

Planes of Immanence

Debbie Guinnane (Dublin)

There is No Outside to the Text, They Read it from Within.[1]

This paper is a continuous work in progress. This paper is a continuous work in process. There is no absolute idea nor any concrete definitions or singular perspectives. There is no hierarchy, only lines of thoughts that are member particles of an organism. This here as you read is a narrow viewpoint, from an accidental angle out of thousands of perspectives and lines of flight. The inspiration behind this paper stems from an array of experiences and re-sources; one particularly important source of inspiration comes from the writings of Deleuze and Guattari and their collection of their writings from *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). From these, I have selected a number of quotes, and although as tempting as it is to become – abstract in my quest to relay episodes of my flights in and throughout my research on D&G, I will try to write in a coherent and honest fashion in order to demonstrate with mild accuracy the history of this practice. I am a willing disciple of D&G (and potential offspring; as we share identical initials. I also am D&G), and before I learnt of their names, I was already proclaiming some of their ideas, although, of course, with far less extravagance and prodigy. My roots of thought are inline with theirs (or tangled up alongside their thousand), and together we are all embedded in the masses of our own subjective constructions. We are tangled up in mohair, my thoughts are raptured up amongst the myriad of thoughts, words and ideas of their own and those of the many others whom they have appropriated from. I am one of them and they are one of me, and of this paper, this process, and these lines of experiences. I have no qualms taking ideas directly from Deleuze and Guattari, as they are already mine or are in the process of becoming – mine... We are humans in states of a constant becoming – “*human roots know no borders*”[2] (Helene Cixous).

Performance art only lives within the present. It cannot be saved, or documented or represented without altering it. It can never be repeated as the same, it is eternally ephemeral. Performance becomes real through the act of disappearance.[3]

The awakening of my becoming ‘D&G’, began as part of my research interest looking into cross-disciplinary mediums that try to capture experience with an automatic response in live art. My work looks for ideas on how to transcribe and document a performance, using the first moments of the encounter with a live-art experience as a primary source of information and a potential malleable sculptural material. In these attempts, I follow the material and actions of the performance to a point of transformation, through the use of writing, language and interpretation. Once an action is being

performed it is already moving into the past, it is vanishing forever erasing itself. When recording or describing a performance through documentation, the absence of the real from the one being interpreted is a fundamental essence of performance art. But this absence can allow for another form of creation. While the performance is disappearing in real time, the person who documents this through writing is creating something new.

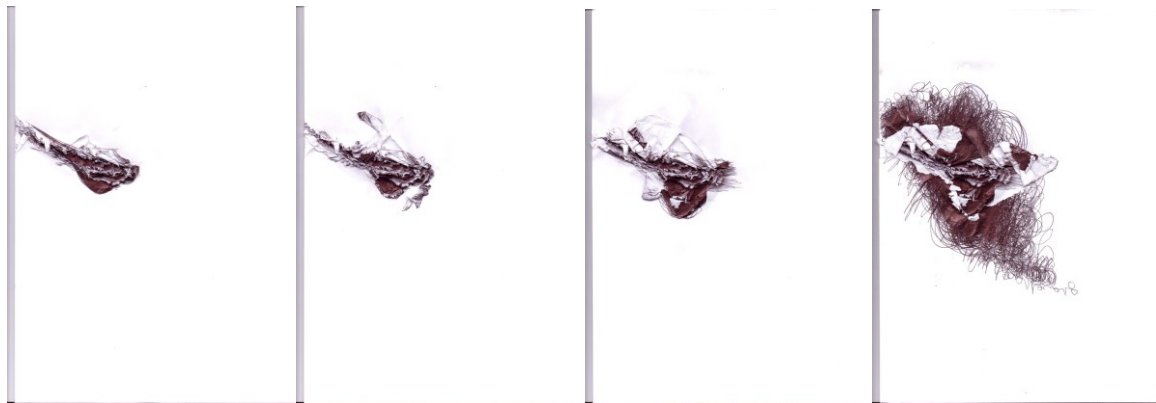


Abb. 1a - 1d: John Bowers and Ryan Jordan (UK), The Thinning Veil, SPILL Festival of Performance 2012 (excerpt of a series of ten). Courtesy of the author

During the IPA Istanbul performance art workshop and IPA Istanbul Festival of Performance Art in August 2012, I was invited by Jürgen Fritz to come and document the workshop in its entirety for its duration. In a paper he wrote called Exploring Performance Art, he discusses how within his workshops he

develops very concrete, sometimes very physical exercises. The preoccupation with these tasks is to throw the participant back on themselves. Existing insights, images, or experiences should be activated and brought in to the actions. In the sense of a negotiation of the topic “presence” the participant shall recognise him/herself regarding the given situation and the other participants. Here, questions about impression as physical perception are the subject of the argument. Presence in this sense is “successfully” setting oneself in relation to the situation of the performance – as an action in the here and now. (Within a group performance strategy), it deals with issues of common rhythm, impulse and perception.[4]

