

12.4 On Techne abstracts

The Revelation of Techne: an anatomical theatre

Gianna Bouchard

This essay explores Heidegger's philosophical analysis of techne in relation to the performer's body and its anatomical demonstration during performance. Drawing on Heidegger's formulation that techne is about presencing truth through bringing an object forth into the world and visibility, the essay examines the potential of utilising a particular medical technology in performance in order to draw attention to and reveal systems of relation that might otherwise go unnoticed and unremarked. Through a consideration of Societas Raffaello Sanzio's production of *Giulio Cesare* (2001), where fibre optic technology is employed to reveal the labour of voice production, the essay contends that, in Heidegger's terms, the correspondence between text, body and speech is strikingly displayed by knowledge being explicitly demonstrated as truth in a phenomenological arena resonant with the anatomy theatre.

The Theatre Soundscape and the End of Noise

Ross Brown

Axiom: consideration of the soundscape is becoming a key dramaturgy of postmodern theatre and the design and craft of theatre sound a significant feature of its technê.

Whilst recent historiographies of auditory culture proclaim sound reproduction and the changing aurality accompanying the acousmatic objectification of sound as emblems of Modernism, I suggest that twentieth century Theatre practice, in its awkward attempts to incorporate recorded 'sound effects', was alienated by the sonic revolution. To explain this, I offer a brief history of twentieth century theatre sound wherein the literary play, as the contemplated art object, had itself become detached from the materiality of the technê of its production. At a time when sound was becoming commodified, the worldly materiality of sound and the essentially noisy sonic environment of theatre had become aesthetically and dramaturgically problematic.

I go on to consider the analogical theory that aurality suffered under Enlightenment rationalist processes, which belonged to the eye, whereas Postmodern processes belong more to the ear. I propose that in the technê of the postmodern theatre soundscape, we might now be witnessing not only a new era of aurality in theatre but an explorative modelling of new ways of 'ear' thinking which accept meaning in the coincidence of any phenomena that might once have been set in binary opposition as (wanted) signal and (unwanted) noise [i] If the shift from (noise–reductive) Enlightenment processes of segregation towards holistic modes of reception seems particularly to have invigorated the technê of theatre sound, I suggest that it is emblematic of a more general postmodern shift from the signal/noise binary (as witnessed in the postmodern theatrical function of distracting video, overt artifice, or performer celebrity.) In its acceptance as essential to complete meaning, noise ceases to be unwanted and ceases to exist.

[i] I use the term noise in the sense of Murray Schafer's fourth definition: 'a disturbance in any signalling system' (which I contend also broadly accounts for his definitions 1-3, see: Murray Schafer 273.)

Pods, Tubes, Plants, Motor Oil and Other Survival Machines: A Syncourse with Claudia Bucher

Meiling Cheng

This project approaches the theme of techne via a double route. Thematically, the article engages with the U.S. artist Claudia Bucher's performance works, which exemplify the creative potential of techne as that which makes present astounding sights. Stylistically, the text explores a different way of organizing a dialogic exchange between the author, a viewer-interpreter who initiated an inquiry, and Bucher, the artist-performer who responded.

Named in the genre of syncourse, this essay experiments with a particular discursive *techne* to document a multi-level exchange. It comprises a critical assessment of Bucher's oeuvre, a composite interview text assembled from various face-to-face and electronic encounters between the author and the artist, and a closing allegory that evokes Bucher's artistic vision and mimics the spirit of this syncourse.

The concept of a syncourse chimes in with the paper's argument that the viewer-interpreter and the artist-performer are bound by a synthetic frame, which derives from their shared experiential matrix of a displayed action. Thenceforth, the artist and the responsive viewer may choose to form a dynamic partnership in the post-mortem act of disseminating the synergy of their mnemonic union, which occurred in the name of a live action that has receded from actual sight into the virtual realm of recollections--visual, aural, discursive, and otherwise. The textual evidence of this union, both vigorous and evanescent, appears as a syncourse, a not-quite-interview that speaks in more than one voice and imagines with more than two minds.

Techné, Technology, Technician: the creative practices of the mastercraftsperson
Nick Hunt and Susan Melrose

In this paper we attempt to begin to theorise the creative practices (*techne*) of the theatre technician: those who explore and implement the technological apparatus of the performance (in professional terms, the staff of the lighting, sound, stage, workshop, costume, and stage management departments). We promote a view of the technician that reconnects the technologies of theatre with the arts of theatre, and the expertise of the technician within a network of human relationships formed by all of those who operate creatively within theatre. We argue that Aristotelian values, still influential today, prioritise the hierarchical, the universalising and the abstracting tendencies of art, science and philosophy over the pragmatic specifics of craft and technology, and that the operation of these values in the academy, together with the particular evolution of Performance Studies, have resulted in the discursive erasure of the work of the technician from performance writing. We go on to consider the nature of creative practices in professional registers, arguing that what superficially appears to be the procedural and combinatorial manipulation of a system, may also be creative when the system involved is complex rather than merely complicated, and that what we term the *production organism* is a complex system.

