

Project profile

Title

Intimacy as event

Brief description

A workshop devised to explore aspects of intimacy and involving participation in a directed performance-experiment and a discussion.

Who

Performance-experiment devised and directed by Lauren Goode (workshop leader)

Workshop participants and guest artists:

Ines Carrasco, Anna Casey, Helene Cooper, Léo Geoffriau, Mariella Greil, Fabrizio Manco (live sound interventions), Louisa Martin, Helen Palmer, Maddy Shrimpton, Sarah-Louise Spies, Jillian Wallis; and Rachel Gomme (discussion chair).

Editing and production of material documenting the workshop: Lauren Goode

This workshop was part of the *INTIMACY Across Visceral and Digital Performance* event programme, co-directed by Maria Chatzichristodoulou and Rachel Zerihan.

Where and when

8 December 2007. 14:00-18:00 hrs. Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Summary

The workshop comprised of three parts:

1. A brief introduction explaining the concerns of interest at stake and the simple parameters to be followed in order to realise the performance-experiment in its particularity, as well as demonstrating the movement-device. (Duration: 20 mins)

2. The performance-experiment, a durational and movement-based intervention, taking place in public, along the corridors of Goldsmiths main building quadrangle and video-recorded. The performance-experiment was devised to explore: visibility and invisibility of intimacy; possibility and impossibility of intimacy; conscious and non-conscious intimacy; and public intimacy in specific vicinities. Participants needed to be willing to carry out quite precisely a simple movement-operation in a disciplined manner in order to realise the experiment. (Duration: 30 mins).

3. A chaired round-table discussion, Rachel Gomme was invited as a special guest artist to chair the discussion. (Duration: 60 mins).

About the durational and movement-based intervention

(The following is an extract from Lauren's submission proposal).

Movement-device: The directed participative experiment involves activating a simple and meditative movement-device that requires individuals to move along in pairs, in silence and extremely slowly (so slowly that at first glance they would appear to an observer as if they were standing still). The movement-device entails directly facing each other and being in close proximity, eg over-stepping a spatial distance of say, two figures comfortably facing each other to converse. The figures will not be touching (eg their outlines should form silhouettes).

Corridor space: I have undertaken initial collaborative exploration with this movement-device with one figure-pair in a specific outdoor space that formed a corridor – which is a key aspect. To realise the envisaged work I am proposing around 16 figure-pairs carrying out the durational movement operation along the corridors of Goldsmiths main building quadrangle (say, 4 pairs to each quadrangle corridor). At the slow transit speed, it would take a single figure-pair about 30 minutes to journey down one side of the quadrangle corridor.

Durational: It will be important that the figure-pairs are encountered by others using the corridor space as usual, as the image and affect of the work requires what results from a montage of movement durations. The usual movements along the corridor will be disrupted and register their intimacy into a co-appearance that is striking against the performers imposition of intimate realms. It is intended to realise a rendering visible of co-simultaneous intimacy in public space. Also other layers of reading will be generated that suggest questions of the possibility and impossibility of subjective shared intimacy; and raise questions relating to representation and identity.

Sound: I may collaborate with sound artists. If so, the intention would be for the corridors' sound space to be minimally disrupted, eg by interventions that, perhaps, only the pair-figures will hear as they become more aware of the sound space during their slow acoustic journey.

Moving-image: It is intended to record the performance-experiment, edit the documentation and, depending upon the results publish as moving-image work online.

Links

INTIMACY Across Visceral and Digital Performance Goldsmiths, University of London

- Full programme: <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/intimacy/programme.php>

Artists' profile pages for Lauren Goode, Fabrizio Manco and Helen Palmer:

- <http://www.liveartgardeninitiative.org.uk/artists.html>

Artists' profile page for Rachel Gomme:

- <http://www.newworknetwork.org.uk/userinfo.php?uid=529>

Documentation

A recording of the discussion and two recordings of the performance-experiment are available (mpeg files) and can be accessed online:

- <http://www.liveartgardeninitiative.org.uk/Movies.html>

Project profile (this summary includes the workshops *Introduction*) – download here:

- <http://www.liveartgardeninitiative.org.uk/projectprofiles.html>

Article (*forthcoming*). An article based on an edited version of the discussion transcript.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to all who participated. Special thanks and appreciation also to Rachel Gomme, Helen Palmer, Fabrizio Manco; Adnan Hadzi (Deckspace) and Goldsmiths College for assisting with technical support needs; and especially to Maria Chatzichristodoulou.

