

Negotiating academic/artistic agendas in documenting PaR

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Valorisation

- Indoctrination
- Dance 'special' - due to ephemerality
- Disappearance through time
- To consider otherwise was a betrayal of sorts

“...performance cannot be saved”

Peggy Phelan (1993 p.146).

“The ‘occurrence’, the performative energy of the (moving) body, evades any attempt at translation.”

Gabriele Brandstetter (2000 p.16).

My body, an object destined to move other objects, is, then, a center of actions; it cannot give birth to a representation.

Bergson (1988 p.20).

photographic or videographic evidence of performance is *“no more than a fragmentary, petrified vestige of a lively process that took place at a different time in a different place”*

Molderings (1984 p.172-173).

to mediatize performance is *“a forbidden act which makes the very object supposed to be re-presented, disappear”*

Pavis (1982 p.129).

“death by video”

Lots of my mates (1990s)

In 1969 Peter Brook suggested that the disappearance of theatre is as it should be and that the only record that is important is that which resides in the memory of those who witnessed the performance

Melzer (1995)

Performance continued to be 'documented' via processes of mediatization (especially video and film).

“We must even more ... devote ourselves to working on the filmed document ... Whatever the losses involved, it can be very useful for our work”

(Brook, 1981 p.41).

In *Shattered Anatomies: Traces of the Body in Performance*, Adrian Heathfield, Fiona Templeton, and Andrew Quick describe the shift or transference of performance into other forms of representation as “inevitable” (Heathfield et al., 1997 www), but suggest that “the terms of its transference are not” (Heathfield et al., 1997 www).

What to call this process?

- Record
- Document
- Transcription
- Transformation
- Translation
- Adaptation
- Photographic conception
- Photostat
- Representation
- Reproduction

Melzer (1995)

Temporality / Originality

- Implication of traditional temporal relationship:
- I present the performance and everything AFTER is the documentation.
- Original ... then some shite COPY
- What if the relationship is more slippery, not temporally based, and seeks an inherently *imbricated* dialogue?

Ontological purity

“Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.”

Peggy Phelan (1993 p.146).

Ontological impurity

in contemporary performance practice there is a
*“progressive diminution of previous distinctions
between the live and the mediatized”*, and that it is
difficult to apprehend any *“clear-cut ontological
distinctions between live forms and mediatized ones”*

(Auslander, 1999 p.7)

Joshua's take

the insertion of limits are *“treacherous in the context of performance practices and their documentation” in which the performance is simply the live event, and documentation is anything afterwards and is “something other”*

(Sofaer, 2000).

Historical imbrication

- *liveness* came into being due to recording technology
- live performance cannot *enter* an economy of reproduction because it has always been there
- valorisation of liveness = virtue out of necessity

Auslander

- Auslander invites a reconsideration of the relationship between live and mediatized forms in which “it is necessary to investigate that relationship as historical and contingent, not as ontologically given or technologically determined” (Auslander, 1997 [www](#)).
- we cannot valorise the live because it is not ontologically pure - but does this mean that we can conflate performance with documentation?

Paradox

- Need to 'preserve' or perpetuate performance
- Part of performance's strength (essence?) is inherent in its disappearance through time
- Ways of knowing and experiences deeply embodied in the *liveness* of performance events - document/translate alters them
- Paradox keenly felt in academic contexts
- (universities need materiality)
- (universities want the knowledge packaged)

Why document performance?

- To stimulate memory of the performance event
(Phelan, 1993).
- Pressure to develop reproducible forms.
- Interest in developing reproducible forms.
- New audiences
- Economic benefit
- Professional benefit

- Continue and diversify creative processes
- Increase cultural authority (Lycouris, 2000)
- Evocation
- To foreground the disappearance of performance
- To prevent performance disappearing
- To acknowledge performance's incompleteness
(Lycouris, 2000)
- To trace or map
- Reflection
- Understanding