



## **Abstracts for the How to Do Things With Art conference**

**12-13 November 2015**

### **Anders Bonde and Birger Larsen, "Triangulating eye tracking and GSR measurements for aesthetic impact assessment"**

It is hardly out of place to claim that works of art containing visual and auditory elements, such as moving images and music, contribute potentially to multifarious audience responses, being cognitive-evaluative, behavioural as well as psychophysiological. However, when discussing research methods, and especially whether such responses can be investigated empirically, one enters a controversial problem area with little or no consensus among research contributors. On the one hand, we find empirical aesthetics, a branch of psychology dominated by empiricist methods of generating hard data; and on the other, there exist a number of hermeneutic and cultural-theoretical approaches focusing on audiences' meaning-inference processes. In this paper, we concentrate on the former, arguing that galvanic skin-response (GSR) monitoring in combination with eye tracking can be used to determine the intensity of an aesthetic sensation. While not new, technology-based devices and methods of measuring psychophysiological effects are becoming ever more accessible and pervasive due to accelerating advancements in the development of new products, resulting in continuous purchase price reductions. As for GSR—a standard measure of the electrical conductance of the skin's moisture level, which is related to the level of arousal (i.e. the state of physiological and psychological 'awakeness') and possibly the intensity of an affective or emotional experience—data can be collected next to unobtrusive in any environment by using wireless sensor technology. The same goes for eye tracking, providing data on where and how long an observer has focussed as well as pupil dilation (the latter also related to arousal effects). Each of these technologies can produce a variety of interesting data, but also data that can be hard to interpret in isolation. We argue that eye tracking, with its stream of temporal and situated data on attention, can aid interpretation of physiological measurements and be instrumental in supporting the test of hypotheses of the degree to which visual or auditory elements are causing arousal and other effects. Eye tracking also supports further triangulation potentials by e.g. replaying recent interaction and doing retrospective think-aloud sessions capturing qualitative data on participants' motivation and experiences. We contend that the time is ripe for research in the incorporation of such methods to measure the intensity of an aesthetic sensation, and report experiences on the combined use of GSR and eye tracking from our master-level class on Applied Aesthetics, where students created their own productions and carried out effect evaluations using this combination.

### **Christina Schoux Casey: "Release your wiggle: Inchoate affects in New Orleans bounce music"**

The paper will be about the space created in live bounce performances for complex and unresolved performances of gender and sexuality. Specifically, bounce music is predominantly performed by gay and trans men, with gleefully explicit lyrics about gay sex. Young women are attracted to these shows, which allow them to dance provocatively and with abandon without being approached by men. Straight men are welcome at bounce shows, but are not welcome to touch or grind on the women dancing. Many men complain that while the shows are great because there are so many pretty women dancing, they are ruined by the presence of gay and trans people dancing. Straight bounce artists also complain that bounce has been hijacked by queers. So, the shows themselves provide a space of serious freedom and safety for artist and audience, while contested discourses about sexuality and gender swirl all around.

### **Jodie Childers: "Constraint and Resistance: The Making of Art Brut in the American Asylum"**

In his quest for intense and authentic creative expression, French artist Jean Dubuffet sought out the art of self-taught artists, cultural outsiders, and psychiatric patients, labeling this body of work 'art brut.' Examining 'art brut' produced within the confines and culture of the 20th century American asylum by Edward Deeds and Martín Ramírez, this paper argues that both artists express a tension between constraint and resistance not only in their work but through the materiality of the creative process. In the introduction to *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Coole and Frost note that "materiality is always something more than 'mere' matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable." Though the raw materials and visual lexicons Deeds and Ramirez use to communicate are individualized and idiosyncratic, their works materialize art as more than 'mere matter,' manifesting its power to subvert control over the mind and body and to serve as a source of self-preservation and self-production.

