Underneath the Arches:
developing a relational theatre practice in response to a specific cultural site

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Abstract

This thesis applies Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of 'relational aesthetics' to the development of site-specific theatre practice. Focussing on the Arches arts centre in Glasgow, the aim is to suggest ways in which a performance aesthetic can be developed that uses, makes evident and contributes to what Bourriaud describes as the 'space of relations' that exists within every site. Employing a practice-as-research methodology in order to develop a 'relational theatre practice', the performances that comprise half of this thesis aim to respond to and generate relationships not only between theatre and its 'audience', but through a sensitivity to site as historically, geographically, culturally and socially located. Key to this project is an understanding of the boundaries, limitations and exclusions that inevitably come to define theatre practice in a site with as many contradictory and conflicting relationships as a busy arts venue like the Arches.

The findings of this research are primarily dependent on three practice-as-research projects at the venue: *Underneath the Arches* (January 2009), *Midland Street* (September 2009) and *A Work on Progress* (April 2010). These projects have focussed respectively on three key areas of relational theatre practice; the *performance text*, the *theatre audience* and processes of *theatre production*. The written part of the thesis provides an exegesis of this practice, critically reflecting on the relationships that developed through the performances. Combining a practical and theoretical approach, this research interrogates Bourriaud's relational aesthetic model through its application to the development of theatre practice within the specific context of a cultural site. Conversely, it reveals and works with the multiple relationships of the Arches, thereby providing new knowledge about the relational processes through which a cultural site is constituted.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

This thesis is the result of a collaboration between the University of Glasgow and the Arches; a busy, multi-use cultural centre underneath seven brick railway arches that support Glasgow's Central Station.[1] The funding for this collaborative doctoral project was secured prior to my own involvement and was awarded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in order for the two institutions to appoint a PhD candidate to undertake a practice-as-research project at the Arches. The project brief that I inherited was to develop a model by which artists can work *in* and *with* multi-use cultural venues, in order to devise performances in response to and specifically for those sites. Using my practice at the Arches as a case-study, the aim is to suggest ways in which artists working in residence at a cultural site can make work that uses, makes evident and contributes to what Nicolas Bourriaud describes as the 'space of relations' that exists within every site.[2]

The key theoretical grounding for the project is Bourriaud's concept of 'relational aesthetics'. Towards the end of the twentieth century, Bourriaud articulated a growing trend in contemporary art to use social relationships as a formal strategy. Rather than the object-based art of paintings and sculptures, for example, many artists were using meetings, encounters and events as the primary component of their work.[3] 'Relational', in this sense, refers to the social dimensions of the space in which we live, and in relational aesthetics, this social realm functions both as an artistic form and as an 'artwork venue'.[4] This is an aesthetic model that aims to operate within 'the realm of human interactions' as opposed to 'the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space'.[5]

Since its conception in the early nineties, relational aesthetics has remained a highly influential model, the principles of which Bourriaud has continued to reassert in subsequent publications.[6] Stewart Martin ascribes it 'the status of an "ism", a name for what is new about contemporary art, and a key position in debates over art's orientation

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[1] The Arches, www.thearches.co.uk (accessed 25/10/10)
[2] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002 [1998], p.15
[3] Bourriaud, 2002, p.28
[4] Bourriaud, 2002, p.44
[5] Bourriaud, 2002, p.14
[6] For example, Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as screenplay: How art reprograms the world*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2001; Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009c

and value today'.[7] Nonetheless, Bourriaud's model is informed by a well established challenge to representation in contemporary art, which can be traced to Conceptual and Minimal art, as well as the Situationists and Guy Debord's belief that in order to escape a society determined by spectacle and separation, art must move away from representation towards community and dialogue.[8] Acknowledging this legacy, and accepting that 'interactivity is anything but a new idea', Bourriaud proposes relational aesthetics as a considerable development of the formal experiments of the historical avant-garde.[9] The argument is that the incorporation of participation and social activity has now developed from their use as 'fashionable theoretical gadgets' to become an aesthetic form in their own right. Bourriaud charts a cultural landscape in which the role of artworks is 'no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real'.[10]

Writing after 2007, when the global population shifted 'irrevocably' from a rural to an urban majority,[11] Bourriaud suggests that the urban landscape has become a 'precarious, cluttered and shifting environment', and that relationships in modern life are now defined by 'the fragmentation of everything and everyone in a confused mass'.[12] If urban life can be conceived of in this way, the ideological, cultural and political precariousness that characterises society has profound implications for the relationships that we form. For Bourriaud, 'social life seems more fragile than ever, and the bonds that make it up seem increasingly tenuous'.[13] In *Relational Aesthetics*, Bourriaud argues that contemporary art has an emancipatory potential in its reassertion of human relationships into a world determined by global consumerism and systems of commerce.[14] Using 'negotiations, bonds and co-existences', relational art is intended to function as a 'social interstice'; an antidote to the dominance of 'supplier/client relations' brought about by the increasing urbanisation of society.[15]

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[7] Stewart Martin, 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics', *Third Text* 21(4), July 2007, pp.369-386, p.369
[8] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, London: Rebel Press, 1992 [1967], p.103
[9] Bourriaud, 2002, p.44
[10] Bourriaud, 2002, p.13
[11] Nicolas Whybrow, *Art and the City*, London: I.B.Tauris, 2011, p.7
[12] Bourriaud, 2009, p.88; Bourriaud, 2009, p.104
[13] Bourriaud, 2009, p.79
[14] Bourriaud, 2002, p.45
[15] Bourriaud, 2002, p.14, 83

Despite (or because of) its popularity, and its ambitious claims of 're-launching the modern emancipation plan', relational aesthetics is not without its critics.[16] For Bourriaud, the aim is to generate 'interhuman experiences' as opposed to the commercial relationships of consumer society, but the dichotomy that this suggests between social and commercial relationships has been questioned.[17] Martin criticises the underlying assumption that social relationships *per se* have emancipatory potential, arguing that the presentation of social relationships as an emancipatory strategy must account for the ways in which relational art is itself commodified by the commercial systems through which it is presented, such as those of the art gallery.[18] Bourriaud repeatedly uses the term 'micro-utopia' to describe a model for a better future realised within the boundaries of the gallery; a project that is characterised by its concern to 'give everyone their chance'.[19] Reacting against this assumed democracy, Claire Bishop argues that the concept of relational aesthetics rests 'too comfortably within an ideal of subjectivity as whole and of community as imminent togetherness'.[20] It is important to acknowledge, however, that Bourriaud only identifies a 'democratic concern' in this work.[21] He does not actually say that it is inherently democratic, and as Liam Gillick, one of the artists criticised by Bishop, retaliates, 'Bourriaud's book, (...) and my own projects are not based on the assumption that dialogue is in and of itself democratic'.[22]

Nonetheless, the discourses of 'democracy' and 'public' that Bourriaud employs are problematic when attention is turned to the institutional, cultural and social boundaries of the environment that relational art takes place within; the exclusions and antagonisms that are obscured by aspirations of 'link(ing) individuals and human groups together'.[23] There is a danger of actual utopianism in this model (as opposed to 'micro-utopianism'),[24] which

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[16] Bourriaud, 2002, p.16; For example, Martin, 2007; Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October* 110 (Fall), 2004, pp.51-79; and Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its discontents', *Artforum International* 44(6), 2006, pp.179-185
[17] Bourriaud, 2002, p.44
[18] Martin, 2007, p.372
[19] Bourriaud, 2002, p.31, 58
[20] Bishop, 2004, p.67
[21] Bourriaud, 2002, p.58
[22] Liam Gillick, 'Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics"' *October* 115 (Winter), 2006, pp.95–107, p.105
[23] Bourriaud, 2002, p.43
[24] Bourriaud, 2002, p.31; The word 'utopia' derives from a pun on the Greek εὖ, meaning 'good' or 'well', οὐ, meaning 'not', and τόπος, meaning 'place'. Utopia is at once 'good' and 'not', perfect and non-existent. From its use as the title of Sir Thomas More's novel in 1516, this dual meaning has endured, implying on one hand visions of a perfect future, and on the other an association with 'the impractical, the unrealistic and the impossible' (Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg & Meaghan Morris, *New Keywords: A revised vocabulary of culture and society*, Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, p.362)

is disrupted by the 'existing real' that such work aims to operate within.[25] Outlining a criteria for the judgement of relational artworks, Bishop therefore demands that we ask, as Bourriaud fails to do, 'what *types* of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?'.[26] These questions are a key concern for my own practice as it becomes part of the relational space of the Arches.

As I go on to discuss, employing a practice-as-research methodology has been central to the findings of this thesis and my research is primarily dependent on the performances that I have directed throughout the project. Using practice to engage with the relationships of the Arches is an opportunity to interrogate Bourriaud's relational aesthetic model through its practical application within the specific context of a cultural site. Conversely, it is an opportunity to reveal and work with the multiple relationships of the Arches, thereby providing new knowledge about the relational processes through which a cultural site is constituted. This approach therefore aims to engage with the relational processes of both performance practice and its site, and to understand the interrelations between them.

The practical part of this thesis is comprised of three major practice-as-research projects: *Underneath the Arches* (January 2009), *Midland Street* (September 2009) and *A Work on Progress* (April 2010).[27] These projects and the research questions that inform them, are introduced in the section entitled 'Underneath the Arches' at the end of this introduction, and discussed in detail in the chapters that follow. The convergence of the multiple roles that I have adopted throughout this project (researcher, staff member, director, etc.) are addressed in my methodology chapter. Before discussing the specific relationships of my practice-as-research and my own position in the Arches, however, it will be beneficial to outline two key research strands that run throughout this thesis.

Firstly, I address questions of site and space, as well as introducing the Arches and outlining my approach to engaging with the site. Secondly, I discuss the centrality of performance to relational aesthetics and explain my use of theatre as a relational artform. Combining these strands, the primary objective of this thesis is an investigation into the possibilities, challenges and limitations of developing a 'Relational Theatre

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[25] Bourriaud, 2002, p.13
[26] Bishop, 2004, p.65
[27] See Appendix and accompanying video files for documentation of practice-as-research projects

Practice' (hereafter, RTP). I have coined this term to describe a model of theatre making that incorporates the day-to-day interactions and activities of the site into the performance aesthetic.

My practice, which included large-scale productions as well as a series of 'satellite' performances that accompanied them, are not intended to represent a relational theatre *par excellence*. As will become clear, a fully relational, democratic theatre practice is an impossibility due to the inevitability of exclusions in 'public' communities.[28] However, despite the boundaries, limits and selections that inevitably come to define performance practice in a site with as many contradictory and conflicting relationships as a busy arts venue like the Arches, each phase of my research offers new insights into how theatre might acknowledge and avow its exclusions, ultimately suggesting the possibility of a more relational, democratic, and to use Umberto Eco's term, 'open' artform.[29] This is an approach to making theatre that aims to respond to the existing relationships of its site, as well as exploring ways in which connections can emerge between the practice of theatre and the relational space that it contributes to and operates within.

Site, Space and Specificity

For Bourriaud, relational art operates within a 'space of interaction', which is also described as a 'space of openness that ushers in all dialogue'.[30] However, by unquestioningly using terms such as 'openness' and 'democracy', Bourriaud avoids any real interrogation of what the spaces that are used and created actually are, and of how they operate in relation to the artwork and their wider social and cultural context.[31] A concern with the specific relational dimensions of space is therefore central to this project.

My engagement with the relational spaces of the Arches is informed by the geographer Doreen Massey's understanding of the ways in which we create space by constantly making connections with each other and with our environments.[32] One of

[28] For example, Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* 2nd edition, London: MIT, 1998
[29] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989
[30] Bourriaud, 2002, p.44
[31] Bourriaud, 2002, p.44, 57
[32] Doreen Massey, *For Space*, London: SAGE Publications, 2005

Massey's key propositions is 'that we recognise space as always under construction' and as will be come clear, this idea has significant implications for the relationships between my practice and the site that it takes place within.[33] Space, as with any entity or identity '(be they places, or political constituencies, or mountains)', is always in process.[34] The project therefore aims to engage with the space of the Arches as constituted by multiple relationships, which are shifting and reconfiguring all the time. Crucially, it recognises that relational artworks do not just take place within space, they are also constitutive of it.