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The workshops introduction

By Lauren Goode (workshop leader)

My introduction comprised mainly of explaining the simple and precise parameters to be followed in order to realise the performance-experiment, as my contribution to the discussion that followed would enable me to speak about the interests driving the work.

The following sets out most of what was covered in the introduction that I gave and I hope, along with the discussion recordings, also gives further insight, as when viewing the moving-image documentation it should be born in mind that this published material is work-in-development and is not being presented as a final work outcome.

[Welcome to all and everyone invited to introduce themselves and their current practice interests]

The performance-experiment that you will be participating in involves realising a specific movement-operation device. It is actually one of a set of movement-operation devices that form a body of work. I devised each of these in response to specific vicinities of a park space – Gunpowder Park.¹ During the *Live Art Garden Initiatives* programme of studio and *in situ* practice sessions (2004/05) I carried out experimentation that led to an outcome in the form of a piece of writing which delineates other of the movement-operation devices.² – *Field Foci*, [<http://www.liveartgardeninitiative.org.uk/fieldfoci-v6brx1im.pdf>]. I was unable at the time to realise the body of work as a performance at Gunpowder Park, but the work remains of interest. One of the movement devices was conceived in response to a specific corridor-like pathway vicinity at Gunpowder park. It is this movement device that we will be realising today and transferring to a suitable (although very different) corridor setting within Goldsmiths main building.

For further background about this body of work involving movement-operation devices, I would say that the work is concerned with the experience of meditative aspects of reality and bringing this presence/absence/intimacy to the fore – sharing it by way of realising a kind of amplification of it. To say more in relation to this particular movement device: it works by making a disruption, *ie*, while say a couple of people may be chatting as they walk along the corridor and forming an image that suggests a conventional social reality interface – by the change of positioning, that this movement-device requires pairs journeying along the corridor to sustain and that makes explicit an interlude of non-social communication, it is hoped to bring attention to another dimension/interface of reality.

On another more literal narrative level, situating the piece in a corridor space is an important aspect as the corridor creates a kind of physical linear timeline and yet the movement-operation is concerned with non-linear aspects of reality. In the discussion later I may read some extracts by Manuel Delanda on the ontology of Gilles Deleuze and about concepts of time and reality (the *Aion* and *Chronos*), as these remain a strong influence upon my work.

Regarding the context of the performance-experiment today, the works situation in an institution symbolic of knowledge and then also the aspect of the figures, possibly, signifying an inward-looking: this is not where I seek the work to lead one. I chose this corridor because of its striking length and wanted to film from the position where the camera captured this and caught light through the doorways at the end, so that there is the suggestion of an infinite corridor. So, this corridor is an appropriate space for the piece because of its physical affects and attributes more

'The work is concerned with meditative aspects of reality and bringing this presence/absence/intimacy to the fore...'

¹ Gunpowder Park: <http://www.gunpowderpark.org>

² This writing – Field Foci – is available as a download: <http://www.liveartgardeninitiative.org.uk/fieldfoci-v6brx1im.pdf>

than for any potential lending of extra registers of meaning through narrative or symbolic contextual readings.

Anyway, moving on, for now: I'll introduce what is to be done.

[At this point Helen and I begin a demonstration of the movement-operation. I then ask Jillian to swap place with me and to continue. The movement-operation involves standing in a pair facing each other in close proximity – about 15-20 cm apart, forming a silhouette and not touching – and stepping sideways so that a journey is made. The speed of the movement is very slow and the way in which the step is carried out is so that its style is of no interest. At first glance, those noticing the pairs should think that they are standing facing each other, before tuning into a very slow movement, rather like the calm and stillness of a sea in windless conditions where the current remains flowing.]

'...like the calm and stillness of a sea in windless conditions where the current remains flowing'

When we get to the corridor I will position you in starting places. After we have begun I will be filming until the end. If you need to drop out, please move out of the camera frame. To avoid others thinking the experiment is over, note that when it is over I will come along the corridor and let each pair know – this way should stop any confusion arising and is important as I'm interested in capturing the experiment on film in one take.