We conclude that the work of the theatre technician can better be understood on the basis of an epistemic shift, *away from* an understanding of the manipulation of technology as essentially instrumental and procedural, and *toward* an understanding of the qualitative judgements and imaginative role of expert theatre-technical practitioners operating within a complex system. We propose in addition that the theatre technician plays the role of dreamer-and-maker, in order to redefine some of the interrelationships between the technological, artistic and human aspects of theatre production.

In parallel to this consciously theoretical thrust, we present an 'evidence' thread which deconstructs an exemplary incident drawn from professional practice in order to provide a complementary perspective

Making Cruising Dwelling: Motion as shelter in the Work of David Wojnarowicz
Melissa Jacques

In 'Making Cruising Dwelling: Motion as Shelter in the Work of David Wojnarowicz', the artist's memoir, photographs, and collages are read together as a fragmented performance of resistance. Through his mobilization of the figure of the alien, Wojnarowicz challenges the illusory cohesiveness of what he calls the preinvented world—the human-crafted world of corrupt governments, organized religion and corporate interests—in an attempt to make that world habitable for those who simply do not fit. One way to understand this challenge is as a struggle against the 'will to architecture'. Rather than seek to establish new boundaries or new models of

inclusiveness, Wojnarowicz represents a world characterized by change, always in flux, always in motion. The terms making, cruising, and dwelling therefore represent a constellation of actions that signify both the theory and the practice of the artist's interventions. Wojnarowicz refuses to accept the terms of the preinvented world; however, his work is never simply a rejection of that world, but an engagement that exceeds the schematic oppositions of art and life, knowledge and craft, gay and straight. Referring to such disparate acts as making and exhibiting art, cruising abandoned warehouses and the American desert for sex, and exploring the forest that existed on the edge of the suburban hell within which he was raised, the terms making, cruising and dwelling represent a way of being in the world that is both affirmative and destructive.

The Nameless and the Named

Graham Ley

The 'named' of ancient Greek performance were the actors and composers/playwrights, with productions also lending kudos to the khoregos, who paid for the training of the chorus. Yet theatrical performance also depended on the skills, or technai, of the nameless who created the costumes, fabrics, properties, pigments, masks and other material means of production. The industrial system of ancient Athens was composed of specialist workshops, ergasteria, with labour supplied by slaves, freed slaves, resident aliens and citizens, both men and women. Some of the techniques for working materials are known, but others are hidden, and only hard materials (stone, metal, terracotta) survive well, while wool clothing, leather and wood are perishable. A key figure in theatrical production was the skeuopoios, who is associated with mask-making by the comic playwright Aristophanes. Techne is linked to episteme in Greek thinking about specialist skills and knowledge, and ancient production relied on a combination of technai, which included the arts of the actor and the playwright/composer/choreographer in addition to material skills. Costumes and objects may have been made or found, and tragedy and comedy are notably distinctive in their use of the 'everyday', while comic scripts reveal marked differences in the expectations they have of the skeuopoios. The technology of the ancient theatre is limited, and relies on the fascination of movement in the absence of direct human agency. The act of performance contained the work of all classes at Athens, and not just the named.

Elemental Spaces and Elemental Performatives

Michael LeVan

This essay considers the primordial phenomenon of the elemental as a way to understand the encounter between performance *technè* and nature objects. I take the work of Andy Goldsworthy and Joseph Beuys as two examples expressing the conditions for elemental performance. The elements, including space, movement, duration, and warmth, are central concerns for these performative sculptors.

Revealing Embodiment: Heidegger's *Techne* interpreted through Performance Processes in Interactive Systems.

Susan Kozel

This discussion of *techne* is based on reading Martin Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* (1955) through the practice of creating digital performance work. By questioning technology and obtaining a clearer sense of *techne*, I am questioning embodiment and obtaining a clearer sense of the wider implications of performance processes within responsive environments. The projects that enter into dialogue with Heidegger are *immanence* (2005) and *whisper* (2003-2005): both create a convergence of bodies and digital technologies, and are interdisciplinary collaborations involving artists, engineers and computer scientists.