While confined in DeWitt State Hospital in California in the 1940s, Martín Ramírez collected whatever scraps of paper he could find, gluing together pieces of paper with paste he concocted from potato starch and his own saliva. He used a tongue depressor as a straight edge and melted crayon on his radiator to soften the wax to make it more flexible so that he could more easily work with it, creating almost 300 drawings that present a profound narrative of the body, mind, and spirit under internal and external constraints. Committed for life in 1925 to State Hospital No. 3 in Nevada, Missouri, Edward Deeds spent over fifty years in the institution and used colored pencil and crayon on psychiatric hospital ledger paper to create 283 drawings that invite the viewer into asylum culture and into a distinctive, anachronistic universe. Because of their creation within psychiatric institutions, these works of art not only provide insight into the history of mental illness, but also challenge aesthetic hierarchies, giving voice to those on the margins of art history and exposing psychosocial and aesthetic systems of power and control.

### **Steen Christiansen, "Sounds of Futures Past"**

How does the materiality of residual media produce ghost effects that haunt our bodies and experience? Danger Mouse and Sparklehorse's album *The Dark Night of the Soul* employs an impressive array of what David Toop has called sinister resonance. Digital dust, doppelgänger

and machine voices blur the separation between human and nonhuman performance, insisting that materiality has agency. The album's ambience teems with uncanny sonics through the foregrounded materiality of residual media, such as vinyl records, speak-n-spells and other outdated devices. Simultaneously, these older musical technologies are reframed by newer, digital processes that resurrect aesthetic textures from these earlier music technologies.

Hauntology is the best way to describe the status of the album; Derrida's term for how objects continue to impinge on us and how the future casts spectral shadows on the present. Whitehead's conception of past, present and future, discussed at length in *Adventures of Ideas* details how past and future are immanent in the present, as felt sensations. Similarly, Mark BN Hansen discusses the process of feedforward of affective experience to consciousness in his book *Feedforward*. Yet what is the experience of repurposed, foregrounded materiality of residual media's own residual past? That is to say, old media anticipated a future that never happened, and so still carry immanent potentials that are now feedforward into a different, tangential future.

Listening to residual media sonics is not simply an archival experience but a haunting experience of hearing what never happened. *Dark Night of the Soul* thus produces ghost effects; effects that are best regarded as intensities that shift and warp affects and agencies inside the soundscape. As affect arises from contact with other, material entities, the superject that we are yet to become is filled and traversed with dead futures that impinge on us and will not let go.

### **Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer, Mariella Greil ,” Choreo-graphic Figures: The Notion >< Notation of Figuring ”**

*Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* is an interdisciplinary research project involving artist Nikolaus Gansterer, choreographer Mariella Greil and writer-artist Emma Cocker. We seek ways of making tangible the process of 'thinking-in-action' within artistic practice — the unfolding decision-making and dynamic movements of 'sense-making' within the durational 'taking place' of something happening live — asserting epistemological significance for this habitually hidden aspect of the artist's, choreographer's or writer's endeavour.

We propose the term 'figuring' to describe the small yet transformative energies, emergences and experiential shifts, operating before, between and beneath the more readable gestures of artistic practice: threshold micro-moments within creative process that are often hard to discern but which ultimately shape or steer the direction of evolving activity. Minor revelations, epiphanies: shivering, full of presence. Unbidden openings: those risings that give way to emergence. The amplification or ebbing of intensity: sliding, sinking. Simmering. Shared vibrations. Becoming synchronised. Co-emergences — embodied, situated. Change in tack or pace, like the turn of tide. Lingering. Longing. An appeal to do something: stop; interrupt; begin again. How to make visible this event of 'figuring'? How to make the intangible tangible, articulate that which is pre-articulation? Our research involves cultivating practices of attention (perceptual heightening, hyper-sensitizing) for noticing these emergent figurings within the creative process and devising systems of notation for identifying/markings/tentatively naming these emergences.

Ours is a practice-as-research approach folded through with the 'practice of theory' where ideas (including Alain Badiou's [via Nietzsche] 'immanent intensification'; Deleuzian-Spinozist ideas of affect; Sarat Maharaj's writing on 'avidya' and 'thinking-feeling-knowing',

Erin Manning's articulation of 'pre-acceleration' and 'incipiency', Daniel Stern's 'dynamic forms of vitality') and are not understood in the abstract but rather *processed*, turned over and inside out through embodied encounter. We propose a form of hybrid performative lecture interweaving performed drawing and kinetic inscription, visual/textual fragments, critical exposition and spoken word. Thick description: singular subjectivity of an ambiguous I, meets the impersonal immanence of an inter-subjective voice distilled from recorded conversation. A form of 'embodied diagram': multimodal, multi-dimensional, durational intensity, performed entanglement of visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic sensibilities.