Fritz agrees with Hans-Thies Lehmann, who in his book Post-Dramatic Theatre, states “Performance is, what those who are showing it, announce as such”.^[5] Fritz begins his workshops with a paper titled “The Horse Will Make You Happy.” From this I’ve selected a quote of his to further illustrate his intentions and the subsequent influence this workshop experience had on my work:

The core of Performance Art, where form becomes art, can not be taught. That may be true of all art forms, but in Performance Art, both the material as well as the medium of the artistic debate are in great degree identical with the person of the artist... this approach thus gives access to Performance Art, that deals not so much with expressing something or conveying a message, but describes Performance Art as a process of discovery.

The performative image can not be planned and then executed as a performance, but it may be found within a defined setting. The workshop is in a way also a language identification process, during which the terms and their classification must be developed. A physical experience is necessary to transform the initial abstract setting into a personally available idea.[6]

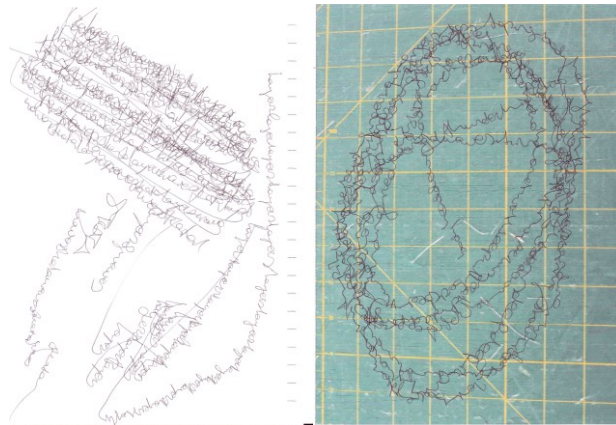
Fritz continues with his ideas through the use of materials within a performance:

the quality of the introduced objects or the material of artistic concentration is measured by its potential of changing and developing the person. Therefore it is not the question what the artist does with the material but how the material reflects back on the artist. On the question of the material the basic idea of "discovery" is consistently applied... Any material that is introduced as a 'prop' or object is already present, and becomes a vital and undeniable part of the performance situation. The performance itself is, in the sculptural sense, an exploration of the material. From this perspective, the question of the material within and between the site and the performer relates primarily to the question of the settings! What intervention should I take to define a situation that is beneficial for the success of my performance (and in my case the document?), Presence in this sense means "successfully" relating oneself to the situation of the performance - as an action in the here and now.[7]

A physical translation of the word:

"Body Impression"

"Action" - reaction, impress, express, response.



Artist Danny McCarthy, OileAnra (Archipelago), Inish Oirr, 2012. Courtesy of the author.

In response to this I would like to quote Robert Smithson: *"My sense of language is that it is matter and not ideas - i.e. printed matter"*[8]. Similarly, Craig Douglas Dworkin writes in an essay on UBU Web: *Anthology of Conceptual Writing* that the

conceptual writing collected here is not so much writing in which the idea is more important than anything else as a writing in which the idea cannot be separated from the writing itself; in which the instance of writing is inextricably intertwined with the idea of Writing: the material practice of écriture...

conceptualizing writing in that way returns us to a poetry of form, new forms and structures (that arose a sense of artifice, constraint, and perversity).[9]

As a working participant in the workshop, and as the documenter, the two opposing roles often became blurred. Which proved to me to be at times quite difficult, but with restriction ('constraint') comes deviation. And delirium supersedes pragmatism. Thus the furrows were unearthed and a mass of roots began to peek out from the shadows and lines between the leaves of my notebooks.[10] During the two weeks, I ended up reverting to irregular short hand, and rapid note taking. Words were written in brief or unfinished sentences across the paper, and the pattern of the transcript altered constantly.

"The inaugural gesture of writing is always in a necessary relation to narcissism. When one begins to write, one is constantly reminding oneself of the fact: 'I write'... It takes time from 'I' to get used to 'I'. Time for the 'I' to be sure 'I' exists. Only then is there room for the other"[11]

I enter the room. I see the artist. I sit. I wait. I watch. As soon as the performance begins I write. I write what I see. I use only the words that articulate the moment before me and whatever thoughts or ideas spring to mind from this mutual authentic engagement with the artists, I lose sight of myself. I let the words come naturally. A dialogue develops. The performance is in on top of me. It blinds me. "I" is submerged beneath the weight of the encounter and another form appears. The other is what occurs in the middle, the other is a transversal line. Within the vector space that is the 'site' and 'setting' of the performance.

