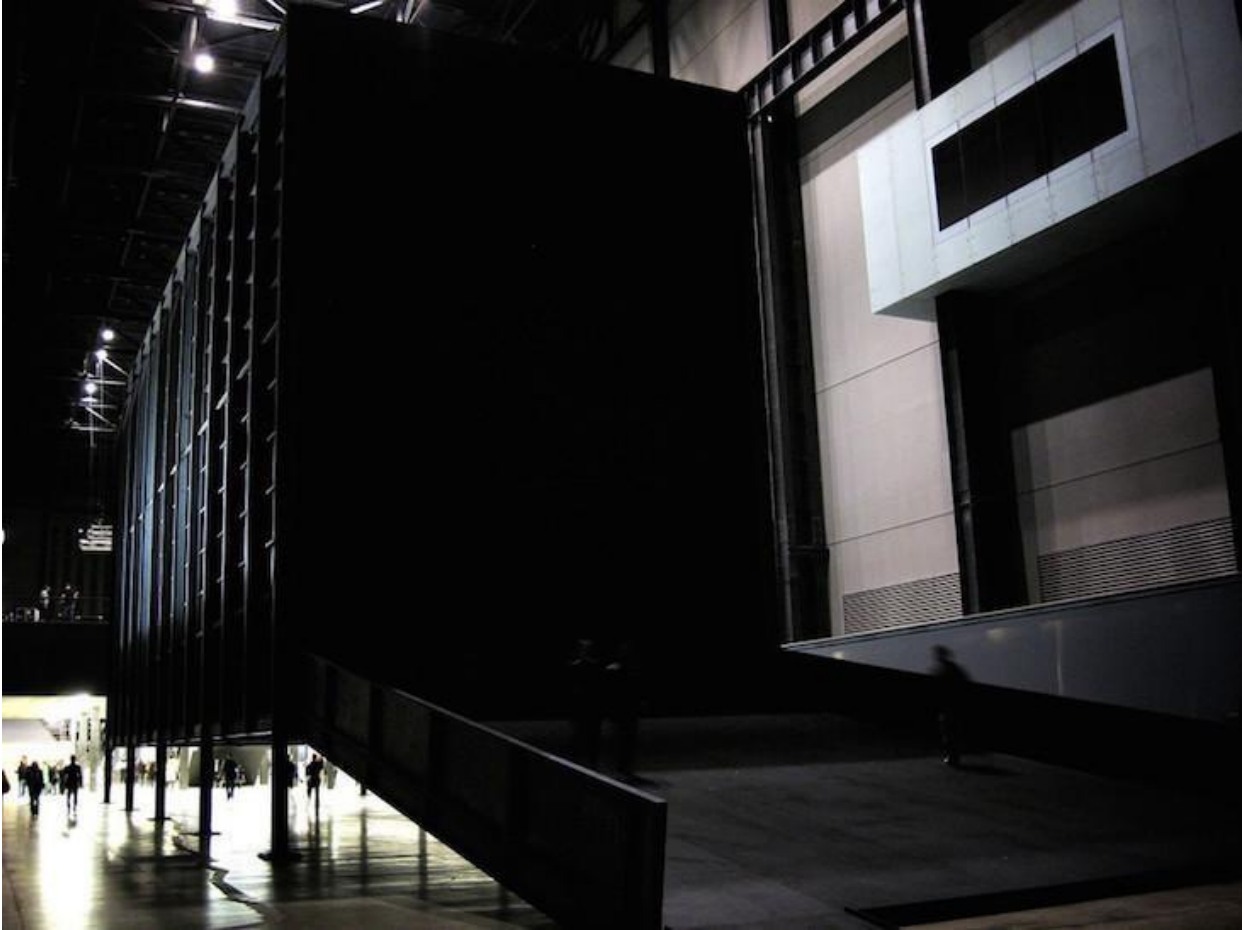
⁵⁴ Mirosław Balka “How It Is,” sculpture, installed at Tate Modern, London, 2009; Tino Seghal “These Associations,” installed at Tate Modern, 2012.

⁵⁵ Agnieszka Gracza, “Taking Part in Tino Seghal’s *These Association*”, *Frieze*, January 1, 2013, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.frieze.com/article/conversation-pieces>. The work shares many of the conceits with traditional theatre, including a rigorous rehearsal process to create the illusion of ease and a natural organic rhythm for the viewers, who were met with the fruits of the labour as either participants themselves in improvised chats, or as passive observers.



Doris Salcedo, "Shibboleth," 2007. Installed at Tate Modern, London.

In these works the concept of thresholds as a feature of time is the creation of an emergent stage: one that is not simply a foundation, but also as a passage through experience, and acts as part and parcel of the journey embodied in the becoming-actor. The actor is already always in a state of becoming; the 'becoming-actor' is the step prior to the actor being activated within the constellation of stage/actor/audience and allows for the expression of acting and performing as it encounters the various elements within staging and performance (scripts, props, actions, lights, stage-space, viewer, costume). The thresholds encountered here are the edges of these entities, and the passage through them creates the encounter.



Miroslaw Balka, "How it Is," 2009. Installed at Tate Modern, London.



Tino Seghal, "These Associations," 2012. Installed and performed at Tate Modern, London.

In Lindsay Seers's work, the 'becoming-method' examined in this chapter is evident in a constellation of encounters, both in fictional terms, as in the characters and scripts that are presented on camera, and in the way in which these are installed within a physical structure that beckons and demands audience to be fully ensconced in the unfolding of the narratives being presented. This creates a folded, integrated encounter amongst audience, actor (both on-screen and with the audience as a kind of activator), and stage (the physical structure redolent of an actual stage set, with specific reference to Shakespeare's Globe Theatre).

"It has to be this way is a work about multiplicity. Voices and places proliferate as the narrative becomes decentred and spreads across time and space; literally, through the installation of the work, but also in its form and content. Differing viewpoints and

testimonies shift the fulcrum of interpretation as characters both living and dead act through one another... Following chains of associations and chance encounters, everything seems connected but meaning is never resolved; it exists in flux somewhere between the fragments.”⁵⁶

Lindsay Seers’ work is an example of how contemporary practice deploys narrative fiction as a method for constructing new realities, and how the physical structure of a sculpture can be conceived of as an entryway into the consciousness, or story, of the artist. The seamless blending of personal and historical narrative and the structure in which it is situated is embedded in a design inspired by a blend of structures based upon The Globe Theatre in the Borghese Gardens in Rome and cosmology and numerology. The spoken narrative and video within the installation invite the viewer to enter a constructed world and encounter its new truths as they are revealed through a double portal of circular video screens, mimicking a view through expanded binoculars. The work suggests that any narrative will do, but putting it through a series of tightly interwoven forces will create one which “has to be this way”. In this way it encounters a theatre which sells fiction as if it were truth, and claims that the effort and conceptual arrangement in which it resides is proof of a new kind of truth, one which depends upon how well the system works together to create the right kind of illusion.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ M. Anthony Penwill, *It has to be this way*, Matt’s Gallery handout (London: Matt’s Gallery, 2009, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.lindsayseers.info/publication/it-has-be-way>). This work by Lindsay Seers was visited by me in 2009, and revisited online in 2021. It is termed a “Memory theatre” in the publication handbook, and uses found images and a sculptural installation to create a new piece of fiction.

⁵⁷ The illusion referred to is a consequence of the realistic style of acting in the theatre developed by Stanislavski in the Moscow Art Theatre, which in turn acted as the basis for Strasberg’s Method, described and researched throughout this PhD.



Lindsay Seers, "It has to be this way," Video Sculpture Installation, Matt's Gallery, London, 2009.

The internal world of the artist performing a narrative fiction within a royal blue stage structure (a simplified replica of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre), is an image of the external world meeting the internal, and ties in with the examination of the stage as an emerging encounter. The work creates a stage, in this case a literal replica of an existing stage, and invites passage into the story it unfolds within its structure. The internal and external press together as they approach a singular encounter with its audience, who activates the meeting of the internal fiction with the physical stage and thereby creates a three-dimensional event of stage-performance-audience

vibrating as one active force.⁵⁸ This kind of encounter is also present in my original work “The Golden Facelift,” examined in Chapter 2, in which audience and performers activate performance by meeting it at the same time in the same space, in a dark room whose edges are shaped by light, voice, presence, and a physical entering into and out of a narrative space.

The encounters examined here between stage, actor, and audience form together to create a new materiality as a consequence of the ‘becoming-method’.

iii. Thresholds as staged, erotic encounters.

“A Romance, A Stage” or “SLIP” is an original installation which explores the edges of participation, and employs the gag of the ‘slip’ in the form of a bronze banana peel. Like Nauman’s “Square Depression”, this work can either be entered or observed, and the space of tension that is engendered in the audience is a way of opening up the relationship to the work. The threshold is what is most key to these works, and it’s the space between beholding and entering where they operate most palpably, and where the stage resides. This work also opens up a space in this original research which deploys humour, cliché, and deadpan as central to the experience and creation of these physical and metaphorical stages.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Here is an example of how the three states “becoming-stage”, “becoming-actor”, and “becoming-audience” can find themselves unified into one productive force. In this case the actor is represented on screen, and the audience encounters the actor embedded in the structure of the stage; as witness, the audience embeds themselves within the triad, which completes a moment of encounter.

⁵⁹ See also Steve McQueen, “Deadpan,” video, 1997, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/98724>. A restaging of Buster Keaton’s infamous film stunt that finds him comically nearly crushed by a collapsing house; McQueen takes on the role himself and dissects the gag through layered camera angles and speeds, unfolding humour into a kind of deadpan dramatic essay.



Cradeaux Alexander, "A Romance, A Stage" or "SLIP," Bronze/Plastic Sculpture, London, 2018. Studio installation.



Cradeaux Alexander, "A Romance, A Stage" or "SLIP," bronze detail.

"A Romance, A Stage" or "SLIP" asks the viewer to participate in a play of sexual energy and clichéd gag humour. The broad plastic backdrop which is situated on the floor acts as a membrane separating the floor from the bronze banana peel which rests upon it, and as a sticky skin-cum-stage demarcating its borders with a shiny edge. It is a romance between a spat out, roughened bronze banana peel and its membranous floor, perhaps an extension of its ooze, perhaps a hardened, dehydrated rectangle of flesh, kissing its connecting parts, frozen in a state of slippage. The old gag of slipping on a banana peel is charged with an erotic humour, with the skin of the old phallace thrown out and frozen in time, awaiting its next incarnation as a silly trope of worn out humour, threatening to slip up its next victim of

romance. As a “becoming-method”, which this chapter seeks to assert and define, this sculpture works between the space of looking and audience activation. It does not allow for participation as such, but seeks an engagement with a viewer who is alive to the thresholds of the work, its physical edges which melt into the ground itself, simultaneously inviting and denying physical entry into its play of sex and humour.

Where the physical edges melt into the participatory edges is where the erotic threshold becomes a staged encounter. It beckons and repels, creating a dialogue between audience and stage which moves beyond passive observation and before full participation.

The sensual promise of “A Romance, A Stage” and in Acconci’s “Seedbed” examined below, give an erotic edge to their encounter; moving private titillation into the public space creates a physical as well as mental encounter as the audience meets private fantasies in public. The self-consciousness created in these encounters turns the encounter into a co-productive space between audience and artwork. The concept relates to a phenomenological point around being; Sartre’s ‘look’ is the sensuous experience of being observed by others which creates a knowledge of one’s own existence, arrived at via bodily experience. The same can be applied here, through an encounter between an erotic stage and the audience that comes across it.⁶⁰

Vito Acconci’s “Seedbed” is also an encounter with the artist’s desire, though in that case the spectacle of lust is present in the form of Acconci’s body and voice inviting the viewer to be an active participant in his own sexual gratification:

“My voice comes up from under the floor: “you’re pushing your cunt down on my mouth... you’re pressing your tits down on my cock... you’re ramming your cock down

⁶⁰Jean-Paul Sartre, “the look”, in *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1943), 252-302.

into my ass..." (Now and then, you can hear me come: I've done this for you, I've done this with you, I've done this to you..."⁶¹



Vito Acconci, "Seedbed," Performance Installation at Sonnabend Gallery, New York, 1972.

⁶¹ Vito Acconci, *Seedbed*, 1972, accessed May 8, 2021, Tate.org.uk, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/acconci-seedbed-t13176>.

Part of a 3-part performance installation at Sonnabend Gallery, New York, which also included *Transference Zone* and *Supply Room*, *Seedbed* created an encounter with its viewers in a psycho-physical theatre as the artist hid away beneath them and masturbated to their presence as they walked over a ramp set up in the gallery space. The artist's voice, transmitted around the space through speakers in real time, cast the audience in the role of his sexual fantasy. The floor that separated the viewer from the artist was a highly charged stage, the artist's sex and presence beneath it electrifying the ground as they walked over his oncoming orgasm.

Transference Zone is also notable for its direct communication with audience, wherein Acconci spoke to viewers individually within a private shared space, casting them in the roles of his own important relationships which he called his "prime people", and engaging with them as if they were those prime people.

In contrast to the denial of physical encounter experienced in "A Romance, A Stage...", Acconci created an erotic, participatory theatre with "Seedbed", one which physically thrust the audience in the role of voyeur. Speaking in the first and second person formed a dynamic and personal link to the viewer, as if the fantasies being recounted belonged to whomever walked above the hidden masturbating figure beneath and gave them direct agency in the production of the sex performance.⁶² The image of this performance stages the image of a male figure somehow crushed by the impossibility of his own desire; he resides in a coffin compared to the free world above him, populated by free agents who may or may not listen to his desire. He is performing an image of masochism, exaggerating and generating a desiring body, a man playing

⁶²This was achieved through the use of microphones placed understage, near Acconci, who spoke to his audience above the floor through speakers placed around the gallery. He remained hidden and declared himself present only through his voice. Originally staged at Sonnabend Gallery, New York, 1972.

at what a man should want: sex and attention, while hiding underground, sweating, out of sight, a stalker initiating and projecting capture and need to the female sex from a safe distance in a raw, pseudo-tragic, physical position, cramped in need and arousal. This performance of male desire, including all of its technical apparatus (microphones, speakers) and choreography is where a particular vision of masculinity lies, desperate but always hidden, its voice finally streaming outwards to a void, or (perhaps hopefully) to a subject, as it is worn like a costume by the performer. This crushed figure unable to meet his desire provides tools for initiating and embodying new images of masculinity; in this image specifically we see how a physical stage may be created to exemplify separation rather than as a stage surface to play out a role, and we see how the construction of such a stage set makes way for heaven and hell, with the performer writhing in a kind of agony which we must see as not humorous as such, but certainly as knowing in its staging.⁶³ This exaggerated sense of crushed hell and airy heaven, pent up sex and abstracted object of desire (the audience above), are tools for future practice which examine the subtle interplay of a humour which is less than funny but most definitely self-aware, in a subject performing the look and feel of masculinity as it unravels openly in private, an alpha-male playing at the beta-male.⁶⁴

⁶³ Staging and set construction work hand-in-hand to inform the narrative in much the same way that Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* informed the performance of Winnie, the main narrator, trapped waist-deep in a mound of earth as her husband clambered mutely around her base, until eventually she is only a head above the earth, and then finally consumed utterly. Both Winnie and Acconci are ensnared in a confined set piece which divides an up and a down, or a heaven and a hell. Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days* (Grove Press, 1970 [1961]).

⁶⁴ See my own work *Crush* in Chapter III, which develops this image of the performance of the erotic in masculinity, as I play out a fantasy of crush fetish in a private, prepared stage set with camera and erotic costume.

This reaching out by the artist with his voice, baffled by the stage floor which both hides and exaggerates his aroused presence, is the charge that creates the stage upon which that performance plays. The relationship at play between viewer and artist can be said to be an early example of what came to be known as relational aesthetics in the 1990s, wherein human relations and their political and social contexts are identified as focuses of artworks; in the context of this research however, "Seedbed" is most important as an example of how the physical staging of desire can create a system of manipulation for its viewership.⁶⁵ The placement of the artist, the placement of the speakers, the separation of the two worlds, one beneath and one below, is a highly choreographed experience which manipulates rather than invites. The mood and atmosphere that is created through this dynamic is where the core of the work resides, created through intensities of exchange between a staged platform.

"A Romance, A Stage" or "SLIP" is in some ways the detritus of such an encounter, a stage floor awaiting its next arrival, but remaining aloof with materials that cannot be walked upon or slipped upon any more, set in plastic and bronze.

⁶⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud and Mathieu Copeland, *Relational Aesthetics*, translated by Mathieu Copeland, Simon Pleasance, and Fronza Woods (Paris: Les Presses du Reel, 1998). Coined by Nicolas Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* (1998), and includes artists working in a participatory way such as Rikrit Tiravanija, an artist traditionally allied with relational aesthetics, whose 2005 work "Sleep on Earth, Eat on Sand" consisted of cooking pad thai and sharing it with his audience. Tate's own site orients Acconci's work as a precursor to such relational art seen in subsequent decades: Tate, accessed February 3, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/vito-acconci-623>.

iv. Finding narrative and constructing new realities.

Making direct use of Strasberg's Method Acting technique to examine fiction and reality in dramatic narrative is Gillian Wearing's 2010 documentary *Self Made*, a project which saw non-actors participating in Method exercises to create their own performance vignettes, blending their own personal impulses with a scripted reality based on moments of their own lives.

Strasberg's methods ask their participants to use their own personal history as material for expressing a scripted reality, and for the Affective Memory exercise, this event must be at least seven years old; an indication of how the technique is to be used as reliable material able to be put into consistent practice.

“Every human being contains within himself the keys on which to play all types of emotional experience. The means by which we are able to avail ourselves of this experience of ours is through the process of emotional memory, or memory of experience.”⁶⁶

The 'sense memory' techniques developed by Strasberg are exercises designed to affect the person employing the exercises, and focus upon the sensory experience of an object, such as a sharp taste of lemon, heat from a hot cup of coffee, scent from a remembered perfume, skin texture of a loved one. By exploring the reality of these remembered objects in a sensory way rather than as an abstract feeling of joy, sorrow, etc, 'sense memory' aims to invoke a consistent

⁶⁶ David Lee Strasberg, quoting father Lee Strasberg, in a workshop delivered to Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute, March 3, 2020, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://strasberg.edu/blog/breaking-down-lees-work-with-david-lee-strasberg>.

reality in the performer which can then be reliably transferred onto a like-for-like scripted scenario in their performance work.⁶⁷ An ‘affective memory’ is a real memory from the participant’s life which is explored sensorily, and which can be brought to bear upon certain strong or unique circumstances in a scripted scenario where high emotions or feelings are required. Moments of heightened sorrow, ecstatic joy, etc.⁶⁸

Using these techniques in non-actors to script themselves puts authentic reality under scrutiny; constructing the self through memory and realising it in a scripted performance presents an unusual encounter with the self as a performer performing the self.

In the video works of Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys exhibited at Raven Row Gallery in 2015, a cast of characters including puppets and associates of the artists partake in scenes with absurd narratives and bad jokes. The use of non-actors, both puppets and people, including the artist’s family members, creates narratives which are obviously staged - stilted acting and mechanised voice-overs alert audiences alert the viewers that this is not to be taken as serious acting.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method*, (New York : Plume Book, 1988, [1987]). ⁶⁸Sir Richard Eyre, forward in Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*, “The System and the Method” (London and New York:Routledge Classics, 2017), xxv-xxvi. The Stanislavski System and Strasberg’s Method diverge at the point of ‘affective memory’ sometimes termed ‘emotional memory and ‘emotional recall’. For Strasberg this was the centre of his techniques, which focused upon the internal feelings of the performer to produce expressive realities. Stanislavski later rejected this aspect of his own system, and put a stronger emphasis on a performer’s actions rather than their internal states, claiming it could induce hysteria in the performer.

⁶⁹ A collection of De Gruyter and Thys’s video works were observed at Raven Row Gallery in London; the individual titles were not made available, playing on a looped video projection. The gallery information states “In an old flat above Raven Row’s galleries, the artists present a selection of their video work: from early comic films animating objects in Belgian suburbs, to more recent works that elaborate absurdist narratives within theatrical and sculptural sets, often featuring characters stunned into immobility.” Raven Row online, accessed January 5, 2020, http://www.ravenrow.org/exhibition/deGruyter_Thys_Fine_Arts/.



Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys, "Fine Arts," Exhibition View, Raven Row, London, 2015.

There is a sense that the artists are playing at being amateurs, and the scenarios constructed are purposely poorly performed, though not from a lack of acting skill by the performers. They are playing at these archetypes as ingredients in order for an emergence to occur. This kind of naturalness which hovers between bad acting and affectless behaviour creates an unlikely charge; the reality being constructed appears as if produced between this lack of affect and the existential nature of the themes being explored: death, ennui, inertia. This playing around with established types and scenarios in a knowingly unconvincing way is apparent in several of my own pieces, including in "cowboyplaycowboy", which sets the actor in space attempting to encounter what he thinks a cowboy might look like and sound like, based upon the image of the cowboy as traditionally represented in cinema and popular culture. There is a sense of finding and throwing away, winking and inhabiting all at once, which creates a performance as an actor

meeting the character he may become, who then decides he'd rather show what it means to be a cowboy instead of fulfilling a notional objective image of the 'right' kind of romantic figure.

The 'becoming-method' asserted in this chapter is expressed in both De Gruyter and Thys's work and in "cowboyplaycowboy" by the creation of an encounter between the actor and their enactment, that is, the actor's and artist's self-conscious awareness of the role they occupy as illustrators of the behaviours and appearances that constitute the appearance of a character or persona.⁷⁰ The moves within this gap between the performer and the character they occupy constitute a becoming as it relates to the actor in search of their character, and further, constitutes a complete entity, ready for emergence as it encounters the stage and the audience.⁷¹

Keren Cytter's work for the 2009 Venice Biennale "Untitled" constructed a looping narrative in a video piece which followed professional and non-professional actors backstage as they were performing a play for a crowd in a theatre. The use of a handheld camera gives the work an intimate, freeform feel, and is inspired by John Cassavetes' film 1977 *Opening Night*, which follows an alcoholic actress preparing for her role in a new play.⁷²

⁷⁰This work will be further developed in Chapter III, in the context of the 'look' and how it creates a bridge between audience and performance.

