2015

Z Axis Follies

Adam Collignon

Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd

Part of the Art Practice Commons, Fine Arts Commons, and the Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons

© The Author

Downloaded from https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/3887

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.
Z AXIS FOLLIES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
in the Department of Sculpture + Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

ADAM COLIGNON

BFA, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, 2005
MFA, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015

Director: Gregory Volk, Assistant Professor Department of Sculpture + Extended Media

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May, 2015
Contents

Introduction to the nature of text / mechanisms of reading
Text as performance
Body / object as prism
Instrument interaction as surfactant / surface active agent
Instrument interaction as simultaneity of past / present / future
Performance as destroyer
Performance as multiplier
Documentation as instrument interaction
Body / object as cavern of prisms
Transcriber as apt aesthetic mechanism
When the transcript precedes the transcriber
(desire’s void and its ilk)
Word as frame
Mouth as window
Abstract

This document will detail the nature of performance / object interaction, and the roles of documentation and language in this interaction. In addition, I will explore the body / object as a site of multiplicities, the quality of simultaneity in the appearance and apprehension of such multiplicities, and traverse the triumphs and travails of the body / object’s journey from one state of being to the next.
Within this text there are windows

Within the window of how text performs there are windows

Within the window of windows there are windows

Wonder of wonders: a wellspring of windows
most
most
mast    moist
master   measure
muster   miss
move     massage
mauve    masseuse
muff     mousse
miffed   mouse
move     muse
move     must
This document is performance.

Not performance document.

You are performing the act of looking and reading, however your experience tells you, and with what equipment your culture provides.

We are not in the same place at the same time, but we are performing together.
I write
You read
Who is talking, who is receiving; a compact between one who makes and one who witnesses. Both assume a common currency of understanding -- if I am to write, it's assumed I will write legibly, in a recognizable form, in words that adhere to quotidian standards of transmission. If I write illegibly, my status as writer is suspect, and you question your status as reader. When the rules of transmission slide, the performance begins. We become aware of our surroundings. Who is doing the speaking? Who is listening? Where in space is this conversation taking place? If the agreement has dissolved, what kind of alien language is this?

This is when the performance begins.
This is not an endorsement of poor writing skills.
Rather, there is a special skill in elision, one that the performer excels at, is disposed toward, spends time studying and perfecting.

Elision / Omission
Transmission

The dissolution of boundaries between things to reveal their closeness, their relationship to one another. The multiplicity concealed by the illusion of their singularity

The body is a site of many multiplicities.
The body is a prism

Face : mask, figure : form, thought : gesture

Multiplicity

Rhythm and tone and word are indistinguishable

Performer and environment intertwine

Performer is othered and intertwines with itself.

Human animal
Human human
Human object
Human vapor
Human void
Human tool
Me and my shadows

Me and my shadows

Me and my shadows

Me and my shadows

Me and my shadows
In acknowledging the permeability of boundaries, and their peculiar role in generating my experience of the world, I also celebrate their necessity. On one hand, all things, thoughts, and energies muddy together in an unquantifiable mass of interrelation. At this point the word “relationship” breaks down, as do most notions of language. A relationship requires one thing to be “othered”; as we are taught: a “subject” and an “object”. One who speaks and one who listens. On this end of the spectrum all is turbulence.

On the other is science, an art tasked with the creation of boundaries. A scientist always systematizes. Even when the scientist synthesizes, the aim is the creation of a new system. A scientist’s duty is to distinguish one thing from another, to efficiently mathematize the exact breadth and width of an entity, to calculate and codify its origins and terminations. It has been said the scientist is a cutter, slicing the environment with a fine tool and removing the chunk to storage. This has also been said of the institutions extending from science, such as the museum.
turbulence

\[ \text{science} \]
performance

object
This is admittedly an understatement.

But it gives us an interesting way to talk about things:

Per.form.ance

per

form

ance
Like perambulate: to walk *through or around*, and perceive: to gain knowledge *through the senses*, performance has developed as a word with *throughness* built into it; the throughness of form.