The discussion relies on rejecting the suggestion that there is a duality between *techne* and *episteme*, yet differentiating between *techne* and technologies. Deeper levels of bodily knowledge and the physical arts have a place in *techne*; and improvisation, like technologies, is a mode of revealing within *techne*. Heidegger's consideration of *techne* and technology is used to chart a different course through the terminology swamp around the artistic use of digital technologies: based on the role for responsibility in bringing something into being, I make a case for using the terms *responsive* and *responsivity* over *interactive* and *interactivity*. The discussion of *responsivity* allows me to make a transition to a consideration of ethics within the context of responsive systems, which I do in the final section briefly introducing ideas from Emmanuel Levinas.

In conclusion, I suggest that *techne* comes to the rescue of technologies. If we are no longer doomed to be trapped within the codes and conventions of a narrowly construed technological existence, nor forced to become a Luddite and reject it, then there is scope for finding new way to work with existing technologies and, in turn, for designing different interfaces and devices for future generations of technology. Out of these can emerge new knowledges and practices, as well as new ethical paradigms.

On *Techne*: Performance and the Human-Crafted Environment

Simon Macklin

This article is focused on the relationship between time and space in human crafted environments. By choosing the lens of mirrored illusions, as developed in the mid-19th century, it seeks to investigate how the critical languages and sites chosen as a basis for the created environment inform the mode of creation and reception of these illusions.

This paper sees the concept that the experience of human crafted environments has a processual delay created in the flux of creation or crafting: in simple terms a concept that part of the interplay in the performance of a human crafted environment is the creation of an immediate often imperceptible past.

'Mirror illusions', it is argued, seek to use the human understanding of time as the mode for creating visual fascination. In simplistic terms, human beings in constructing time seek to place the unknown in the future and the known in the past and so by reversing the natural order, magicians are able to create a temporal flux within which they hide their illusions.

By investigating this intersection of the notion of past in both traditions of *techne*, one mechanical and the other discursive, this article seeks to shed light on the interplay of these worlds in the

understanding how performative play constructs perceptual qualities in the human crafted environment before it is perceived.
For as the saying goes, "If you're looking for the illusion, it has probably already happened."

Making Space, Marking Time: Stationhouse Opera's Mare's Nest **Richard Malcolm**

Recent accounts of multimedia performance tend to be organised around a more or less nuanced opposition between live body and the electronic image, echoing the postmodern problematics of 'derealisation' written by theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio. Analysing work via a postmodern paradigm of binary collapse – the infiltration of a virtual ontology into the hitherto 'immediate' realm of performance – tends to lead to generalisation that neglects the complexities of the interaction between live performance and media technology. I begin by proposing a 'prosthetic' approach to multimedia performance, one that focusses on the specific configuration and concrete effects of the interface between stage and screen in particular works. I go on to recount my experience of watching Stationhouse Opera's Mare's Nest, concentrating on the ways in which this performance fractures, re-shapes and layers space and time, and describing the effects of the temporal paradoxes this performance world provokes. I address the plays of synchronisation and desynchronisation that occur, as well as the effect upon my apprehension of the performers' presence. Across the article, I am at pains to mark my physical engagement with this 'virtual' space-time, as a response to Virilio's assertion that electronic media always act to disengage the subject from lived experience.

Projection and transaction: the spatial operation of scenography **Joslin McKinney**

Drawing on a piece of practice-led research, this paper reflects on the process of crafting and perceiving images from a spatial perspective. The scenographic process is figured as a transaction of symbolic exchange. The images it seeks to evoke are drawn from the material of the everyday and projected through manipulations of space, form, movement and colour. The work is experienced haptically as well as optically and a spatial understanding of the process of reception and transaction helps identify the operation of scenography as dynamic and open. Luigi Prestinenza Puglisi's consideration of the 'projective relations' of art and reality, can be applied to scenography and configured as a series of projections in a never ending game of reflections where translation, conceptualisation, metaphorisation of an object into another medium 'assumes new connotations and interpretative openings'¹

Art processes and projects nature in an attempt to explore an experience of the world. At the same time the desire to recover the natural or to surrender to feeling and pure sensations of the material exerts a powerful influence. But as Gabriella Giannachi has pointed out, nature has come to incorporate the human-made and both 'includes the human and is defined by it...it is both our 'homely' habitat and our *unheimlich*, uncanny surroundings'.² The projections of scenography oscillate between the comfort of images we can feel part of and the provocation of the unfamiliar which makes us aware of ourselves as viewers and of the world beyond the performance.

Consideration of the spatial operation of scenography leads not only to the consideration of what modes of understanding are in play when we make or view scenography but also what insights and new perspectives on the world might be explored through the medium of spatiality.