**Adriana Margereta Dancus: Real Women Act Themselves. Vulnerability and Bullying in Anna Odell's *The Reunion* (2013)**

The 2000s have witnessed the proliferation of Scandinavian films in which women directors turn the camera towards themselves in projects that combine method from fiction and documentary filmmaking. Central to these films is the notion of vulnerability, a condition inherent in our corporeality and sociability, and which these women stage by sharing their own embodied experiences with a variety of phenomena such as bullying, motherhood, mourning and depression. I am interested in investigating the aesthetics, politics and ethics of vulnerability in these female narratives. How is vulnerability staged and imagined by these women? How can these staged vulnerabilities be understood in a wider sociopolitical context and how do they operate as an ethical resource?

In this paper, I will discuss these questions by looking closer at Anna Odell's debut film "The Reunion" (2013). Odell is a controversial performance artist whose diploma project from the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, "Unknown, woman 2009-349701," highlighted a recording of a staged psychotic episode inspired from her own life and in which she faked a suicide attempt. A victim of bullying in secondary school, Odell finds out that her former classmates held a twentieth anniversary reunion to which she had never been invited. In response, she makes "The Reunion," a film structured in two parts: the first part of the film is the reunion as Odell imagines it would have happened, had she attended the party, and where she openly confronts her former bullies; the second part of the film is a reconstruction of the conversations Odell had with her real classmates and in which she invited them to watch the fictional party together. Both the subject and the form of this film afford important discussions about the aesthetics, politics and ethics of vulnerability in Scandinavia, a region otherwise world-known for successful anti-bullying programs.

**Betty Li Meldgaard: "Creativity and Materials in Artistic Processes"**

In 1961, Mel Rhodes proposed that creativity research should be comprised of four main strands of inquiry; Person, Process, Press and Product, which he labeled the 4 P's of Creativity. Here the importance of the concept, Press, will be considered in relation to the use of materials in the creative process and be extended to incorporate material pressure as a means of driving forward the process of creation. The presented approach argue that materials reveal their artistic potential by being processed and transformed and further points to the feeling of urgency and emergency in relation to creative actions, based on the affordances, which emerges in the now of the creative act. By identifying material pressure in artistic processes and applying the concept of affordances, it is believed that the interconnectivity of all 4 P's can be deepened.

### **Katalin Halasz: “On Affecting White Femininity: The Chamber of White at Performance Sense Laboratory, Art Zone Roskilde Festival 2014”**

This paper is a reflection on the affective performance of white femininities in my recent performance work *The Chamber of White*.

The video performance *The Chamber of White* was installed in one of the rooms of the Performance Sense Laboratory at Art Zone, Roskilde Festival in 2014. The installation was made for one single individual at a time, to create a direct and inescapable interaction – intimate and confrontational. Based on four years of arts-based visual sociology research the performance piece includes references to the works of Aimé Césaire, Audre Lorde, Howardeena Pindell and Diane Torr, as well as to the interviews I conducted with 14 women active in the anti-racist and feminist movements.

The curatorial concept for the performance programme focused on how 'to activate the sensuous through different, yet related, performance-artistic approaches which all subscribe to an interactive and immersive performance art tradition\*'. *The Chamber of White* was part in a 'symphony of installed, intimate parallel-universal rooms', along with performance artists Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen (DK), Savage Amusement (AU/DE) and Sisters Hope (DK). Each performance group explored different ways to evoke the sensuous.

By the way of a brief description of the piece and the screening of the video I reflect on how the work enables a sensuous and affective experience of white femininities. I trace affective transactions between the performer and the participant. In an effort to critically examine the affective power of whiteness in a feminist context, I attend to the white female body and to the responses and entanglements that are attached to it. Through this account I further elaborate on how to present and disseminate results of art-based research in sociology by engaging academic and non-academic audiences in affective experiences.