⁷¹ See Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (New York: Signet Classics, 1998 [1921]) for an early example of this gap between actor, character, and author are played out as a stage drama.

⁷² Kerren Cytter, "Untitled," installed at Venice Biennale 2009; John Cassavetes, *Opening Night*, film, 1977, distributed by Faces Distribution.

“The inclusion of shots of the audience watching the production adds another layer to the experience of viewing—we are watching them watch the actors, putting into sharp relief the spatial and temporal displacement enacted by the museum context of the video projection in the black box. We are further removed but somehow are granted more insight into the machinations of what is occurring in the work.”⁷³

The intimacy afforded by the handheld camera moving into private spaces backstage is broken by the view onto the sides of the stage, where we look out onto an audience watching the action onstage, though in that moment, because the viewer watching *Untitled* was situated in a likewise theatre-style seating installation, a pair of audiences in effect began to watch the work unfold. Watching them, watching you, watching that - a circle of attention folds in on itself and begins to create a narrative which is entirely constructed of watching and being watched.

⁷³ Hammer Projects: Keren Cytter, Exhibition Text, 5 Jan-4 April 2010, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2010/hammer-projects-keren-cytter>. This work was observed in person at the 2009 Venice Biennale. The video was shown in a small, constructed theatre within the larger exhibition hall, putting the viewer in a theatre-style setting as they watched the onscreen action taking place in a backstage setting.

Chapter II. Stage meets performer.

This chapter examines the encounter between the performer and the ground upon which they play. The ground/stage ground has so far been proposed as a holistic space which prioritises improvisation and development within the performer as a means towards negotiating a new ground for performance; it is conceived as a dynamic basis upon which to situate the performer. This next chapter will extend this examination through several sections including “Stage meets body” which highlights Bruce Nauman’s foundational performance work and Embodiment as theorized by Ben Spatz, and original research conducted on the live performance of “Bluebeard”; “The ‘I am’ (playing one’s self)”, including Konstantin Stanislavski’s techniques of ‘creating inner circumstances’ and Campbell Edinborough’s exploration of these in live art performance, the Becoming-Animal as conceived by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and their deployment in the performance work of Marcus Coates and in original performance research project “The Stripper and the Pig”; “Encounter producing presence”, which examines the practices of Lindsay Seers, Dan Graham, Paul McCarthy, Tim Etchells, and Lee Strasberg’s ‘personal objects’ as tools for producing a multiplicity of encounter; “Improvising as condition of becoming”, which introduces Viewpoints performance and theatre training as devised by Tina Landau and Anne Bogart, ‘substitution’ techniques developed by Lee Strasberg, and the original research performance for video “Domme Shew and the Musick of Violenze”; “Performance research in practice (modified Strasberg and Bogart and Landau)”, which presents original performance research as it engages with the techniques and theories of Strasberg and Bogart/Landau modified specifically for creating new works of

performance; and “Making a performer a Body Without Organs”, which examines the ways in which Antonin Artaud and later Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of a body without organs might create new pathways towards representation in performance, and how the new associations created in the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre directed by Richard Foreman might develop further understandings in this regard; “Playing the male figure”, which imagines drag and gender play as productive means towards embodying new forms of representation among archetypes; and includes examinations of Jean Genet, RuPaul, Diane Torr, and the Rhizome as an image of thought for performance creation as conceived by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari; and new research in the shape of original performance projects “The Golden Facelift” and “Act Natural” is laid out as case studies in developing these ideas in contemporary practice.

i. Stage meets body.

As an early exemplar of performance practice which locates the stage onto the body, there is Bruce Nauman’s performance work “Slow Angle Walks”, a live performance work informed by the characters in Samuel Beckett’s dramas.⁷⁴ It makes direct contact with its theatrical roots and then breaks the circuit of theatrical representation by removing the requirement of narrative theatre to represent a character within a drama, and all of the work that goes behind building a character which ultimately remains hidden under a veil of realism. The work creates

⁷⁴ Bruce Nauman, “Slow Angle Walks (Beckett Walk),” 1968. See Ubu Web, <https://vimeopro.com/user3539702/ubuweb/video/121813096>; The work is an action recorded on video, in which Nauman negotiates his studio floor over the course of some hours, embodying an interpretation of Beckett’s characters with stiff, impinged walking styles. For relevant Samuel Beckett reference see the characters Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2010 [1952]). First performed in Paris in 1953, we find Vladimir described as walking in short strides, legs wide apart.

its own structure of intensities and flows, and acts in a continuous Moebius band, with no beginning, end, or resolution; instead, intensities and movements.⁷⁵ “Slow Angle Walks” takes characters amalgamated from Samuel Beckett’s work, many of whom are defined by the limitations of their physical structures, including mainly their own bodies, and with this material Nauman created a durational performance which consisted of him performing a series of very stiff, mechanical walks over a particular space for an extended period of time:

“A fixed camera turned on its side records Nauman repeating for nearly an hour a laborious sequence of body movements inspired by passages in works by Samuel Beckett that describe similarly repetitive and meaningless activities. Hands clasped behind his back, he kicks one leg up at a right angle to his body, pivots forty-five degrees, falls forward hard with a thumping noise, extends the rear leg again at a right angle behind, and begins the sequence again. As in many of his fixed-camera film and video works, parts of Nauman’s body disappear from the frame as he moves close to the camera; occasionally, he walks off-screen completely while the sound of his footsteps continues on the sound tracks.”⁷⁶

The piece is a key example of performance which identifies the performer’s body as a stage, and in the context of this chapter, which examines the space where stage meets performer, it demonstrates how the performer, when enacting both the conceptual and the physical characteristics of a character is able to embed themselves within the flow of the stage, which meets them not as a ground on which to perform gestures but rather as a co-conspirator in a shared space which enables a dynamic space for the expression of representation, demonstration, and enactment.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ See footnote 24 for Lyotard’s description of the Moebius band as it relates to staging.

⁷⁶ Electronic Arts Intermix, accessed June 1, 2019, <http://www.eai.org/>.

⁷⁷ These terms inter-relate with the actor’s work as they employ the techniques of Method Acting (Strasberg, after Stanislavski), Viewpoints (Bogart and Landau), and Alienation (Brecht) to create varying degrees of reality with and

Throughout the work Nauman navigates a studio floor, but the real stage is on the bones and skin of the performer, as it enacts an interpretation of its original source material. By identifying an amalgamation of tendencies in Beckett's work such as stiffness, slowness, and the absurd nature of existing in a human body, Nauman was able to create a performance which enacted that absurdity through physical movement in a pared down, minimalist fashion as a work of interpretation, extracted from theatrical and narrative characterisations/constructions. In a sense, he took on the role of the actor who embodied the physical essences of a work and wore them both physically and psychically. This process moves away from a traditional performance by an actor, however, which normally requires a focus on creating characters which are then presented to an audience. Here he compresses character and improvisational narrative into a single space, which creates a kind of stage for atmospheric embodiment. Moving through the body are attempts at a characterisation of Beckett's existential narrative: "...you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on".⁷⁸ Nauman attempts to express this idea throughout this performance, and attempts to get at this final expression through a physical engagement with his own body. Like the source material, which moves towards a conclusion but never rests, Nauman's *Slow Angle Walks* moves on and on, focusing on one attempt after the next, never fully realising its end destination.

"It is a question of producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work...of

for the audience. Strasberg/Stanislavski represents one end of this spectrum, working towards naturalism, while Brecht's technique moves us towards demonstration.

⁷⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Molloy; Malone Dies; The Unnamable: A Trilogy*, (London: John Calder, 1958), 418. As well as in his fiction, many of Beckett's characters throughout his dramatic writing find themselves in physically reduced straits, including Winny in *Happy Days*, Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, all of the characters in *Endgame*, two of whom are confined to trash bins and one blind and confined to a wheelchair. The physical restriction and duress in these characters is a dramatic representation of a larger existential absurdity Beckett continually plumbed; it is this absurdity that Nauman is exploring through his performed actions.

inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind. This is the idea of a man of the theatre, the idea of a director before his time.”⁷⁹

Nauman’s stage is a compressed space which inhabits the essences of his source material and the urge towards its expression. Here he embodies a drama whose expression chimes with Deleuze’s ideas towards the foregrounding of movement as a work in itself, an expression which is completely full and not in need of a further move to representation to fulfil its promise.

In a similar vein, the original piece “Bluebeard” abstracts its source material and investigates the actor as a stage for embodying intensities and tendencies.⁸⁰ This sets up and explores the ‘becoming-actor’ as a force, or a body, which meets the stage. The actor is here emerging as a character through and amongst all of the elements of staging in an improvisational way.

Physically the actor attempts language and movement for the first time, in front of an audience, thereby standing side-by-side with them as the character of Bluebeard is expressed and revealed through improvisation with its source text, but instead of presenting the character through the prescribed text so as to reveal the character through a kind of smokescreen of naturalism, the performance of Bluebeard deliberately emerges through new encounters with the archetype pre-established as Bluebeard, finding undiscovered characteristics and behaviours in real time and space as the performance itself.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton (London and New York: Continuum, 1994 [1968]), 8. Deleuze writes about the theatre in more explicit detail in *One Less Manifesto*, an essay written in 1978 in response to theatre practitioner Carmelo Bene’s production *Romeo and Juliet*, in which he examines the Shakespearean drama in terms of amputation, variation and its movement towards a minor theatre. This essay is examined in more detail in upcoming chapters. See Gilles Deleuze, “One Less Manifesto,” in *Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime, the Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, edited by Timothy Murray, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997) 239-258.

⁸⁰ Charles Perrault, *Bluebeard* (1697), accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault03.html>.

⁸¹ This method of improvisation is influenced by Strasberg as taught at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute, New York, and by originally developed encounters with Brecht’s ‘Alienation effect’. Lola Cohen, *The Method Acting Exercises Handbook*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 52. Bertolt Brecht, “A Short Organum for the Theatre,” In *Brecht On Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. by John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964).

The character of Bluebeard was explored in several situations, beginning as a solo piece with rabbit (see photo below), and later as an original opera alongside 3 other performers. The character Bluebeard is imagined here as a monster, a clown, an animal, a snake, a weak hunter dressed in deconstructed and ridiculous formal attire, a club foot, and extravagant blue beard.



Cradeaux Alexander, *Bluebeard*, 10 minute live performance, London, 2019. Featuring actor, animal, and props, originally performed at Asylum Gallery, London.

“I take embodiment to be the zone of ontological engagement in which the dynamic interplays... between perception and action, resistance and accommodation, and problem-solving and problem-finding occur in the absence of any clear physical distinction between agent and substrate.”⁸²

Here Spatz identifies a new stage when he defines embodiment as dynamic interplays. In works such as “Bluebeard” and “Slow Angle Walks” the stage upon which the performance occurs is the meeting amongst the performers’ physical and psychic impulses, their physical expression, and the body which performs them. Treating a stage in this way, as a coming together of impulses which create expression, begins to erode boundaries between performer and performance, body and stage or, as Spatz defines it, between agent and substrate. The dynamic interplays can be seen as a series of flows that circulate within the body of the performer along a singular pathway, rejecting binaries of cause and effect, actor and character. Lyotard’s conception of the Bar and Libidinal Band allow us to explore states of intensity, rhythm, and flow as fully realised objects of pursuit in performance, as opposed to a representational form of drama.

“... the folding back of complete parts onto the libidinal Moebian band, in the form of a theatrical volume, does not proceed from an error, from an illusion, from malice, from a counter-principle, but again from desire. One must realize that representing...is desire, putting on stage, in a cage, in prison, into a factory, into a family, being boxed in are desired, that domination and exclusion are desired; that extreme intensities are instantiable in these assemblages too.”⁸³

⁸² Ben Spatz, “Embodiment as First Affordance: Tinkering, Tuning, Tracking,” Research Gate (Performance Philosophy: January 2017), accessed October 2, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313125571_Embodiment_as_First_Affordance_Tinkering_Tuning_Tracking.

⁸³Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, translated by Iain Hamilton Grant, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993 [1974]), chapter “Pagan Theatrics”, 11-12 and Translator’s preface, xii.

In the introduction to Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy*, Iain Hamilton Grant defines the "Bar" as the "operator of disintensification" which, slowing down, allows the displaceability and non-identity of the drives/pulsions and intensities to be arrested and given a designation and signification." Of the Libidinal Skin he states "various descriptions of the band wish, nevertheless, to account for the closures and exclusions inherent to re-presentational thinking and suggest a 'pagan' manner of affirming the differences and singularities that run through the libidinal band in an aleatory and indeterminate fashion."

It is important to clarify here, as the quote above suggests, that while this research aims towards a freedom in the expression and creation of performance, there is no suggestion that performance float away into an abstract space without definition or clarification. To create theatrical shapes and structures is an important form of desire, indeed stems from the desire to communicate via artistic expression, with all of its trappings, stagings, and mimesis at one's disposal. There is no "right" or "wrong" form to take; instead there is a change of focus, and Lyotard's work in exploring desire in terms of hotter or colder intensities is one way we can focus our attention on the path towards expression, with the understanding that as it is already set in continuous motion and does not rely on a singular destination, and its movements and trajectories are already fully formed spaces of reflection and inspection ripe for the creation of performance. Imbuing these continuous motions with a strong backbone of performance technique is what will elevate performance to its next level.

In pursuing the physicality for *Bluebeard*, Lee Strasberg's animal technique was researched and physically conducted within a rehearsal context.⁸⁴ In the context of its ultimate performance, this physical research was allowed to exist as an object of pursuit by itself, as the performance itself was primarily an exploration of the states of becoming an animal, and operated as an extension of the original rehearsal work. The vocalisations of the piece were informed by snakes, the physical set of the head and eyes informed by werewolves, the manner of walking informed by a damaged bird, the hands informed by the monster Nosferatu.⁸⁵ These explorations were not, as is typically the case, imitations of animal behaviour to be ultimately subsumed within the body of the actor as a means to portray a certain kind of character. They were instead a map of intensities conducted across a field of possibilities that were created by an improvisational stage and conducted through on the body of the performer.⁸⁶ As the performer meets the various possibilities afforded by improvising animal behaviour, both natural and supernatural, the encounter with those possibilities are expressed. The pre- established images and behaviours of werewolves and snakes act like a stage (pre-made, ready- made) which the actor encounters with a new intention, which is to not subsume themselves within the guise of pre-established characters, but rather conceive new ones through physical improvisation.

In Strasberg's Method, which operates both from an internal biography and external set of exercises to develop appropriate character behaviour, a stage is created upon which actors look

⁸⁴ Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* (New York: Plume Book, 1988 [1987]). Strasberg developed this exercise for actors to bring physicality to their roles which would help illuminate the internal world they constructed for that character. Marlon Brando exploring the physicality of an ape is a good example of how he developed the role of Stanley in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a character who proudly wore his uncivilised nature on his sleeve.

⁸⁵ *Nosferatu*, directed by F.W. Murnau (LA: Eureka, 2001 [1922], DVD).

⁸⁶ The difference here is how the actor is making use of these techniques; this research used existing animal exercise techniques developed by Strasberg as a starting point to conduct original applications of these techniques, exploring them as improvisations to create newly formed intensities rather than as tools to ultimately embed them within a character created for the stage.

inwards and outwards, constantly fine tuning these two areas and balancing them upon their person as they use them to embody another persona.

“...choose and isolate the animal’s main characteristics or its behavior that lend themselves to or are emblematic of your character’s nature...associated with different energy levels, rhythms, personalities, emotional states, myths, and symbols”.⁸⁷

Researching the physical habits of animals including snakes and hawks was a point of departure for the physical and psychic expression of the character Bluebeard, which were then embodied over a period of weeks in a private rehearsal. During this period animals beyond the natural world were brought in to further push the mythological and emblematic nature of the character: werewolves and vampires made their way in and served to elevate the characterisation beyond a naturalistic portrayal of Bluebeard.⁸⁸ By incorporating both monster fiction and the natural animal world, and focusing upon the dynamic between their physical and mental expression, and by allowing this dynamic to roam freely through an expressive improvisation, the performance lies in an immanent state, always on the verge of crystallising into a set state before dipping back into itself for replenishment and further improvisation, pulsing quickly along Lyotard’s libidinal band.⁸⁹ It remains active and unsettled, and seeks to create a form of theatre out of that very formlessness.

⁸⁷ Lola Cohen, *The Method Acting Exercises Handbook*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 152-153. Lola Cohen studied with Lee Strasberg at the Lee Strasberg Institute, and is an acting teacher recognised internationally. Her handbook is an important contribution to Strasberg’s techniques, building as it does upon an intimate experience of the techniques themselves as explored by Cohen herself. Cohen has offered her own experience of these techniques alongside their theoretical application, providing fresh viewpoints and clarifications on their use and value for other actors.

⁸⁸ Integrating mythological animals with real-world animals was a move towards bringing them into each other’s realm and finding a new animal/type through their integration. The desire is to produce a third entity, one which finds itself in the expression of the encountering of these myths and reality. This is how the character of Bluebeard was created for this performance.

⁸⁹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, “Translator’s Preface” in *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993 [1974]). See footnote 72, where the ‘libidinal band’ begins to find definition as a means upon which intensities can freely circulate.

As the stage-ground was developed as becoming-method in ontological terms in the first chapter, i.e. as a flow of intensities and multiplicities which are produced through their encounter, in this chapter we have moved towards the encounter itself between the performer and stage-ground as a bridge which draws the performer, who is also a becoming-actor, into the matrix of that becoming-stage. Strasberg's 'animal exercise' is an example of a tool with which a performer can begin to meet that stage-ground as likewise a network of flows and multiplicities.⁹⁰ The performer begins with mimicry which flows into embodiment, which flows into the rehearsal of this new state (performer mimicking animal behaviour, in this instance), which circles back again as the performer makes further attempts and failures, forever seeking a sync between themselves and what or who they attempt to represent. This rehearsal is the flow of becoming, and as the two areas flow into each other they begin to create the encounter that is the stage with which the event of performance occurs.

Similarly, Nauman's performance in "Slow Angle Walks" strives to exist as a self-supporting structure, relying on its internal flows and circulation, as it looks back to its source material in Beckett and extends along his physical improvisation. It is an embodiment of a certain state of being, rather than a movement seeking a form as representation of those ideas. It relocates the original absurdity of Beckett's often minute focus upon the dialogue between the body in relation to space and the experience of living in said body as an expressive drama, whose stage

⁹⁰ See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (NY: Zone, 1991 [1966]) for a view of multiplicity as a concept whole rather than a constellation of fragments of a whole. This concept of multiplicity then refers to an idea of a multiplicity which is not deferential to a larger structure, and is used throughout this research to imbue the various spaces of performance (stage, performance, audience) and their encounters amongst each other as separate entities which find expression in performance via their encountering.

is located in the body of the performer. In this sense Nauman is not just making a work whose inspiration was formed in part by researching Beckett's texts – he performed as an actor, embodying the physical essences of the characterisations researched. Naming the piece "Beckett Walks" (alternative title) not only tells us his inspiration, but really underscores the work as a conversation between maker and executor, author and actor, writer and director.

Nauman is occupying the space between interpretation, conversation, artist and actor.



Bruce Nauman, *Slow Angle Walks (Beckett Walks)*, documentation of live performance, 1967.

ii. The 'I am' (playing with one's self).

This experience is notably examined by Konstantin Stanislavski when he describes a state of "I am" in the context of *Creating Inner Circumstances* for the actor as they prepare for a role.

"...the point where I begin to feel myself in the thick of things, where I begin to coalesce with all the circumstances suggested by the playwright and the actor, begin to have the right to be a part of them."⁹¹

Notable in this passage is the placement of the "I am" state between the actor and the playwright. In the context of preparing an actor for a role, this idea intriguingly displaces the "I" from the actor and places it into the mixture of the total event of theatre. This "I" sits somewhere between being, performing, and interpreting. It is suspended lightly, asking for permission to exist within all of these parts that maintain the mechanics of theatre, but still separate from the actor who ultimately creates the expressive performance, and who is, ultimately, the "I" in question.

As this relates to performance training, when a performer encounters a non-representational space of performance, or any art space that does not demand they play a role other than themselves (i.e. theatre) we can begin to see how traditional actor training might appear antithetical to the sort of relationship a performer may have with themselves as an inhabitation of closely connected feelings and expressions. Using one's unfiltered self as subject and object

⁹¹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *Creating A Role* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1961), 26. Stanislavski founded the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898 and is the father of the current naturalistic style of acting seen across all media in most film, tv and theatre productions. Lee Strasberg developed his own technique, which came to be known as Method Acting, building on Stanislavski's methods for portraying realistic characters in the theatre. Stanislavski was equally influential to Strasberg's colleagues in New York's Group Theatre including Sanford Meisner and Stella Adler, two other well-known proponents of Stanislavski-based acting techniques.

of an artwork can be seen in opposition to the actor's goal of mimesis, or stepping outside of the self to create an illusion of reality.⁹²

“problematic disciplinary binaries illustrates the ways in which critical discussions that highlight the performing body's dialectical status as material reality and artificial construct tend to negate the impact of performance training when working outside the context of dramatic representation”.⁹³

Campbell Edinborough highlights this division between representational and non-representational performance in the context of performance training. Playing one's self vs playing someone else is a binary that can be closed through rethinking how actor's training does not show how to play a character that is outside of the performer, but rather can be used to situate the performer within a network of associations that deepen the connection between the performer and the circumstances being portrayed, whether they be scripted fiction or self-authored performance actions.