¹ Luigi Prestinenza Puglisi, *Hyper Architecture: Spaces in the Electronic Age* trans. Lucinda Byatt (Basel, Boston and Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1999) 40

² Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres: An introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 69

The Means Whereby: My Body Encountering Choreography via Trisha Brown's Locus
Megan Nicely

In her early work Locus (1975), post-modern choreographer Trisha Brown defined an invisible cube as a technology for guiding the body's pathways in time and space. Originally developed as a way for Brown to teach herself her own movement, Locus is now rarely performed onstage. However, the piece is still embodied and transferred, circulating as a dance 'warm-up' and form for practicing the Alexander Technique in workshops taught by former company member Shelly Senter.

In this article, I approach Locus from several perspectives: Brown's original dance, the choreographic score and body-scale it creates, my own experience learning the dance, and the function of language. I map this varied terrain, then query the historical trajectory this piece of embodied technology builds as it is taught, remembered, and taught again. Post-modern dance's relationship to 1960s minimal art and artist theories on scale, theatricality, and the role of performer and spectator allow me to further complicate Brown's device and my own knowledge of it.

Expanding approaches to academic writing, a privileged form of knowledge transmission, is equally integral to my inquiry. Here, I mobilize such Alexander principles as 'non-doing,' 'direction,' and 'means whereby' in an attempt to avoid the fixed conclusions so fundamental to the academic essay. Instead, I note these moments of tension between 'doing' and 'allowing' by interrupting my main text with two items: Artifacts -- which are findings based on how two pieces of fixed information reveal a contradiction that is 'solved' by my embodied knowledge of Brown's movement -- and Thoughts -- which are personal contradictions and an attempt to reconcile them in my dancing and writing. By opening up this space between thought and action, technique and choreography, and warming up and dancing, a space for dialogue becomes available for today's dancer and scholar. This essay works toward this coordination.

Oblivion
Daniel Watt

This essay deals with the discrepancy between a technology of knowledge, which becomes demonstrable or *monstrates* itself, and that of poetic thought, which withdraws, eludes, and calls another form of techne into being: the craft of revealing. The essay explores Heidegger's essays 'What Calls for Thinking', 'On The Way to Language', 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Derrida's essay '*Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand*' alongside Blanchot's *Awaiting Oblivion*, Beckett's *Company*, the work of Tadeusz Kantor and the hand written signs of Forced Entertainment. These works are events within the performance of revealing that articulate the imperative of techne as that which is both 'at hand', random, disintegrating and ephemeral but also integral to the manifestation of a work of art as that which resists the movement from hermeneutics to epistemology (so often from interpretation to ossification), enacting another mode of thought, experienced as the oblivion of knowledge, the irreducible gap that marks the event of art (the Orphic Gaze).

The paper takes place as a dialogue between two beings in the dark (perhaps between practice and theory, *techne* and *episteme*) exploring a space that is unknown, and unknowable to both of them (as in Beckett's *Company*). The paper seeks to explore the space of writing as fetishised technological construct; as typographical medium (spaced by machine) rendered, proofed, and clean. But also as handwritten, disordered, human, and in proximity to being. The aesthetics of the 'to hand' will always be of self absorption, oblivion, masturbation, and mirroring. This work, of revealing and aesthetics, is performative and generates a central antagonism (oblivious to the *matters of fact* of techne, of craft, of the dangers of technology and that which is 'at hand') that this paper seeks to address, discuss, and forget.

A dwelling in the screen, at least for a little time

Joanne Whalley and Lee Miller

This article focuses upon Whalley and Miller's various practical explorations of Marc Augé's concept of the 'non-place', which is typified by the shopping mall, the motorway service station and the airport lounge. According to Augé, in avoiding Michel de Certeau's 'space narratives' that intersect and organise space (Augé 1995:84), the non-place functions as a liminal space, which is traversed, but never fully occupied. Whalley and Miller have created a series of Practice as Research projects that variously seek to qualify this articulation of the non-place.

Whalley and Miller's overall conceptual framework includes an exploration of Bourdieu's 'habitus', particularly in relation to its support of the lived-through experience of the users of the non-place. This article goes on to explore how performance practice might be used to unsettle the habitus that reinforces the users experience of the non-place. Further to this, they suggest that the habitus created by the spatial practices engaged in by the users of the non-place result in an operational understanding of Augé's abstract articulation. Thus, they argue that any counter to this articulation must be framed within the context of said spatial practices. This article considers how the practical incursions of Whalley and Miller might provide an, albeit temporary, counter to the dominant conceptualisation of the space.