\*see: <http://sensuous.dk/?p=939>

### **Elizabeth Jochum and Lance Putnam: “Robot Aesthetics: Practice-Based Research in Robotic Art and Performance”**

This paper considers art-based research practice in robotics through a discussion of our course and relevant research projects in autonomous art. The undergraduate course integrates basic concepts of computer science, robotic art, live performance and aesthetic theory. Through practice-based research that includes devised performance and art practice, we demonstrate how art-based research in the humanities can help bridge the gap between artistic practice and engineering. Given the proliferation of interactive, systems-based art works and the continued interest in human-centered factors in robotics research (such as aesthetics, culture and perception), we believe robot aesthetics is an important area for research in contemporary aesthetics.

In this paper we outline the methodologies and relevant theories concerning autonomous and generative art, and in particular how theories of computational creativity (Margaret Boden) and robotic art (Eduardo Kaz, Steve Dixon, Chris Salter) reformulate notions of subjectivity in artistic practice. The notion of autopoiesis is particular relevant for understanding the aesthetic implications of robotic art works, where the experience of an interactive art work becomes the object of aesthetic investigation.

Our paper will include examples from the Multimedia Programming: Autonomous Art elective in fall 2015, and will showcase some of the student-projects in development (We

have coordinated our course specifically in timing with the conference, so students will have functioning prototypes). We will also demonstrate how rapid prototyping and movement-based design approaches (such as choreography) can be innovative approaches for designing interactive art works.

**Liani Lochner: “What Literature Can Do: Performing Affect in Zoë Wicomb’s *October*”**

Zoë Wicomb’s *October* undoes me as a reader. Each reading of this narrative of Mercia Murray, a coloured immigrant and academic living in Scotland who visits her native South Africa only to be confronted with a family secret, takes an inordinate amount of time, as I intermittently find myself staring off into space, lost in memory. The act of reading becomes one of remembering, which also means that my affective response to events within the novel are conflated with the feelings evoked by this nostalgia. But what exactly am I remembering? After all, I am reading across a considerable cultural distance, and while Mercia and I have some things in common – for example, we are both South African, immigrants, and working in academia – I am also not from Kliprand; these are not my family members, and this is not their story. Of course, this is not anyone’s story, as these characters, in this incarnation, exist only on the page, variously brought to life by different readers and readings; and Mercia’s tortured negotiation of notions of home and belonging are “performed emotions.” My affective response, however, as Derek Attridge argues in *The Work of Literature*, is not just “some mental simulacrum of affect, but a real feeling” (330) that replicates experiences in the extra-literary domain. I am feeling these emotions “always as performances of language’s powers” (333-334), demonstrating literature’s capacity to engage with the complex, intertwined nature of memory and affect. Moreover, *October* itself enacts the kind of reading I am describing, what Attridge calls reading as an event, whereby the reader performs the literary work, bringing to life as events the “individual’s mental processes” – “the emotions, the mental and physical events, the apprehendings of the external world it depicts” (58) – staged by the novelist. Like Mercia, who returns again and again to Marilynne Robinson’s *Home*, a novel she finds “Strangely familiar” (13), to reflect on ideas of home, her own conflicted relationship with her past in South Africa, and her present deracinated existence in Scotland, the reader of *October* feels the performative power of language in a novel that affectively unsettles complacent understandings of memory, belonging, and cultural hybridity.

**Beate Schirmacher: “Performative Plots and Medial Performativity in Günter Grass’s and Elfriede Jelinek’s fiction”**

Regarding the literary work of e.g. Elfriede Jelinek and Günter Grass, uncertainties about how to read and how to understand this fiction have repeatedly led to vehement rejection, often combined with accusing the artist of failure. I will argue that this disturbance is not a sign of a failed artwork but due to the fact that Grass and Jelinek are dealing with language in a performative way which can be connected to what has been pointed out as corporeal (Krämer 2004) or medial (Wirth 2002) performativity.