Massey's spatial theory is informed by Henri Lefebvre, who also argued that space is not a fixed or stable entity, but rather the product of the constant reconfiguration of social relations.[35] This theory of the *production* of space through relationships has been hugely influential, and has led to a concept of space as the sphere of a multiplicity of relationships, and potential relationships, in which the constantly shifting and changing configurations of 'the social' constitute the space in which we live.[36] Framing her concept of space in anti-essentialist terms, Massey recognises 'the relational constructedness of things'.[37] Rather than accepting identities as already constituted and fixed, Massey posits a progressive political position in which an 'open' future is always constituted by a multiplicity of possible relationships.[38]

The relational dimension of space is also recognised by Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks' concept of 'theatre archeology', which engages with sites as multi-temporal and comprising of many interrelated 'layers'.[39] Recognising that the remains of the past are all around us to be creatively interpreted and brought into new configurations, this theory understands all sites as plural and heterogeneous places, full of juxtapositions and discontinuities.[40] Pearson and Shanks point out that when performance practice is created for sites, this is only 'the latest occupation of a place where previous occupations are still apparent and cognitively active'.[41] A sensitivity to

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[33] Massey, 2005, p.9
[34] Massey, 2005, p.148
[35] Henri Lefebvre, 'Preface to the New Edition: The Production of Space' [1985], *Lefebvre: Key Writings*, ed. Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas & Eleonore Kofman, London: Continuum, 2003, pp.206-213, p.208
[36] Massey, 2005, p.9
[37] Massey, 2005, p.10
[38] Massey, 2005, p.11
[39] Mike Pearson & Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, London & New York: Routledge, 2001, p.150
[40] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.150
[41] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.111

a preexisting relational realm is therefore advocated. This concept is in alignment with Massey, who suggests that space should be understood as a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far'.[42] My practice at the Arches is just one of these myriad stories.

Adopting these understandings of space and site, my exploration of the Arches aims to engage with a constantly shifting and reconfiguring relational space. Conceiving of space and relationships in this way allows a progression from the practices of Bourriaud's model to the development of a relational performance aesthetic as a model for 'site-specific' theatre. The project therefore situates itself within a tradition of site-based performance work, which aims to respond to its environment; 'inspired by and designed to integrate with the physical and non-physical aspects of a specific location'.[43]

Since gaining currency as a model for contemporary theatre in the mid to late Eighties, 'site-specific' is now a contested term.[44] As indicated by Pearson and Shanks, and Massey, it is problematic to fix notions of site. However, 'specificity' has connotations of doing just that. As a result, a number of alternative models have been suggested by practitioners and critics interested in the relationship between site, space and artistic practice. For example, Miwon Kwon refers to 'site-oriented' art to conceive of site not only as an actual location and a socially determined context, but also 'as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate'.[45] This discursive dimension of the relationship between site and artistic practice is also addressed in Jane Rendell's 'critical spatial practice', which describes a multi-disciplinary approach that charts a place 'between theory and practice', in which 'the construction of critical concepts' is recognised as an outcome, and a possible rationale, for practical interventions into the spaces that we inhabit.[46] Recognising the relational dimension of 'situated' artistic practice, Claire Doherty identifies a concern in contemporary art with 'experience as a state of flux which acknowledges place as a shifting and fragmented entity'.[47] For Doherty, and the 'New Situationists', site is no

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[42] Massey, 2005, p.9
[43] Red Earth, cited in Fiona Wilkie, 'Mapping the Terrain: A survey of site-specific performance in Britain', *New Theatre Quarterly* 70, 2002a, pp.140-160, p.149
[44] Wilkie, 2002a, p.141
[45] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-specific art and locational identity*, London: MIT Press, 2004, p.26
[46] Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A place between*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006, p.6, 4
[47] Claire Doherty, *Contemporary Art: From studio to situation*, London: Black Dog Publishing, c2004, p.10

longer approached as a fixed location, but rather as a set of interrelational processes, with which the artist enters into dialogue.

Although I retain the usage of 'site-specificity' to describe my work at the Arches, as it remains the most commonly used term to describe site-based work, my understanding of both 'site' and 'specificity' is informed by the debates around the suitability of these terms. For Fiona Wilkie, unlike conventional theatre-based work where an artistic vision can be constructed *a priori* and planted onto a stage, site-specific work has the potential to respond to the subtleties and complexities of its location.[48] In site-specific work that adheres to this objective, the site could be understood to be 'perform(ing) itself'.[49] The walking and drifting practices of site-specific performance collective Wrights & Sites, for example, are intended as 'an invitation to practice, to share and to connect' rather than imposing a creative work on an existing site.[50] I therefore use the term 'site-specificity' with an understanding of the 'new mutable notion of site' identified by Doherty.[51]

A sensitivity to 'existing social situations or locations' is advocated by many site-specific practitioners.[52] This is not always achieved by Bourriaud, who fails to pay adequate attention to the social and cultural contexts of the primarily gallery-based artworks that he identifies as relational. As with any other site, the Arches is constituted not only by the relationships that exist within the space, but also by processes of exclusion; limitations and selections that determine the ways in which the building is used and the communities that are formed there. The project therefore begins with a practical exploration of the site and the relationships that comprise it.

Located underneath the railway lines of Glasgow's Central Station, the Arches was constructed between 1902 and 1905 in a large scale extension to the station, which included the construction of a bridge on Argyle Street to the north of the Arches,

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[48] Wilkie, 2002a, p.156
[49] Phil Smith, 'Crab Walking and Mythogeography', *Walking, Writing and Performance: Autobiographical texts by Deirdre Heddon, Carl Lavery and Phil Smith*, ed. Roberta Mock, Bristol, Intellect, 2009b, pp.81-114, p.91
[50] Phil Smith, *Mythogeography: A guide to walking sideways*, Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2010, p.116
[51] Doherty, 2004, p.10
[52] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.150

thirteen new platforms and an eight-track bridge running south over the River Clyde.[53] This large-scale building project resulted from Glasgow's rapid expansion following the Industrial Revolution.[54] The site is therefore rich with industrial history and there is also an extensive history of settlement on the site, from the Neolithic farmers and Bronze Age metallurgists who lived and worked in the area, to the people of Grahamston, a village that was demolished to make way for the station.[55]

To enter the Arches, it is necessary to pass beneath one of two bridges, which carry trains from Glasgow's Central Station south over the River Clyde. These bridges and the arches that support them are an important part of the city's industrial history. The position of the Arches underneath the Argyle Street and Midland Street bridges situates the venue on vectors of transportation. Several times an hour the passage of trains vibrates around the building; a tangible reminder that the venue is a byproduct of commerce and industry. Despite the historical significance of the site, and its central position in the city, the Arches does not proclaim its presence. Hidden away underneath the city, the building has an evocative atmosphere of dark, subterranean corridors and damp, musty smells. Very little natural light illuminates the vast brick arches and there is total darkness in the derelict rooms below.

Since Glasgow's winning bid as the European City of Culture in 1990, when the Arches was originally established as an arts venue, the building has developed into a hub for arts and entertainment events.[56] The use of the building changes rapidly from corporate event to theatre performance to club night, often in just one day. Over three hundred events take place each year, and hundreds of thousands of people come through the doors.[57] It is estimated that once all unticketed visual art exhibition visitors and cafe bar patrons are taken into account, the total annual Arches attendance is around a quarter of a million people. The reputation of the Arches as a leading arts and club venue extends both nationally and internationally.[58] Mirroring the trains that

[53] John Thomas & Rev A.J.S. Paterson, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain. Volume VI Scotland: The Lowlands and the Borders* 2nd edition, Devon: David & Charles, 1984
[54] W. Hamish Fraser, 'Second City of The Empire: 1830s to 1914', *The Glasgow Story*, www.theglasgowstory.com/storyd.php (accessed 17/05/10)
[55] Norrie Gilliland, *Glasgow's Forgotten Village: The Grahamston Story*, Glasgow: Grahamston Story, 2002
[56] European Capital of Culture Report, *European Capital of Culture: The road to success, from 1985 to 2010*, Belgium: European Committee, 2009, p.16
[57] The Arches, 'Attendance Figures April 2008 - March 2009', Internal Document, 2010a
[58] For example, The Arches regularly features in the Top 100 Clubs in the World in *MixMag* and *DJ* magazines

rumble overhead carrying passengers all over the city, and further afield, the relationships of the Arches reach out far beyond the physical location of the building.

For many, the Arches is also a place of work. Forty-two full time staff, twenty-two part time and sixty-two casual employees work at the venue and each play a different role in sustaining the commercial and creative success of the company.[59] Under the leadership of Artistic Director, Jackie Wylie, and Executive Director, Mark Anderson, responsible to a board of directors, fifteen departments programme and manage three bars, a cafe and restaurant, corporate events, and a wide range of club nights and arts events.[60] Programming takes place at a weekly meeting with representatives from each of the programming departments (music, artistic and corporate), at which negotiations for the use of space could be argued to determine the key relational processes of the venue. With a busy programme of events across its spaces, the Arches is created through constant negotiation and transition.

For arts critic Jennie Klein, to enter the 'strange subterranean world' of the Arches is to descend into 'a liminal space'.[61] The building is often likened to a labyrinth. Its cavernous upper level is supported by a confusing network of corridors, offices, and a derelict basement, and there is even another level below which has been filled in with concrete. Writing about such spaces, architect Bernard Tschumi argues that 'one can participate in and share the fundamentals of the labyrinth, but one's perception is only part of the labyrinth as it manifests itself'. The 'labyrinth' of the Arches, therefore, can never be seen or experienced 'in totality'.[62] Given the labyrinthine qualities of the building, the complexities of its day to day operations, and the plurality of stories that make up its history, it is easy to understand how geography and time appear to operate differently in the Arches, as the building plays tricks on its visitors, losing them amongst its bewildering multiplicity of spaces and events.[63]

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[59] Figures confirmed by Human Resources Manager July 2010
[60] The Arches, 'The Arches Organisation Chart', Internal Document, 2011
[61] Jennie Klein, 'Genre-Bending Performance', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28(1), 2006, pp. 58-66, p.58
[62] Bernard Tschumi, *Questions of Space: Lectures on Architecture*, London: Architectural Association, 1990, p.28
[63] Klein, 2006, p.59

Reflecting on the final National Review of Live Art at the Arches in March 2010, Tim Etchells felt that 'even time itself seemed to be in flux' as he encountered artists 'popping up in the corridors' from the festival's thirty year history.[64] Although referring to the history of NRLA, rather than the Arches specifically, it is significant that the architecture of the Arches is the prompt to Etchell's feeling of temporal flux. Disorientating and unfathomable in the scope of its activity and the speed of its reinvention, the Arches is a clear example of Massey's understanding of space as continually under construction.[65]

This thesis explores the possibility of developing a theatre practice that responds to and contributes to this dynamic, ever shifting terrain. Using a variety of approaches to theatre making, and focussing on different aspects of the site, these projects have explored ways in which a performance aesthetic can be developed that incorporates the multiple relationships of the Arches. Ultimately, this thesis proposes a relational performance aesthetic as a model for developing theatre practice in response to a specific site.