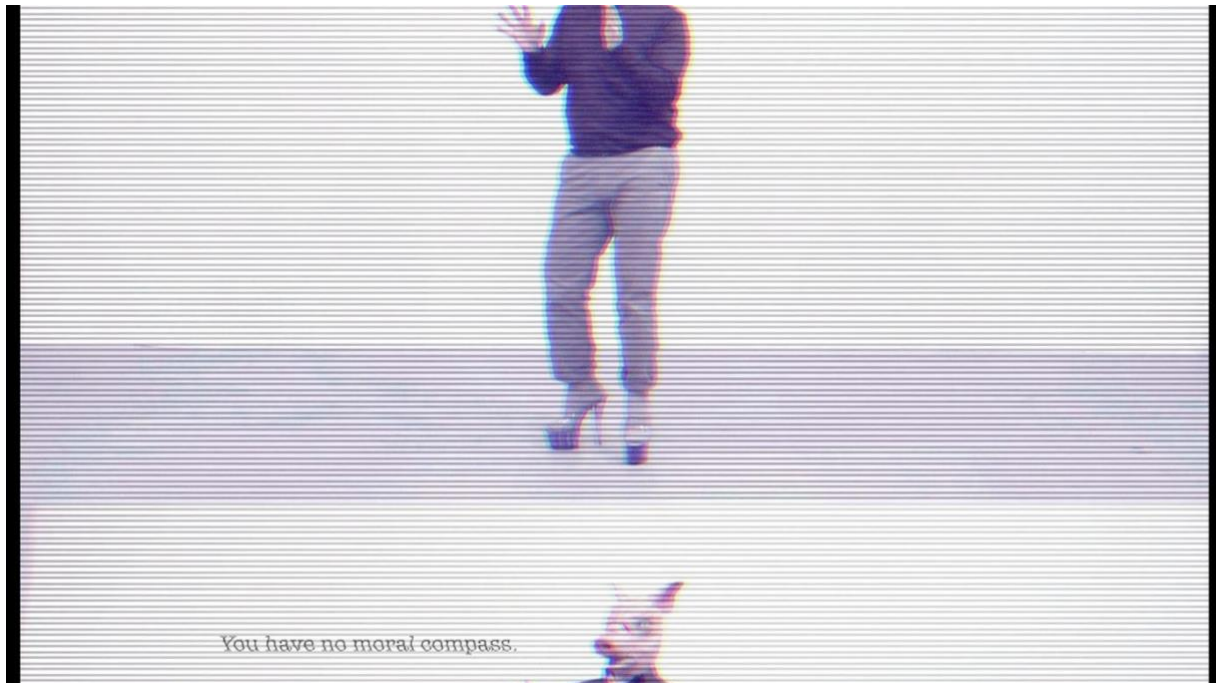
When creating “The Stripper and The Pig”, the states of play between masks, props, and Strasberg's animal exercises became the atmosphere where the performance could begin to coalesce, and where “I” as the performer could begin, as identified in the quote above, to feel myself in the thick of things. This place is a combination of experimenting with physical shapes and props and the psychological space they begin to engender. It is a space where creative expression can begin to occur, and which can begin to take into account further structures such as scripts, scenarios, and performing outwards towards an audience.

⁹² Diving deeper into the term mimesis, see Rene Girard's ‘mimetic theory’ which employs the concept of a scapegoat in ritual to preserve a status quo amongst rival factions, a symbolic sacrifice, for example, which serves to satisfy the crowds and quell a thirst for violent retribution. When the actor performs mimesis, they can be seen to create a character outside of themselves which exists as a third symbol, which both themselves and the audience may use to find sympathetic or cathartic release. Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts, *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*, (Princeton University Press, 2012), 127-140.

⁹³ Campbell Edinborough, “Using the method to be myself: adapting and appropriating historical training approaches for interactive performance”, Taylor Francis Online, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* Vol. 9, No. 2, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 177, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19443927.2018.1453863>.

“The Stripper and The Pig” sees a pair of characters embodied as one structure.⁹⁵ Simple costume pieces including platform shoes and a pig mask distinguished two separate characters as the performer moved briefly between the two over a series of dialogues. This work included further research within Strasberg’s animal exercise, this time using a physical mask and a pair of shoes as two opposing devices to both express the physicality of the characters being presented as well as acting as a reverberation within the body, deploying lines of energy that circulated around and through the performing body, intensifying as it connected to each pole, the north head of the pig, and the south platform shoes of the stripper. In this way the animal exercise was used to create an internal system of expression which propelled both the physical look of the characters being portrayed along with the ensuing scene that was created. It acted as a natural fuel for an improvisation that was tightly bound within the experience of the performer.

⁹⁵ See Tehching Hsieh’s *Art/Life One Year Performance 1983-1984*, where he was tethered to fellow artist Linda Montano for one year by a rope for an example of two becoming one structure. Artsy Net, “The Performance Artist Who Went to Impossible Extremes,” accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-performance-artist-tied-woman-year>.



**Cradeaux Alexander, "The Stripper and The Pig," Moving Image, 2018.
 Single channel monitor, 5-minute loop.**

Researching the characters portrayed in "The Stripper and The Pig" in line with Strasberg's animal exercise involved deviating from the normal methods. It was important to treat both

characters with equal respect and depth, to get both sides of the story and put them on an equal ground. This involved expanding the field of animality to include human beings; not a far stretch but one which required certain thought and care so as not to objectify or treat a certain profession of human as a one-dimensional stereotype. Researching the Stripper involved watching male and female pole dancers perform routines in films and online, and personally exploring their movement patterns through physical improvisation. Later came the shoes, and a process of clarification came through the body which began to inform the character's look and feel and potential scope for a scripted dramatic situation. A similar process of research for the Pig, consisting of observations of pig animals in nearby city farms and online then physically embodying them as an animal before standing them up and integrating these behaviours as a human being. Further research included watching masked villains in classic horror movies including Jason in *Friday the 13th*, Michael in *Halloween*, and Leatherface in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.⁹⁶ These characters provided another way of negotiating a masked character, and added to the psychology of the physical character that was being created. These behaviours for both characters were then deployed at the same time, wearing the platform shoes of the Stripper on the feet and the mask of the Pig over the head, and by moving between the two points of engagement, head to foot, a scenario began to develop organically, and a dialogue was formed between them. In this way, the script, the body, the character, and the eventual form of this work as a piece of bad tv were all informed by one another, through a

⁹⁶ *Friday the 13th (1980)*, 1980, directed by Sean S. Cunningham, streaming video <https://www.amazon.co.uk/FRIDAY-13TH-Mark-Nelson/dp/B00FZ311SM>; *Halloween*, 1978, directed by John Carpenter, streaming video https://www.amazon.co.uk/Halloween-John-Carpenter/dp/B0178V9HQ6/ref=sr_1_6?keywords=halloween&qid=1641580808&sr=8-6; *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, directed by Tobe Hooper, https://www.amazon.co.uk/Texas-Chain-Saw-Massacre/dp/B09LZ7XKMX/ref=sr_1_1?crd=1UL7D6NLQDBVQ&keywords=texas+chainsaw+massacre&qid=1641580914&s=instant-video&prefix=texas+chai%2Cinstant-video%2C93&sr=1-1.

series of intensities along a never-ending band, shifting and developing and working together simultaneously through the interior of the performer. This shifting of intensities is where the stage continually meets the body, composed of props, costumes, scripts, and film stage, and the encounter between the performer and these elements is how the encounter is expressed as performance.

The interior movement of becoming one with a character through props, costumes, and observation is also found in the performance work of Marcus Coates, specifically the Shamanistic practice in works such as *Journey to the Lower World* (2004) and *The Plover's Wing* (2009).⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Both of these works consisted of the artist entering into the animal spirit world and soliciting answers to questions posed by the artist's interlocutors. The experience the artist had with the animals found along his journey were later interpreted as potential pieces of new knowledge to help with the situation at hand. The interaction between Coates and his audience is avowedly funny, as we see the reaction shots of the residents chuckling in disbelief as Coates very seriously performs his extravagant ritual. Marcus Coates's website, accessed January 1, 2019, <https://www.marcuscoates.co.uk/>.



Marcus Coates, "Journey to the Lower World," A traditional Siberian Yakut ritual for a group of residents of Linosa Close, a condemned tower block in Sheil Park, Liverpool, UK, 2004.



Marcus Coates, "The Plover's Wing: a meeting with the Mayor of Holon," Video, Israel, 2009.

In these works there is a real sincerity in the approach to what the artist himself refers to as “Becoming Animal and Becoming Human”.⁹⁸ Coates uses his imagination to take a journey into a spirit world, dressed in animal skins, to find information in answer to a posed question.⁹⁹ Visible in the documents of these performances is the nervous laughter, the uncomfortable and often skeptical reception they receive from their audiences. The sincere effort of the ritual by the artist in the context of locations and situations unused to such absurd-seeming behaviour creates a charged atmosphere; this thickened atmosphere, becoming nervously humorous, where sincerity meets skepticism on an equal ground is the stage upon which the performance plays. This charged atmosphere is only able to be created when the artist has fully allowed themselves to become the animal they then want to inhabit, through observation, improvisation, and committed imagination.

“...a becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself...it has no term, since its term in turn exists only as taken up in another becoming of which it is the subject, and which coexists, forms a block, with the first. This is the principle according to which there is a reality specific to becoming...”¹⁰⁰

Most importantly for performance, becoming is conceived as a line of flight which passes between points, a relation between them which is not localised. For performance-makers, this can be a region where new forms and behaviours can be discovered and expressed without the threat of falling into cliché or mimicry, as a kind of pure research space between the self(performer) and the object (characterisation/performance).

⁹⁸ Marcus Coates “Becoming Animal and Becoming Human”, accessed May 19, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/129569297>. The video is a recording of an artist’s talk by Marcus Coates given to the Radical Anthropology Group at The Function Room, The Cock Tavern, London. In the talk Coates references a number of works, all of which uncover a uniquely personal approach to embodying the natural world through performances which find Coates physically transforming into animals and undergoing interior spirit worlds to converse with animals in a Shamanistic mode.

⁹⁹ In “Journey to the Lower World” Coates visited a tenants association in Liverpool and attempted to answer the question they posed, which was who was their protector? In “The Plover’s Wing” Coates visited the Mayor of Holon, Israel and conferred with his spirit animals regarding the Palestine/Israeli crisis.

¹⁰⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980]), 238. Becoming as a concept contains numerous viewpoints, including a succession of becomings: becoming-woman, becoming-minor, becoming-animal, etc., and refers to a dynamic interplay between discrete elements of assemblages.

Deleuze and Guattari address the concept of becoming-animal in *A Thousand Plateaus* as an event which is a reality in itself, independent of any notion of where becoming may lead or where it may derive from. This is an important area to examine within the mode of performance which involves portraying characters outside of one's self and, in the case of Coates, one which imagines encounters with other beings (spirit animals) as a metaphor for storytelling. In the instance of *The Stripper and The Pig*, where the action is one of moving towards characterisation first through imitation and then embodiment, there is a point of connection wherein the imagination has been infiltrated by the body, where a profound concentration gives way towards an embodied flight of creation.

"Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, "appearing," "being," "equaling," or "producing"."¹⁰¹

While for artists involved in performing roles outside of their selves there is an eventual image that is produced through their efforts of mimesis, improvisation, and concentration, what Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of becoming may offer is a valuable place for a new ground for performance, one which dismisses the idea of easy imitation or identification as a means to create a realistic or truthful representation. By allowing this new ground to be free of expectations, and to treat it as a resource for uncovering new images and modes of behaviours that may or may not connect to a tangible outcome, becoming can be a place of pure research

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 239.

for performance. This is valuable for both performers creating characters and for artists like Coates who enter into a trusting space of discovery during spirit journeys.¹⁰²

The stage is the emergence that forms the ground, an emergence that is always already in motion, coming out of the encounter. This goes back to form the self, or the agency/performer and in so doing creates the way in which manifestations of masculinity, camp humour, and archetypes aren't inert simply elements that are grabbed onto and deployed as props in a performance, but become an integral tool to the production of that circular, emergent stage-ground. Archetypes are utilised as tools towards creating the encounter between the actor and the subject they portray; they act as fully-formed structures upon which the audience and the actor can meet them in a simultaneous manner, through pre-recognition of their form and meaning in society and culture. When the actor disrupts this known archetype, it creates an encounter with a new actor, one who does not represent images, but rather one who eats them and creates new images for new encounters with them.

Ryan Trecartin's moving image practice examines the space between culture and its output, developing complex collage edits as a means to explore identity creation. In "Center Jenny", this sees a group of women on camera, each identified as "Jenny" attempting to create a Platonic ideal of a "Jenny" as their identities merge on camera through chaotic, lo-fi aesthetic scenes addressed to camera.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Particularly in a piece like "Journey to the Lower World", mentioned previously, where the line between reality, acting, ritual and performance become irrevocably intertwined. In this instance 'becoming' allows that open, improvisational space to find its own shape and outcome.

¹⁰³ Ryan Trecartin, *Center Jenny*, video, 2013, Vimeo, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://vimeo.com/trecartin/centerjenny>.



Ryan Trecartin, *Center Jenny*, video, 2013. Premiered at 55th Venice Biennale, 2013.

“I think about a vibe that I felt somewhere in culture that stimulated some aspect of creativity in my head,” the artist remarked. “With media, I’m often much more interested in how it’s translated by people sharing that media, rather than the media itself. I feel like that’s where it exists, between the piece and the sharing of it.”¹⁰⁴

The work also explores a contemporary take on artists and video, accepting video as a transparent and ubiquitous means with which to examine culture and identity, rather than exploring the technological and material aspects of video as it relates to the making of the recorded image. Trecartin’s statement tells us how the exploration of culture and the process of performing an image of identity in art exists in the interstices of finding, producing, and revealing; this ground which seeks “Jenny” is an energetic search for individuality within a complex of contemporary interconnected representations of identity, online, in media, across

¹⁰⁴ ArtNet, “Ryan Trecartin,” accessed July 12, 2021, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/ryan-trecartin/>.

myriad social sites where individuals are cloaked, united in “likes”, and form a mass of atomized culture. Privileging the sharing of this space between becoming an identity and its audience as a site for its encounter erases the screen on which it is transmitted, even while that screen shows us the making of this “Jenny” as a conceptual tool within the work (the camera is evident in many of the shots, and the performers address it/us directly and indirectly). This effect is further enhanced by its original installation at the 55th Venice Biennale, which employed the work of set builders and a sound stage.

iii. Encounter producing presence.

The following sections are going to deal directly with artists that use various aspects of the tools that have become central to rethinking the method of performance as the intersection of a multiplicity of encounters. Dan Graham, Lindsay Seers, Tim Etchells, Paul McCarthy and the tools provided by Strasberg’s Method in varying ways will use the gaze, eroticism, fiction, and personal/private moments and environments to produce the multiple connections that begin to develop an emergent encounter which will be examined in the following.

What began in the early performance work of Dan Graham, which is examined here as an encounter with audience and devices of self-reflection (mirrors and cameras) as an encounter that produces a certain kind of self-aware presence as the central locus of the work, eventually flips over and finds the encounter between and amongst performer, environment, and audience (in my own work and in the works of Seers, Etchells, and McCarthy examined below), acting as the machine that produces the stage-ground, which in turn discloses its presence.

“Through the use of the mirror, the audience is able to instantaneously perceive itself as a public mass (as a unity), offsetting its definition by the performer’s discourse. The audience sees itself reflected by the mirror instantly, while the performer’s comments are slightly delayed. First, a person in the audience sees himself "objectively" ("subjectively") perceived by himself, next he hears himself described "objectively" ("subjectively") in terms of the performer’s perception.”¹⁰⁵

Dan Graham’s video performance is an early example of how presence can be used as material to produce the encounter between artist, performance, and audience. By making exclusive use of the materials at hand (audience, mirror, his self) as both setting and as narrative, the improvisation that occurs creates a loop which is reflected in the loop of the mirror. No escape is possible from the witnessing of the event as it is transcribed in detail by the performer and viewed by an audience who is constantly on view themselves. The narrative that is encountered in this situation is constructing the presence for the viewer and the artist, not only by its minute description of the visual and bodily perceptions encountered by the performer, but by the arrangement of the mirrors which act as a video monitor, through whose reflected eyes all parties are being observed, observing each other.

“Recorded at Video Free America in San Francisco, this work is a phenomenological inquiry into the audience/performer relationship and the notion of subjectivity/objectivity.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Graham, *Video Data Bank*, “Performer/Audience/Mirror”, [1975] 1991, accessed May 3, 2020, <http://www.vdb.org/titles/performer-audience-mirror>. This quote from Graham relates to his 1975 work *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, archived in Video Data Bank. The piece involves 20 minutes of the artist describing the event he is experiencing, standing in front of an audience in front of a mirror, focusing on his own awareness and then onto the audience and then onto the audience reflected in the mirror.

¹⁰⁶ Electronic Arts Remix, *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://www.eai.org/titles/performer-audience-mirror>.



Daniel Graham, *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, Video Performance, 1975.

Tim Etchells, director of Forced Entertainment theatre company, in conversation with Gabriella Giannachi about the role of presence producing encounters in their work, in the context of Giannachi's research project "The Presence Project":

Gabriella Giannachi: What implications do words such as 'presence,' 'being there,' 'aura,' 'awareness,' 'or self-awareness' have for you in this process?

Tim Etchells: The thing we talk about the most, really, when we are working, is the idea of 'being there'. At one level I think we seek this probably impossible thing – a very simple, human scale presence beneath the theatrical – a way of simply being in a space and with some people. The other thing that's relevant is a definition of theatre - of performance – we often invoke - that as performers we are people at one end of a room, who are paid to do something for a bunch of other people in the same room... There's a certain feeling of ordinariness, which I think is completely constructed - I am not under any illusions about that. I think that ordinariness, that human scale presence, is a thing that we stage - and we work very hard on how we want it to look. We attempt to create a kind of intimacy - an easy working, work-a-day 'nowness' on the stage and with the audience.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Tim Etchells, "The Presence Project," an interview recorded by Gabriella Giannachi and Nick Kaye on 15 February 2006, edited by Nick Kaye, accessed 7 June 2021, http://spa.exeter.ac.uk/drama/presence/presence.stanford.edu_3455/Collaboratory/646.html. Etchells as the

For Tim Etchells and Forced Entertainment, the presence of the performer is a constructed reality, not through the act of interpreting a role or attempting to express a character in a fiction, but through the act of the performer performing themselves.

“Creating a ‘private moment’ roots you in the present, providing a freedom of movement and thought by eliminating the pressures of performing. Strasberg...devised the ‘private moment’ exercise from Stanislavski’s comment that one of the necessary conditions for acting is to be “private in public.”¹⁰⁸

Producing presence in the context of performance is a challenging negotiation between performer, audience, and stage. Simply being, onstage or on camera, is a task that requires skills and technique to pull off; even if the performer in question is supernaturally confident, there will always be a gap between simply being and being observed. This gap is a productive one for Forced Entertainment, and a challenge to be overcome for the performer/director striving for pure, unselfconscious realism in a performance. The ‘private moment’ in Strasberg’s Method aims for complete unselfconsciousness in the performer, requiring them to recreate an activity in their life which they would never perform in front of anyone else, such as wildly dancing or singing or reading a private letter.¹⁰⁹ This moment is examined in sensory detail, recreating the environment in which it happens, such as a private bedroom or alone in a kitchen. The walls of the space are recreated in the imagination through visualising them and

director of Forced Entertainment has worked extensively in a collaborative theatre company, devising new works of theatre which often involve the performers as actors who play a constructed version of themselves.

¹⁰⁸ Lola Cohen, *The Method Acting Exercises Handbook* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 78. The ‘private moment’ exercise can lead to a focused, realistic inhabitation of a moment by loading it with the sensory details inherent within the performer’s individual moment, such as the smells and sounds of their home bedroom, for example. Ultimately its aim is towards creating unselfconscious behaviour when being viewed performing.

¹⁰⁹ Core to the Method Acting technique is ‘sense memory’, which recreates remembered sensual experience in an acting environment, as part of rehearsal for a character or scene, to be utilised as sensation during the performance of a fictional scene. ‘Private moments’ come out of that sense memory exercise, in which several are built up to recreate an authentic environment in which the actor can confidently behave in a truthful way, as if unobserved by audience. Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute online, “Spring Class Description,” accessed June 5, 2019, <http://Strasberg.edu>.

feeling their surfaces, and perhaps smelling distinctive odours. 'Personal objects' relevant to the moment are introduced into this space, and examined in the same way (i.e. a diary, a pet, a letter, a picture, jewelry). When the reality of the 'private moment' is maintained then the activity can begin to be introduced (i.e. dancing, crying, singing, self-examination in a mirror). Effectively the performer is cosseted in a ring of concentration which excludes any feelings of being observed from the outside, and allows them to fully inhabit private behaviour in a public space, such as a stage.

“The 'private moment' exercise eliminates the presence of the public, shuts out the pull of the audience. A kind of ease is created...It goes beyond ordinary concentration, creates a blanket, and the audience disappears.”¹¹⁰

The 'private moment' exercise was examined as a tool for producing a new kind of presence in the original performance for camera *Crush*.¹¹¹ The aim was to create a private space for the performer to enable them to produce intimate and challenging actions for a viewing audience. In *Crush* the viewer sees a crush fetish taking place in a constructed space with a loaf of bread and tights-covered feet. The foot teases the loaf of bread before slowly and deliberately crushing it down. The use of bread as an object of crushing in this fetishised construction offers a knowing smile - crush fetishes can involve true sadism - the bread offers a safe space for witnessing this act, allowing the imagination to take the lead and put the focus on the act of witnessing rather than the outcome of the act. To perform such an act and create such an environment, the research involved performing a combination of 'private moment' exercises

¹¹⁰ Lee Strasberg, *The Lee Strasberg Notes*, edited by Lola Cohen (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 24-25.

¹¹¹ This work is also later examined in chapter xiii. as it relates to the looking of the viewer.

and examining Paul McCarthy's *Bang Bang Room* as a potential way to incorporate this exercise within an external, equally dynamic structure.¹¹² McCarthy's work (i.e. *Bang Bang Room* and *The Saloon*, both examined in more detail later in this thesis) developed the ontological ground of the stage as a process of emergence within a network of encounters between performer, stage, and audience in my own work *Crush*, examined below. These works have also indicated a way of using eroticism as a tool to define the edge between viewer/performance, interior/exterior, to better accentuate the meeting ground between these areas. This accentuation provides an edge and definition for the gazes that occur in these works: the eye, the kinetic movement, the hard, often violent sexuality of McCarthy, which McCarthy defines as both "a reflection of mediated violence and the desire for violence"; the seductive fetishised leg and the soft, silly, emasculated action of the crush fetish in *Crush*.¹¹³ The sexual charge of such works and practices is defeated by their knowing absurdity or theatricality; the figures and objects in these scenarios move towards the viewer wrapped in a well-trod layer of cultural baggage and seduce or repel the viewer with the performance of this baggage, or garbage.