When I'm performing well with an instrument, say a jackhammer, or a scissors, or a guitar, it can be said that I perform well because the resistance between my body and the instrument is eased, or not existing at all. It can be said there is little to no surface tension between myself and the instrument. Performance as surfactant / surface active agent. In the truest sense of performance I am puncturing the form of the instrument. The instrument's form now includes my body along with it. I have become one with the instrument.
At this point there's no telling where I begin and the instrument ends.

This is my joy as a human.
As the myth was told to me, Prometheus’s brother Epimetheus was given the task of assigning qualities to all living things. Each creature received a quality such as swiftness or strength, and was equipped with fur or armor to protect against the forces of the environment. All creatures, as a result, had the elements of their survival built-in to their being.

Humans, however, had been overlooked and had to be given an equipment that was external to their being. Prometheus provided this in the form of fire, Hephaestus’ skill of metalworking, and Athena’s gift of the arts.

I experience joy by experiencing life the way the rest of the world does naturally -- a fully formed being entwined with the equipment of my survival. My fortune as a human is that I receive this joy with a quality of awareness; when I break through the boundaries of the instrument, I can appreciate it. Appreciation is something I’m equipped with.
The instrument itself carries a dense history -- the origin of its materials and necessity, the proclivities of its maker, others before who have similarly communed with it. In reaching a state of performance with an instrument I also commune with its interdimensional past.

Sometimes I know the instrument so well I can redefine its use. While I make contact with the denseness of its past, I can at the same time be altering the shape of its future. Instrument interaction as simultaneity of past / present / future
Fümms bö wö tää zää Uu,
pögiff,
kwii Ee. 1
Ooooooooooooooooooo, 6
dll rrrrr beehee bö
dll rrrrr beehee bö fümms bö,
rrrrr beehee bö fümms bö wö,
beeehee bö fümms bö wö tää,
bö fümms bö wö tää zää,
fümms bö wö tää zää Uu: 5

primera parte:
tema 1:
Fümms bö wö tää zää Uu,
pögiff,
kwii Ee. 1

tema 2:
Dedesnn nn rrrrr,
li Ee,
mpiff tillff too,
tillll,
Jüü Kaa? 2

tema 3:
Rinnzekete bee bee nnz krr müü?
ziuu ennze, ziuu rinnz-
krrmüü, 3
rakete bee bee, 3a
tema 4
Rrummpff tillff toooo?

Kurt Schwitters
from Ursonate

Fümms bö wö tää zää Uu,
Uu zee tee wee bee fümms. ü1
rakete rinnzekete
rakete rinnzekete
rakete rinnzekete
rakete rinnzekete
rakete rinnzekete
Beeeee
bö ü3+
3a
fö
bömö
fümmsbö
bömörö
fümmsböö
bömöötää
fümmsböötää
bömöötääzää
fümmsböötääzää
bömöötääzääääUu
fümmsböötääzääääUu
bömöötääzääääUu pö
fümmsböötääzääääUu pö
bömöötääzääääUu pögö
fümmsböötääzääääUu pögö
bömöötääzääääUu pögiff
fümmsböötääzääääUu pögiff
kwiiEe.
The -ance suffix indicates a noun of action. A thing doing something. What does a thing inside performance do? It shows up.

It appears.

A thing's performance is its appearance before another thing. Like myself and the instrument, I perform when I appear before the instrument.

I am present with the instrument.

Similarly, when an actor performs, the actor appears before the audience. The actor's performance is the actor's showing up before the audience.

The actor need not do anything, simply appear.

Appearing is harder than one might think.

My friend says the actor's special skill is also the skill of the conjurer -- one who is talented at eliding basic principles of distance to summon from the audience a tangible sense of community ... The summoner brings into the room a being from another world, a world that didn't / doesn't / won't exist outside of this room. People witness to supernatural acts commonly say, “What happened in that room last night...” or,

“There was something in the air...”