Further instructions:

- Don't speak to each other – it's not about trying to communicate or interact with your partner socially in other ways, *eg*, winking or whatever and especially as the performance isn't about 'expressivity'. Also, I don't want to say 'you should be thinking *this* or in this way or *whatever*, as I'm interested in the *whatever* that will just happen. However, although this is not a Butoh walk exercise, I know from exercises which involve acutely slow movement, moving in connection with or from ones sense of breathing, these can result in a listening that involves a heightened awareness or kind of amplification of the surrounding acoustic environment. The intention is that the movement-operation should lend itself to one relaxing into this zone of experience and focus.
- The movement is very simple – note that you need to refrain from any actions with your arms, *eg*, deciding, say, to twiddle your hair or putting your hands in and out of your pockets or answering your mobiles *etc*. Your arms need to be just hanging and relaxed.
- The way of stepping is important – it should be of no interest *ie* as unnoticeable as possible – this isn't the occasion for modifying the step to create any elaborate, however subtle choreographic element. The performance-experiment involves realising a particular movement energy zone, but this is not one that derives from movement style or an approach that is intended to be 'expressive'. Also, I will be filming and do not want to capture the noise of a kind of step that slides the foot along the ground. (In the previous experiment of this movement-device at Gunpowder Park the pathway happened to be shingle and so the audio produced an unintended comical aspect as the pair were dragging their steps).
- Regarding the eyes – if you are feeling rather unrelaxed in this proximity it may help to look to the side rather than directly forwardly (but only with your eyes, as it is necessary that your head remains facing forwards. Alternatively, you may imagine your eyes are seeing the view behind you as you travel along, relaxing the eyes from the focus of what is immediately at your eye-level in front. Really the aim is to arrive in an experience where you embody a relaxed moment in which your eyes focus or de-focus, as it

happens. [For instance, it may be that you happen not to be at eye-level with your partner, so your eyes may be journeying over their neck or chin or collar or the textures of their clothing, as if examining the detailed pattern of a seashell, or the meditation may make you awareness drift from noticing any of these. Of interest is to see how far the movement-operation affect can enable a kind of day-dreamy experience to open up: one that is both shared-in and not shared-in by your partner in proximity].

While the pairs are on their slow journeys there will be minimal sound interventions made using a selection of specific instruments and objects. The sound will be intermittent and the player will change their location along the corridor. [I give a demonstration of particular calming gong-like sounds that an improvised object – a stainless steel tin – can make and that I have chosen to accompany the performance; and two thumb pianos. Fabrizio Manco has also brought a special instrument along and is the artist who improvises using this collection of instruments/objects during the performance-experiment].

[I show the participants a map of the corridor space, the positioning of the pairs and the directions that they will embark from. I explain that I need them to be able to negotiate the line of their journeys without bumping into others or making anything of the situation where two pairs happen to end up on a direct collision path, *ie* that they end up moving apart or adjusting their pathways should just be done in a manner that is simple, not so that it becomes any kind of building-focus tension point within the performance, which should be elsewhere].

Documentation of the *Performance-experiment* and *Discussion*

Images – a selection of frames from the video-recordings are included here. There is moving-image documentation of the performance experiment available online and recordings of the discussion which followed.

Further comment

During the performance-experiment there were a range of sounds that intermittently drifted into the corridor from the adjacent Great Hall space, which happened to work well with what was taking place, although on film these are less noticeable. Contingent sound events were to be part of what was intended. However, I didn't quite have in mind that the general level of noise along the corridor would have become so low that a chance user of another adjacent vicinity having a conversation on a mobile phone very loudly would become so dominant! (And go on for nearly the whole 20 mins!). But this was an experiment... In the edited moving-image documentation I have dimmed this sound track a bit, although this also loses sounds that I liked, and I've added another soundtrack made from improvising with the gong-like sounding object.

With regard to the moving-image documentation. I filmed using two cameras: one was still throughout and the other hand-held and used for various angles. I had envisaged editing two outcome versions from this material, one comprising a mix of the two, but due to what interests me about this work I have not produced the 'mix', but kept material from the two cameras separate in the documentation outcomes. The single take aspect is important to how the movement, *what* takes place and durational experience is captured and I have learnt that in developing this work for future filming I would want cameras from several key places and framings (*ie* some enabling the close-ups), but all fixed position and capturing in one long take respectively.

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