Relational Theatre Practice (RTP)

Writing on *Art and the City*, Nicolas Whybrow identifies the centrality of performance to what he terms the 'situational-relational impulse' in contemporary art.[66] Identifying 'an increasing preoccupation of art directly and indirectly with the experiences and discourses that make up living within the space of the city', Whybrow suggests that artistic practices that engage with this modern condition, such as those curated by Bourriaud, constitute 'a major shift in where and how art takes place'.[67]

Performance is at the centre of this shift because it implicates the 'spectator' in the artwork, facilitating a 'translocation of the "place of art" to the contextual interactions of various constituencies of people, sites, objects and processes'.[68] Through

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[64] Tim Etchells, 'Tim Etchells On Performance: National Review of Live Art meets a bloody end', *The Guardian Online*, 25/03/10, 2010a, www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/mar/24/national-review-of-live-art-ron-athey (accessed 15/05/10)
[65] Massey, 2005, p.9
[66] Whybrow, 2011, p.5
[67] Whybrow, 2011, p.7, 6
[68] Whybrow, 2011, p.5

performance, then, contemporary art enters the relational realm. This is a 'turn towards performance' that is frequently identified as originating in Minimalism.[69] In Minimalist art, Rosalind Krauss identifies a radical shift away from contained, isolated artworks modelled on 'the privacy of psychological space' towards 'the public, conventional nature of what might be called cultural space'.[70] The 'theatricality' that Minimalism precipitated was infamously rejected by Michael Fried as a hostile 'negation of art'.[71] However, a concern with theatre and performance has since been embraced as a common thematic and formal strategy in the contemporary art world.[72]

By moving away from 'private' space, both 'psychological' (Krauss) and 'symbolic' (Bourriaud), relational art makes a performative intervention into the public sphere, in which artistic practice has the potential to affect change to its environment.[73] This interventional potential is identified by Whybrow as 'a form of ongoing renegotiation, or, indeed, troubling of its chosen sites'.[74] Echoing Pearson and Shanks, and Massey, sites are understood as never fixed, but 'permanently in transition'.[75] Performance is the means by which artists can engage with these transitory sites, constituting a movement from the fixity of the object to the 'spatio-temporal movement' of the event.[76] Primarily, art therefore becomes 'a state of encounter' as opposed to an aesthetic object.[77]

Using a practice-as-research methodology at the Arches is an opportunity to use site-specific theatre to make a critical intervention into the relational space of the site. Significantly, despite the importance of performance to contemporary art, Bourriaud

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[69] Nick Kaye, *Art into Theatre: Performance interviews and documents*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, c1996, pp.1-2; See also Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A critical history*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p.53; Nick Kaye, *Site-specific Art: Performance, place, and documentation*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp.2-3; and Gavin Butt, 'Introduction', *After Criticism: New responses to art and performance*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, pp.1-19, p.8

[70] Rosalind Krauss, 'Introduction', *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, eds. Foster, Hal; Krauss, Rosalind; Bois, Yve-Alain & Buchloh, Benjamin HWD, New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005, p.2

[71] Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood' [1967], *Minimal Art: A critical anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, New York: Dutton, 1968, p.125

[72] The relationship between theatre and visual art was recently explored at Graham Eatough's *This Time With Feeling* Symposium at the Tramway, Glasgow (27/04/10)

[73] Krauss, 2005, p.2; Bourriaud, 2002, p.14

[74] Whybrow, 2011, p.30

[75] Whybrow, 2011, p.30

[76] Nicolas Whybrow (ed.), *Performance and the Contemporary City: An interdisciplinary reader*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, c.2010, p.10

[77] Bourriaud, 2002, p.18

rejects theatre as a relational artform. For Bourriaud, unlike the performance of exhibition-based relational art, theatre brings together 'small groups' of people 'before specific, unmistakable images', and offers no opportunity for live discussion during the event.[78] This understanding of theatre is of an inherently image-based artform, and if this is the case, as Joe Kelleher suggests, perhaps for spectators and onlookers, 'all that is left to see is that here something happened, some action, some thinking took place'.[79] For Kelleher, this is a world in which 'relationality has crumbled, has been broken into; which is tough, if relations are all we've got, and all we want'.[80] The sort of theatre that Dan Rebellato calls 'representational theatre' ('in which people and things on stage represent other people and things') is seen by many as closing down relationships and maintaining a rigid divide between what is understood as the 'illusory' world of the stage and the social and cultural environment that surrounds it.[81]

Defining theatre solely on these terms, as a non-relational, representational artform, is problematic. Bourriaud's understanding of theatre fails to acknowledge a substantial history of theatre practice that incorporates a variety of techniques to open up a discursive space through performance, and seeks to establish relationships between audience, performers and a wider social context. Joshua Sofaer argues that in much contemporary performance practice, 'the nature of the audience encounter is integral to the operation and meaning of the work', and contemporary culture is frequently concerned with 'the emancipation of the spectator and the transformation of the audience from passive recipient to active participant'.[82]

However, Sofaer's discussion of contemporary performance upholds a problematic binary between the passive and active audience position. This position has been

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[78] Bourriaud, 2002, p.16

[79] Joe Kelleher, 'The Spectator is the Work of Our Hands', unpublished paper, read at the University of Glasgow, 03/03/09, p.2

[80] Kelleher, 2009, p.15

[81] Dan Rebellato, 'When We Talk of Horses: Or, what do we see when we see a play?', *Performance Research* 14(1), 2009b, pp.17-28, p.18. To provide just two examples, with almost seventy years between them, in 1938 Brecht rejected the 'engendering of illusion' in 'ordinary theatre' as lacking any 'clear social function' (Bertolt Brecht, 'The Street Scene: A basic model for an Epic Theatre', [1938], *Brecht on Theatre: The development of an aesthetic*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1978, p.122, 128); and in 2006, Tim Crouch expressed a 'disillusionment' about 'psychologically motivated social realism', which limits an understanding 'of the here and now', and any 'sense of the audience' (Tim Crouch, interviewed by Caridad Svich, Hunter On-Line Theatre Review, 2006, www.hotreview.org/articles/timcrouchinterv.htm (accessed 05/03/10))

[82] Joshua Sofaer, *The Many Headed Monster*, London: Live Art Development Agency, 2009, p.47, 7

significantly called into question by Jacques Rancière's concept of *The Emancipated Spectator*.[83] Rejecting the assumption that seated, silent audiences are necessarily 'passive', Rancière posits an active role comprised of observation, selection, comparison and interpretation.[84] The idea of the 'emancipated spectator' is also supported by Rebellato, who rejects the assumption that audiences passively buy into an illusion when watching 'representational theatre'. Rebellato proposes that rather than operating through illusion, theatre functions as a metaphor. In metaphor, he reminds us, 'we are invited to see (or think about) one thing in terms of another thing'.[85] As opposed to the proposed illusion of representational theatre, in metaphor, 'there is no make-believe involved, no amassing of propositional information, no artful subtraction from one to create the image of the other'.[86] The spectator is therefore granted the critical faculty to recognise that what is on stage is not the same as that which it represents; 'We know the two objects are quite separate, but we think of one in terms of the other'.[87]

Recognising that traditional theatre does not necessarily creative passive audiences, and does not necessarily operate through illusion, it is important to understand the particular types of relationship that theatre operates through. When Bourriaud refers to 'small groups' in front of 'unmistakable images', he does not account for the active, critical audiences identified by Rancière and Rebellato. However, Bourriaud's reference to theatre is slight and undeveloped and it may be unfair to reject his position entirely. In the context of Bourriaud's wider theory, perhaps what he is objecting to is not an assumed passivity, but rather an explicit division of labour. This is the 'orthodox theatre' that is rejected by Richard Schechner due to its conventions of separating the audience from the performers, and making performers into 'sellers of pleasure-services'.[88] For Nicholas Ridout also, conventional Western theatre is defined by 'one group of people spend(ing) leisure time sitting in the dark to watch others spend their working time under lights pretending to be other people'.[89] Whether this

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[83] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, London: Verso, 2009
[84] Jacques Rancière, 'The Emancipated Spectator', *Artforum International* 45(7), 2007, pp.271-80, p.277
[85] Rebellato, 2009b, p.25
[86] Rebellato, 2009b, p.25
[87] Rebellato, 2009b, p.25
[88] Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater*, London: Applause, c1994, p.60
[89] Nicholas Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals and Other Theatrical Problems*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.6; See also Tim Etchells, *Certain Fragments: Contemporary performance and Forced Entertainment*, London: Routledge, 1999, p.64

capitalist division of labour is Bourriaud's reason for rejecting theatre is not addressed explicitly. Nonetheless, twentieth century theatre practice has often been understood as collapsing the 'orthodox forms' of the sort of theatre to which Bourriaud seems to be referring.[90]

The Arches' own theatre programme can be understood as an ongoing attempt to redefine 'orthodox' forms. For example, in May 2010, the annual Behaviour festival explicitly addressed the relational potential of theatre:

> This year, the festival is defined by a desire to feel new connections to each other: through the pleasure in the spontaneous and transgressive, the tenderness of an intimate encounter, or the collective reflection that occurs best within a theatre audience.[91]

At the Arches, theatre often involves live discussion during the event and performances can rarely be described as 'unmistakable', in the sense of the creation of an illusory reality. During my research period, the Arches has hosted a number of performances that could perhaps be understood as 'relational', including several one-to-one encounters with Adrian Howells, the controversially 'intimate' relationships of Ontroerend Goed's *Internal*, the unique audience participation of Nic Green's *Trilogy* and the multiple relational formations of Derevo and Akhe's *Nature Morte*. Inviting the audience to 'join us to challenge that which is accepted or expected', the artistic team at the Arches consistently programmes theatre that is far removed from Bourriaud's understanding of the artform.[92]

The development of a performance aesthetic that explicitly aims to form relationships with the audience was an established concern in contemporary theatre practice long before these recent examples from the Arches' programme. Over half a century ago Antonin Artaud demanded an end to the division of 'stage and auditorium into two closed worlds without any possible communication between them', and Bertolt Brecht aimed to create a theatre that would engage the audience with 'the world itself in a critical, contradictory, detached manner' as opposed to simply offering 'a

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[90] Michael Huxley & Noel Witts, 'Introduction', *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, ed. Michael Huxley & Noel Witts, London: Routledge, 1996, pp.1-13, p.7
[91] Jackie Wylie, 'Introduction', *Behaviour Festival Brochure*, Glasgow: The Arches, May 2010
[92] Wylie, 2010

representation of the world'.[93] Brecht's 'learning plays' aimed to break down distinctions between audience and performer through 'revolutionary thought and critique' through direct participation in the artistic event.[94]

Influenced by radical practitioners such as Artaud and Brecht, Western theatre companies gradually turned away from the veneration of canonical classic texts to develop models of theatre practice that aimed to find new ways to connect to their immediate context. For example, in the late Sixties, Schechner and The Performance Group (TPG) began to experiment with 'environmental theatre', which in Schechner's words aimed to transform an aesthetic event into a social event, 'shifting the focus from art-and-illusion to the potential and actual solidarity among everyone in the theatre'.[95] Schechner argues for a reimagination of aesthetics to incorporate the participation of the audience in the performance:

> The orthodox view of aesthetics insists on an autonomous, self-contained (separate) drama performed by one group of people who are watched by another group. The architecture and conventions of the orthodox theatre strongly enforces these aesthetics. However, (...) participation is such a powerful intrusion into this orthodox scheme, that in the face of participation we must reconsider the very foundations of orthodox aesthetics: illusion, mimesis, the physical separation of audience and performers, the creation of symbolic time and place.[96]

The 'open system' of environmental theatre is conceived as a direct challenge to this 'orthodox view of aesthetics'. 'Openness' in this sense can be usefully understood as an example of Eco's 'open work', which aims to set in motion a 'cycle of relations between the artist and his audience, a new mechanics of aesthetic perception (and) a different status for the artistic product in contemporary society'.[97]

TPG is just one of many examples of theatre practices that use participatory audience relationships in some way, and it finds its precedent in the experimental music of John

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[93] Antonin Artaud, 'Theatre and Cruelty' [1938], *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, ed. Michael Huxley & Noel Witts, London: Routledge, 1996, pp.25-29, p.26; Bertolt Brecht, 'Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which Produces an Alienation Effect' [1940], *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, ed. Michael Huxley & Noel Witts, London: Routledge, 1996, pp.99-111, p.109

[94] Douglas Kellner, 'Brecht's Marxist Aesthetic: The Korsch Connection', *Bertolt Brecht: Political theory and literary practice*, eds. Betty Nance Webber & Hubert Heinen, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, c1980, pp.29-42, p.35

[95] Schechner, 1994, p.45

[96] Schechner, 1994, p.45

[97] Eco, 1989, p.22-3

Cage and the Happenings of Allan Kaprow,[98] as well as influencing a great deal of work that comes after it, including the 'postdramatic' theatre of the Wooster Group, which emerged from the disbandment of TPG.[99] Furthermore, Schechner was not alone in reimagining the relationship between audience and performers at this time. In South America, Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed set out to liberate the spectator, on whom he felt that the theatre has imposed finished visions of the world.[100] The collective form developed by Boal served as a 'rehearsal' for revolution, which rejected the spectacle of bourgeois theatre.[101]

There is an important distinction to be made between 'participation', as Schechner uses the term, and the possibility of developing a 'relational' theatre practice. Bishop argues that the 'idea of considering the work of art as a potential trigger for participation is hardly new', but this comment betrays a misunderstanding of relational aesthetics by remaining beholden to the art object without fully permitting the relationality of artistic form.[102] Gillick is strongly critical of Bishop's position, pointing out that in relational art, the 'whole situation' constitutes the work, 'not one element of it that Bishop has substituted in a desperate search for a proxy object of contemplation'.[103] Rather than considering participation as an outcome of the work as Bishop appears to do, RTP aims to develop a performance aesthetic that derives its form from the 'whole situation', including, but not limited to, any participatory relationships that emerge.