The words uttered by Fritz were followed and expressively carried out through both my body and my notes. I obeyed his command to follow the rhythm, impulse, perception and impression of our actions within the performance workshop. The words he used carried their own weight and I followed, giving and taking weight, trying to transcribe in as legible detail as possible, but also allowing for any development of illegibility to occur. These words and notes charged from movements and actions taken, progressed with the speed of the subject being documented and the material performed. My role I believed was to obey and follow. From which I found that I was no longer in control, but I must not resist. The notebooks and the actions taken in this role became part of the overall workshop experience. Not only do they hold a reflection and account of the workshop but also the writings became new material, and the material I found to be forever transforming. Until eventually it was no longer a document of the original source but a wholly new object. The notes veered between legible to illegible script and become at once both "trash and relics. But they can also take on a fetishized aura for the (archiver), with the mystified and talismanic associations that the term fetish connotes"[12] (Pamela M. Lee). Perverse in the essence of the fetish, whereby pages of illegible script manifest auras of experience. As we begin to question their function in the transmission of knowledge, we see that they stand as a confirmation and reminder of both the importance and uniqueness of each performance event and workshop experience. They represent the immateriality of the ideology of knowledge and personal interpretation. The workshop and the performances that followed dictated my position within each situation, which allowed for the material to evolve 'organically' into new forms. Transcribing a live performance, between myself as author and spectator with a performer, has the potential to transform the current of the experience into a plane of consistency, a current consisting of

motions carried out through time and space and inscribed upon a flat sheet of paper; the markings upon a talisman. The plane of consistency or the plane of immanence is held upon the pages of my notebooks.

Kierkegaard shows that the plane of the infinite, which he calls the plane of faith, must become a pure plane of immanence that continually and immediately imparts, reimparts, and regathers the finite... Perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation, in the period associated with the subject and object. Perception will confront its own limit; it will be in the midst of things, throughout its own proximity, as the presence of one haecceity in another, the prehension of one by the other or the passage from one to the other: Look only at the movements.[13]

“LOOK ONLY AT

MOVEMENTS!”

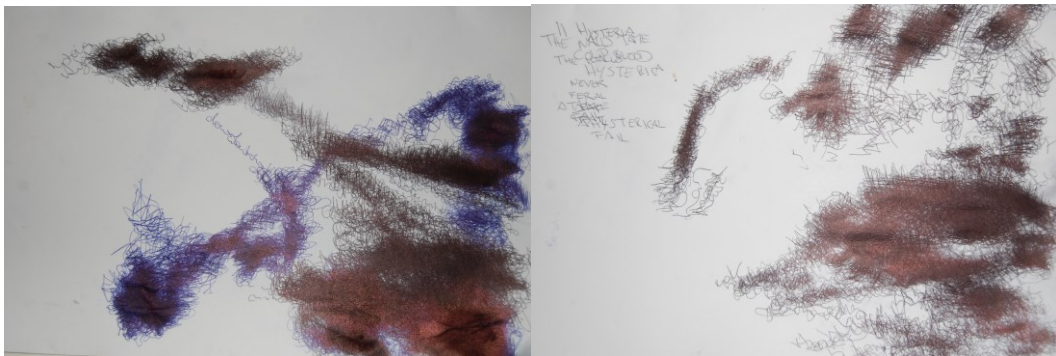


Abb 3a/3b: BEAN (UK) 'O' SPILL Festival of Performance 2012. Courtesy of the author

To write, to record, or document a performance event is to feel for a sense of completion, an urge to transcend. Writing during performance art can become a tool used to (re) mark the world with a language composed for such transformation. Every “object” presupposes the continuity of a flow; every flow, the fragmentation of the object [14].

I see through the words I use to transcribe.

I write what I see and I see what I write.

The life of the situation is held in the experience of these actions.

Pen to paper, eyes always up.

Open.

Write.