Medial performativity brings forth the materiality of language. With examples from Jelinek’s *The Piano Teacher* and Günter Grass’s *The Tin Drum*, I will demonstrate how the reader is forced to picture literally what is usually hidden on language’s conceptual structural level. The reader is confronted with disturbing images without the distancing meta-level, which in reception is perceived and felt as a kind of linguistic violence. Medial performativity thus provokes strong reactions in the public. However, these reactions of disgust, rejection, or pro-

test are not a sign of a failed artwork. For what the artist makes us reject is the structural and cultural violence we usually accept in social context.

Krämer, Sybille. "Was haben 'Performativität' und 'Medialität' miteinander zu tun? Plädoyer für eine in der 'Asthetisierung' gründende Konzeption des Performativen". In *Performativität und Medialität*, ed. Sybille Krämer. München: Fink, 2004, 11–32.

Wirth, Uwe. "Der Performanzbegriff im Spannungsfeld von Illokution, Iteration und Indexikalität" in *Performanz. Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Uwe Wirth. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 2002.

### **Clarence Burton Sheffield Jr: "The Ecosystem that is Comics: Nick Sousanis's "Unflattening" and the Process-Oriented Approach to Art"**

Nick Sousanis's *Unflattening* (2015) epitomizes a process-oriented approach to art, as well as a critical yet, playful analysis of the ways in which art can produce new subject positions and experiences. An innovative graphic narrative, based on his unconventional doctoral dissertation (which was organized and defended entirely as a comic book), his title alludes to Edwin Abbott's classic tale *Flatland* (1884). Sousanis uses "unflattening" as a powerful metaphor to counteract and resist narrow, rigid, prescribed thinking, as well as a monolithic paradigm. *Unflattening* is an ideological manifesto, of sorts, a plea for an expanded sense of awareness, and a powerful pedagogical exercise. He advocates a fluid, multimodal, non-linear, approach, and the capacity of the imagination to construct new frameworks and ever-enlarged boundaries. The ecosystem that is comics, according to him, "combines the sequential and simultaneous modes," and this is one of its greatest strengths. It succeeds where words alone might fail, since comics integrates and incorporates "multiple modes and signs and symbols." (65) Comics, in other words, have the ability to demonstrate that perception is always a process of melding together and analyzing different viewpoints. He argues that "comics can hold the unflat ways in which thought unfolds." (66) Sousanis describes this process as multi-faceted, as well as "a participatory dance," and he acknowledges Deleuze and Guattari as key theoretical influences.

With exceptional brio and deep insight his flat, two-dimensional drawings, combine words and images, to enact, and thereby model the very kaleidoscopic shift in awareness that he advocates. In one drawing, he describes the extraordinary olfactory capacity of his dog, for example, which far exceeds his own. Dogs, thereby, "access dimensions of experience we can't fathom." (40) This example, and others as well, suggest that Sousanis's position is entirely compatible with the speculative realist strategy. It also provides a playful visualization of many of its basic precepts.

### **Jens Kirk, "Awe"**

Among other things, post-pastoral writing concerns the overwhelming emotion of awe that results from adopting an ecocentric perspective (e.g. Gifford 1996, 1999). Reverence, veneration, wonder, fear, terror and similar sensations of belittlement characterise the subjection of the post-anthropocentric subject facing his or her humbling environment. This paper deals with examples of post-pastoral writing that struggle to unfold an ecocentric viewpoint in language and to map out and reproduce the writer's feelings of awe in the reader.

### **Morten Søndergaard: “Doing Things With Sound (in) Art: The Ultra-local Beat of Peter Laugesen (with some comparisons to Per Højholt, Dan Turèll and Michael Strunge)”**

According to Lars Bang-Larsen, the ultra-local is first and foremost based on that which is not unique or perceivable; not presented in the names or images of a culture; it is what comes before and after the official ontologies.

The ultra-local is tracing the probable vicinity of reality to art by taking the roads less travelled by. In the context of this chapter, I find that the ultra-local is present on three levels in the Danish ultra-local beat poetics: 1) A focus on the hidden streets or quarters in a city, or the provinces of Denmark as hidden and 'out-of-the-way' places. This focus I am claiming is mostly communicated in sound - through ultra-local dialects or musical interpretations of well-known genres of Jazz, Beat, Pop, Rock and Punk. 2) A development of an 'Ironic mediacy', and 3) a construction of a meta-existential aesthetics. All three levels are based on the idea of music as 'individual expression', which can be traced back to the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard; and on the 'generative situation' of sound in poetry.