Using site-specific theatre as a research methodology provides an opportunity to practically explore the relationships of theatre to its wider environment, and as Bishop demands, to question the *types* of relationship that are produced.[104] This thesis aims to

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[98] Schechner, 1994, p.60

[99] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, London: Routledge, 2006 [1999]; See also David Savran, *Breaking the Rules: the Wooster Group*, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988

[100] Augusto Boal, 'The Theatre as Discourse', *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, ed. Michael Huxley & Noel Witts, London: Routledge, 1996, pp.85-98, p.85

[101] Boal, 1996, p.85; Boal's 'Legislative Theatre' extended the concern of Theatre of the Oppressed to transform spectators into actors by transforming citizens into legislators. Between 1992 and 1996, the work of several 'legislative theatre groups' in Rio worked with Boal, who was then an elected member of the Workers' Party, *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, to directly affect thirteen new laws (Frances Babbage, *Augusto Boal*, Oxon: Routledge, 2004, p.27)

[102] Bishop, 2004, p.61

[103] Gillick, 2006, p.102. Bishop is also taken to task on similar grounds by Grant Kester, who criticises 'an unseemly enthusiasm for policing the boundaries of legitimate art practice' (Grant Kester, 'Another Turn', *Artforum International* 44(9), 2006, p.22)

[104] Bishop, 2004, p.65

develop an approach to theatre practice that consciously engages with a range of
relational processes, including those of audience-performer or stage-auditorium, but
also incorporating the multiplicity of relationships operating within the site.

Underneath the Arches

In Chapter One I explain the processes involved in my use of performance practice as a
research methodology. I outline a five stage process of *Participant Observation*,
Theoretical Research, *Practical Exploration*, *Performance Development*, and *Exegesis*,
and explain how my research findings developed through this practical and theoretical
research framework. I argue that exegesis is the crucial stage in determining the research
value of performance practice. Without explanation or interpretation of the creative work,
it remains simply *practice*, which although constituting an embodied, 'tacit' form of
knowledge, cannot be considered *practice-as-research*.[105]

I go on to reflect on the particular challenges of practice-as-research within the specific
context of this project. I draw on John Freeman's argument that despite the 'messiness' of
using practice as a research methodology, 'there is still a place in practice-based
investigations for research which is systematic, informed and verifiable'.[106] Whilst
accepting the unpredictable and unknowable results of artistic processes, I propose that as
long as practice is developed from clear research questions, and the outcomes of the work
are continually reflected on critically, then practice-as-research becomes a valuable
research methodology.

Chapters Two, Three and Four develop a model for RTP by drawing on examples from my
practice. These chapters roughly correspond to three areas of practical exploration
undertaken in the Arches (*guided tours*, *clubbing* and *theatre production*). They represent a
chronological progression through the project, and a gradual accumulation of research
findings. My decision to focus my investigation on these three areas is knowingly
subjective, and results from my practical experience of the Arches and the areas of the

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[105] Robin Nelson, 'Modes of Practice-as-Research Knowledge and Their Place in the Academy', *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen*, ed. Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw & Angela Piccini, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, c2009, pp.122-130, p.125
[106] John Freeman, *Blood, Sweat & Theory: Research through practice in performance*, Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, c2010, p.79

venue where I have spent the most time during the three years of the project, as well as the coincidence of the timings of the project to various events, festivals and funding priorities. There are many more possibilities that I might have chosen to explore (corporate events, live music, education and participation, etc.), but the three projects that make up the body of this thesis are intended to address a wide range of cultural and operational activities in the building, and to engage with a number of departments, working with many different members of staff and multiple users of the venue.

My chapter structure is intended to mirror the chronological progression of my practice, which was prompted by and turned to these three diverse areas (and existing relations) of the venue's activity. Each of these chapters represents a new area of enquiry, and rather than constituting a gradual movement towards a final version of RTP, each project takes a new path in order to develop an understanding of the ways in which a relational theatre may be developed, focussing respectively on the *relational performance text*, the *relational theatre audience* and *relational theatre production*. These areas of focus have emerged organically from my chosen areas of practical exploration. As such they also adhere to a subjective, exploratory approach, in which the research is led by the relationships of the venue rather than predetermining a particular set of boundaries.

In Chapter Two I present a model for a 'relational performance text'; a theatre practice which could be understood as a negotiation between 'script' (as the predetermined, fixed structure of the performance), and 'divergences' or 'detours' (as relational, 'open' and process-based). Focussing my practice on the relationships of the guided tour, I discuss how the tour 'writes' sites as well as 'reading' them, and I argue that in responding to relationships, RTP also becomes part of the processes that continually construct its site.

This discussion focusses on *Underneath the Arches* (January 2009). This was a large-scale promenade performance that visited many of the building's spaces (including offices, theatres, dance floors and the derelict basement) and drew on the histories of the site (settlement, industry and cultural activity that have taken place in the immediate geographical location). The first section of this performance used seven guided tours, simultaneously exploring the Arches and encountering the everyday activities of the venue, as well as encountering each other along the way. The tours in this performance, as well as

a number of guided tours that I ran in the Arches during the development process, were a valuable starting point as they introduced a number of key research areas that were developed in my subsequent practice, including the importance of antagonistic relationships to the relational theatre 'audience'.

In Chapter Three, I develop a concept of 'audience' that accounts for a complex process of fluctuation between observing or spectating the performance as part of a wider group, and becoming part of the aesthetic - forming individual relationships with the artwork and its environment. I conclude that RTP has to allow for the continually shifting modes of engagement of those encountering and becoming part of the performance aesthetic. Drawing on theory of clubbing and developing a performance for a club night, I compare the experience of the clubbing crowd to that of a theatre audience in order to interrogate the relationship of two cultural practices that are central to the Arches' identity, yet remain largely autonomous within the day to day operations of the venue (for example, the club uses the Midland Street entrance, takes place after 10pm and is programmed by the Music Department; the theatre uses the Argyle Street entrance, usually takes place before 10pm, and is programmed by the Artistic Department).

Midland Street (September 2009) was a one-off performance for Death Disco, the monthly electro club night at the Arches.[107] Using cars parked outside the venue, a chaotic poker game and an array of overtly theatrical characters, including a clown and a pack of urban animals, *Midland Street* was an attempt to move my practice outside the boundaries of the theatre programme as well as the studio theatre space, entering another dynamic relational realm, which is central to the Arches' cultural identity and funding structures.

In Chapter Four, I consider the wider production processes of RTP, recognising the tensions and contradictions involved in presenting this relational work within the wider institutional structures of a commercial arts venue. In this phase of my research I explored the possibility of incorporating ongoing processes of production into the performance aesthetic. I am concerned with the different ways in which theatre is *used* by the relational theatre audience. This chapter explores the various 'currencies' of theatre and proposes a

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[107] Death Disco, www.thearches.co.uk/ddhome.htm (accessed 03/08/10)

model of 'relational theatre production' that aims to move beyond the commercial relations of the box office.

I focus on *A Work on Progress* (April 2010), a performance/installation that took place in the studio theatre during a mini-festival programmed by the Forest Fringe.[108] A room filled with various 'tools' of theatrical production was available for visitors to the space to use and over the course of two three hour periods, a number of unrehearsed performances took place. Technical equipment including lights, amplifiers and microphones, and different forms of media were available. I reflect on the variety of ways that visitors used the performance context that I set up and suggest that a relational mode of production might be possible through the continual changes and reconfigurations that take place throughout RTP.

In my conclusion I reflect on the boundaries and limitations of my practice-as-research as it operates within the existing relational space of the Arches. Throughout this project, my practice has responded to, and been determined by the specific relational conditions of the site, which have included the operational procedures of the business, the architectural features of the building and the artistic approach of the programming teams. It is important to recognise the ways in which these conditions determine the sorts of relationships that can form in a cultural site like the Arches.

I go on to discuss the temporal and spatial boundaries of these performances, which have significant implications for the level of autonomy of the theatre performance from the other events taking place in the building, and from its wider social and cultural context. I argue that while each of my practice-as-research projects have encountered boundaries, limits and exclusions, each of them also offers a number of insights into how RTP can enact a performative intervention into its own relational space. The 'existing real' of the site has frequently determined the types of relationships that my practice has operated through.[109] However, through the conflicts and antagonisms that have occurred, the site has revealed itself as a complex plurality of relationships, many of which exist in tension with one another. I suggest that through an active engagement with the continual relational constructedness of space, a performance aesthetic can be developed that responds to its site

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108 Forest Fringe, www.forestfringe.co.uk (accessed 03/08/10)
109 Bourriaud, 2002, p.13

through dialogue and reconfiguration, as opposed to the 'specific, unmistakable images'
suggested by Bourriaud's conception of theatre.[110]

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[110] Bourriaud, 2002, p.16

Chapter One: Methodology

Practice-as-Research

In this section I explain the processes involved in my use of performance practice as a research methodology. The model that I developed for this project can be broken down into five overlapping and interrelated stages: *Participant Observation*, *Theoretical Research*, *Practical Exploration*, *Performance Development* and *Exegesis*. The pattern that emerged can be seen as a five stage progression towards research findings, with research questions set at the beginning of the process and a series of findings presented at the end. This approach follows conventional academic models, with the final goal being the 'significant contribution to knowledge in, or understanding of, a field of study and normally containing material worthy of publication'.[1]

The individual progressions outlined below should also be understood as taking place within a wider research framework, which corresponds to what Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart call 'the enquiry cycle'.[2] This model involves a continual cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and re-planning. My practical work in the Arches has continually emerged from my engagement with relevant theory and my experience of the venue, as well as moving these in new directions. In turn, this has informed and determined the development of the next stages of my practice. Freeman refers to an iterative working process which involves 'systematic reflection as a means of developing practical investigations in situ, rather than merely reading the work in its entirety upon conclusion'.[3] I have adopted this iterative approach throughout this thesis.

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[1] Graduate School Committee, Faculty of Arts, 'Guidelines for Research Degrees', Glasgow: University of Glasgow, October 2009. As John Adams *et al* point out, in the development of creative disciplines in the academy, terms such as 'original knowledge' are continually debated and contested (John Adams, Jane Bacon & Lizzie Thynne, 'Peer Review and Criteria: A discussion', *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen*, ed. Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, c2009, pp.99-110, p.99). Robin Nelson and Stewart Andrews make a recommendation that in a practice-as-research PhD, 'new knowledge or substantial new insights will be afforded by *ideas* in practice', without the requirement for the practice itself to constitute an original contribution (my italics). It is therefore proposed that the required 'contribution to knowledge' or 'substantial new insights' are located in the research findings discussed in this written part of my thesis, not necessarily through the artistic form of my practice. (Robin Nelson & Stewart Andrews, 'Regulations and Practice Governing "Practice-as-Research" (PaR) in the Performing Arts in the UK Leading to the Award of PhD', www.bris.ac.uk/parip/par_phd.htm (accessed 03/08/10)
[2] Stephen Kemmis & Robin McTaggart, 'Participatory Action Research', *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* 2nd edition, N.Denzin and Y.Lincoln, Thousand Oakes: Sage, 2003, pp.336-396, p.381
[3] Freeman, 2010, p.68

1. Participant Observation

All of my practice in the Arches developed initially from a period of participant observation, in which I developed personal and professional relationships with many of the staff by spending time working with the different departments at the Arches. I attended programming meetings with the music and artistic teams, worked behind the bar at Octopussy, the student club night, and assisted the box office and marketing staff.[4] Contributing to the company in this way was an opportunity to develop a clear understanding of the range of activity in the building, and to observe the ways in which the different departments work together. It also clarified my own contracted role as Research Associate within the Arches staff, officially situating myself within the relational field that I was researching. This was a paid position, as a condition of the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award. This meant that I had particular contractual obligations to the company, which allowed me free access to the building, but also determined the types of relationship that I was able to form with the other staff and with visitors to the building.

My employment by the Arches was extremely valuable to my research because the relationships that this allowed me to establish with other members of staff significantly contributed to the development of my practice. For example, Rob Watson, the Technical Manager, was the lighting designer for *Underneath the Arches* and our professional relationship resulted in the full support and artistic input of the technical team, and their willingness to work during January 2009, when the building was scheduled to be closed for technical maintenance. Similarly, Jason Edwards, the former Music Programmer, was instrumental in funding and programming *Midland Street* as part of Death Disco, one of the Arches' main in-house club nights. Many of the relationships that formed during my associateship were based on the contracts of employment, but establishing myself as a member of Arches staff meant that a series of collaborations and negotiations emerged within the professional structures of the business. In this sense, my own relationships have often operated as personal and professional at the same time, and the ability to constantly adapt my role at the Arches has been key to the success of the project.