Name the object for what it really is. Transcribe the performance as shrewdly and as accurately as possible. Repeat; until the words can go no further; until illegibility occurs; until the moment of the infinite is captured in the present, a sudden moment of a transversal nature. The performance is over, but the art is resurrected through the act of writing. It was written in the body of the event and is now written in the body of the text. The text becomes the material being explored, the physical impression: that of the original performance slowly being destroyed but conserved, through repetition, and labour. The process of the writing ultimately destroys the writing itself recreating new and unique performative possibilities, and theory for performance art and writing. In the attempt to write both critically and artistically, the author of the text will perceive the performance through a critical, analytical, objective eye, but will also respond to it in an equally visceral and subjective manner. The challenge between archiving and documenting performance art through writing lies within the conflict between these two opposing points of view and impressions. But within this conflict a tension is created. And while this tension is developing, a new art is forming. The material is transformed. Thus transitioning the performance from one life into another.

That which races or dances upon the plane of consistency thus carries with it the aura of its stratum, an undulation, a memory or tension. The plane of consistency retains just enough of the strata to extract from them variables that operate in the plane of consistency as its own functions. The plane of consistency, or phenomenon is in no way an undifferentiated aggregate of unformed matters, but neither is it chaos of formed matters of every kind... it creates continuity for intensities that it extracts from distinct forms and substances... The only intensities known to the strata are discontinuous, bound up in forms and substances; the only particles are divided into particles of contact and particles of expression; the only deterritorialized flows are disjointed and reterritorialized.[15]

This is an account of the first stage of the transversal performative text. The first stage resembles something of a larva, where the notes of the transcripts are scrawled along the pages indiscriminately and occasionally illegible. They are objects in a process of becoming that have not yet actualized themselves in a specific form; they are the subjects of a rhizome whereby a rhizome is Deleuze and Guattari's term as

The multiple (that) must be made, not always by adding sobriety; with the number of dimensions one already has available – always $n-1$ dimensions... A rhizome as subterranean stem... (And) assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions...[16]

First moments of transversal occur within texts, residues of experience through language or symbols, which become objects of textual analysis, and also a location for further formulations of representations to evolve from. Upon this departure or evolution, the work goes through a series of manifestations, citing Marshal McLuhan "the medium is the message"[17]. These mediums arise from each point of the transverse, and occur in stages, such as life stages, or junctures whereby there is no end only progress and evolution[18].

Following the artist's lead in a performance allows for the material to evolve 'organically' into new forms. Transcribing a live performance, between author and performer, has the potential to transform the current of the experience into a plane of consistency. The plane of consistency or the plane of immanence is held upon the pages of author's notebooks, (these are the first stages of the performative transversal).

Whereby a transversal at this point is understood as a line that intersects a system of other lines. Originally as a topological concept this idea of a transversal intersection wouldn't be an account of any resulting coincidence, so would seem in effect an act of intervention. Within performance art, transversality carries the potential for radical progressive changes to occur in the process of the encounter. The nature of the transverse can result in the nature of the process and thus experience, and vice versa. Elements exposed and morphed within the structures of a live performance are transformed and brought out into a world of potential never-ending mutilations. Crossing boundaries of the encounters and impressions with new media and expressions.



Abb. 4: Karolina Kubic (Poland). IPA Istanbul Festival of Performance 2012.
Courtesy of the author.

Planes of Consistency: The text becomes the intertext:

Roland Barthes reminds us of the word text's original meaning: 'a tissue, a woven fabric'. The idea of a text and of intertextuality depends, as Barthes argues, on the figure of the web, the weave, the garment (text) woven from the threads of the 'already written' and the 'already read'.^[19]

In D&G, a plateau is reached when circumstances combine to bring an activity to a pitch of intensity that is not automatically dissipated in a climax. The heightening of energies is sustained long enough to leave a kind of afterimage of its dynamism that can be reactivated or injected into other activities, creating a fabric of intensive states between which any number of connecting routes could exist, ... growth is an endless, eternal process. The process is everything.^[20]

Furthering this enquiry into the cross-contaminative situations in live-art experiences while being documented, written and transformed, discussing the art-object in terms of literature and literary devices, and the role of criticism and what occurs after criticism is naturally conducive to drawing considerations to critical terms and strategies that are already within place in cultural theory and research. Bryan Reynolds, Chancellor's Professor at the University of California-Irvine, is a researcher of social theory, performance aesthetics, and a research methodology known as transversal poetics (he is also a playwright, director, and cofounder of the Transversal Theater Company), which is exploring ideas of the transverse in performance, theater and literature. Through his research papers and theatre productions, critical strategies are employed as tactical devices merging both textual analyses with performative exercises that result in unique and potentially reactionary responses. He uses his critical case studies (mainly those originating from his research into Shakespeare and that era), as a kind of fundamental map to mark and demonstrate areas within live-performance practices that can cause radical and reformative change in performance, theatre and cultural theory. Work such as this, is exemplary of the more recent debates and questions that surround art-criticism and inter-textuality in contemporary art world. Books such as *After Criticism*