The provincial towns of Denmark, even Denmark itself, as hidden and 'out-of-the-way' places are setting the stage of ultra-local beat. Laugesen writes from the Danish ultra-local municipality of Aarhus; Dan Turèll situates his best poetic expressions on the ultra-local suburb of Vangede in Copenhagen; and Michael Strunge zooms even further into the ultra-locality of Copenhagen under/behind Copenhagen, the merciless and zapped 'underground' of the Danish capital where all the 'punks' rummage about.

Rhythm and music may be viewed as an integral part of experimenting and exploring life and language. The boundaries of language and expression by other means create a unique situation in which listening becomes what Salomé Voeglin has called a sensory interaction with the world. Listening produces a sonic life-world, in which 'what I hear is discovered not received, and this discovery is generative, a fantasy: always different and subjective and continually, presently now.' (Voeglin, p4 & p11).

This paper investigates the ultra-local beat in Peter Laugesen's sonic collaborations in the bands 'Mind Spray' and 'Singvogel', as artistic expressions organised around generative situations in which the use of rhythm and sounds drawn from ultra-local contexts are the core elements. They point towards theoretical positions building on experimental investigations of how to do things with sound in art.

### **Bent Sørensen: “Tarot and the Poets – 20th C. American Poets using the Tarot”**

This paper deals with the little-known practice of a surprising number of canonized American poets of the 20th C. of using the Tarot in multiple innovative ways. I suggest that there are four main avenues in which poets both exhibit influence and gain insight and wisdom from the Tarot:

1. Describing Tarot readings, practices and practitioners – this being a practice of cultural negotiation of otherness and identity.
2. Employing the Tarot imagery generally – often in the same manner as other archetypes are employed in textual representations.
3. Interpreting in words specific cards or spreads from Tarot decks – this being a specific case of the much more general phenomenon of ekphrasis.
4. Using the cards to create specific poems – this being a generative process of a different order than the first three, much more descriptive processes.



Well-known American poets who indulged in the Tarot, using one or several of these practices, include: Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Diane di Prima, Alice Notley, Ted Berrigan, Philip Whalen, John Wieners, Philip Lamantia, Robert Creeley, Michael McClure, Charles Olson, and T.S. Eliot.

My paper will focus on the 4th aspect mentioned above: the generative process in which poets do things with the artwork of the Tarot decks. The production of texts inspired by images can be regarded as ekphrasis+ - a practice which not only creates a work of art but constitutes a transformative ritual that is akin to other types of invocation and magic rituals.

**Anne Mette Winneche Nielsen and Rikke Platz Cortsen: “How we think through doing – artistic strategies and their role in new codified sets of practices”**

In *How We Think* professor of literature, Katherine Hayles proposes how the codifying set of practices in Traditional Humanities is challenged as print-based disciplines within the humanities and qualitative social sciences move into digital media. Drawing upon the work of Marshall McLuhan, Friedrich Kittler, Lev Manovich, Mark Hansen and Jonathan Crary, Hayles convincingly unfolds the implications on humanistic inquiry, demonstrating how digital media and technology make a difference in the way we conceptualize projects, implement research programs, design curricula and educate students. However, it is less clear in Hayles’ analysis how the new multimodal and collaborative practices these changes involve transform academic engagements beyond the digital platforms. In order to investigate aspects of this shift in paradigm we propose to understand it as the emergence of new codifying setS of practices within the humanities and qualitative social sciences.

In this presentation we will examine how these new codifying setS of practices can be understood within teaching, by using one of our co-taught courses as a prism through which we expand on the changes involved. We analyse how the awareness of new codified setS of practices redefines the relation between teaching and research and moves it from a transmissive relation to a transactive.

Our teaching relied heavily on artistic strategies to develop the students’ understanding of the field, using practice as a way of thinking, and we will end our talk by discussing why artistic strategies play a key role in this process of redefining the teaching/research relationship within the humanities and qualitative social sciences.