Instrument interaction as simultaneity of past / present / future. Performer as summoner of appearances.

“All moments are contained in the singular moment” is the same as saying:

“There is no singular moment.”
Appearance is part of many creation rituals.

In bringing things into the world of the visible, it is important to remember that which is destroyed.

The ritual of showing is also the ritual of destruction.

In travelling from one world to the next,

From the unseen world to the seen,

A sheath is torn.
Instrument interaction as fundamentally destructive / violent / consumptive. Performance as destroyer.
In order for a thing to appear before another thing, it must first travel through many processes / spheres of interrelation.

In traveling from one sphere of relation to the next, from the unseen world to the seen, a thing experiences change.

As in the documentation of a live performance, something of the performance is altered upon its capture and replay by other media.

The performance retains enough of its essence to “other” the document

The document is its own.

Re: presentation.

Performance carries its own shadow / echoes itself in the spaces it creates.
Burnt Norton

I

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility

Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.
There they were, dignified, invisible,
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.

Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

T. S. Eliot

from Four Quartets
Documentation as instrument interaction.

When one documents, one kneads the original material into new material.

In this process, the introduction of new gaseous spaces and the removal of gases from the original space.

There is confusion, consolidation, and crystallization.

con  fusion

It is said the crystal can reproduce from within, is asexual, is born with its own mate. Like a worm, a crystal is self-perpetuating.

Instrument interaction as hermaphroditic and masturbative, a covert and singular communion with primal / internal other.

The object cums within itself / into itself.
The object buds itself

The object produces fractalized parallels and sheds itself.
infinite dimension

radical dispersion
Body / object as cavern of prisms
Transcriber as apt mechanism

In this system of transcriptions --

translations, transmutations, transmissions --
transfixations, transubstantiations

of bringing things into this world from another world
Time naturally plays an important role in these processes.

Within the nature of these slippages / transmissions, de / reformations, there is the possibility of chronological slippages as well.

Anachronistic appearance //
the possibility of the transcript preceding the transcriber //

The document preceding the object or gesture documented

(desire's void and its ilk)
In the spirit of simultaneity, multiplicity, mimesis and self-replication,
when giving an object / gesture / moment / transcriptive movement its own set of autonomies,
it could be possible to say these things are born with their own set of desires,
that they are in fact filled with the desires of their own self-perpetuation or destruction,
and are made visible by the desires of the environment in which they appear.

A collective longing within the environment summons their arrival, and ushers others to concealment.

In this sense,
the text here has come about not only because of my desire to write it,
but equally due to your desire to read it.

Your reading is my writing.
Your consumption is productive.

The void of desire is abundant fullness.
We join spokes together in a wheel,
but it is the center hole
that makes the wagon move.

We shape clay into a pot,
but it is the emptiness inside
that holds whatever we want.

We hammer wood for a house,
but it is the inner space
that makes it livable.

We work with being,
but non-being is what we use.

From *Tao Te Ching*
Tr: Stephen Mitchell
I write
You read
turbulence = science
performance = object
One begets the other.

One cannot exist without the other.

They are distinct / can be distinguished,

But their boundaries are unclear.

A word,
its letters, intonations, histories and forms
are a frame.

Desire for this word determines its character, and foreshadows its future use.

The word's use -- its sphere of interrelation -- defines its location, describes the word as sculptural material,
capable of maintaining locality while activating spaces across vast distance.

The word is born with an objectness that can be related to performance.

Word as object is disposed toward elision, of acknowledging boundaries and traversing in / around / through them

Of retaining and shedding in order to remain relevant to our cultural bodies
Instrument interaction as saying.
The void that opens when a mouth speaks:

A tunnel to our reflective darknesses.

Wonder of wonders: a wellspring of windows.
Vita

B. 1980, St. Louis, MO

BFA 2005 Minneapolis College of Art and Design
MFA 2015 Virginia Commonwealth University