Using readymade cultural tropes in this way and restaging them offers one kind of bridge between the viewer and the performance and the performer -- they all work together under

¹¹² Paul McCarthy, "Bang Bang Room," (1992), was originally researched in the context of the exhibition "Paul McCarthy: Central Symmetrical Rotation Movement, Three Installations, Two Films" (2008) at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Art 21, accessed May 2, 2018, <https://magazine.art21.org/2011/05/13/paul-mccarthy-central-symmetrical-rotation-movement/#.YQ2xQtNKidY>. Other works in this installation included *Spinning Room* and *Mad House* (both 2008). The kinetic nature of the forms and their amusement park ride/stage set aesthetic allowed for new types of entry points for the viewer.

¹¹³ Hauser and Wirth, "Paul McCarthy and Tala Madani on the Power of Seditious Art", 2020, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.hauserwirth.com/ursula/26546-paul-mccarthy-tala-madani-power-seditious-art>. Several works of McCarthy's are important to the discussion around sexuality, violence, and the production of viewership as a seductive/repulsive act, including *Pinocchio Pipenose Household Dilemma* (2012) and *The Garden* (1992).

the same umbrella of knowledge to create the conditions for the performance to occur and disclose itself.



Paul McCarthy, "Bang Bang Room," Kinetic Sculpture, Installation view at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 1992.

As the stage set of "Bang Bang Room" opens and closes its doors and turns and revolves on its axis, the viewer is invited to behold a performance of revelation, concealment, disclosure. A kind of puppet enacting its own drama. This sculpture was key to the eventual construction of the stage set that was constructed for "Crush", which consisted of an 8'x6' square box composed of stage flat walls covered in standard hardboard sheets. The internal space was

utilised as a video shoot for the crush fetish to be performed. The look and feel of this constructed set had a deliberately unfinished aesthetic which hoped to further amplify the staged encounter within its walls.¹¹⁴ Both “Crush” and “Bang Bang Room” reveal the structure of the external world in an art object as a porous but thick entry point to the internal experience of the work, which oscillates between and around the edges of disclosure, through walls and lenses that open, shut, reveal, and tease with promises of sex and violence. The energy between these oscillating moments of revelation and concealing, seducing and repelling, are an ingredient in the becoming-method which configures a new ground for performance in this research.

In “Crush”, the camera lens is the eye of the viewer; it is also an object which records and transmits images; this dual aspect creates a dynamic engagement for working with the camera as a ‘personal object’ within the ‘private moment’ exercise.¹¹⁵ As a performer looking at and performing for the camera, it proved difficult getting lost in the moment or getting rid of inhibitions. When the camera was transformed into a ‘personal object’, the relationship between the performer and the camera immediately changed.

“Seers, now adult, makes the radical decision to ‘become a camera’, using her own body as an image capture device by placing light sensitive paper directly into her mouth. This is the first of a series of ‘becomings’ that are revealed in the overlapping narratives of the films.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ See Lindsay Seers’s work “It has to be this way” in Chapter I, ii. “Activating the threshold as a feature of time” is an earlier example of how stage set construction in a sculptural practice help to inform its use in “Crush”.

¹¹⁵ Both of these techniques are taught and were encountered by me at The Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute, New York, NY, in 1990-1993. They are developed from Lee Strasberg’s lectures and workshops, and are published in *The Lee Strasberg Notes*, Lola Cohen, editor, (Oxon, Routledge, 2010) 22-24.

¹¹⁶ M. Anthony Penwill, “Introduction”, Lindsay Seers, *Human Camera* (Article Press, 2007), 6. The publication contains various essays relating to the series of films exhibited between 2005-2006, and form an examination of Seers’ work with the camera which is related to a condition of the artist’s photographic memory, lost at the age of

A series of Lindsay Seers' films, including *The World of Jule Eisenbud (Remission)*, 2005; *Intermission*, 2005; *Extramission*, 2005; *Under the Influence of Magicians*, 2006; and *The Truth Was Always There*, 2006 are the subject for a collection of essays compiled for Lindsay Seers: *Human Camera*.¹¹⁷ They reveal a unique relationship with the apparatus of the camera as it merges with the user's body; in the pursuit of becoming a human camera the artist re-conceptualises the object as both a recorder of images and a means towards creating a physical embodiment of their own history.

"Her unobserved but constantly observing existence confined Seers to a solitary and somewhat parasitic dependence on the world in which others seemed to live their lives for the sole purpose of being watched. She had "become a vampire" who fed on looking, "watching with (her) whole body", her "eyes drinking in the details that were being printed in (her) mouth". When she parted her lips to kiss a lover, she felt his image fall onto the back of her throat. "Even the idea of a kiss mutated into a kind of cannibalism."¹¹⁸

7, when verbal language finally erupted. These examinations include the use of the human body as a camera/recording device, with photographic paper inserted into the mouth, and the body becoming a human recording device.

¹¹⁷ *The World of Jule Eisenbud (Remission)*, film, 2005; *Intermission*, film, 2005; *Extramission*, film, 2005; *Under the Influence of Magicians*, film, 2006; *The Truth Was Always There*, film, 2006, Lindsay Seers's website, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://lindsayseers.info/publication/human-camera/>.

¹¹⁸ Pavel Buchler, "A True Story," Lindsay Seers, *Human Camera* (Article Press, 2007) 17. Especially interesting is the merging of technology with the body and how that merge forms a layered conceptual ground which cuts out the opposition between the subject and the object of performance.



Lindsay Seers, "Extramission 6 (Black Maria)," Video, 2009

This very intimate and embodied relationship with the camera as depicted in Seers' practice became the catalyst for experiments in conceiving the camera as more than an extension of the viewer's gaze. In "Crush", which deals with a private fetish for ostensibly private eyes, the camera used in the constructed set became another actor in the crush scenario. Modifying Strasberg's 'personal object' exercise and the 'substitution' exercise (which is examined further later in this thesis), this researcher imbued the camera with the kind of intimacy only a person or object from one's private life could inspire.¹¹⁹ The object of the camera, transformed as a substituted private object became an object which inspired eroticism, and the performance of the crush fetish became an intimate act for 2. By personalising the object via substituting it with

¹¹⁹ Supra Chapter II, subchapter iv. "Improvisation as condition of becoming."

a meaningful object/person from life it was more possible to improvise freely within the performance and make spontaneous actions and decisions before (or with) the camera.¹²⁰

iv. Improvisation as condition of becoming.

In performance, improv and improvising is often understood as a tool for either creating a performance, as in comedy improv groups, or for creating characters in scripted drama, as in Strasberg's use of improvisation which creates character behaviour through the use of 'sense memory' and the creation of personalised experience as the actor's autobiography encounters the scripted reality.

"It eschews clichés and pursues individual authenticity and a reality deeply grounded in the given circumstances of the script."¹²¹

Here, improvisation is rethought as a condition of becoming, which is understood as a series of motions which disclose the performer within the environment of the performance, which respond and react with that environment (the stage-ground). When becoming is considered not as a method to arrive somewhere, but as a condition in and of itself, independent from but surrounded by nearby forces and entities (actors, environments, scripts, actions, manifestations of archetype, audience) it can begin to be used as a tool for the performer to encounter the stage as an eternal motion which simultaneously produces the event and its disclosure. In this

¹²⁰ Within the 'private moment' exercise, several exercises are often layered together, explored individually, then held together throughout the exercise. 'Sense memory' techniques are used to recreate 'personal objects' which are placed and explored within the overall environment of the 'private moment', which is itself recreated through 'sense memory' techniques. If the environment was a bedroom, for example, then first that environment would be recreated before recreating any objects within it. These techniques are utilised to elicit realistic and truthful emotional responses.

¹²¹ The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute online, accessed August 5, 2021, <https://strasberg.edu/about/what-is-method-acting/>.

way, improvisation meets rehearsal, which meets the stage, which meets the audience, which meets the improvisation, in a looped way. This circular flow is the energy and force that creates the 'becoming' in this method.

“How does the thought of pure becoming serve as a foundation for the eternal return? All we need to do to think this thought is to stop believing in being as distinct from and opposed to becoming... What is the being of that which becomes, of that which neither starts nor finishes returning? *Returning is the being of that which becomes.*”¹²²

Improvisation in the context of this research identifies performance-making as a practical tool which can unearth the ground for a new performance world, and one that can produce new styles and expressions of performance within the context of creating a character. These objectives require the performance practitioner to open themselves up to possibilities hitherto unthought, and to use improvisation in a heuristic mode, exploring and finding new ground through practical exercises.

In this way, improvising in the Viewpoints style is an equivalent ground of Becoming, in that its object is a pure form of discovering behaviours for performers as they move between different spatial and time-based exercises, and are not hindered by the edges of these spaces as outcomes.¹²³ It offers itself as an alternative to Stanislavski/Method-based training for actors, announcing itself as a system which prioritises the external world and its relationship to the

¹²² Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press), 48. This circular method of becoming is informed by Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the 'eternal recurrence'. This concept informs the ideas of flow and intensity as producers of their own ground, which becomes the stage, which then encounters the performer, etc. and thereby creates a perpetual cycle of production.

¹²³ Anne Bogart and Tina Laundau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005). The publication sets out a practical set of instructions for practitioners to engage with the Viewpoints as a method to create theatre. Those Viewpoints are indebted to choreographer Mary Overlie, whose own system of Six Viewpoints for choreography (Space, Shape, Time, Emotion, Movement, and Story) became influential to Bogart's use of them as a basis for tools for theatre-creation.

performer over the interior or psychological world founded in the original Stanislavski system and developed further in the Strasberg Method.¹²⁴

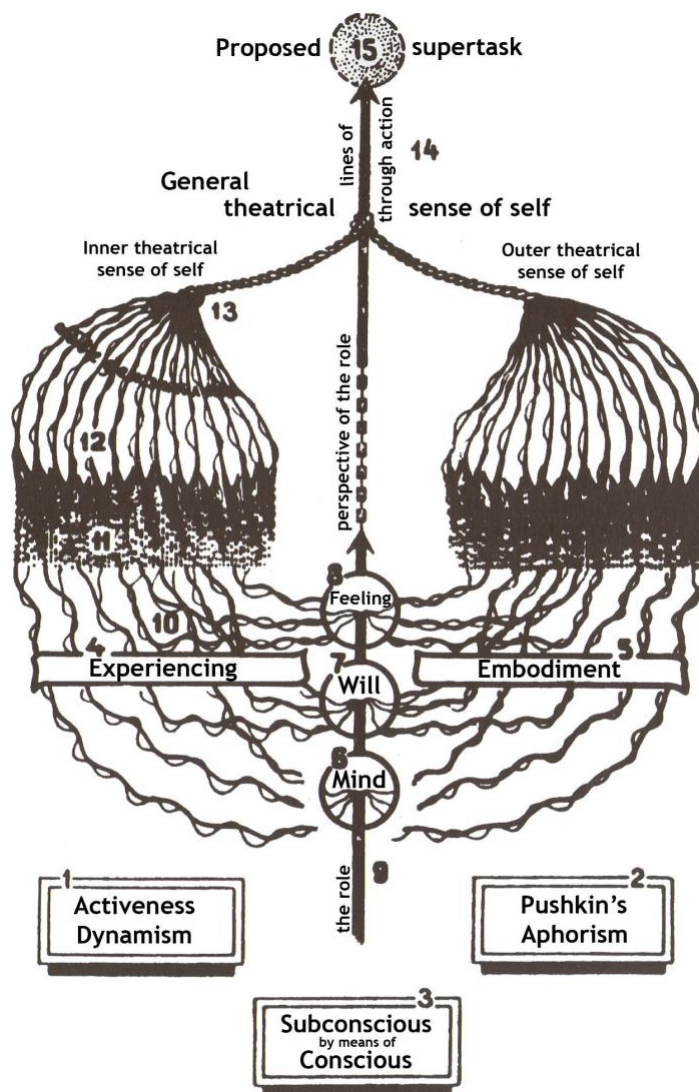


Diagram of the Konstantin Stanislavski System

¹²⁴ The original system created by Stanislavski is, compared to Strasberg's subsequent Method, a holistic affair, including a focus on both internal and external forces to create theatre. Bogart's and Landau's reaction to the dominant force of naturalism and psychological-based actor's training in modern theatre will relate therefore more to the strong influence of Strasberg's system in American acting, which is primarily focused on actors' personal biography in creating characters, as established in the Affective Memory exercise, which utilises actual lived experience as the basis for character-creation.

In a typical training session for practitioners, several states are embodied by moving through a physical experience with spatial/time viewpoints consisting of Spatial Relationship, Kinesthetic Response, Shape, Gesture, Repetition, Architecture, Tempo, Duration, and Topography.

Additionally, vocal viewpoints include Timbre, Silence, Acceleration/Deceleration, Pitch, and Dynamic.¹²⁵

“The Play-World is the set of laws belonging to your piece and no other: the way time operates, the way people dress, the color palette, what constitutes good or evil, good manners or bad, what a certain gesture denotes, etc.”¹²⁶

Following along the exploratory path of improvisation can lead to new behaviours which can in turn lead to unexpected outcomes. The Play-World described by Bogart and Landau represents a new world, a free world, a Becoming-World wherein creation arises out of an abandonment of preconceived notions of morality and even physics and initiates a new world, correct in its own make up, divorced from the primary concerns of an end goal. The same world can be created through improvisational techniques which delve into a performer’s autobiography as source material, as in Strasberg’s Affective Memory techniques, and techniques which rely on both internal and external approaches, as in Stanislavski’s, which investigate both an Inner Theatrical Sense of Self alongside Outer Theatrical Sense of Self as laid out in the above diagram.¹²⁷ Seen from above, it appears that the differences found between different schools

¹²⁵ See Anne Bogart and Tina Laundau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005).

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 166.

¹²⁷ Strasberg’s ‘affective memory’ technique calls for the performer to investigate a lived personal experience that is at least 7 years in the past by a series of relaxation and ‘sense memory’ exercises. By thoroughly investigating the surrounding circumstances of an event that had emotional impact, the performer is meant to be able to

of performance-making are differences in stress and philosophy more than in substance. While it is true that Viewpoints and Method may seem at odds with each other, the former external and the latter internal, they are both seeking a state where behaviour can be discovered rather than imitated. These approaches express a yearning for freedom from established modes of behaviour; exploring character work via improvisational methods is the space where performance practitioners 'become', not in the sense of transforming into, but rather adjacent to or parallel with the character and circumstance within their purview.

Strasberg's techniques follow a different approach, one in which the performer consults with their own autobiography as the source material for their interpretation of character behaviour. A prime example of this technique lies in the 'substitution' technique, which finds the performer substituting a personal object/person for their scene partner or for an object they are dealing with in a script, such as a photograph of a loved one or a pet.

"Substituting a person or an event from your own life unrelated to the play can justify your actions, give you the value needed in the scene, and enhance the idea of "actor's belief" without which there is little truth to be found."¹²⁸

An important aspect of this exercise for this research is how it is used to feed the belief of the actor; it uses an authentic object or a person from life to create a fiction that is perceived by both performer and audience as real.¹²⁹ For the performer the reality lies in the feelings and

truthfully recall an experience of magnitude on par with the circumstances presented in the scripted story they are enacting.

Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York and London: Theatre Arts Book Routledge, 1936). Stanislavski's System as represented in the diagram is expounded throughout *An Actor Prepares*.

¹²⁸ Lola Cohen, *The Method Acting Exercise Handbook*, 116.

¹²⁹ This sort of belief is used to produce what is felt to be an authentic or real experience, which is experienced by the actor and then in turn is experienced as such by the audience. The reality in question is complicated by

sensations that are evoked when exploring the exercise, and for the viewer it is the quality of the feelings expressed within the fictional circumstances they are witnessing. This gap between what is being experienced and what is being expressed is where both the performer and the viewer invest themselves in the event of becoming. The event that transpires is a circulation of movements towards belief, reality, authenticity, empathy, acting, and the activity of witnessing. Stanislavski-based theatre may ask for a different experience from its viewers than a Brecht-based theatre, but the gap that is created between actors finding characters and viewers finding those characters in fictional circumstances is the same.¹³⁰

Substitution is also connected with Uta Hagen's actor training, which strives for a similar connection to objects and people, but is seen as a holistic pursuit in the creation of a character, and how that character creates realities in fictional circumstances.¹³¹ Her ideas around substitution include a focus on 'intangibles' and 'particularizing'.

"If a new character has, to me, elements of light blue, a field of clover, a Scarlatti sonata, a toy poodle, a shiny blue pond, a piece of cut crystal—these essences may be of value to my sense of self, my particularizations for my character... Particularizing or to make something particular, as opposed to generalizing or to keep general, is an essential for everything in acting from identification of the character right down to the tiniest physical object you come in contact."¹³²

exploring autobiographical situations to produce this reality which is then filtered through a scripted drama. What is important is the strength of illusion of the reality in question, not whether or not what is performed is a real, non-fictional event.

¹³⁰ The difference here is between empathy and alienation; either viewers are absorbed in the fictional circumstances or are reminded of the conceits of the theatre that are producing these fictions.

¹³¹ Uta Hagen, *Respect for Acting* (New York: Macmillan, 1973). Uta Hagen was a hugely influential Master Teacher along with Herbert Berghof at HB Studios in New York from 1945 to her death in 2004, and was an accomplished actor.

¹³² *Ibid*, 43-44.

In original work “Domme Shew and the Musick of Violenze”, the ‘substitution’ technique was explored as a means towards finding personal connections between myself and the objects in my studio to create a new work of performance. This research expanded and began to examine how ‘substitution’ could be modified to create not only the connections between performer and surrounding objects, but as a further tool to help create the new circumstances which would underpin a new world for this performance. ‘Substitution’ is normally used in acting to create attachments between performers and people/objects within a given fictional circumstance and thereby imbue those fictions with reality; this research wanted to explore how ‘substitution’ could create the world in which those connections were created.¹³³

The process of “Dommes Shew and the Musick of Violenze” began by confronting a number of objects and costumes in the studio and allowing each to reveal a quality of their own, through manipulating the prop, wearing it, touching it, tasting it. An old piece of technology destined for the skip was explored in this sensory way, and it gave rise to a wider web of associations between it and the performer. Instead of substituting a loved ex-pet from childhood while relating to this old prop, which is an example of a usual way of exploring this technique, should one want to respond to it tearfully or wistfully, the old prop was allowed to give rise to a free association of feelings and ideas as it was physically explored. Following the ‘sense memory’

¹³³ ‘Substitution’ as developed by Strasberg is one technique out of many, including ‘sense memory’ and ‘private moment’, taught by Lee Strasberg at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute. This technique of ‘substitution’ calls for the performer to identify memories through their sensory properties, and to enlist the effects of those properties as they give rise to behaviour. Smells, sounds, touch, taste, etc. of the ‘substitution’ are recreated in the performer’s imagination to the extent they become a reality; when recreated over and over again they become a tool for the performer to use when the scripted situation arises, ie. to produce genuine tears, or warmth, or laughter, or embarrassment.

exercise, which was developed and taught at The Actors Studio and later at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute as a means to achieve 'emotional recall', a term used to differentiate the processes of remembering and re-living. Exploring experiences and objects from the performer's actual memory via their sensory properties is a technique to tap into those memories and relive them as if they were current. This is a tool for producing specific effects of emotion and feeling during performances. These techniques were first introduced to the United States by actors from Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, who opened The American Laboratory Theatre in New York City in the 1920s. Strasberg began to utilise and developed these techniques in his own Group Theatre, formed along with Harold Clurman and Cheryl Crawford in 1931. The exercise, which traditionally involves using one's imagination to reproduce sensations of an imagined object's touch, taste, feel, smell, etc, this old prop plus several other found objects in the space were explored literally in this sensory way. The impressions that arose from the sensations began to give rise to the beginnings of a theme, which was then developed into a kind of narrative or throughline as text was produced while in this receptive mode.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ The Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute online accessed October 1, 2018, <https://strasberg.edu/about/what-is-method-acting>.



**Cradeaux Alexander, "Domme Shew and the Musick of Violenze," Moving Image, 2020.
Single channel monitor, 8 minutes, commissioned by Swarm Dynamics.**

As this technique was adapted to create new performance rather than to create the conditions of simulacrum for the performer in a given fictional circumstance (i.e. using 'sense memory' to recall this emotion which fits in with the emotions suggested in a fictional scripted situation); as such, there were no preconditions or specific outcomes intended, apart from creating a world which was absolutely connected to the materials and the performer's experience of them. The hope was to create a new world which, while still a fictional reality, would edge towards the state of re-lived experience which was the goal for the techniques of Emotional Recall and Affective Memory previously discussed. It was performance research which sought to produce a kind of authentically felt, or realistic, connection to devised performance, using acting techniques to create its ground as well as its surface. Ultimately "Domme Shew and the Musick of Violenze" was created via this 'sense memory' work with a number of objects and costumes, which devised a performance for camera which found an actor trapped in a room, creating a new Eden, letting the outside world go, and treating the politics of the external world as sound of diminishing echoes as he began to devise his own new world in the shape of one of Earth's first great land masses, Gondwananland.

v. Performance research in practice (modified Strasberg and Bogart and Landau)

— Spine —	
(Relax)	— Spine —
(Audio Interpretation)	(Audio Transcription)
<u>Mood</u>	<u>Words</u>
Quiet, small	No no.
Sharp, high	Eat the world.
low, open	Take flowers.
	Haunted houses.
	Love child.
	Rats.
Opaque, question	Blond boy
	Drowning.
	Witches taking.
flat, dead	Throw the flowers.
	Chop chop chop.
Sharp, mourn, keen	Let them in.
	Soil gods.
	Flee and jump,
	jump over cliff.
	New face new.
	No one knows.
	Neighbour.
	Young love.
	Take take.
	Run with skin.
	The girl is gone.
	Haunt haunt.
	Too blue.
	Golden facelift.
	Shocker jumper.