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[4] Octopussy, octopussyuk.co.uk (accessed 03/08/10)

Writing about her observation and recording of rehearsals at the University of Sydney, Gay McAuley draws comparisons with the ethnographic model of participant observation.[5] McAuley refers to Margaret Mead's influential discussion of 'the balance between empathic involvement and disciplined detachment' that the ethnographer has to maintain in their research.[6] This resonates with my own participant observation at the Arches, especially when my participation made a tangible impact on the artistic activity in the building, as I became part of programming teams for the theatre festivals or programmed the Scratch Night of work-in-progress performances.[7] My participation in the Arches has therefore directly affected the object of my study - the relational space of the venue. In these moments I am reassured by ethnographers such as Kirsten Hastrup who accept that their involvement with the object of their study will necessarily affect relationships in some way. Hastrup therefore bases her research on dealing 'not with the unmediated world of the "others" but the world between ourselves and the others'.[8] This acceptance that 'knowledge produced is doubly mediated by our own presence, and the informant's response to that' has informed my work at the Arches throughout.[9] This dialectical process is important to an investigation into relational practice, as the relationships of my participant observation are developed through the aesthetic of my practice.

This approach is particularly relevant to a large-scale practice-as-research project, in which my 'observation' has frequently crossed over into 'collaboration'. As a theatre director, bringing collaborators into the building to develop performances, I have frequently been instrumental in setting up the events and relationships that I have observed. As Hélène Bouvier identifies, the 'immersion in another community or society' that forms the basis of ethnographical participant observation can be applied just as easily to theatre practice as to more traditional subjects of enquiry.[10] However, the dual demand on the ethnographer to 'see with the eyes of an outsider as well as the eyes of an insider' is particularly complicated by a practice-as-research methodology,

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[5] Gay McAuley, 'Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal', *New Theatre Quarterly* 14, 1998, pp.75-85
[6] Margaret Mead, 'The Art and Technology of Fieldwork', *A Handbook of Method in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Raoul Naroll and Ronald Cohen, New York: Natural History Press, 1970, pp.246-265
[7] MySpace - Scratch Night, www.myspace.com/scratchglasgow (accessed 05/08/10)
[8] Kirsten Hastrup, 'Writing Ethnography: The state of the art', *Anthropology and Autobiography*, ed. Judith Okely & Helen Calloway, London: Routledge, 1992, pp.115-32, p.116
[9] Hastrup, 1992, pp.115-32, p.121
[10] Hélène Bouvier, 'Foreward', *Theatre Research International* 19(1), March 1994, pp.1-8, p.1

which conflates the relationships of the artistic theatre director and the academic ethnographer.[11] As a director, my participant observation of the Arches staff and customers informed my collaboration with performers, designers and writers, but it is important to recognise that these were very different types of relationship. In some cases, this became further complicated as many of my artistic collaborators, such as performers and designers, were also members of the Arches' staff.

Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock argue that successful participant observation 'requires a self-conscious balance between intimacy with, and distance from, the individuals we are seeking to better understand'.[12] However, in many of the relationships of my practice-as-research, such as working as a director with a group of performers, distance is not always conducive to a successful artistic process, which relies on the development of close working relationships that are often akin to friendship. Towards the end of this section, I discuss Claire MacDonald's call for a 'politics of acknowledgement' in the artistic friendships of performance making.[13] Friendship, I conclude, operates through fragile relationships of trust, respect and investment, and my performance practice is frequently built on my artistic friendships, many of which had existed long before this project was underway.

My own roles as Arches staff member, theatre director and researcher have shifted and developed throughout this project. Although this has occasionally caused me a certain degree of uncertainty and anxiety in determining my place in my own research, I have come to embrace the 'messiness' of the relationships involved in participant observation and practice-as-research.[14] As I go on to discuss, it has frequently been the case that the contradictions, discomforts, anxieties and limitations arising from my research methodology have actually resulted in the clearest insights. The potential productivity of 'ethnographic discomfort and awkwardness' has been recognised more and more in recent ethnographic theory.[15] In the discussion of 'the messiness of practice-as-research' later in this chapter, I argue that the success of a practice-as-

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[11] Lynne Hume & Jane Mulcock, 'Introduction: Awkward spaces, productive places', *Anthropologists in the Field*, ed. Lynne Hume & Jane Mulcock, New York: Columbia University Press, c.2004, pp.xi-xxvii, p.xi
[12] Hume & Mulcock, 2004, p.xi
[13] Claire MacDonald, 'Backandforth', *Remembering Performance Panel*, The Arches, NRLA, March 2010. Available on Podcast (#2), itunes.apple.com/podcast/new-territories-podcasts/id272928756 (accessed 11/06/10)
[14] Freeman, 2010, p.81
[15] Hume & Mulcock, 2004, p.xii

research methodology does not happen in spite of inherent complexities and difficulties, but because of them.

2. Theoretical Research

Concurrently with my participant observation at the Arches, my engagement with relevant critical theory continually informed the ways in which I practically investigated the site. Initially, my focus was on three key areas: relational artworks, site-specific theatre practice and conceptions of space. These broad areas of theory laid the foundations for a practised engagement with the site in which I would explore and interrogate theoretical concepts through small-scale performance projects in the Arches. As Robin Nelson identifies, 'one of the ways in which practice becomes innovative is by being informed by theoretical perspectives'.[16] The conceptual frameworks that I engaged with significantly determined the ways in which I developed my practice. A series of workshops and small-scale performance explorations developed from my initial literature reviews, alongside my direct experience of the day-to-day activities of the venue.

As my research progressed and I began to develop more substantial performance projects, I engaged with theories concerning areas of the Arches' activity that I had encountered as a participant observer. For example, as I turned my attention to the clubbing programme, I undertook an extensive literature review into clubbing theory as well as attending numerous club nights as a participant observer. This combined theoretical and participatory approach ensured that my practical work in the venue was clearly determined by carefully considered research questions and a comprehensive knowledge of my field of enquiry.

3. Practical Exploration

Each new phase of my practice began with small scale practical explorations into different aspects of the Arches' spaces and activities. Through a series of workshops, work-in-progress performances, interventions and installations, I began the process of

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[16] Nelson, 2009, p.128

moving from an abstracted theoretical understanding to a practised engagement with the site. These were performance experiments that were often designed to test a specific research question. For example, the workshops that I ran in the lead up to *A Work on Progress* asked 'what are the "currencies" of theatre, and how do they operate?'.[17] During this workshop the participants, including friends, regular collaborators, and academics and artists associated with the University and the Arches, identified four key 'currencies' and developed performances that focussed on these: *money*, *physical exertion*, *time* and *applause*. In a second workshop I further investigated the physical exertion of theatre production, and the different forms of labour that operate during the event.[18] In this case, these workshops were a crucial stage in developing a larger-scale public performance. Through a combination of participant observation, theoretical research and practical exploration, I developed a series of research questions concerning the labour of theatre production and the place of cultural practice within the wider systems of commercial production processes. *A Work on Progress* was the final result of these initial explorations.

The different phases of my research all began with these small-scale practical explorations. Approaching the major performance projects in this way ensured that the form that I eventually employed was the result of a rigourous practical and theoretical development process. Developing projects in this way also meant that many of the performers and artists working on the project were involved from an early stage in the process, ensuring a deep understanding of my research concerns from as early as possible. This was important to my use of a collaborative devising process as a research methodology because it ensured that everybody involved was aware of the aims of the project from the beginning, and understood the potential for tensions to emerge between artistic and academic requirements as we developed the performances.

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[17] The results of this first workshop can be viewed at web.me.com/davidoverend/David_Overend/commerce.html (accessed 03/08/10)
[18] The results of the second workshop can be viewed at web.me.com/davidoverend/David_Overend/commerce3.html (accessed 03/08/10)

4. Performance Practice

The three main productions that I directed for the project were all developed using very different creative processes. The smaller scale practical explorations that preceded them ensured a critically informed progression, which clearly addressed a set of research questions. However, despite the significant differences in artistic process, on which I elaborate in the following chapters, all of the three productions followed the same pattern, which began with the development of an overall performance concept, followed by the appointment of a creative team and a period of research and rehearsal, and culminated in the performance event.

These development processes and performances form the basis of the exegesis in the chapters that follow. Over the course of the project I worked with approximately thirty performers, designers, writers and technicians. This ever growing team included an amateur dramatics group, several dancers, a brass band and several emerging professional artists from Glasgow. The relational field that converged around this project therefore reached out into the city and beyond, drawing together a diverse range of previously unconnected groups and individuals.

The productions are described in detail in the Appendix of this thesis and short films have also been provided on the accompanying video files. A shorter description is also included in the following chapters as I discuss the projects in relation to my development of a relational performance aesthetic. It is important that these performances are seen as a stage in my wider research process rather than an end point in themselves. Furthermore, the projects should not be seen as a gradual development towards a final performance, but rather as representing different strategies to explore the relationality of site-specific theatre practice, each yielding different results and setting up the next path of exploration.

5. Exegesis

Over the course of the project I developed a documentation process that used the observation of the creative teams that worked on the productions as well as teams of research assistants, who I employed to observe the variety of ways in which audiences engaged with the work. Following performances, I arranged focus group discussions which were key to identifying the different modes of engagement that emerged during the performances.

Another important means of researching the outcomes of my practice was the gathering of feedback from participants. This took a number of forms including questionnaires and comments books. I also recorded hours of footage using video cameras, and this provided film from different stages of the project. Newspaper previews and reviews of the performances were also useful in providing a critical overview of engagement with the work.[19] For each of the three main performances I used these sources to write an extensive document including a detailed description and a critical reflection on the event. The descriptions are included here in the Appendix, along with photographs taken by James Baster, Bartosz Madejski and Sophie Malleson, photographers who I worked with throughout the project.

This exegesis of performance is the crucial stage in the process that makes my work practice-as-research, rather than simply practice. As Brad Haseman identifies, the explanation or interpretation of the creative work is a crucial stage in performance-based research.[20] Paul Kleiman points out the dangers of presenting work without exegesis by referring to Minimalist art, in which a potentially identical 'product' could result from years of diligent study or an attempt to mock the contemporary art world.[21]

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[19] For example, Kirstin Innes, 'Underneath the Arches: Going underground', *The List*, Preview, 08/01/09, www.list.co.uk/article/15144-underneath-the-arches (accessed 16/06/10); Mary Brennan, 'Forest Fringe Microfestival, Arches, Glasgow', *The Herald*, Review, 20/04/10, www.heraldscotland.com/arts-ents/stage-visual-arts/forest-fringe-microfestival-arches-glasgow-1.1021782 (accessed 23/04/10); and Jay Richardson, 'Theatre Review: Forest Fringe, The Arches, Glasgow', *The Scotsman*, 18/04/10, thescotsman.scotsman.com/features/Theatre-review-Forest-Fringe-The.6235542.jp (accessed 07/05/10)

[20] Brad Haseman, 'Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the performative research paradigm', *Practice as Research: Approaches to creative arts enquiry*, eds. Estelle Barrett & Barbara Bolt, London: I.B.Tauris, 2007, pp.147-157, p.156

[21] Paul Kleiman, PARIP mail group discussion, 28/10/02. In Peter Thomson (ed.), 'Notes and Queries: Practice as research', *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 22(3), 2003, pp.159-180, p.163

Only some form of exegesis can distinguish between these otherwise identical artworks.

Exegesis is generally accepted as a prerequisite for the research value of artistic practice.[22] However, the relationship between practice and research in the academy is far from clear, and my own position is therefore influenced by a number of individual practitioner/researchers, many of whom employ very different, even contradictory approaches. For example, Jane Bacon describes the way her own work negotiates the territory between practice and research:

> I work with the premise that the text-based knowledge I acquire will and does inform my performance making. I try to hold my theoretical concerns lightly when I enter the creative space of the studio in order to better understand the way in which my reading of books and writing is influencing my practice-based studio processes and vice-versa.[23]

Bacon has coined the term 'performance ethnography' to explain this methodology. Her interest lies 'in the '"how" of what I do', not necessarily '"what" I do'.[24] Central to Bacon's work - whether written or performed - is 'accepting and finding ways to work with the knotty business of the creative unknown'.[25] This is all very well, and finding ways to incorporate the 'creative unknown' has been a key concern in my practice. However, elsewhere Bacon holds her theoretical concerns so lightly that she asks 'must practice as research include some form of disseminable "reflection" or is the practice in performance/screening contexts sufficient to stand as research outputs?'.[26] I share Freeman's concern that this question can be asked at all, and his assumption that exegesis must be regarded as a necessary part of practice-as-research.[27]

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[22] Nelson, 2009, p.128

[23] Jane Bacon, 'It ain't what you do it's the way that you do it', *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 25(3), 2005, pp.215-227, p.224

[24] Bacon, 2005, p.224

[25] Bacon, 2005, p.226

[26] Jane Bacon, 'Musings on Documentation: Performance self-ethnography as a methodological tool for documenting practice as research in performance', PARIP 2003, National Conference Proceedings, www.bristol.ac.uk/parip/bacon.htm (accessed 04/06/10)

[27] Freeman, 2010, p.80

The 'Messiness' of Practice-as-Research

Of all the terms to describe the use of performance as a research methodology (practice-based research, practice-led research, practice-integrated research, etc.),[28] I consider *practice-as-research* to be the most suitable for my work. This is because my research questions have always driven and determined my practice. In performance, this research is necessarily subjective and 'messy', to use Freeman's term.[29] However, in this written section of my thesis I have striven to be as transparent, systematic and rigorous as possible.