explore the blurring of the boundaries between theoretical interpretation and artistic practice in a bid to take seriously the consequences for a critical writing within the space of the art-work itself.... belief that the embodied conditions of interpretation are best explored through the production of novel narratives of viewer response rather than subsumed within already extant theoretical structures of interpretation...This innovative and challenging approach offers new ways of thinking about the relationship between the bodily experience of art, whether understood in physical, social and/or psychic terms, and the production of critical narratives. Debate focuses on the consequences of immersion of the spectator within the space of the work and whether this prompts a dissolution of critical judgement or in fact encourages a productive opening out of critical subjectivity to its sensual, psychic, and embodied conditions.(a) provocative interrogation of how we think about and experience art.[21]

I am writer, artist, critic, performer, explorer, navigator, sculptor, poet, interpretator, narrator, spectator, hunter, translator, map-maker, theorist, activist, catalyst, provoker, instigator, documentor, fundamentalist, provocateur, receptor, channeler, gazer, manipulator, rhythm maker, cake-baker, ingredient shaker, escalator, evaporator..... "When language arrives at its own edge, what it finds is not positivity that contradicts it, but the void that will efface it. Into that void it must go...."[22]

And where there is a void, there is also an opening. Let the lines of 'becoming' advance. Arise, go forth and multiply![23]

Debbie Guinnane is a visual artist, researching into cross-disciplinary mediums that try to accommodate experience with an automatic response in live art. Guinnane is currently pursuing a Masters in Visual Arts Practice (MAVIS), IADT, Dublin, after graduating with an Honours Degree in Sculpture & Combined Media in 2008 from the Limerick School of Art & Design. She has performed, exhibited and written both nationally and internationally. Guinnane is a member of *pre form* which was founded in 2012 by Ciara McKeon, Debbie Guinnane, Alan Magee, Olivia Hassett, Tanya O’Keeffe and Alan Delmar to practice live, improvised, collaborative performance as well as support each other’s work through peer critique. *pre form* work space is currently supported by RUA RED arts centre Tallaght (2013/2014). *pre form* have also been awarded the Dublin City Council Incubation Space Award, which we will commence in the LAB in October 2013.

[1] Taken from Jacques Derrida essay on Rousseau from *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, by The John Hopkins University Press, 1974, USA. (1967), “there is nothing outside the text” (*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*).

[2] Helene Cixous, *Live Theory*, Ian Blyth, and Susan Sellers, 2004, Continuum New York (page unknown).

[3] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, London UK, 1993 (page unknown).

[4] Jürgen Fritz, *Exploring Performance Art*, IPA Istanbul 2012.

[5] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, Verlag der Autoren, Frankfurt am Main 1999, S. 245, as written in Jürgen Fritz, *Exploring Performance Art*.

[6] Jürgen Fritz, *The Horse Will Make You Happy*, IPA Istanbul 2012.

[7] Ibid.

[8] R.S. June 2, 1972, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, Edited by Jack Flam, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1996. p. 61.

[9] <http://www.ubu.com/concept/>

[10] *Affect/Affection: (Spinoza) L'affect is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experimental state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act.* Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translation and foreword by Brian Massumi, Continuum International Publishing Group, London and New York, 1987, p. xvii.

[11] Helene Cixous, *Live Theory*.

[12] Pamela M. Lee: *Illegibility: Unleserlichkeit* 100 Notes-100 Thoughts Documenta 13.

[13] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 311 (bold font author’s own addition).

[14] Deleuze and Guattari *Anti-Oedipus, Capital and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Continuum International Publishing Group, London and New York, 1984, p. 4.

[15] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 78.

[16] Ibid. p. 7.

[17] The phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan was first expressed in his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, published in 1964.

[18] ‘Transversal’, with consideration to Bryan Reynolds concepts on transversal within both performance and language: *The Devil's House, "or worse": Transversal Power and Antitheatrical Discourse in Early Modern England*, Theatre Journal 49.2 (1997) 143-167.

[19] Introduction, *Intertextuality*, by Graham Allen, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, Second edition 2011.

[20] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Translation and Foreword by Brian Massumi, p. xiv (bold font author’s own addition).

[21] Introduction: *The Paradoxes of Criticism*, by Gavin Butt. Book; *After Criticism*, New Response to Art and Performance, edited by Gavin Butt, 2005 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd. (UK, USA, AUS).

[22] *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, By Michel Foucault. Edited by James D. Faubion, Paul Rabinov Series Editor, 1998 by The New Press USA.

[23] Genesis 9:7 “*And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein*”.