Audio recording of Modified Relaxation Exercise, taken shortly after the spine segment was completed.

This picture is precisely an example of using the Method and Viewpoints techniques which were examined early on in the thesis in an adapted and expanded way. As these methods and techniques are mainly geared towards actors working in traditionally scripted theatre, the aim of this modification was to create a new practical method for performers who devise their own work, as is more often the case in performance art.¹³⁵

As a piece of exploratory research which sought to find the ground of becoming via improvisational techniques informed by Method and Viewpoints, a series of performance workshops were undertaken. The goal of these workshops was to find the relationship between the external world and the internal, utilising some aspects of Strasberg and Bogart/Laundau along with original forms of improvisation, including new uses of language and the presentation of image-based source material.

Beginning with a series of relaxation movements inspired by Strasberg's techniques of relaxation I guided myself through a series of muscular movements coupled with a focus upon mind-body connection. I would move through the body in a physical way and check in with what feelings and emotions were elicited when various muscle groups became relaxed. As an expression of this emotional release I was to create tonal sounds and allow that newly freed emotion to be expressed and released. Deviating from Strasberg's original techniques of relaxation, and in an effort to create language which may might later be utilised as source material for a scripted performance, I set myself the task of expressing the feelings as random

¹³⁵ For example, in the live performance work of Ron Athey, Marina Abramovic, Nigel Rolfe, and Franko B.

words and phrases rather than the tonal sounds originally suggested in Strasberg's 'relaxation exercise'.

"You can make the specific committed loud sounds during Relaxation when there is tension...make a long deep "HA!" or "AH!" sound. The sound should be loud, committed, and elongated for five or ten seconds. Stretch your arms out from the side of your body at shoulder level, opening up the chest area and move the legs. Then lean back into the chair and let go of the tension, collapse, and breathe. The bad feeling stops you from going further and the movement and sounds break you through. The explosive "HA!" sound can help you deal with specific, troubling issues, such as anger."¹³⁶

Tension in the original exercise is viewed as an obstruction to expression, and something that should be worked out before creativity begins. This research instead utilised tension in a productive and dynamic way; rather than as a means for simple release of tension, this exercise was repurposed as a tool to create new verbal expression, unfettered by conscious thinking, made in the body within the release of physical tension. The rupture of released tension as it travels through the body and out of the mouth is an emotionally charged flight; it writes the script as it utters its feelings, forced by muscular release and guided out through a strong connection of the mind intertwined with specific physical localities of unreleased tension.

Session 1 began with a sustained relaxation exercise along the guidelines of Strasberg's 'relaxation technique', sitting in a chair and beginning to release tension in the body from the head down to the toes. As each point of the body was being addressed I actively engaged that area, swivelling the neck, raising and lowering the shoulders, moving the torso and bending forward, lifting the legs and becoming aware of where the tension pooled in the body. As points of tension were identified through these physical walk-throughs of the body, they were guided

¹³⁶ Lola Cohen, *The Method Acting Exercises Handbook* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 23. Cohen studied directly under Lee Strasberg towards the final years of his life in New York and Los Angeles, 1977-1982, and distilled the experience of the acting techniques into a handbook guide for professionals to teach the Method and to learn it for themselves. She is a Strasberg Faculty Member at NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

to explore those points of tension through subtle physical movement and attempt to release the tension through a combination of mental awareness and physical movement, dropping the tension out of the affected area and allowing it to either dissipate without any further consequence, or, when the identified tension began to create an emotional response, to harvest that tension and let it become a verbal expression. These verbal expressions, which began as pure sound, as described above in Cohen's *Method Acting Exercises Handbook* as HA! and AH!, were then guided into actual words and phrases by improvising with words rather than sounds. In this way a map of words and phrases began to be constructed, working as verbal symbols of pure emotional response harvested from the movement and release of physical tension in the body.

This exercise was recorded on an audio device, and listened to upon completion of the exercise. The areas of the body relaxed were segmented between head/neck, spine, and limbs. The transcription of this audio was then separated between the mood and quality of sound and the actual words and phrases that were uttered. The transcription became a map which plotted out a series of new vocabulary alongside its corresponding quality of mood, and revealed itself to be a map of unconscious expression; importantly, it provided a new way of meeting language which relied upon intuition and unconscious expression within the body of the performer. It was as if the matrix of physical tension playing along the musculature of the performer sparked an innovation in verbal articulation as it was released and experienced.

vi. Making a performer a Body Without Organs.

“By placing him again, for the last time, on the autopsy table to remake his anatomy. I say, to remake his anatomy.

Man is sick because he is badly constructed.

We must make up our minds to strip him bare in order to scrape off that animalcule that itches him mortally,

god,

and with god his organs.

For you can tie me up if you wish,

but there is nothing more useless than an organ.

When you will have made him a body without organs,

then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom.

Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out as in the frenzy of dance halls and this wrong side out will be his real place.”¹³⁷

The body without organs that Artaud introduced us to in his radio play *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* is an image which the ‘relaxation exercise’ hopes to achieve. By treating muscular tension as a zinging source of energy that flows through the body and engaging with it as a pure force of energy, Strasberg’s technique can become a powerful method to decouple the rational mind from its obligations and allow a new image of the performer to appear: a

¹³⁷ Antonin Artaud, *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*, written in 1947 for French radio. Text accessed June 1, 2020, <https://surrealism-plays.com/Artaud.html>. In this radio play Artaud first invokes the image of a body without organs, which Deleuze and Guattari later adopt for their own work. The implication of a body without organs in the context of this research serves as an image of complete disruption between neurological impulse and bodily expression as well as a disruption of what a body or person or performer ought to do, as opposed to what might be available to them when societal/formal rules are dispensed with, within the creation of new performance expressions.

conduit for creative energy and a stage on which it plays. This new image views the matrix of an arranged system (organs) as a pulsing, Protean structure, giving way for the body (performer) to create new associations and patterns of vocabulary and behaviour.

“That is why we treat the BwO as the full egg before the extension of the organism and the organization of the organs, before the formation of the strata; as the intense egg defined by axes and vectors, gradients and thresholds, by dynamic tendencies involving energy transformation and kinematic movements involving group displacement, by migrations: all independent of accessory forms because the organs appear to function here only as pure intensities.”¹³⁸

The Body Without Organs is rethought through the scaffold of Strasberg as it makes its way towards a becoming-actor; the corpse it invokes is an actor ready to act independently from prescribed cultural viewpoints, and operate as a system of potentialities. If we assume nothing except that there is a complete set of possible outcomes available to the performer, then the operation of relaxing the body becomes a way to tap into that potential without assuming an outcome or prejudicing behaviour.¹³⁹

This reworking of Strasberg’s original relaxation technique aimed to create a new vocabulary for performance. Instead of viewing tension as a difficulty to overcome, it positively used the meeting of bodily tension with its release as a meeting point for new expression. Upon review of the exercise as it was recorded on audio device, and the new verbal maps had been written

¹³⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 150. This demonstrates how Deleuze and Guattari picked up Artaud’s conception of a Body Without Organs (BwO) and deployed it as a new structuring for dynamic intensities.

¹³⁹ This is a radical approach to improvisation as laid out in footnote 8. Not only is it being used to explore new behaviour for performance, it seeks a total decoupling from expectations to behave in any relatable form. This is a system decoupled from cause and effect, moving between and through representations of gender, sex, colour, age, abilities, and all categories of represented characters to uncover very primal and unrefined presentations of the human as they make their ways towards behaviour in performance.

down and laid out to view, it became evident that the utterances were a surprise. There was no recognition of having spoken these words aloud; what were mainly recalled were the various states of emotion, some quite strong and tearful, others warmer and freeing. This part of the research revealed that verbal expression did not always match what one may think of as a like-for-like emotional response, and helped to suggest that this way of creating language for performance did in fact work as a method to reveal previously unthought associations between words and states of feeling, and, ultimately, could create a new register for vocabulary: “golden facelift” as associated with the mood loud/ugly/fast, “throw the flowers” was associated with a flat/dead mood, and “witches taking” with an opaque/question mood. These unusual associations became the underlying blueprint for a new matrix of associations among words and actions, a new world where a flower was primarily a murder weapon, a glass of lemonade a gateway to eroticism, a wall of soil a god. While many of these associations appeared only surreal at first glance, it became apparent that their true value was in how a verbal expression, or a fact, could be tied with a new, unexpected passion, and could be harnessed as a new meeting ground for the performer to inhabit and, ultimately, express to a public.

“The minute man “knows”, he sleeps (Shestov). Because he loses touch with that IMBALANCE which he most deeply is. Art must keep man consciously rooted in that imbalance-and that can only be done if no conclusions are drawn (implied-as in the MESSAGE or RESOLUTION)- but rather, the spectator is moment by moment exposed to the true process of a certain kind of sentence-gesture (man’s inner quest for style, for a way of being-in-the-world) as it encounters the resistance of the real-object (nature).”¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Richard Foreman, *The Manifestos and Essays* (New York: TCG, 2013), 26.

Foreman's Ontological-Hysterical Theatre is a quest for new associations and images; his work reveals how the unfolding of these associations is an action diametrically opposed to concrete, empathetic performance, and how their unfolding for an audience is a new method of creating experience which takes the place of dramatic narrative. This new experience as theatre is a dynamic unfolding of new compositions in time and space.

This research led to the creation of 2 pieces of work, *The Golden Facelift*, and *Act Natural*, performances constructed through encountering narrative language via physical release of tension, as explored in the Modified Relaxation Technique described above.



Cradeaux Alexander, "The Golden Facelift," Durational Live Performance, London 2019. Installation with actors, text, and projection, Commissioned by Wimbledon Space.



**Cradeaux Alexander, “Act Natural,” Moving Image, London, 2019.
Single channel with sound, 10 minutes. Installed at Dyson Gallery.**

The map of language and mood acted as the starting point for a scripted performance; its phrases and words began to reveal narrative possibilities and their mood associations began to suggest an emotional world that might be created in a series of dialogues for performance.

Moving into an external mode, Session 2 concentrated on Architecture, one of the Viewpoints considered in Bogart and Landau’s system of performance techniques.¹⁴¹ Architecture and its

¹⁴¹ Anne Bogart and Tina Laundau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 52-54. There are many variables to consider and explore as a performer within each Viewpoint, and in Architecture itself there are a number of ways to approach it, including responding to Solid Mass, Texture, Light, Color, and Including Others. For this research the focus between what is termed The Whole Space and Distant Architecture became important pivot points to explore specifically.

constituent qualities termed The Whole Space and Distant Architecture became the focal point for improvising with the external world and its immediate surroundings. This was in conscious response to the Modified Relaxation Technique which summoned mood and experience from within the body; the point of this second session was to discover whether or not a setting or container could be found organically through an encounter with its physical properties.

Important to this exercise was how this stimulus resonated with the body and the mind of the performer and, moreover, how that resonating could create a new, profoundly experienced surrounding saturated with mood and emotion. The Modified Architecture Exercise that ensued began as a pure physical encounter with the stage upon which the exercise was performed, and included a series of walks, runs, scrapings with fingers along its surface, minute face-to-face examinations with walls and curtains, focusing on lights and shielding eyes from them, stumbling in darkness, rolling on the floor, moving to the back of the space, investigating angles and various points of view, sitting in chairs, touching all surfaces, occasionally tasting surfaces, and paying attention to changes in temperature, smell, the body in the upclose space, the sensation of heat on the skin and the cooling of the skin as it moves from one area to the next. The film *Last Year in Marienbad* was referred to as a filmic encounter with architecture and helped to guide the intentions around the space throughout the exercise.¹⁴²

¹⁴² The screenplay for *Last Year in Marienbad* (1960) written by Alain Robbe-Grillet is in keeping with the writer's style of obsessive focus upon detail of surface, found in previous books *The Erasers* (1953) and *The Voyeur* (1955) which effectively condense narrative and setting into one compressed plane, as opposed to a narrative happening within a setting. This has the effect of giving equal agency to setting, mood, and narrative action, as they speak through each other within the focus upon the detail of the surface. *Last Year at Marienbad*, directed by Alain Resnais (Studiocanal: 2005 [1960]); Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Erasers* (New York: Grove Press, 1994 [1953]); Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur* (New York: Grove Press, 1994 [1955]).



Director Alain Resnais, *Last Year at Marienbad*, Film Still, 1961.

After the close inspection of the surface of 'The Whole Space', 'Distant Architecture' (2 separate aspects detailed within 'Architecture') came into focus and, as furthest points of visual space began to be explored through looking and moving in response to them from a far-fixed point, a space began to form which was more than a simple body relationship between this point and that. It became clear that by pivoting between a very near focus upon detail and a very distant point, the mind was activated towards creating a third space. This third space, which was developed by focusing upon the pivot between the micro and the macro elements of the inhabited space, grew into an imagined shape which later became the basis for the setting in which the ongoing text for performance lived.

Ultimately these 2 sessions provided the basis for a scripted performance which braided together setting, narrative, and mood in a holistic way, one in which no element was more dominant than the next. After this script was completed it was recorded as an audio piece to be used in a live performance called *The Golden Facelift*. This performance acted as a meeting

ground between performer, performance, and audience, creating potential equal agency for audience to inhabit and co-create the performance alongside the performers. The performers entered the space just before the audience and found a small earpiece which they discreetly inserted into their ears. These were connected via Bluetooth to the original audio recording. When the audio was turned on, only the performers could hear the text, and the audience, who were beginning to enter as the performers began to recite what they were hearing, were treated to a conversation between 2 people, standing at microphones at opposite side of a darkened room, with intense blocks of red, blue, and green light rotated throughout the piece, projected onto the wall behind the performers.

vii. Playing the male figure

Here we see how the use of eroticism and humour act as agents of reconstructing masculinity (often hetero-normative); forming new images of this figure in performance as it plays upon the new ground of performance.¹⁴³ A new aesthetics emerges through the use of the excesses of representation, caricature, and deformed images of types, and restages them as an ingredient within the larger structure of the research, which revolves around a new method that rethinks the encounter as an emergence of stage/performer/audience, and situates these entities alongside each other as producers of the event of performance as they encounter each other within that network of emergence.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Supra Chapter II, subchapter iii, "Thresholds as staged, erotic encounters" where the use of eroticism in the 'becoming-method' is first expanded upon.

¹⁴⁴ See Yve Lomax, *Sounding the Event* (London, New York: IB Tauris, 2005), 7, where an encounter is one of perpetual incompleteness with a world that is always "in transition and becoming...coming about, coming undone." The entities actor, stage, audience as developed in this thesis work in these incomplete states as they find expression through their encounters with and among each other.

“Genet says in *Our Lady of the Flowers*: “If I were to have a play put on in which women had roles, I would demand that these roles be performed by adolescent boys, and I would bring this to the attention of the spectators by means of a placard which would remain nailed to the right or left of the sets during the entire performance, the illusion is prevented from “taking” by a sustained contradiction between the effort of the actor, who measures his talent by his ability to deceive, and the warning of the placard.”¹⁴⁵

Jean Genet’s “*The Maids*” does indeed contain the female roles Claire, Solange, and Madame, though they ended up being staged with women actors playing the roles. Even so, the act of playing Solange and Claire is at the heart of such a drama, regardless of the presenting gender of the actors playing them. Genet may have had in mind a more robust divide between the sexes that drag, when done properly, can spotlight; in his original conception of a boy playing a woman’s role, the ruse is manifold. Gender play here is conceived as a tactic to highlight the theatricality of the feminine and masculine, to play with and disrupt the gestures of sexed persons, to reveal the construction of a sexed presence as a chorus of affects.

“In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency. Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Jean Genet, *The Maids and Deathwatch*, trans. by Bernard Frechtman, Introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre (New York: Grove Press, [1947] 1954), 7-8. This represents an important moment for what comes to be known as drag performance. Genet not only subverts gender expectation; by initially writing the characters as women while simultaneously asking for them to be performed by men he is already playing up the idea of gendered representation as an integrated and fundamental aspect of the drama, asking audience and actors to perform a quadruple register of representation (female character/portrayed by male/ portraying the female/ portraying the act of this conceit).

¹⁴⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, “Subversive Bodily Acts” (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 187.

In the suggested use of drag, Genet offers a way to examine the staging of gendered bodies as a Brechtian theatre device, proposing a productive gap between concepts of naturalness (what may be considered to possess essential qualities) and reality (what we may define at least as a near-perfect simulacrum of reality on stage) and parody (imitation as a knowing exaggeration for a particular social, dramatic or aesthetic effect). Butler suggests that drag skewers the link between sex and sexed behaviour and is the source of its pleasure for an audience. Drag as a recent mainstream cultural phenomenon is too new to reflect upon in terms of its productive subversive qualities; *RuPaul's Drag Race* was first aired in 2009 and is largely responsible for this current mainstream acceptance; conceived as a reality television show it is difficult to disentangle the staged dramas of the “reality” in question with the wider effects of drag outside of the contestants’ own individual ambitions, careers, and cash prizes. This ambiguity is more a product of the conceit of the platform than with drag itself, certainly, but since drag has had an impressive cultural impact in the shape of John Waters, Divine, Lady Bunny, and in the performance project of Diane Torr, and with the drag queens centrally positioned in the Stonewall Riots of 1969, and the influence of countless queens and drag performers who have found a home and an identity performing largely within the LGBTQ+ population, future further examinations of the effects of the *RuPaul* phenomenon are merited.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ *RuPaul's Drag Race*, hosted by RuPaul, World of Wonder Productions, 2009-Present. Drag artist RuPaul hosts a reality television show in which drag queens compete for the crown, with cash prizes, backstage footage of the queens as they prepare for the show’s challenges and runway looks. John Waters and drag performer and actor Divine’s collaborations include *Pink Flamingos* (1972) and *Hairspray* (1988). Divine’s mini-bio on IMDB tells us “Originally born Harris Glen Milstead just after the end of WWII, Baltimore’s most outrageous resident eventually became the international icon of bad taste cinema, as the always shocking and highly entertaining transvestite performer, Divine”. IMDB, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001145/bio>. Lady Bunny is a drag performer and founder of Wigstock, the famous annual festival of drag and music, for over 20 years in New York City, begun in 1984. Transgender woman Marsha P. Johnson and drag queen Sylvia Rivera were two key figures in the original Stonewall Riots of 1969. Biography, accessed July 2, 2020, <https://www.biography.com/activist/marsha-p-johnson>.

The *Man for a Day* workshops developed by performance artist, drag king, and multi-disciplinary artist Diane Torr were experiments in performing gender, and helped to examine questions around the constitution of masculinity as it related to look, gesture, and embodiment.

“What makes a man a man and a woman a woman? Precisely when and where is gender identity formatted? How much is nature and how much nurture? Each of Torr’s workshops represents an open-ended laboratory experiment in social behaviour in which the question is posed: is it possible to deliberately play out different roles and create a space in which to transgress both masculine and feminine characteristics?”¹⁴⁸

In the documentary for *Man for a Day* Torr states “The whole construction of identity--it’s created.”¹⁴⁹ Her workshops act like rehearsal spaces and training grounds for trying out a new gender, including instruction on male walk, male gesture, male voice. The women are instructed to seek out their chosen male subject and study their behaviours rather than enact a male stereotype; one participant describes her male subject as softly spoken, for example. As they were not created purely for performers, Torr’s workshops offered a space for exploring gender and gesture as a social exercise, with elements of self-empowerment achieved through the enactment of a new sex. In Torr’s case women may have realised some of this through the enactment of men who are perceived as confident and strong; interestingly, the same is often achieved through drag in reverse, when men create their own visions of women and enact

¹⁴⁸ Diane Torr’s website, accessed October 4, 2020, <http://dianetorr.com/artist-bio/>.

¹⁴⁹ *Man for a Day*, directed by Katarina Peters, with Diane Torr, SyndicadoFilms, YouTube Movies, 2016. YouTube, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://youtu.be/tAmmZCQU-j0>. A documentary following a group of women as they attempt to present as men in society under the guidance of Torr and her *Man for a Day* workshops.

them. Both uses of drag seek a measure of strength in becoming someone new through costume and gesture; gay men may achieve a personal freedom by expressing their inherent feminine qualities in an enlarged enactment of a female persona, and women and drag kings may achieve the same. Contemporary drag culture should not be seen as a parody or denigration of the sex being enacted; rather it should be considered a creative outlet for expressing nascent masculine and feminine qualities which society deems unacceptable when anchored in socially-constructed ideals of men/women, masculine/feminine. Torr and RuPaul have shown us that drag equals empowerment, even if it is through a narrow lens of gender presentation.



Diane Torr, Drag King, Introducing “Man for a Day” workshop.



RuPaul, Drag Queen, Introducing *RuPaul's Drag Race*, Season 13.

Playing the male figure here incorporates the use of drag as a tool for creating the encounter between actor and character. The external props and makeup employed to create a half-illusion allow both actor and audience to meet the male figure encountering the female, and in this encounter, work together towards a new staging of a new representation of gender, neither male nor female. The effort towards this illusion is the threshold where the encounter is staged between actor and character and actor, character, and audience, all working together to create the stage which allows this expression (acting) to occur.

Many of the works created during this research include a reconfiguring of the male figure: Bluebeard (“Bluebeard”); the Cowboy (“cowboyplaycowboy”); the Actor (“Domme Shew and the Musick of Violenze”); the Pimp (“The Stripper and the Pig”); the Fetish Model (“Crush”). The

study of drag is useful in discovering what is important in the play of the male figure, not only in terms of appearance and gesture as the physical construct meets the social world but, for the performer, on emotional terms. Constructing versions of men as a man is a similar path as those found in more traditional drag (playing the opposite sex); it is the discovery of where the archetype meets reality, and in that meeting, where a productive reworking of the tropes of masculine characteristics act as a method towards uncovering new expressions of the masculine type.¹⁵⁰ This method aims to rearrange the binary division between masculine and feminine and place these qualities along one equal plane, along which certain characteristics may be identified, consumed, expressed, and replaced alongside an infinite number of options as they pertain to the expression of gendered bodies. This endeavour, which is a reconfiguration of the aesthetic of performed subjects in art, hopes to find some fruit in the larger social sphere. Working through these new representations in a performance context is a way towards adding new images to the world, to help dilute prevailing notions of what a masculine figure looks like and behaves like.