Nonetheless, my primary research methodology has involved artistic processes, and as Helka-Maria Kinnunen points out, 'artistic processes (at least those ending up in communicative events) show up as collective and transformative journeys containing breaks or jumps, collective and individual, that tend to lead to an unknown result'.[30] Freeman's discussion of the 'messiness' of performance practice offers a valuable defence of the problems that inevitably arise from using such work as a research methodology:

> Unlike (...) traditional research, performance practice is always messy and its manners are often bad. It neither does what it is told nor does it go meekly in the direction one would usually expect. It sits uneasily with many ideas of academic objectivity and verification. Its goals are often less well-defined and usually impossible to measure. It deals with jumps and starts, and sometimes complete revisions. It is unpredictable, maybe even at times uncontrollable.[31]

Importantly, Freeman's argument is that despite the 'messiness' of practice-as-research, 'there is still a place in practice-based investigations for research which is systematic, informed and verifiable'.[32] In fact, it is often in those moments of performance when the clearly defined aims of the research questions could be understood to be jeopardised that the most valuable research actually emerges:

> An iterative working process (...) in which problems are identified and re-worked (if not always resolved) is almost always a central part of a practice-based researcher's methodology, insofar as it takes an intrinsically heuristic approach to the value of failures as well as successes. In this way all work becomes work in progress.[33]

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[28] Haseman, 2007, p.147
[29] Freeman, 2010, p.81
[30] Helka-Maria Kinnunen, 'Towards Collaborativity in Theatre-making: Reflections on an artistic research case', *Blood, Sweat & Theory: Research through practice in performance*, ed. John Freeman, Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, c2010, pp.26-33, p.31
[31] Freeman, 2010, p.81
[32] Freeman, 2010, p.79
[33] Freeman, 2010, p.68

As will become apparent in the chapters that follow, on many occasions, the 'failures' that occurred during my practice proved extremely valuable in developing my understanding of the conflicts, exclusions and antagonisms that are an integral part of RTP. As Phil Smith points out, 'sometimes getting things wrong helps the most'.[34]

For Matthew Goulish, failure produces transparency. The Institute of Failure, which he launched with Tim Etchells in 2001, was 'dedicated to the documentation, study, and theorisation of failure as it occurs in all aspects of human endeavour'.[35] Writing about the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in 1940, Goulish suggests that 'we study failure for the precision of its revelation - the exact manner of the collapse of the bridge allows us to see its design, the mathematics of its construction and stress, renders the wind itself visible, and renders visible the aggregate of factors at Tacoma Narrows on November 7th, 1940'.[36] In RTP, 'failure' reveals complexities that would otherwise be naturalised or ignored.

It is in the unexpected, challenging and 'messy' elements of RTP that the most valuable research material is often generated. During my practice-as-research projects, the 'problems' of hierarchical power relations, *a priori* relationships and exclusive community formation have actually provided some of the most tangible examples of the unpredictability and aleatory nature of relational art practice. The challenges and limitations that were encountered by my practice ultimately proved to be of far greater value than the seemingly democratic and inclusive relational spaces that emerged as planned during the development of the performances.

In this sense, the distinction between 'success' and 'failure' is by no means clear. Judging the outcome of practice-as-research in terms of its success or otherwise is to focus on the completed *product*, but the particular benefit of practice-as-research as simultaneously methodology and outcome is as a way of researching the 'irregular' and 'unpredictable' terrain of artistic *process*.[37] In the chapters that follow, I therefore reflect on my work not by attempting any sort of value-judgement, but by identifying events and incidents that

[34] Smith, 2010, p.110
[35] 'About the Institute', The Institute of Failure, www.institute-of-failure.com (accessed 07/05/10)
[36] Matthew Goulish, 'Lecture in the Shape of a Bridge Collapsing to inaugurate the Institute of Failure', www.institute-of-failure.com/mattEssay.html (accessed 07/05/10)
[37] Baz Kershaw, 'Introduction', *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen*, ed. Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw and Angela Piccini, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, c2009, pp.1-16, p.13

reveal something about the way that theatre practice can engage with the relationships that operate in the Arches. These are points at which the unpredictability and 'messiness' of my practice results in new insights into the relationships of the site and of the performances within them.

Friendship and Time

At the National Review of Live Art at the Arches in March 2010, Claire MacDonald's contribution to the 'Remembering Performance' panel, read out in her absence, suggested the need for a theory of artistic friendship, which would allow for a politics of acknowledgement in the artistic process.[38] In many ways my own artistic friendships were central to this project. In previous years, working at Arches with members of the Glasgow arts community, as well as the five years I had already spent studying in the Theatre, Film and Television Studies Department at the University of Glasgow, meant that a significant set of relationships was already in place as the project began.

As I developed performances for the Arches, I drew on the valuable support of playwrights (Lewis Hetherington and Rob Drummond), actors (Julia Taudevin and Stewart Ennis) and writer-performers (Murray Wason, Chris Hall and Kieran Hurley). Through informal discussions and walks around the building with these practitioners, many of whom are close friends, I began to find ways of 'practicing' and testing the theory that had informed my thinking in the first few months of my research.

MacDonald refers to the artist and critic Charles Green, who warns against confusing friendship with collaboration. Green argues that 'friendship is always fragile since its contract is so unenforceable'.[39] This means that any relationship based on friendship alone cannot endure the demands that can be managed through the contractual relations of collaboration. For Green, friendship is ultimately unsustainable, whereas collaboration takes place under contract. It is important to recognise, however, that friendship carries its own social contract, which could not be contained within the fixed, legally binding terms of a written document. For MacDonald, friendship as a basis for artistic practice has to be

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[38] MacDonald, 2010
[39] Charles Green, interviewed by Geert Lovink, 'The Art of Collaboration: An interview with Charles Green', Freeincorporation Mailing List Archives, molodiez.org/ocs/mailinglist/archive/123.html (accessed 11/06/10)

understood as a 'queer and destabilising, generative, poetic exchange'. This is because friendship is bound by something more delicate, more 'poetic' even, which exists outside 'authorised narratives' such as the contracted relationships of arts organisations.[40]

Central to this understanding is the temporal dimension of friendship. Artistic friendship might be considered as an 'oscillation between past and future, a conduit, a means of passing things back and forth across time'. This temporality is an important aspect of my work at the Arches, as many of my relationships with collaborating performers had developed over years prior to the commencement of the project (as Geert Lovink points out, 'we do not get up, have coffee, and then collaborate').[41] Furthermore, the friendships that I formed over the three years of my time at the Arches were central to the ways in which this project developed.

The duration of the project was not only necessary for me to develop a thorough understanding of the various sites of the Arches, and of the theoretical terrain I was working within; it also proved necessary for me to build my own relationships with the various users of the building, including many of the staff. To acknowledge this is to begin to explore what MacDonald refers to as the 'space of encounter' that artistic friendship sets up. This phrase is reminiscent of Bourriaud's explanation of relational art as 'a state of encounter' and indicates the importance of the relationships formed during the process of developing performance, as well as those generated through the event itself.[42] Getting to know the venue through participant observation, and working with most of the staff in one way or another over the course of my time at the Arches, meant that I developed a strong relationship with the company and was seen as a member of staff, complete with my own email address and key fob. My intention was that rather than expressing or articulating 'an already formed creative vision', I would try to adhere to Grant Kester's call for work that involves a 'period of openness, of non-action, of learning and of listening' before the artwork is created.[43]

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[40] MacDonald, 2010
[41] Geert Lovink, Zero Comments: Kernels of Critical Internet Culture, New York: Routledge, 2007. Manuscript August 2006, www.manhattancache.net/pratt/Lovink_zero_comment_manuscript.pdf (accessed 11/06/10), p.193
[42] Bourriaud, 2002, p.18
[43] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and communication in modern art*, California: University of California Press, 2005, p.118

My own integration into the day to day life of the building over the last three years is therefore an important facet of this project that has allowed me to respond to existing relationships in a sensitive and informed way, as well as becoming part of the relational field within which I was working. As will become clear, time and duration are essential components of RTP, which significantly determine the types of relationship that are able to form. A number of different temporalities have operated throughout this project, from its three-year duration right down to brief moments of connection between audience members during a performance.

In the following chapters, I turn my attention to the specific context of the Arches and the relational processes of the three main practice-as-research projects that I directed at the venue. RTP aims to respond and contribute to the multiple relationships that comprise its site, and this includes the spatial and temporal boundaries that the performances operate within. My aim in the discussion that follows is to provide three case-studies, each focussing on different aspects of my practice at the Arches. My intention is to suggest a number of ways in which a performance aesthetic can be developed from the 'existing real' of a specific cultural site.[44]

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[44] Bourriaud, 2002, p.13

Chapter Two: The Guided Tour as Relational Performance Text

This chapter concerns the early stages of my practical work at the Arches, primarily my use of the guided tour as a model for RTP. The guided tour can be understood as a negotiation between predetermined, planned and rehearsed performance, and the incorporation of unexpected, unpredictable encounters with the people and places that it visits. The tour itself is a process, with the group undertaking a journey, moving through space, encountering and becoming part of its relationships. It therefore provides a valuable theoretical and practical model for the development of a theatre practice that aims to respond to the relational processes of a specific site.

Using the guided tour as a model for RTP provides an opportunity to explore the relationship between the 'script' (that which exists *before* performance) and the 'relational performance text' (that which emerges *through* performance). I am particularly interested in the tension that arises between a predetermined, guided access to a site (script), and the relational, responsive engagement with the people and places that are encountered (performance text). RTP aims to function as a *context* for relationships to form, rather than simply providing *content*, as with traditional scripted theatre.[1] The 'script' is therefore intended to function as a loose framework for a relational performance aesthetic, rather than a rigid plan.

It is perhaps because of the dynamic between *relational* and *guided* performance that so many contemporary practitioners have been drawn to it as a site-specific model. Examples include Forced Entertainment's *Nights in This City*,[2] Mike Pearson's *Bubbling Tom*,[3] and a large number of projects by Wrights & Sites and its individual members, including their series of *Mis-Guided Tours*.[4] Although these performative tours have ranged from city bus journeys and urban explorations to walks around villages and beaches, they share a number of common concerns. At the heart of all of them is a recognition that any narratives that claim authority, such as those of the tourist industry, frequently present a problematically 'authentic' version of site.[5] These overtly theatrical guided tours generally aim to engage

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[1] Kester, 2005, p.54
[2] Forced Entertainment, *Nights in This City* (perf.), dir. Tim Etchells, Sheffield: 1995; and Rotterdam: 1997
[3] Mike Pearson, *Bubbling Tom* (perf.), Hibaldstow, Lincolnshire: 2000
[4] Wrights & Sites, www.mis-guide.com/ws/archive/4mgtours.html (accessed 30/06/10)
[5] Phil Smith, 'Actors as Signposts: A model for site-based and ambulatory performances', *New Theatre Quarterly* 25(2), 2009a, pp.159-171, p.159

with the existing relationships of their site as well as contributing to the relational space that they take place within. In different ways they all explore notions of truth and reality, process and movement, and the creation of what Phil Smith of Wrights & Sites calls 'Massey-space' in reference to Doreen Massey; space as constructed through dynamic relational processes.[6]

These performances use relationships in a variety of different ways, but do not always acknowledge the implications of a guided engagement with site. Liz Tomlin criticises *Nights in This City*, Forced Entertainment's bus tour of Sheffield, as the performance tours the people and places of the city without any attempt to establish dialogue or build relationships, thereby casting people as 'exhibits' without their consent.[7] Tomlin warns of a 'tourist trap', in which performance is in danger of 'merely replicating the exploitative practices of postcolonial tourism'.[8] In contrast, Mike Pearson describes how at times during performances of *Bubbling Tom*, a walking tour of his childhood village in Lincolnshire, he could 'barely get a word in edgeways'.[9] Despite a pre-rehearsed text, the 'script' of Pearson's walking tour was re-written in performance by the additions corrections and contradictions of the tour group. Deirdre Heddon describes how the performance changed from *Bubbling Tom* into 'Babbling Tom' - a 'model for ethical community or participatory performance where the content or "script" of the piece is largely dictated by the spectators'.[10] In both of these examples, the way in which the 'script' is performed significantly determines the relationships that are formed (or prevented from forming) during the event.

