

Cultural Production in Theory and Practice I Participate

Lesley Telford – Using the museum as a performance space for dance; *Nomadism*

Canadian, based between Spain and the Netherlands; she has most recently danced with Netherlands Dans Theatre and presently works as a choreographer.

The museum has increasingly become a desired setting and mode of discourse for dance. However, despite some exceptions, dance as a discipline is caught between the product-oriented system of repertory companies and isolated independent dance projects which are generally limited in funding and often remain small-scale in terms of exposure. Since performance, particularly dance, is normally created for the theatre, the practicality of producing performance work for the museum is challenging. Although museums are interested in performance, independent dance artists continue to rely on the theatre as an institution for production support and the majority of funding.

The museum is a space in which the relationship between the performer and the spectator may be explored as a permeable exchange. The investigation lies with questioning how a performative situation may be produced to encourage an emancipated spectator. This concept of emancipation is described by Rancière as, “the blurring of the boundary between those who act and those who look” (2009: 19). Considering the museum as a setting in which the constellation of elements may be optimized for the experience of the emancipated spectator, what are the possibilities and constraints of the given institutional, practical and financial context?

I refer to the theories of Rancière (2009), Fischer-Lichte (2008) and Lehmann (2006) as a theoretical base regarding the emancipated spectator, the performative turn and the “event” nature of performance, respectively. These theories will be used as a base from which to look into existing models of cultural production studies. Models of the circuit of production are proposed which are adapted to include the concept of a live “event”. In investigating the influences on the performance event in a museum, research is directed towards cultural politics, the mission of museums and funding scenarios. These factors shape the curatorial choice towards performance and how it is incorporated into the agenda of a museum.

In conclusion, the emancipation of the spectator is encouraged through situations which lead the spectator to find his or her own associations, creating one’s own narrative (Rancière, 2009). In pushing the boundaries of where a work “belongs” the spectator is required to re-situate his or herself. The use of the museum as a performance space may be a site of discourse where expectations are shifted and the relationships of all elements in the constellation redefined by all. This includes the space and time situation of the work, the performer-spectator relationship, the spatial context and the institutional relationship with the artwork, artist, and publics. In attempting to fully integrate a project proposal including performance in a museum context, an artist ideally needs a collaborative relationship with the institution. The theories of New Institutionalism are based on principles of open exchange with artists which trickles down to the relationship with the spectator, encouraging an emancipated experience.

Decentralized networks of small institutions rather than large national centralized institutions may be more conducive to this goal providing a sufficiently flexible infrastructure for developing performance work. The development of relationships with institutions is based on trust, growth and continuity. Just as artistic collaboration is deepened through long-term relationships, institutional collaborations with artists develop over time. This has artistic benefits as well as the advantage of sustainability in an ephemeral and under-funded field.

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Link to presentation/documentation:

lesleytelford.com/project

Vernissage/presentation:

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Cooperating Institutions:

Festival Internacional de Madrid en Danza, Spain

Teatro Canal, Spain

Korzo Theatre, Netherlands

Cadance Festival, Netherlands

Chutzpah Festival, Canada

Cooperating Artists:

Yoko Seyama

Iratxe Ansa

Clyde Archer

Miguel Olivera

Fischer-Lichte, Erika (2008): *The Transformative Power of Performance*. Translated from German by S.I. Jain. Abingdon / New York: Routledge.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies (2006): *Postdramatic Theatre*. Translated from German by K. Jürs-Munby. Abingdon/ New York: Routledge.

Rancière, Jacques (2009). *The Emancipated Spectator*. Translated from French by G. Elliott. Brooklyn/ London: Verso.