“A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be,” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and...and...and...”¹⁵¹

Deleuze and Guattari’s image of the rhizome in the context of performance describes a method of expressing qualities throughout an infinite range of possible expressions; if such a structure were applied to the performing of *The Pimp*, as was imagined in original work “The Stripper and

¹⁵⁰ See images of Richard Prince, “Untitled (Cowboy)” and Director Sergio Leone, *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* in Chapter III, sub-chapter iii. “Imitation as a shared reality; impersonating sex.”

¹⁵¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980]), 25.

The Pig” previously mentioned, then an actor would be able to select from any possible expressive gestures that followed along a story line of that soap opera.¹⁵² Rather than beginning with the idea of what a pimp might do or resemble and work one’s way towards presenting that image, the actor and maker can instead begin in the middle of the drama and allow for improvised associations to occur without drowning in the pre-established image of what The Pimp does and appears to be. It is a method of discovering the image from an exploratory state of mind, without an end in sight, and no root source as a starting point. Using this rhizomatic image was integral to exploring both the narrative and physical characteristics that ultimately resulted in The Pig as well as the other character in the skit, The Stripper. It acted as a supporting apparatus along which the other explorations and techniques, including the ‘animal exercise’ and notions of ‘becoming’ (both previously described in this thesis), could play out.

“Every object of ‘natural’ or ‘actual perception’ is always given as already belonging to a *field* of perception. Each object is always in a network of relationships with other objects and already has its own immanent sense which is produced in the body before it becomes a dot-like representation.”¹⁵³

If the work towards representing types, or archetypes, in performance can be performed as a series of explorations pre-representation (perhaps by a process of willfully foregoing/forgetting/dissolving all pre-established images of the type in the first instance), then the work towards creating characters and behaviours is already in a state of improvisational

¹⁵² “The Stripper and The Pig” was imagined as a series of cheap soap operas, in lost video format, partially reclaimed.

¹⁵³ Joe Hughes, *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 5. This description belongs to the concepts of Merleau-Ponty which are uncovered in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Author Joe Hughes situates Deleuze within the field of phenomenology after Merleau-Ponty and Husserl.

freeform; a productive exploration which generates rather than reproduces. A field of perception is where performers can generate new images of representations by considering how the type (Pimp, Cowboy, Actor, etc.) is situated within a larger network of cultural and aesthetic associations. One method for achieving this aim is to take the type out of their normal set of associations and ask them to roam freely in a new space. In Strasberg's 'private moment' exercise previously described, where actors are asked to layer elements of acting work, including 'sense memory' and 'personal objects', they can also begin to bring in behaviours from other sources, such as animal behaviour, and explore this behaviour within a personally created setting. In generating *The Actor for Domme Shew and the Musick of Violenze*, an improvisation which created the work and the character was developed by exploring the idea of an actor trapped in a room. The piece was commissioned by Swarm Dynamics in response to artists working in a new Covid-restricted environment, and so the work was situated in a solo studio, with no recourse to a live audience.¹⁵⁴ This became the stage for *The Actor* to create his own world, and the studio became his 'private moment'. By exploring the objects in the room utilising the 'substitution' techniques described earlier, *The Actor* became a figure set free from the rigours of performance and was allowed to develop his own characteristics and behaviours within a new, and unlikely, environment.

This new environment created a productive space for generating behaviours and images as they apply to the representation of characters (including a version of oneself, in the case of performers like Spalding Gray) by focusing on the environment at hand and moving away from

¹⁵⁴ Swarm Dynamics online, accessed July 20, 2020, <https://swarmdynamics.org/>.

the restrictions imposed by audiences and personal expectations of developing a known outcome or image.

“Make a note immediately of your mood; it is what we call Solitude in Public. You are in public because we are all here. It is solitude because you are divided from us by a small circle of attention. During a performance, before an audience of thousands, you can always enclose yourself in this circle like a snail in its shell.”¹⁵⁵

Here is the basis for Strasberg’s ‘private moment’, though for Stanislavski the means to produce privacy in public is to create what he termed “circles of attention”, calling for the actor to focus on three levels of attention, small, medium, large, and largest, corresponding to the size of the area being investigated. To enjoy public solitude, one must continually engage with the smallest circle of attention, often a single object, and draw attention to it to the exclusion of what may surround it. Eventually the actor will walk around a performance space and carry a small moving circle of attention along with them, using it to continuously stay focused on the moment in space in which they are occupied.¹⁵⁶

Reworking this technique in the development work for creating *The Actor in “Domme Shew and the Musick of Violenze”*, which was devised as a video work without a live audience, proved that the oscillation between the largest circle of attention, which is as far as the eye can see, and the smallest one, is a force which produces an energetic engagement with the space, tightly bound and sharply focused. Treating the studio as an empty theatre space and letting the mind wander, investing in an engagement with small circles of attention (small objects in

¹⁵⁵ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (London: Eyre Methuen, [1917] 1936), 82.

¹⁵⁶ This moving circle is recounted in *An Actor Prepares* as appearing as a small spotlight which follows a performer around the performance space, focusing the smallest circle in a crisply delineated circle. Initially these circles are exposed as smaller to larger areas of stage light, exposing the edges of attention as they increase to a fully lit space. The effort of retaining the same focus upon an area which is cleanly delineated (a lamp on a table) and literally concealed by the rest of the space which is in blackout, within a large area that is not thus arranged (a fully lit amphitheatre and stage) is where the exercise begins to come into its own.

the studio) to larger areas (the walls, the window looking out onto the world) then reeling them back in created a space for dialogue between the performer (this researcher) and the new world being occupied (the studio). Having no expectation of what would result from this technique, apart from examining the effects of an enhanced privacy and solitude within a performance that was not destined for a live audience, the exercise produced a surprising narrative. Out of the oscillations between small to largest circles emerged a new world with roots in Gondwanaland (one of the earliest supercontinents after Pangea), and a far-reaching look outwards towards a New Eden. Somewhere in between these gyrations was The Actor, navigating his place in this matrix, looking back to his memories and inventing new futures in his fantasies.

Reworking Stanislavski's 'circle of attention', which was developed for actors to feel alone in public, unencumbered by the attention of the audience just beyond the fourth wall, in this new environment, creates a new way of utilising this privacy for encountering the entire network of performance elements. "Domme Shew and the Musick of Violence" was created in solitude, for a camera. There was no need to hide away from a nearby audience. In this scenario, 'circles of attention' were instead used to understand the immediate surroundings of the stage set, and to encounter them with fresh possibilities. The kind of enhanced privacy that these 'circles of attention' created in this case allowed for self-inhibition to be freed up and for improvisation with surrounding stage elements to be explored and rethought. This new privacy allowed for a new 'playing of the male figure' as the character The Actor took shape amongst its wigs, props, detritus, and camera lens.

Chapter III. Complicating the encounter (audience as co-actor).

This chapter begins with an argument between Bertolt Brecht and Jacques Ranciere with reference to *The Emancipated Spectator* and a conversation between Campbell Edinborough and Konstantin Stanislavski and the 'fourth wall'.¹⁵⁷ It then brings in Cindy Sherman and Jeff Koons along with my own works *The Adam Series*, *Crush*, and *cowboyplaycowboy* as practice which relates to Sartre's 'look', examined previously in Chapter I. The 'look' in this context is conceived as a bridge for audiences to enter the work of art, and enter into the emergent cycle of becoming-stage/becoming-actor/becoming-audience.

To recap, Chapters I and II situate a way in which the performer emerges as that which is becoming from the relationship with the stage; the stage is conceived of as not a ground upon which events occur, rather as the emergence of the various encounters with the stage, thereby creating a cycle of emergence in which performer encounters stage, stage encounters performance. The next chapter examines the complicated relationship between audience and performance, which is taken first as a division on both physical and conceptual terms, and offers a way towards creating in this division a productive ground of co-authorship. Jacques Rancier's *Emancipated Spectator* is adopted as a valuable tool for rethinking how audiences might engage with the critical theatre of Brecht, and Edinborough's practical experiments with

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Ranciere, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2009). The 'fourth wall' is a term relating to the imaginary wall which separates audience from live theatre performance, and was proposed by Stanislavski as a tool to engender a sense of privacy in the actor so they might behave in a realistic manner during performance without the pressure of feeling observed.

Stanislavski's concepts of public solitude in the spectre of interactive theatre offer a new bridge for producing empathetic co-authorship with the physical bodies represented on stage.¹⁵⁸

This includes sub-chapters "Audience and performance as co-actors" which examines Jacques Ranciere's concept of the Emancipated Spectator as a bridge between audience and performance, and Stasnislavski-based techniques within interactive theatre; "Alienation in the 21st Century", which examines how the Alienation Effect is a productive force in the work of Cindy Sherman, Jeff Koons, and original performance research project *Crush*; "Imitation as a shared reality; impersonating sex", which examines the work of Anna Deveare Smith, Andy Kaufman, Paul McCarthy, and Spalding Gray, along with original performance and photo works "cowboyplaycowboy", and "Adam with Pom Poms" from "The Adam Series"; and "Staging the readymade, which explores the Wooster Group's methods of combining personal histories with historical texts as a means to enfold audience within its approach to drama.

i. Audience and performance as co-actors.

Jacques Ranciere's aims towards creating a new conversation between audience and performance as it pertains to critically-engaged art is explicitly concerned with the problems of theatre and performance which seek to teach or enlighten; the potential issue being a non-productive gap between an audience who perceives a work in the context of its own productive fiction (i.e. in the context of theatre, whose purpose and context is to engage fully in its own

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

production of fiction, entertainment, and aesthetics for a theatre audience). This gap may be a difficult one to bridge without proper access to the intention of the work.

“There is no reason why the production of a shock produced by two heterogeneous forms of the sensible ought to yield an understanding of the state of the world, and none why understanding the latter ought to produce a decision to change it.”¹⁵⁹

Jacques Ranciere explicitly confronts Brecht’s theatre techniques as a means towards Brecht’s stated claim to engender productivity in his audiences through the process of an alienated aesthetic.

“...our representations must take second place to what is represented, men’s life together in society; and the pleasure felt in their perfection must be converted into the higher pleasure felt when the rules emerging from this life in society are treated as imperfect and provisional. In this way the theatre leaves its spectators productively disposed even after the spectacle is over. Let us hope that their theatre may allow them to enjoy as entertainment that terrible and never-ending labour which should ensure their maintenance, together with the terror of their unceasing transformation.”¹⁶⁰

Ranciere’s critique questions the relationship between audience and spectacle within a critical art student-teacher dialectic, as in Brecht’s theatre, which includes making evident all the elements of the staging and writing, showing rather than acting, and making the pedestrian strange. These can be viewed as a form of didacticism, which assumes that the audience knows less than the author of the spectacle, and, once educated, the audience-student will then be on

¹⁵⁹ Jacques Ranciere, “The Paradoxes of Political Art,” in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Steven Corcoran (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), 151.

¹⁶⁰ Bertolt Brecht, “A Short Organum for the Theatre,” in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York, Hill and Wang, 1966), 205.

par with the teacher and in a position of greater (perhaps equal) power.¹⁶¹ The problem lies in the positions of power, and the fact that those who are giving information will always be separated from those who are receiving it.

“This politics of aesthetics, however, operates under the conditions prescribed by an original disjunction. It produces effects, but it does so on the basis of an original effect that implies the suspension of any direct cause-effect relationship.”¹⁶²

Ranciere is proposing a short-circuit in the effects of a didactic theatre (including specifically Brecht’s) brought on by the space it already occupies as a fully-formed system of distributing its sensibilities within its own established network. When this network is presented to an audience there is no way to enter that space and engage in its alterations because that work, the work of producing change, is already inherent in its conceit, and can only be encountered as a work that, practically, performs its own work. The audience will remain as spectators as long as they are presented with ideas in the form of this art aesthetic/theatre conceit because they are already encountering an altered fiction, divorced from their own lives and made emblematic through devices of representation -- alienating these representations will not undo the original conceptual space they occupy as works of fiction and entertainment.

¹⁶¹ Ranciere’s criticism of Brecht is not so much about Brecht’s theories and techniques, but rather the system in which theatre operates. Ranciere can’t get over the fact of the environment of art and how it creates a space where social critique can’t function within it, as the art environment is already saturated with its own expectations of theatrical aesthetics and fictions. This point is introduced here simply to allow for a way into theatre and art performance from an audience’s perspective as they begin to experience co-authorship with the event on some sort of an equal footing.

¹⁶² Jacques Ranciere, “The Paradoxes of Political Art,” in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Steven Corcoran (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), 150.

As an alternative to this potentially problematic teacher-student relationship, Ranciere strives for an art dialectic which produces an emancipated community who arrive at knowledge on their own terms.

“Like researchers, artists construct the stages where the manifestation and effect of their skills are exhibited, rendered uncertain in the terms of the new idiom that conveys a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. 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.”¹⁶³

This conversation is important to the area of this research which is examining the role of the audience as co-actors. The power relationships between audience and performance that arise from Ranciere’s critique of Brecht is relevant for the question of this co-operation because it brings into focus a potential bridge for viewers to meet the event of performance within the same circular structure of stage-performer-audience that has been proposed throughout, a structure that proposes an consistently emergent stage and becoming-actor which disclose each other through their encounter: here the audience joins this cycle and emerges as a becoming-audience which produces the event as it is encountered by the viewer. Ranciere’s suggestion that emancipation or, in this case, equality of an audience is arrived at through a repositioning of the audience as a people who meet an event on their own terms and through their own personal negotiations with culture, is one way into that emergent circle.

¹⁶³ Jacques Ranciere, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 22.

Edinburgh's attempts to use Stanislavski-based techniques to develop a way forward in performer training for interactive theatre are unusual, especially in the context of Stanislavski's conception of the fourth wall as a means to intentionally divide the actor from the spectator.¹⁶⁴

The divide in this scenario proves to be a productive one between actor and audience, with the understanding that it is because this divide has successfully allowed the actor to create a reality unfettered by self-consciousness of being observed, that the audience has fuller access to an embodied expression (by the actor) that they can use as a bridge to their own experience. This is the bridge that creates the encounter and the co-productive audience.

...the spectator in Stanislavskian theatre acts as a co-creator of the characters presented onstage – responding affectively to the actor's physical behaviour in order to build a sense of their emotions and internal world... Stanislavski's demand for the actor to live truthfully on stage is less a philosophical idea than a practical attempt to facilitate the spectator's affective response to the actor's body. This argument is based on the fact that there are fewer cognitive or perceptual obstacles to empathising with a seemingly real situation than a seemingly artificial one."¹⁶⁵

ii. Alienation in the 21st century (starting with Brecht).

"The Golden Facelift" created an experience for the viewer and the performer which strove to unify their experience of presence. It dismantled the stage as a platform for producing events for an audience; instead it laid the stage flat with no top-down structure. Performers met the

¹⁶⁴ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds (UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013 [1937], p 72. The fourth wall is conceived for the first time as a divide between actor and audience to create a sense of 'public solitude', allowing the actor to forget they are performing for an audience and to create an intimate space for themselves onstage, unencumbered by the weight of being observed as they are acting.

¹⁶⁵ Campbell Edinburgh, "Using the method to be myself: adapting and appropriating historical training approaches for interactive performance", *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* Vol. 9, No. 2, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 174-188. Taylor and Francis online, accessed June 5, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19443927.2018.1453863>.

performance in a similar state of ignorance as the audience, and what transpired was an exploration of language and story nearly equally experienced. This concept of performance has important roots Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre, with its use of the Alienation Effect, which presented audiences with a radical shift away from Stanislavski-based theatrical empathy, and opened up a new view onto theatre performance as a demonstration of ideas and characters, as opposed to an experience of identification with characters and their fictional stories.¹⁶⁶

In the Chinese theatre the alienation effect is achieved in the following way. The Chinese performer does not act as if, in addition to the three walls that are around him there were also a fourth wall. *He makes it clear he knows that he knows he is being looked at...*The audience forfeits the illusion of being unseen spectators at an event which is really taking place.¹⁶⁷

This effect is an impactful deconstruction of representations of character onstage which has implications in the understanding and construction of types and archetypes across a wide spectrum of media. Such a deconstruction can be seen in many artists exploring presentations of gender and self, very notably in Cindy Sherman's 2019 photo works which not only erase gender type but include an obvious nod to the artist, as in *Untitled #602* in which Sherman models a version of herself in a picture printed on a shirt which she wears as part of a costume which models another, sexless, version of herself.

¹⁶⁶Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht On Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, edited and translated by John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), 91-99. The Alienation effect is an important component of Brecht's theory and style of theatre known as Epic Theatre. The term was first used by Brecht in a description of an encounter with Chinese acting styles, which did away with European/Aristotelian style empathetic theatre. This Epic style of theatre is in evidence in Brecht's plays including *Mother Courage* and *Man's A Man*. The self-conscious quality of such a performance style is what is important to this research, and its wider bleed into other art forms which dwell upon presentations of the self.

¹⁶⁷ Bertolt Brecht, trans. Eric Bentley. "On Chinese Acting," in *The Tulane Drama Review* 6, no. 1 (1961): 130-36, accessed June 17, 2020. doi:10.2307/1125011.



Cindy Sherman, "Untitled #602," 2019 dye sublimation print 76 1/4 x 87 1/2 inches 193.7 x 222.3 cm.

"...gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-31, accessed June 7, 2021. doi:10.2307/3207893. Butler's theories of a performed gender are identified here as very useful methods towards understanding and creating performed identities not only in lived experience, but also in the context of theatre and fine art performance. These are particularly interesting for the contemporary moment which is actively exploring binary identities; these

Making the decision to perform an identity and simultaneously proclaim its construction is a profound legacy of Brecht. The work of art that emerges from such a method will include an important aspect of self-awareness alongside its absorbing or entertaining or aesthetic drives. This holds true for representations of gender not just as sexed male or female, but also with wider representations of gendered qualities, such as masculinity or femininity, and the kinds of archetype they inspire.



Jeff Koons, *Made in Heaven*, Billboard poster, 1989,
Jeff Koons and Cicciolina.

explorations continue to usefully problematize set notions of behaviour and presentation in the context of masculinity and femininity as they play out across the backdrop of gender fluidity.

Jeff Koons's "Made in Heaven" series of paintings and sculptures featuring himself having sex with then-wife Cicciolina kitschily advertise an archetype of Adam and Eve, with a painting that see Koons looking directly into the camera and Cicciolina swooning passively. The billboard is advertising a performance of man and woman, staged eroticism, artist and muse, power and surrender. The subjects are players in a theatre of this knowing desire, and, most importantly, are also their director. Koons's gaze short-circuits the viewer's ability to maintain their own privacy as they observe the imagery. They are implicated in the making of the event.

"Instead of emphasising the emotional or psychological predisposition of characters, the *Gestus* allows the actor to demonstrate the social attitudes of one character by contrast with others, in collaboration sculpting a momentary tableau that the spectator views as a picture of the social relationships pertaining under a specific set of historical circumstances. The careful composition of each visual grouping also reminds the spectator of the conscious artistry of the work's construction, openly indicating the author's viewpoint."¹⁶⁹

The direct look towards the audience of Koons and the printed t-shirt of Sherman give us a clear indication of the self-conscious nature of their acts. In some respects they are a nod and a wink to the audience, but more generously these gestures can be viewed as an indication of the wider space both viewers and artists inhabit when approaching a performance. These gestures

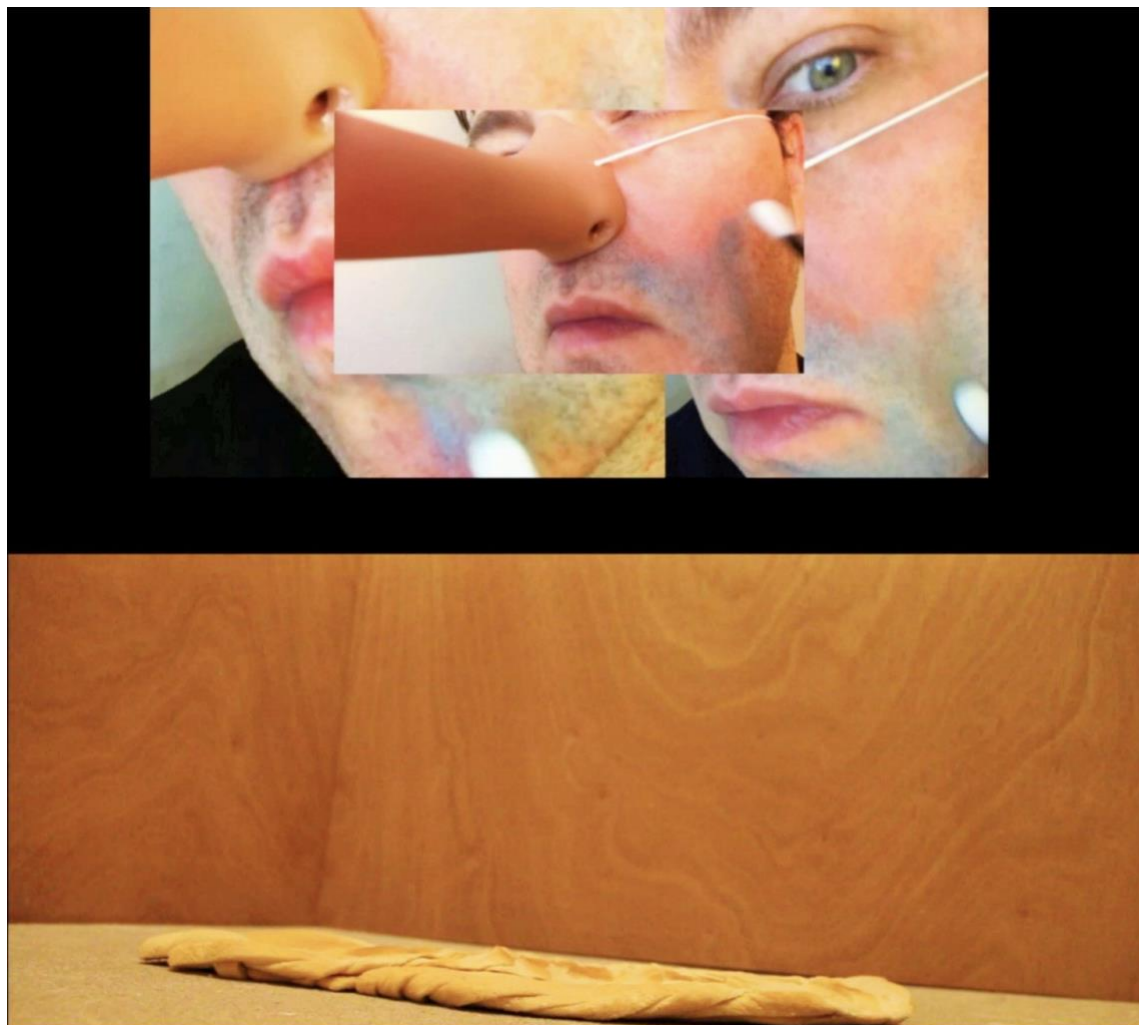
¹⁶⁹Robert Gordon, "Brecht, interruptions and epic theatre," BritishLibrary.uk (updated September 7, 2017), accessed June 17, 2021, <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/brecht-interruptions-and-epic-theatre#>.

ask us to take part in their creation not as a passive observer, but as a fully-present and aware co-author of their meanings and intent.¹⁷⁰

In original work “Crush”, this self-conscious gaze was developed through the lens of the crush fetish, first as a moving image performance then later as a collection of stills and texts reimagined as a performance book. The camera continuously clicks as it attempts to find focus upon the subject who is negotiating a private performance of making up (prosthetic nose, beard makeup, lipstick) and displaying legs wrapped in tights, teasing a loaf of fresh bread and gazing into the camera as it finds focus, loses focus, and tries to regain it. The lens attempting to focus on the private performance is the eye of the viewer, looking and searching, attempting to discover the world of the performance but seemingly unable to fix it upon a permanent subject. This seeking of the viewer mirrors the creation of the performer who is also slipping between desire, humour, sex, and genders, knowingly displaying these slippages to the viewer. By installing the non-fixed lens as a central concept within a performance for camera, *Crush* was attempting to mimic the gaze of a live viewer and bring the recorded work into a new dynamic theatre, one that had a lively eye and encouraged a porous connection between viewer and maker, one reaching out to the other in a shared ground of creation.