My own tours at the Arches are intended to foreground the relational processes of a guided experience of site, acknowledging that the guide necessarily makes selections and works to a predetermined script, but at the same time attempting to open up a space for the disruption of that *a priori* text. In this sense, the guide (who is in this case also an actor), functions as a 'signpost', grounding the performance in its immediate environment, but

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[6] Smith, 2010, p.177; Massey, 2005, p.151
[7] Liz Tomlin, 'Transgressing Boundaries: Postmodern performance and the tourist trap', *The Drama Review* 43(2), 1999, pp.136-149, p.141
[8] Tomlin, 1999, p.136
[9] Mike Pearson, *"In Comes I": Performance, memory and landscape*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006, p.22
[10] Mike Pearson, Interview with Deirdre Heddon, Cardiff, 2001; Cited in Deirdre Heddon, *Autobiography and Performance*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.101

also encouraging group members to make their own connections.[11] In this sense, two structures (the guided tour and the theatre performance) were simultaneously in operation in these tours, each with their own distinct conventions and dynamics. My intention was to explore ways in which the 'script' of theatre could be opened up through the relational processes of the guided tour.

The drifts and 'mis-guides' of Wrights & Sites aim for their groups to be directed 'from the periphery', using a variety of techniques to defer the authority of the tour guide or organiser to the group.[12] Borrowing techniques from theatre, the group engage with geography as a process of myth-making.[13] Smith refers to 'mythogeography' as an 'experimental approach to the site of performance (in the very broadest, everyday sense) as a space of multiple layers'.[14] When a 'guide' is used, the role is not intended to illuminate the content of a 'simple, bounded, neutral space', closing down the site through a rigidly scripted narrative.[15] Rather, the aim is for the guide to function as a 'signpost', pointing towards the site as 'a performance yet to be discovered'.[16] As an evolution of 'psychogeography' and the walking practices of the Situationists, *mythogeography* is concerned with the ways in which walking constitutes a performative intervention into a site, which contributes to an ongoing 'quotidian re-making of space'.[17]

While my tours share Wrights & Sites' aim to provoke the site to 'perform itself', rather than imposing extraneous narrative and characters, my tours of the Arches are more explicitly 'scripted' and rehearsed than 'mis-guided tours'.[18] Framed as a theatre performance and taking place in a cultural site with an established history of performances travelling around the building and fitting into every available corner, these tours are knowingly guided, but employ a series of strategies that disrupt the authority of the guide and draw attention to the theatricality of the tours.[19] There is a subtle but significant

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[11] Smith, 2009a, p.160, 168; This idea of the guide as 'signpost' was introduced by Simon Perisighetti of Wrights & Sites in 2000 but only came to my attention several months after my work with guided tours at the Arches, when Phil Smith published this article examining the concept. Retrospectively, it proves a valuable term for understanding the role of the tour guide in my work at the Arches
[12] For example, Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith, Cathy Turner & Tony Weaver, *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere*, Exeter: Wrights & Sites, 2006
[13] Smith, 2009b, p.101
[14] Smith, 2010, p.113
[15] Smith, 2009a, p.163
[16] Smith, 2009a, p.159
[17] Smith, 2010, p.112
[18] Smith, 2009b, p.91
[19] For example, two productions directed by Andy Arnold, the old artistic director; *Spend a Penny* (2006) took place in the Arches toilets, and *Inferno* (2007) used the derelict space underneath the main arches

difference in focus here: rather than employing theatrical conventions to re-examine the potential of the guided tour as a means of performing site, my practice at the Arches uses the form and practices of the guided tour to re-examine the relational potential of theatre performances. The conventions of theatre are still very much in place in my tours of the Arches, and they are the focus of my research as much as the relational processes of the site.

It is important to recognise the implications, possibilities and limitations of framing the guided tour as a theatre performance, presenting it as part of the arts programme, referring to my own role as 'director', and overtly acknowledging the illusions that the tour operates through. Although all guided tours can be considered *performative*, presenting tours within the context of site-specific theatre is to frame them as a particular type of performance practice. There is an important distinction to be made here between performative events outside the theatre, and performance presented as part of a theatre programme in an arts venue such as the Arches. As opposed to what could be considered the 'everyday' performance of the conventional guided tour, a whole new set of dynamics are brought into play when the guided tour is presented as a performance, the guide is introduced as an actor, and the tour group take on the role of a theatre audience. It has been important, therefore, to remember Wilkie's argument that 'the rules of each particular performance are always to a greater or lesser extent also the rules of a general notion of what "performance" is',[20] and to recognise that there are many deeply rooted codes and conventions in theatre that significantly influence the relationships that operate during these tours.

Although the traditional view of theatre spectatorship as passive is now disputed,[21] the separation of audience and performers is still the dominant mode of contemporary Western theatre. The division between stage and auditorium, which Ridout links to commercial systems and artistic hierarchies, are part of a long tradition that is not easy to depart from.[22] This leads Wilkie to question whether site-specific performance can ever remove itself from such deeply ingrained theatrical codes and conventions.[23] While *Underneath the*

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[20] Fiona Wilkie, 'Kinds of Place at Bore Place: Site-specific performance and the rules of spatial behaviour', *New Theatre Quarterly* 18(3), 2002b, pp.243-260, p.255
[21] For example, Rancière, 2007, p.271-2; and Rebellato, 2009b, p.18
[22] Ridout, 2006, p.6
[23] Wilkie, 2002b, p.255

Arches might occasionally have achieved a movement away from these conventions, challenging some of them and pushing others to breaking point, for the creative team and the audience alike, this proved difficult within the structures of the guided tour, which is inherently based on division between guide/performer and group/audience.

While remaining attentive to the difficulties that arose from merging the conventions and codes of each performance system, and to the constraints of the hierarchy between guide/ actor and group/audience, the following discussion of my use of the guided tour introduces a series of underlying principles that have informed my practice throughout this project. Sites are not just physical locations; they are created by people and relationships, and as such the guided tour offers a model by which site-specific theatre practice can engage in various ways with the various users of the venue (staff, members of the public, visiting artists, etc.) as well as the materiality of the building (objects, architecture, textures, etc.), bringing these dimensions of the site into a dialogue with each other and developing a performance practice that incorporates these dialogical and creative processes into its aesthetic. This work laid the foundations for a relational engagement with the site, which was developed in subsequent research to incorporate a wide range of institutional, cultural and social relationships operating within the Arches.

Initial Practical Explorations (May - September 2008)

Initially, I ran three workshops exploring the Arches' warren of corridors, arches, offices and derelict spaces through various spatial practices including touring, mapping and playing. The aim was to begin to practically explore different ways of forming relationships between ourselves and the space in order to develop material for a more substantial practice-as-research project to take place within the Arches' theatre programme. I advertised these workshops to the general public and the Glasgow arts community through the Arches' website and mailing lists, and also invited Arches staff, Theatre Studies students, and several friends and previous collaborators. Each of these groups was represented, and this provided a wide range of interests, reasons for attending, knowledge of the building, and familiarity with each other. In all of these tours we were also

accompanied by James Baster, a photographer who worked with me throughout the project to take many of the photographs included in this thesis.[24]

In the first workshop, we undertook a tour of the Arches with no appointed guide. Moving around the building as a group, we speculated about what its spaces are for, and about what happens in them. Facts and information merged with lies and speculation and we 'rewrote' the space as a collective. The second workshop drew on Michel de Certeau's discussion of mapping as a 'a totalising stage' which can never capture the vast range of 'proportions, sequences, and intensities which vary according to the time, the path taken and the walker'.[25] We therefore experimented with new ways of charting our experiences of our journeys to and around the Arches, creating a web of mapping on many different levels and referencing many different aspects of the site. In the third workshop, we explored the relation between play, performance and everyday life through a wide-ranging game of 'hide & seek', in which participants 'hid' in the Arches by attempting to blend in to the everyday life of the building.[26]

Due to the opportunities that the touring workshop provided to move through the many spaces of the site, including parts of the building that were otherwise out-of-bounds, as well as the potential for encounters with Arches staff and customers, I continued to explore the guided tour as a performance strategy, a research area which proved particularly suitable due to the apt timing of *Doors Open Days* in September 2008, a city wide event in which a number of buildings across Glasgow opened their doors to the public and ran guided tours over the course of a weekend.[27] I took this opportunity to work with the actor Stewart Ennis to create what we called an 'unofficial' or 'unauthorised' guided tour to run alongside the official and authorised tours guided by the Arches front of house staff.[28]

The tour groups, which ran eight times in one day, included Arches staff, theatre-makers, students, friends, collaborators, colleagues, academics, other interested members of the public, as well as myself and my photographer. The tours were not self contained, so we

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[24] James Baster, www.doubtlesshouse.org.uk (accessed 05/08/10)
[25] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, London: University of California Press, 1984, p.97, 99
[26] For a discussion of the political potential of play in guided tours, drifts and walking practices, see Smith, 2009b, pp.98-9
[27] Doors Open Days, www.doorsopendays.org.uk (accessed 04/08/10)
[28] A film of this tour is provided on an accompanying video file, which is also available to view at www.underneaththearches.co.uk

also encountered users of the building who were not involved directly in the tours - customers drinking at the bar or going to a theatre show, ushers, bar staff, technicians, etc. As we passed the box-office, left the building to point out the Grant Arms (a final relic of the old village of Grahamston, which was formerly on the site of Central Station at the other side of Argyle Street from the Arches),[29] and ended the tour outside the kitchen, we engaged in conversations as we encountered members of staff and public, and attempted to build impromptu dialogues into the structure of the tour. This was an early attempt to open up the performance to form dialogical relationships with those outside the boundaries of the 'audience', and although we were not always successful in this attempt, as I go on to discuss, the difficulties that we encountered helped to shape the focus of the entire project.

Underneath the Arches (January 2009)[30]

My first major public performance at the Arches used the guided tour as a starting point. The semi-improvised guided tours that I developed in the workshop and for *Doors Open Days* formed a major section of a large-scale promenade performance. In the first half of *Underneath the Arches*, seven tour guides took groups around the building at the same time. The guides with whom I worked were either Arches staff members or performers I had previously directed, or both. I worked with each guide to develop their own route and 'script', which was informed by my research. Each guide followed their own route and told their own version of the site, blurring the lines between fact and fiction, and self-reflexively playing with the conventions of the guided tour. Often, these scripts, which had been written down and rehearsed prior to the performance, were interrupted and 're-written' as the tour groups came into contact with each other - sometimes there were greetings between groups, sometimes eavesdropping; snide comments, sarcastic dismissals, outright rejections of the other voices round corners, down corridors and up stairs. Routes changed and groups slowed down or sped up to avoid or catch up with each other.

The first section of the performance ended as the tour groups came together in one of the main arches, and the guides began to argue about the site. As their dispute escalated into a

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[29] Gilliland, 2002
[30] A more detailed description of this event is provided in the Appendix, and a video of the performance is also provided, which is available to view at www.underneaththearches.co.uk

rehearsed fight and four of the guides disappeared into the darkness, a dance piece began in the adjacent arch and the audience were guided through the space. The remaining three guides - Erin Brubacher, James Oakley and Maca Andrews - then led the audience of a hundred people on a promenade route down into the lower level of the building. The four guides who had disappeared - Kieran Hurley, David Lees, Julia Taudevin and Chris Hall - also made up the core creative team who I worked with to create a promenade route, including video and sound installations, a brass band and dancers emerging from the darkness.