¹⁷⁰ See footnote 4 which details Sartre’s conception of “the look” as it relates here to creating co-authorship between the viewer and the performer as they are mutually observed and brought into an equal footing via the bridge that such a look provides.





U g l y l i a r s
t u r n y o u
o n

M e l a n c h o l y
c r r r r r r u s h

Cradeaux Alexander, "Crush," a book of performance, Luxe Booxe, 2018.

iii. Imitation as a shared reality; impersonating sex.

Deploying shared cultural references in performance is a technique which aims to bring viewers towards the work as a fellow producer. When figures from popular, mythological, and literary sources are already established in culture, the work of establishing their ground is already complete, so animating these figures, characters, and archetypes becomes an act of communion between the performer, the event, and the viewer. Not satisfied with simple

recognition or agreement, the works created and investigated in this research often rearrange these character types to produce new images. These newly arranged images aim to develop new representations in performance by undermining their stereotypical representation.

The original "Adam" series, comprising photos and videos, does this by setting this researcher up in the role of Biblical Adam, and staging him in a contemporary context, creating a new origin myth with kitsch costumes and novelty props. "Adam" takes ready-made narratives and props, often from popular culture, and re-imagines them through juxtapositions, deadpan humour, and a stage aesthetic which aims to highlight the constructed nature of representation as it relates to the figure in performance.



Cradeaux Alexander, "Adam with Pom Poms," Video, 2021.



Cradeaux Alexander, "Adam with Dear John and Pistol," Digital Photograph, 2021.

In a documentary directed by Jörg & Ralf Raino Jung, Paul McCarthy describes his practice of using established archetypes in the making of his 1995 video “The Saloon”. He discusses how mimicking can be an act of subversion, especially as it attempts to get close to the means of production it aims to impersonate.

“There’s this mimicking of Hollywood genres, of particular genres - when I made The Saloon, it’s a sort of mimicking of a cowboy movie - in some ways these kind of cliches - but then it’s refiltered through these other issues.. these two sort of barmaids...and one being the older sister to the younger sister, and there’s the sort of cliched bartender who looks like he could be a bartender in a cowboy movie, and there’s this youthful Clint Eastwood type who enters the bar and is referred to as The Cowboy...

“Within Hollywood there are huge budgets...in order to depict it or to mimic it or to appropriate it, it has to be a certain level of production. And to a degree it’s uninterested in being more highly produced, but at the same time there’s this element where I want the work to be almost ridiculous, to not fit in, to not be commercial, to not find itself within the genre of Hollywood.”¹⁷¹

This method of getting very near to a subject but purposely falling short can begin to draw the notion of imitation away from mere parody, and invites a looking-in to the gap that is created between simulacra and reality. In this way mimesis becomes a productive tool for a shared connection with cultural types, as all parties begin to experience their unravelling or reconstruction in a shared space of recognition.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ “Paul McCarthy: Destruction of the Body,” directed by Jörg & Ralf Raino Jung, 2001, streaming video, https://www.ubu.com/film/mccarthy_destruction.html. Quote taken from video interview with Paul McCarthy. ¹⁷² See image of Wooster Group’s House/Lights in Chapter III, sub-chapter iv. “Staging the readymade; re-examining scripted drama as an encounter between audience, performer, and event”, and other Wooster Group works examined there which examines how known character types and literature can be disturbed and reconsidered through a blend of acting and staging that exploits the divisions between caricature and reality.

¹⁷² See image of Wooster Group’s House/Lights in Chapter III, sub-chapter iv. “Staging the readymade; re-examining scripted drama as an encounter between audience, performer, and event”, and other Wooster Group works examined there which examines how known character types and literature can be disturbed and reconsidered through a blend of acting and staging that exploits the divisions between caricature and reality



Cradeaux Alexander, "cowboyplaycowboy," Video, 2019.

“cowboyplaycowboy” explored the romantic archetype of The Cowboy as portrayed in the Western film genre. A set was constructed in a space out of basic hardboard and timbre, using the same techniques employed by theatre flat-makers. Its walls were left unpainted and around its edges were strewn cheap props and pieces that acted as landscapes and backdrops. Shower curtains with birds and tinsel curtains created a tropical rainfall for The Cowboy to navigate. A cowboy hat and a Cyrano de Bergerac-cum-Pinocchio nose-cum-penis create the costume for The Cowboy, and he sets off, filming his adventures in the set with an obviously-held mobile phone.¹⁷³ His deadpan delivery and attempt at a “cowboy accent” are continually undermined by his flipping of a long nose on his cowboy hat as he delivers romantic dreams of being in the rain and making his way towards the sun. As research, this video work explores where a character and their creator meet; this meeting place aims to produce the ground where such an enactment of character and situation can be organised within its movements, improvisations, and productive imitations. Its productive element is key; imitation in this research is not meant to act as a tool of denegration or poking-fun; the humour and erotic suggestions within “cowboyplaycowboy” are a kind of serious fun. The drive to reorganise these (largely masculine) archetypes comes out of a serious attempt to establish new ways of representing the subject; it attempts to do this through the tools of irony, deadpan, camp, and humorous eroticism.

“...by creating a space for the operation of truth and falsity, by situating the free supplement of error, categories silently reject stupidity. In a commanding voice, they instruct us in the ways of knowledge and solemnly alert us to the

¹⁷³ Edmond Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, translated by Charles Renaud, 1897 (E-book released 2013). <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/41949/41949-h/41949-h.htm>. The title character is known for his conflicting qualities of heroism and romantic shyness born from a self-consciousness about his perceived ugly large nose. This dualism is also examined in *Bluebeard*, a character researched and referenced earlier in this PhD.

possibilities of error, while in a whisper they guarantee our intelligence and form the a priori of excluded stupidity... To think within the context of categories is to know the truth so it can be distinguished from the false; to think “acategorically” is to confront a black stupidity an, in a flash, to distinguish oneself from it.”¹⁷⁴

Working in a mimetic mode aims to confront the container or category within which that subject is situated and offer it an expanded choice of categories. If wishing to undermine categories is a dangerous game, with the potential for suffering a loss of footholds or knowledge, then it is best to not destroy the category completely. This is where imitation reveals its productive nature. This could produce a camp-presenting cowboy with the same authenticity and merit enjoyed by a macho-presenting cowboy. Imitation only seeks one object, which is an archetype, which is only valuable because it is a shared cultural object. Imitation can take that shared object, hold it up to a new colour of light, and shine those new possibilities.

There is no destruction here, just multiplicity. As in the case of Andy Warhol’s *Cowboys and Indians* series, the reproduction of the romantic archetype involves a shared cultural recognition of the emblem, divorced from the reality of the personal lives or livelihoods of actual working cowboys; Warhol’s abstraction of this figure from its popularised version from Hollywood, further multiplies the emblematic nature of this figure.

“Warhol chose to portray a popular, romanticized version of the American West. The West that he chose to represent is familiar to everyone and can be seen in novels, films, TV series. Warhol’s *Cowboys and Indians* suite serves as an ahistorical representation that mirrors a popular interpretation of the past.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum” [1977], in *Mimesis, Masochism & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, edited by Timothy Murray, 216-38, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 231.

¹⁷⁵ Andy Warhol, “Cowboys and Indians Complete Portfolio (Full Suite II. 377-386),” Revolver Gallery, Printed 1986 by Rupert Jasen Smith, New York. Revolver Gallery online, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://revolverwarholgallery.com/portfolio/cowboys-and-indians-complete-portfolio>. The images referred to are part of a collection of prints depicting figures relating to the historic American West and its subsequent mythology and include: “John Wayne,” “Annie Oakley,” “General Custer,” “Northwest Coast Mask,” “Kachina Dolls,” “Indian Shield,” “Mother and Child,” “Geronimo,” “Indian Head Nickel” and “Teddy Roosevelt”

Turning figures into emblems can be one way towards reusing them in a plastic way; for performance this offers a way to look at pre-made figures as a central meeting point for themselves and the viewer. There is no need to create The Cowboy; it is already a fully-formed idea. Such an emblem can be twisted inside out and turned upside down without destroying it, which is useful as a means to produce new ways in which such a figure can behave. In performance, embodying such a space means easy and instant recognition (the hat, pistol, etc.); for this research such as shorthand offers a productive bridge between audience and performer which allows the two of them to co-author a new set of journeys for this character. Each party is already invested in the emblem, with their own construction, memories, and visions of it, and when it begins to behave in new ways or in new situations, that shared space allows for additional information to be added onto their pre-existing vision of it. Ultimately this should allow for an additive, multiplied experience rather than a complete destruction and rebuild job. Richard Prince's examination of the archetype, taken directly from advertising, and offers a performance of a shared version of what such an emblem may inspire.



Richard Prince, "Untitled (Cowboy)," Photograph, 1989.

"Untitled (Cowboy)" is a high point of the artist's ongoing deconstruction of an American archetype as old as the first trailblazers and as timely as then-outgoing president Ronald Reagan. Prince's picture is a copy (the photograph) of a copy (the advertisement) of a myth (the cowboy). Perpetually disappearing into the sunset, this lone ranger is also a convincing stand-in for the artist himself, endlessly chasing the meaning behind surfaces. Created in the fade-out of a decade devoted to materialism and illusion, "Untitled (Cowboy)" is, in the largest sense, a meditation on an entire culture's continuing attraction to spectacle over lived experience."¹⁷⁶

Prince and Warhol's use of archetypes from media culture allowed an audience insight into how these images of consumption could operate simultaneously in a state of attraction and repulsion, and ultimately how this performance by the media created a very real sort of truth within the fiction they presented. Creating an ideal type or lifestyle that is believed in or

¹⁷⁶ The Met Museum online, "Richard Prince," accessed June 1, 2021, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/283742>. This article refers to the photograph "Untitled Cowboy (1989)", by Richard Prince. This artist's deconstruction of mass media imagery is interesting for this research in terms of how a shared object/subject can operate as a productive, co-operative performance of reconfiguring the understanding, situation, and validity of the shared cultural object/subject.

inspirational or coveted is a fiction that those who play along can ultimately identify with and take ownership of; in media and in embodied performance (such as in “cowboyplaycowboy”) this is a journey that is manipulated and co-created with the consent of both viewers and performers. When the type that we’ve been sold begins to be distorted or reconfigured, we get a glimpse of how far we’ve bought into the fiction, and how much value we want to ascribe to it as it currently stands. For this research, the use of the male figure is of particular interest, as it examines the veracity and one-dimensional nature of a version of popularised masculinity.

“what is said about sex must not be analyzed simply as the surface of projection of these power mechanisms...it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together...we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable...we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.”¹⁷⁷

A man imitating a man is no simple gesture, and the original works created across this research has seen the artist play at various types of man: Biblical Adam, The Cowboy, The Actor, The Pimp. The aim is not a simple undermining of the sex, or a kitschy response to a dominant heteronormative male culture, though it does utilise camp gestures to move to destabilise the image of man. The aim is more closely related to a proposition: What does a man look like, behave like, and perform like in contemporary culture? As this research is interested in performance, this question relates not to the ‘man on the street’, though it will hopefully continue to bleed into that domain via the transmission of art culture, but to the representation of him in performance. By disturbing what is thought as representative, a rift is opened, and

¹⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, “Rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses,” in *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: Volume One* (England: Penguin Books, 1979), 100.

further potentialities are disclosed. Foucault's remark suggests a power struggle between represented voices and unrepresented voices and, ultimately, an unhelpful play of opposition. The strategies for undoing this turgid opposition is a series of multiplicities - for images of representation in performance, this may lead us to a type of discourse where archetypes are not simply disrobed and turned on their heads, but more fruitfully, allowing the archetype to exist whilst exposing new elements, traits, and ambitions within the structure of the archetype. In this way, when this researcher begins to penetrate the characteristics of The Cowboy, for example, the first port of call is the ideal: Clint Eastwood.



Clint Eastwood in *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*, Sergio Leone, director, Movie Still, 1966.

The process then is to first look at the impact of such an image. Rugged, outlaw, masculine, heterosexual. A certain kind of straight male fantasy. We the audience are only looking at one

or two aspects of such a character, because that is all that's available to us within the filmic construction of his representation. If we wish to explore such a type further, then the process of enhancing or suppressing certain characteristics comes in handy as a method of exposing new potentialities for the character. As an actor buying into the reality of playing such a character, which has been a large part of this research process, utilising Method Acting in particular, one new thing that occurs is the meeting of one reality and biography (this researcher's), with a fictional one (Clint Eastwood playing "Blondie").¹⁷⁸

Normally the process of creating a character in scripted or improvised narratives won't begin with a fixed pre-existing representation of that character, so the process of re-presenting a character or, in this case, an archetype of a character becomes a process of merging two realities which are already at a level of remove (the actor, re-creating personalised realities from life; the image of the actor playing the character in an existing narrative). It's a case of stepping into the shoes of another man, registering the parts where they don't fit, and exploiting those gaps - this is where the process of reconfiguring an archetype is anchored in a true experience, and the way in which such an exploration circumvents pure parody and produces new gestures and images for the archetype.

¹⁷⁸ The acting techniques that have been researched throughout this PhD are intended to both provide tools for performers working in abstract or non-representational performance, such as in live art performance, performance for moving image, experimental theatre. Of particular importance is how Method Acting, with its roots in Stanislavski-based realism, could be adapted and re-conceptualised for performers who are not necessarily seeking to emulate realism in a scripted drama, but are instead interested in the process of achieving realism and naturalism as both an outcome and as a means towards constructing new works which may benefit from the process. Prominent among the proponents of Stanislavski-based actors training are Stella Adler and Sanford Meisner, though it is only in Strasberg's Method where 'emotional recall', prompted by the actor's own lived experience, is at the centre of the technique. It's this closeness to the performer's own life that makes it particularly interesting for artists working with the self as an object/subject, as is historically the case in performance art and body art (Annie Sprinkle, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ron Athey, Penny Arcade, etc.).

Andy Kaufman's "Foreign Man" persona took parody into a new territory in the 1970s, when he unveiled performances of this persona on the US television programme *Saturday Night Live*; this was to become the basis for the character Latka Gravas on the US television show *Taxi*, aired 1978-1983.¹⁷⁹



Andy Kaufman, "Foreign Man," Stand Up Comedy Routine, Broadcast on Saturday Night Live, 1975.

In these performances, which may have laid the groundwork for later comedian and actor Sacha Baron Cohen's characters including the titular character in the 2006 film *Borat*, Kaufman creates an uncomfortably naive, naturalistic experience by presenting himself as a foreigner, uncomfortable in his presence before the audience, at turns distressed and confused by the audience's laughter.¹⁸⁰ Kaufman's disturbance is a threshold where we begin to see the edges

¹⁷⁹ Jim Carrey later portrayed Kaufman in the biographical 1999 film *Man on the Moon*. Kaufman inhabited other characters as part of his comedy routines, including Elvis Presley, and appeared often on the Johnny Carson Show on US television. *Man on the Moon*, directed by Milos Forman, (USA: Universal, 1999), DVD.

¹⁸⁰ Andy Kaufman, "Foreign Man," live performance, Saturday Night Live, aired 11.8.1975. YouTube, accessed March 5, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yxp23Gkvn9g&t=306s>. Kaufman's impersonation will have had a very different audience from Cohen's, arguably less knowingly politically correct. The discomfort of the audience

of representation and move towards and away from the experience, in a combination of repulsion and attraction, not just at the content of the performance, but by the novelty of a comedy presentation so invested in the naturalistic presentation of a fish out of water falling to emotional, hysterical pieces in front of their eyes. This falling, where the audience and the performer are moved together into a mutual mild hysteria, blurs the edges of cause and effect and creates an atmosphere wherein all parties are simultaneously self-aware of the construct of the performance event and yet totally invested in its emotional outcome.

Anna Devere Smith's verbatim performances create an opportunity for another form of theatrical ground, one in which the actor impersonates actual people with their own voices, taken directly from interviews conducted by Smith. The 2012 production of *Notes from the Field* is political theatre examining the lives of black American youths throughout the Obama administration, with a focus on "the school to prison pipeline".¹⁸¹

may have been more closely related to the novelty of the performance style over the subject/type that was being impersonated.

¹⁸¹ Anna Devere Smith, *Anna Devere Smith Projects*, "About the Pipeline Project", 2021. Anna Devere Smith's website, accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.annadeaveresmith.org/>. "Notes from the Field" premiered as a stage play by Smith at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California, in 2015. and played at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 2018. It was made into a film for television produced by HBO in the same year.



Anna Devere Smith, “Notes from the Field,” Play, 2018, Royal Court Theatre.

“The voices form a palimpsest of “broken people” living in a “broken system” that fast tracks black men into a pipeline from school to prison... Costume changes are initially made in darkened stage corners, Smith sitting and glugging from a water bottle like a theatrical pugilist waiting to throw herself back in the ring. Later, the changes are on the lit stage. Where this technique might have had the effect of Brechtian distancing, Smith embodies her characters so fully that we are not distracted. She knows her power, reaching for shoes, coat or props well after she has fallen into character. The staging uses tropes from documentary film-making so that it appears at times as if a screen production has dramatically burst into three dimensions.”¹⁸²

This kind of performance represents a negotiation between presenting characters and identifying with them; because the source material is from actual people, rather than historical characters or purely fictional constructs, the ground on which their representation is played out is an active, emerging ground, not satisfied with a static stage upon which representation

¹⁸² Arifa Akbar, *The Guardian* online, June 17, 2018, accessed June 3, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jun/17/notes-from-the-field-review-royal-court-london-anna-devere-smith>. This review documents Smith’s UK premiere of the play at Royal Court Theatre.

struts. The Brechtian-style staging referred to above is an example of a technique that allows for an active staging; the reviewer is worried and then pleased that revealing the mechanisms of character change does not distract from the reality Smith is portraying; in fact this style of presentation allows audiences a fluidity across the mechanisms of creating character and illusion and, in the case of Smith's portrayal of actual voices embroiled in a politically-motivated machine, this technique offers a metaphorical view into these individuals' placement and construction within a larger system in which they are situated. Presenting the construction of a character in this way offers a gap between identifying with characters whilst inhabiting them fully; in Smith's case it is a gap that allows for political awareness as well as aesthetic. This gap, between a performer and the character they are portraying, and the meeting between a political awakening and entertainment are a consequence of Brecht's Epic Theatre.

"The theatre has to become geared into reality if it is to be in a position to turn out effective representations of reality...although we cannot bother it with the raw material of knowledge in all its variety...it is still free to find enjoyment in teaching and inquiring. It constructs its workable representations of society, which are then in a position to influence society, wholly and entirely as a game...they (the audience) must be entertained with the wisdom that comes from the solution of problems, with the anger that is a practical expression of sympathy with the underdog, with the respect due to those who respect humanity, or rather whatever is kind to humanity...with whatever delights those who are producing something."¹⁸³

The game that Brecht invokes is a sophisticated ruse: theatre will pretend to entertain whilst actually educating, but then will provide the awareness of the ruse to the audience as part and

¹⁸³ Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (New York, Hill and Wang, 1966), 186. This statement aims to provide a space for didactic theatre to operate consciously as an entertainment, and to affect change through the pleasure of learning and inquiring and acquiring knowledge. This is especially important in relation to Smith's verbatim theatre work, which aims to reveal social injustices through art.

parcel of their education. Simple methods such as breaking the fourth wall, changing costumes on stage, writing stage directions on placards; all of these devices serve this multi-faceted approach to engaging with audiences on productive terms and are the basis for the breach in naturalism we see everywhere in entertainment, from contemporary television shows like *The Office* (2005-2013) to the recent films of Yorgos Lanthimos (*The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, 2017), films of Lars Von Trier (*The Idiots*; 1998; *Dogville*, 2003; *The Five Obstructions*, 2003), to theatre work of The Wooster Group (1975-Present).¹⁸⁴

Spalding Gray's autobiographical narratives used his own voice to construct a dramatised version of himself onstage and in film; his trademark stage design which found him sitting behind a simple table with little else put the emphasis of his work squarely on himself as a storyteller. The context of the theatre with audiences and the delivery to camera in the film versions of his work created the necessary conditions for treating his words as both fact and fiction. The simplicity of the sets and the uncomplicated staging of the performances allowed for a complicated kind of intimacy, as if deliberately claiming an authenticity in the performer, supposedly freed from stage trickery. The supposed authenticity, however, is deeply troubled by the act of performance and the claim to a scripted autobiography. Already we question its

¹⁸⁴ *The Office*, created by comedian Ricky Gervais, is notable for its use of camera, with the characters either aware of the camera recording them, and the use of direct address to the camera. *The Office*, created by Ricky Gervais (BBC America, 2001), accessed July 1, 2018, streaming video, <https://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Office-Season-1/dp/B00ET0DUX6>; Von Trier's *The Idiots* describes a group of people mimicking the behaviour of mentally disabled people as an exercise in freedom which bleeds problematically into their private lives. *Dogville*, directed by Lars Von Trier (MGM, 2004), DVD. *Dogville* makes use of emblematic stage sets on an obvious sound stage to create its settings; and *The Five Obstructions* is notable for regarding the practical limits of filmmaking as an exercise in conceptual freedom. The Wooster Group's work is explored further in an upcoming section. *The Five Obstructions*, directed by Lars Von Trier and Jorgen Leth, (Denmark: Zentropa Real ApS, 2003), DVD.

embellishments, and because it only delivers a deliberate portion of events, we are already watching a highly choreographed version of reality.

“Gray admitted that his work was not scrupulously factual. He played fast and loose with the order of events. The more fantastical manifestations of his neuroses - during one anxiety attack, he claimed, he sweated through his shoes and left wet footprints - were often fabricated. "I am interested in what happens to the so-called facts after they have passed through performance and registered on my memory," he once said. In another interview, he provocatively compared himself to a collage artist who "cuts and pastes his memories".”¹⁸⁵

The journalistic approach told through the lens of personal history adds to the complication of a man playing himself, and playing a narrator of himself, and playing an actor who is playing the role of Spalding Gray. As he was an actor, playing roles in film and theatre outside of his own scripted monologue performances, we must engage with his truth as a sort of fiction when we encounter his work, but because the delivery is passive rather than acted out by playing characters or scenes, there is a ring of truth to it which begins to collapse the space between the actor performing himself and the actor being himself.¹⁸⁶

“Brecht introduced the simple and devastating idea that ‘fully’ need not mean ‘lifelike’ nor ‘in the round’...He will then see the character he is playing more impartially, he will look at its sympathetic or unsympathetic features from different viewpoint, and in the end will make different decisions from those he made when he thought ‘identifying’ with the character was all that mattered.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ David Patrick Stearns, *The Guardian*, “Guardian Obituaries: Spalding Gray,” accessed March 3, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2004/mar/10/guardianobituaries.film>.

¹⁸⁶ Spalding Gray was a founding member of The Wooster Group, a currently active performance collective founded in New York in 1975, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte. As a solo performer his work includes performance monologues for the stage and for film, including *Gray’s Anatomy* (1996), directed by Steven Soderbergh, and *Swimming to Cambodia* (1987), directed by Jonathan Demme. *Gray’s Anatomy*, directed by Steven Soderbergh, (BBC Films, IFC Films, 1996), DVD; *Swimming to Cambodia*, directed by Jonathan Demme, (Cinecom Pictures, 1987), DVD.

¹⁸⁷ Peter Brook, “The Rough Theatre” in *The Empty Space*, (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 75-76.

The common ground in performance styles and concepts as diverging as Smith's and Gray's is the distance placed between the actors and the portrayals of the figures they represent, and where their identification with those representations lie. In Gray's case the gap is seemingly very narrow; he is, after all, recording himself and transmitting his personal experiences to us. For the audience, however, we are unsure of the performer's veracity or intentions. In the experience of receiving the performance, the audience is already within a play where theatrical effects are produced to create illusion.¹⁸⁸ When an actor sits on stage and purports to be recounting his autobiography, therefore, we should be unwilling to accept this conceit at face value.

"Allow me to be frank at the commencement. You will not like me. The gentlemen will be envious and the ladies will be repelled. You will not like me now and you will like me a good deal less as we go on. Oh yes, I shall *do* things you will like. You will say 'That was a noble impulse in him' or 'He played a brave part there', but DO NOT WARM TO ME, it will not serve. What I require is not your *affection* but your *attention*."¹⁸⁸

When Rochester makes this declaration at the opening of Stephen Jeffrey's *The Libertine* he is declaring a self-aware space in the drama between himself and his adventures, past and present; the actor playing the role is then creating a space between himself and the audience which disrupts their own adventure of following the story of the drama.¹⁸⁹ This kind of declaration is present in the construct of an actor performing both themselves and others through a kind of contract offered by the theatre or performance space such a declaration is made. This space can belong to any environment where there is a viewer observing a ritual, a

¹⁸⁸ See footnote 154, which spells out the Ranciere's approach to the limits of artifice available in a staged setting. Jacques Ranciere, "The Paradoxes of Political Art", In *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Steven Corcoran (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2010).

¹⁸⁹ Stephen Jeffrey, "Prologue" in *The Libertine* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1994), 14. First performed at the University of Warwick Arts Centre October 20, 1994.

subject in a staged photograph, an actor on a stage, a performance artist dealing with their own bodies: the threat of fiction converging upon reality.

iv. Staging the readymade.

Dramatic classics as a first version of readymades in theatre may be utilised in the service of producing new visions of contemporary reality; contemporary stagings of famous historical plays by, for example, Chekhov and Shakespeare can, in some cases, bring audiences up to date by incorporating contemporary dress, settings, and streaming technology.¹⁹⁰ More radically, we can conceive of the established drama as a readymade, whose re-deployment is less a matter of updating than it is a matter of reconstructing it from the ground up. Because the story and historical context is always intact, no manner of deconstruction or reinterpretation can silence the established drama, making it a productive tool for creating new experiences with the audience and the performer as they approach this object, this drama, this pre-established entity, in radically new terms. We can look to The Wooster Group as an entity which re-examines drama as a readymade and treats it as a ground from which a new dramatic maneuver may come to pass.¹⁹¹

The Wooster Group's productions "Fish Story" (1994) and "Brace Up!" (1991) provide a way of looking through existing images and stories as a reconfiguration of how narrative and

¹⁹⁰ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* [1609] 2017, Robert Icke, Director, Almeida Theatre, London. The production incorporated modern dress and streaming technology, with a filmed version of the stage play available for streaming on BBC iPlayer through March 2018.

¹⁹¹ A knowingly liberal use of the historical art term, borrowing from Marcel Duchamp's reference to ordinary objects newly contextualised. A drama in this case is not ordinary in the sense of being created for a purpose other than in a dramatic context; rather, the context in question here is a change in its staging and original dramatic intention.

characters come into being, both with the performers themselves and along with their audiences. Both productions are based on Chekhov's "Three Sisters", and both operate as grounds for an engagement with the drama as a way into staging an encounter between the performers' own personal histories and experiences alongside the dramatic text written by Anton Chekhov.¹⁹² In an interview with company member and performer Kate Valk, we see how the identities and histories of the performers inform the process which leads to creation of their work.

SEE: How did your role of the narrator evolve? Surely this was not part of the original translation.

VALK: No, it came about as a direct extension from reality. About eight or nine years ago, the Wooster Group was in residence at a theatre in Holland working on *North Atlantic* [1984]. The company we were to work with was presenting a four-hour production of *Three Sisters* in Dutch. I was sitting next to Liz. She doesn't understand Dutch, and I don't understand Dutch, and the play was very long. I had played Anfysa in a college production of *Three Sisters* and knew the play well, so I told her what was going on. That was the beginning of my role.¹⁹³

This method of using the performer's personal encounter with a source material and then weaving that into the fabric of the source material, in this case, a 1901 drama by Anton Chekhov originally staged by Konstantin Stanislavski, produces an exploration of the drama which enacts both the story and characters of the original alongside the story of the performers and director who eventually stage an encounter with the work of Chekhov. Such a staged

¹⁹² Anton Chekhov, "Three Sisters" in *Chekhov Plays*, (Penguin Classics, 1985 [1900]), premiered at Moscow Art Theatre, Russia, 1901; Wooster Group, *Fish Story*, directed by Liz LeCompte, premiered at The Performing Garage, New York, 1994 ; "Brace Up!", directed by Liz LeCompte, premiered at the Performing Garage, New York, 1991.

¹⁹³ Susie Mee, "Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and the Wooster Group's *Brace Up!*", TDR (Cambridge University Press, 1988-), 36, no. 4 (1992): 143-53, accessed August 20, 2021. doi:10.2307/1146221.

encounter with a work well-known to theatre audiences may reach across the stage and offer the audience a space to join in this exploration through the shared cultural history of Chekhov's play. They are asked to watch actors perform Chekhov, and they are offered a way into this enactment through an idiosyncratic method of personalisation, which stages the performers' own journeys as they create this historical drama as if from scratch.¹⁹⁴

"The Group often repurposes classics, found texts and documentary materials, combining these sources in unusual ways, as in *House/Lights*, a work pairing Gertrude Stein with a 60s lesbian exploitation flick."¹⁹⁵

While *Brace Up!* delivers the entire text of Chekhov's original, albeit in a deconstructed fashion, their subsequent production based on *Three Sisters*, like their 1998 *House/Lights*, operates in a more abstract fashion.

"Spinning off from the fourth act of Chekhov's play, it also incorporates fragments of biographies of members of a touring Japanese theater troupe with which Ms. LeCompte and her actors had felt an affinity...In "Fish Story," the splicing of disparate realities assumes even more dizzying proportions. The production calls deliberate attention to the artificial nature of the performance, and you have the sense that you're looking at a blueprint for the show even as you're watching it. A bungee cord harness, which had been attached to the actors' waists and ankles during rehearsals to help them find their centers of gravity, has now become part of their costumes, giving them a confined, mechanized walk."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters*, originally directed by Konstantin Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1901. Also important to this research is how the naturalistic aims of Stanislavski's theatre, as examined throughout this thesis, is confronted by the radically different aesthetics of the Wooster Group and their freewheeling use of technology and Brechtian distancing.

¹⁹⁵ Alexis Soloski, *The Guardian*, "Porn, blackface and Germaine Greer: the shows that built the Wooster Group," October 26, 2016, accessed June 3, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/oct/26/wooster-group-elizabeth-lecompte-porn-blackface-germaine-greer>.

¹⁹⁶ Ben Brantley, "Chekhov Through a New Dimension," in *The New York Times*, November 22, 1994, Section C, Page 20, accessed online August 8, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/11/22/theater/theater-review-chekhov-through-a-new-dimension.html>.



The Wooster Group, "House/Lights," Play, 1998, The Performing Garage, New York.

Richard Schechner's 1997 staging of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* offers a new take on the role of scripted drama as an encounter with the audience by focusing upon style, specifically naturalism, and reimagining it as one among several credible options.

In his new adaptation of Chekhov's "Three Sisters," Mr. Schechner, a professor of performance studies at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, poses a more intellectual challenge: "My mission," he said, "is to make audiences see naturalism as another style."

Like the play's characters who yearn for a better future, Mr. Schechner...yearns for a theater that "moves past naturalism, so we can stage these great, realistic texts in many

styles. Because naturalism is so tied to real life, audiences forget that it, too, is a director's choice."¹⁹⁷

Staging Chekhov's drama as a kind of essay on performance style, Schechner utilised separate schools of acting and theatre technique for each act, including Meyerhold's Biomechanics, technological use of microphones, and physical theatre inspired by Grotowski alongside the Moscow Art Theatre's original usage of naturalism by Stanislavski.¹⁹⁸ Baring the mechanics of staging specific theatre styles in this way allows for a dialogue with the audience, inviting them to participate in the construction of what eventually comes to be termed style, and how it can be reinforced or rethought as a tool for representation on stage.

In the original work "Love Kills", previously examined in section i of the first chapter, the established drama was Rainer Fassbinder's *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant*, a work established for a wide audience in the 1972 film based on his own play of the same title; using

¹⁹⁷ Steven Drukman, "The Three Sisters' Across Time," in *The New York Times*, January 19, 1997, accessed August 22, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/19/theater/the-three-sisters-across-time.html>. Schechner's production was staged at LaMAMa, New York, in 1997 with East Coast Artists, the company newly founded in 1993. Schechner's original performance company Performance Group was founded in 1967 and is well-known for staging dramas by Euripides, Marlowe, Genet, and Shakespeare in an avant garde tradition, breaking with norms of Stanislavski-inspired naturalism. A focus upon anthropology and ritual in performance, as evidenced in his 1998 *Performance Theory* is evident in this staging of *Three Sisters*, which proposes four separate styles of performance and staging across a range of decades. Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*. (New York and Oxon: Routledge Classics, 2003).

¹⁹⁸ Vsevolod Meyerhold's Biomechanics is closely allied with the Constructivist art movement in Russia, culminating in theatre productions *The Magnanimous Cuckold* (1922) and *The Government Inspector* (1926) which explored theatrical language and acting as a series of mechanical, stylized, expressive movements which were rigorously presentational in aesthetic. Meyerhold began as an actor in Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre before making this radical shift in aesthetic. Jane Baldwin, "Meyerhold's Theatrical Biomechanics: An Acting Technique for Today," *Theatre Topics*, Vol. 5, Number 2, September 1995, 181-201, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. Jerzy Grotowski, influential Polish theatre director and author of *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968), likewise explored acting and theatre through the physical body rather than the internal processes required in naturalistic performance styles. Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, (New York: Routledge, 2002 [1968]).

an established story allowed for a new investigation of the space between audience and performance.¹⁹⁹ Texts of the original drama were spread around the stage space, for both the actors and the audience to pick up and peruse at will, offering a very clear bridge between audience and performance, and quite literally placing the actor and audience on the same stage. This piece, as research for encountering drama as an established cultural phenomenon able to be deployed as a piece of shared dramatic encounter, consisted of working with actors in an improvisational way, and approaching the drama as a series of personal tasks that only the performers in question could offer to the project (particular instruments, accents, languages, costumes). Working in this personalised way has its roots in the work of the Wooster Group as well as Foreman's Ontological-Hysterical Theatre; the approach to drama is what is highlighted in these methods and, in this way, the results of the methods are profoundly interwoven into the resultant performance for audience.²⁰⁰

Eugene Ionesco's 1959 play *Rhinoceros* was staged by this researcher at Bow Arts in 2017; as further research into the conversation between audience and performance the production employed a series of techniques, including vox pop-style interviews on the streets of London with invited guests offering their accounts of rhino sightings on the streets, screened as pre-show videos online before the production, a film screening of the final act in the play at the end

¹⁹⁹ *Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant*, directed by Rainer Fassbinder (New Yorker Films, 1972), streaming video, https://www.amazon.co.uk/Bitter-Tears-Petra-von-Kant/dp/B076C19MFC/ref=sr_1_1?crd=1LM7YSEWY6762&keywords=bitter+tears+of+petra+von+kant&qid=1641773767&srefix=bitter+tears+of+petra+von+kant%2Caps%2C106&sr=8-1.

²⁰⁰ Foreman's work is far more univocal than the collective efforts of the Wooster Group's, though the long rehearsal process Foreman gives to the development of his work with the actors in a particular production, often 3-4 months of rehearsal and development, necessarily informs a good deal of the aesthetic as the result of strengths and peculiarities of the individual performers at work.

of the performance, a town hall on a mobile platform which brought the actors to the audience in the courtyard of Bow Arts, and additional texts weaving together Donald Trump's Presidential Inauguration Speech and Winston Churchill's *United States of Europe* speech. These theatrical devices were employed to offer a series of reflections upon how social and political reality is a construction in itself, available to multiple interpretations and outcomes.²⁰¹



Cradeaux Alexander, "RHINO," Multi-Media Live Performance, Bow Arts, London, 2017.

²⁰¹ Eugene Ionesco, *Rhinoceros*, translated by Derek Prouse (New York: Grove Press, [1959] 1960). This production was titled "RHINO", and combined Ionesco's original text along with the speeches mentioned in an open air courtyard at Bow Arts, London. Churchill's *United States of Europe* speech was delivered at the University of Zurich on September 19, 1946, and called for a Europe unified in its reconstruction post war. This, in the context of Brexit (then, in 2017) on the horizon, and the nationalism espoused by newly elected Donald Trump in America, highlighted the change in fortunes and attitudes between the original work's time and society and today's. International Churchill Society, accessed January 5, 2017, <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/united-states-of-europe/>.

Conclusion.

The motivation behind conducting this research was to provide makers with more tools to create new performances; to discover a new ground for performance which acts as a holistic system upon which new representations of the figure can be staged; and to bring actor and theatre technique firmly into art discourse and practice as a means to address the growing conversation artists are having with regard to representing themselves, their narratives, and fictional representations in their work. In Chapter I the actor was rethought as a 'becoming-actor', now unshackled from the job of mere representation. Through a network of encounters with the elements of performance, including script, props, audience, costume, the becoming-actor has emerged as a co-dependent contributor to the network that allows acting to occur. Chapter II showed how this emerging actor meets the stage, and rethinks how the stage exists not as a structure upon which to perform, but rather as an equally emergent entity that is produced through the encounter with the becoming-actor. Chapter III completes the circuit by showing how the audience is actually now a 'becoming-audience' in that they are co-actors in the emergence of the performance, encountering the becoming-stage and becoming-actor on the same, co-productive terms as that encounter is met. As work in this field continues to expand, this research hopes to be beneficial in providing new ways into the development of the figure as represented on stage and onscreen, and for the performer to find innovative ways into the creation of themselves and their fictions as subjects in their works.

This research identifies emergence as an encounter; its manifestation in the field of performance is manifested through an emergent encounter between and with the stage, the

performer, and the audience. Each of these entities are already in a cycle of emergence in relation to the event of performance, and it is through a series of bridges that the performance event is made manifest. Alienation, the Method, the 'look', and exaggerated figures of representation are all tools to create this bridge and make the event of performance a dynamic, emerging stage which comes into happening through its encounter with performer and audience.

Appendix of original works (in order of appearance in the thesis)



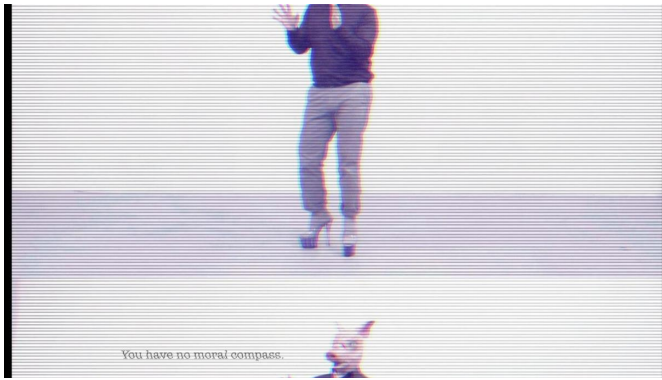
“Love Kills”, photo documentation of live performance.



“A Romance, A Stage” or “SLIP”, installation view.



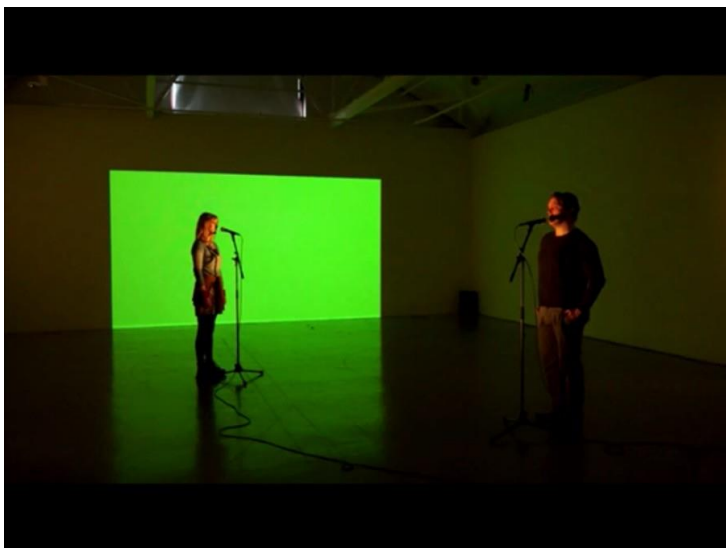
“Bluebeard”, photo documentation of live performance.



“The Stripper and The Pig”, screen capture, full work viewable online here:
<https://vimeo.com/162764005>



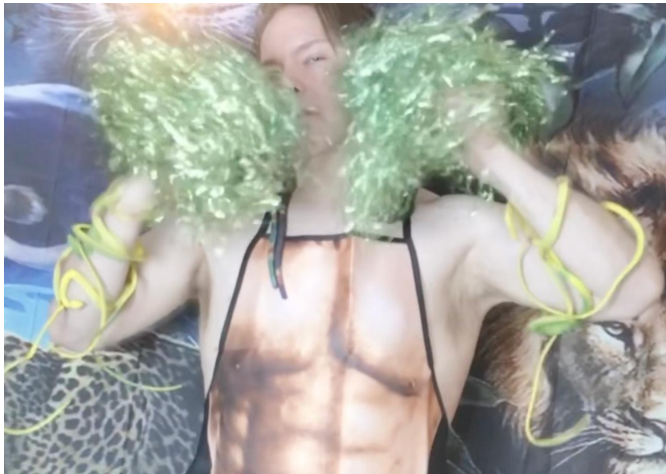
“Domme Shew and the Musick of Violence”, single channel video viewable online here:
<https://youtu.be/nCWxVAwraaA>



“The Golden Facelift”, photo documentation of live performance.



“Act Natural”, video screen capture.



“Adam with Pom Poms” single channel video, viewable online here: <https://youtu.be/ll1ArKyw8OE>



“Adam with Dear John and Pistol”, 50 x 50 cm digital image.



"cowboyplaycowboy", video screen capture. Full video viewable online here:
<https://youtu.be/7kn9e0EnAC4>



"RHINO", production photo of live theatre performance.

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