The audience were then guided to the studio theatre via the back staircase, where the final part of the performance took place. As they re-emerged from the derelict space into the studio, Hurley and Hall were busy constructing a model of the old village of Grahamston, which covered the entire the stage. When all the audience were seated Taudevin narrated the history of the village, right up to its demolition to make way for the train station, which was enacted by Hall with a cricket bat. From the remains of smashed model buildings littering the stage, Lees performed a monologue taking the audience on an imaginative journey back through the layers of history and geography that created the Arches. This was a self-reflexively partial and speculative narrative that drew on the fragments of history that had been explored through the guided tours, but which made 'no attempt to re-enact the million, million occurrences which have happened there'.[31] The performance ended as Lees' narrative reached the empty void before the Big Bang and as the thematically juxtaposed lights and sound of the Death Disco club night filled the studio as the door between the studio and the main dance arch was opened, the audience left the theatre into the club, which was already underway. *Underneath the Arches* was deliberately scheduled to finish as the club started, indicating a continuation of the performance outside the studio theatre into the nightclub; a very different constitutive element of the Arches' relational space.

In terms of the development of RTP, *Underneath the Arches* was an early experiment in theatrical form. It served as a transitional project from the script-based theatre I had been directing for the past few years to a more relational performance style, which was mainly devised and improvised. Much of the performance maintained a separation between

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[31] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.111

audience and performers; there were large sections of rigidly scripted text, and a number of rehearsed 'scenes' which were acted in front of the audience. However, there were also key sections of the performance that were extremely valuable in suggesting ways in which a relational performance aesthetic might be developed. In the discussion that follows, I draw on examples from the guided tours in *Underneath the Arches*, as well as those in the early workshops and the *Doors Open Days* tours, in order to develop a concept of a 'relational performance text', which I use to develop a theatre practice that operates through a negotiation between 'script' (as the predetermined, written, fixed structure of the performance), and 'divergences' or 'detours' (as relational and process-based).

'Divergences' and 'detours' are terms that are influenced by Situationist strategies of *dérive* (drift) and *détournement* (diversion). In the *dérive*, an individual or group's 'usual motives for movement and action' are replaced by a deliberate 'letting-go' to 'the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there'.[32] This was a key Situationist practice, which ultimately aimed for a new way of negotiating the urban environment as process-based and relational, centring around 'changing architecture and urbanism'.[33] *Détournement*, another Situationist strategy, involves 'triggering responses or "situations" in public places that momentarily introduced ruptures into the urban everyday'.[34] Debord, who wrote many of the most influential Situationist texts, argues that 'cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones'.[35] These 'games' of *dérive* and *détournement* provide a way of working against these organising systems, 'creating new conditions more favorable to our purposes'.[36] My tours at the Arches adopted a similar rationale, using the walking practices of the guided tour to find new ways of using the 'constant currents' and 'fixed points' of the site; the organisation of public and private areas, and systems of entry such as locked doors and ticketed access.

Situationist strategies, which, in the case of the *dérive*, Whybrow understands as 'a form of reconception and remapping of the city based on a performative practice of "walking

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[32] Guy Debord, 'Theory of the Dérive' [1958], *Bureau of Public Secrets*, www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm (accessed 11/11/10)

[33] Debord, www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm (accessed 11/11/10)

[34] Whybrow, 2010, p.88

[35] Debord, www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm (accessed 11/11/10)

[36] Debord, www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm (accessed 11/11/10)

without aim"', have provided an important reference point for my tours of the Arches.[37] However, as Carl Lavery points out, 'although Situationism was definitely interested in performance, it rejected, with vehemence, all forms of organised theatre'.[38] Debord and his contemporaries rejected many forms of art, and one of their main propositions was 'that art can no longer be justified as a superior activity'.[39] It is this position that leads Bourriaud to argue that Debord and his contemporaries were concerned only with real life as opposed to the 'permanence' of art.[40]

RTP follows Bourriaud in his concern with work that 'manipulates Situationist methods without targeting the complete abolition of art'.[41] However, while Debord argues that 'something that changes our way of seeing the streets is more important than something that changes our way of seeing paintings',[42] Whybrow points out that despite Bourriaud's position, 'it is helpful to recognise Debord is not necessarily disavowing here the practice of art (or even painting) per se [...] but rather making the case for its central implication or activation within the business of everyday urban life'.[43] To invert this interpretation of the Situationist project, RTP aims to make the case for the central implication or activation of the relationships of everyday life within the business of theatre production and performance. To adopt Situationist terminology, my guided tours at the Arches are therefore concerned with the ways in which the 'business of the everyday' can inform and determine theatre practice, introducing 'ruptures' into the performance text.

Towards a Relational Performance Text

It is important to acknowledge the boundaries that my guided tours of the Arches operated within. The 'divergences' and 'detours' from the script were frequently set up, controlled and managed. As with Debord's theory of the *dérive*, 'chance' is therefore 'a less important factor in this activity than one might think'.[44] For example, at the Arches, the presence of a

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[37] Whybrow, 2010, p.88
[38] Carl Lavery, 'Situationism', *Performance Research* 11(3), 2006, pp.111-113, p.112
[39] Guy Debord & Gil J. Wolman, 'A User's Guide to Détournement' [1956], *Bureau of Public Secrets*, www.bopsecrets.org/SI/detourn.htm (accessed 11/11/10)
[40] Bourriaud, 2001, p.37
[41] Bourriaud, 2001, p.37
[42] Guy Debord, 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action' [1957], *Bureau of Public Secrets*, www.bopsecrets.org/SI/report.htm (accessed 11/11/10)
[43] Whybrow, 2011, p.11
[44] Debord, www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm (accessed 11/11/10)

guide was necessary for access to the majority of the building beyond the public areas of the foyer and the bar/cafe, and much of the content of the tours had to be planned beforehand, risk assessed and authorised by the Arches' Front of House Manager and Production Manager. Underlying these tours, then, is a negotiation of the relationship between heavily regulated operational systems that determine what can happen in the building, and an open, relational engagement with the site. A tension exists between those elements of a relational performance aesthetic that are rehearsed and scripted before the event, and those that emerge through performance. These tours were a valuable starting point in revealing this tension, and in developing a theatre practice that acknowledged and incorporated this dynamic into its performance text.

In *Underneath the Arches*, the seven guides, all touring at the same time, each departed from the 'script' and the prepared route in their own way: Erin Brubacher recreated the Canadian Arctic in a secret corner of the Costume Store using a hidden slide projector and stolen costumes; David Lees took his group into a dressing room where he took beers from the Club DJ's rider and handed them out; Julia Taudevin took her group into the dressing room, gave out the performers' complimentary wine and held an impromptu party. This staged misbehaviour was intended to encourage the group to assume the same creative approach to the site as the guides, and a healthy disrespect of the narratives communicated through the script.

In the *Doors Open Days* tours, my own presence as director, and Arches staff member, was implicated in the guide/group relationship significantly as I was part of the group on every tour. My role was intended as a *signpost* towards a particular sort of relationship between the site, the guide and the group.[45] I had the key fob to get round the building, which I wouldn't give to Ennis, the guide, meaning that he had to ask me whether we could go into certain spaces. A series of minor disagreements and arguments between us aimed to indicate that he should not be allowed the authority of the guide, as this dialogue involving Erin Brubacher, indicates:[46]

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[45] Smith, 2009a
[46] To clarify, Brubacher was cast as a tour guide for *Underneath the Arches* after the *Doors Open Days* tours. At this point she was Creative Learning and Development Officer at the Arches and a member of the tour group, but not yet a tour guide

Stewart	David. I don't have a key.
Erin	Here I do.
	(*Erin opens the door with her key fob*)
Stewart	How come I don't have a key?... How come I don't have a key? Why can't I have a key?
Erin	I don't know.
David	Erin has one.
Stewart	Why can't I have a key?
David	Because I don't trust you.
Stewart	Yes but if I'm doing the tour... and I've worked here for eighteen years and I don't have a key...
David	Yes but I'm going to be with you all the time so I'll just look after it.
Stewart	Sorry this is nothing to do with you guys... I'm going to take these guys around and I'm not allowed... Nobody trusts me.
David	You're not having a key.[47]

These tours were constantly interrupted by these improvised disagreements. Our aim was to draw the other members of the tour group into this relationship, encouraging them to question and challenge either Ennis or myself. In so doing, they would be engaging critically with our interpretation of the site rather than imposing a hierarchical relationship between the guide and the group, with 'strings of duckling audience trailing after mother-duck performers'.[48]

However, in both the *Underneath the Arches* and the *Doors Open Days* tours, for the vast majority of group members, the artist/guide/performer and spectator/group/audience hierarchy remained largely intact and our attempts to open up the role of the tour guide to criticism, questioning and subversion had limited success. Through my attempts to create an environment in which the guides' authority could be subverted and challenged by the other group members, and by adopting a self-reflexive approach to the tour, I aimed to encourage divergence from the 'script'. There was some evidence of this occurring, resulting in an active participation from the group. For example, on Maca Andrews' *Underneath the Arches* tour, after she apparently got lost in the basement of the building, one of the group members took over, directing the group back upstairs and commenting on the spaces that they moved through - 'this is the corridor'; 'we're just going up these stairs now'. However, such reconfigurations of the groups' relationships were infrequent. There

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[47] *Doors Open Days Tours*, David Overend (dir.), Glasgow: The Arches, 20/09/08. Quotations used here are taken from a video-recording of the fourth tour of the day but the text was improvised and therefore differed significantly on each tour
[48] Smith, 2009b, p.101

appeared to be a handing over of agency in the performance of the tour, and a willingness to place trust in the guide/performer. Despite an effort to move away from authoritative narration and fixed history, tour group members frequently showed that this is exactly what they wanted.

Questions of agency have been widely discussed in tourism theory, much of which contradicts Daniel J. Boorstin's criticism of the modern tourist who buys into the illusions of the tourist industry and 'expects everything to be done to him and for him'.[49] Being guided is a very particular way of experiencing a site and tourists on guided tours have made the decision to experience a site in this way, deferring to the authority of their guide, who may or may not be communicating 'authentic' information about a site.[50] Rejecting Boorstin's damning critique of tourism as an aberrational symptom of the *malaise* of modern life,[51] Dean MacCannell argues that modern tourism should be understood as a quest for 'authentic experiences, perceptions and insights'.[52] While Boorstin argues that the tourist is passive, MacCannell presents tourism as an active way of engaging with the world. However, subsequent theory has revealed the determinism of both points of view. Erik Cohen, for example, proposes a blurring of the line between authenticity and illusion, and conceives the tourist experience as operating on a spectrum between the two poles.[53] The same individual can oscillate between different modes of engagement, aligning themselves with the tour group as well as experiencing a site on a personal basis.

This recognition of the multifaceted experience of tourism is also applicable to the experience of the theatre audience. In my next chapter, I draw comparisons with the clubbing crowd in order to understand fluctuations between spectating performance as part of a wider group and the formation of individual relationships through active participation. My exploration of the relationships between different modes of engagement of the theatre audience and the clubbing crowd has its roots in my observation of the tour groups in

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[49] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A guide to pseudo-events in America*, New York: Harper and Row, 1964, p. 85
[50] For a different perspective on what Boorstin calls the 'synthetic happenings' of tourism, see Marc Augé, 'An Ethnologist in Disneyland', *Site-Specificity: The ethnographic turn*, ed. Alex Coles, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2000, pp.182-191
[51] Erik Cohen, 'A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences' [1979], *The Sociology of Tourism: theoretical and empirical investigations*, ed. Yiorgos Apostolopoulos, Stella Leivadi & Andrew Yiannakis, London: Routledge, 1996, p.90
[52] Dean MacCannell, 'Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of social space in tourist settings', *American Journal of Sociology* 79(3), 1973, pp.589-603, p.602
[53] Cohen, 1996

Underneath the Arches. In these guided tours, the opportunities for active participation and the formation of relationships outside the boundaries of the group remained limited. In my subsequent practice I therefore explored very different routes towards the incorporation of the relationships of the site into the development of a performance aesthetic, attempting to open up the boundaries of the audience-community, and subjecting the performance text to a much greater range of external influence.

Despite the limitations of the guided tour as a relational form, its use as a performance strategy in the Arches was an important point in my development of a 'hands-on' engagement with the site.[54] The relationships of these performances were clearly determined by the codes and conventions of theatre, but within the boundaries that this created, the tours proved valuable as a means of bringing together creative performance practice and an engagement with the 'immediate site and its material specificities'.[55] Exploring the Arches through guided tours granted us access into otherwise private areas of the building, and afforded us the opportunity to engage directly with the materiality of the site. By incorporating the architecture, objects and textures of the Arches into the performance text, we engaged in a corporeal relationship with the site that grounded the performance in its immediate environment.[56]

An Exegesis of Stuff

> We are on our way now and your eyes and ears are beginning to adapt to the
> light and the sound. We have been in the shadows since the dawning of the last
> century when the last brick was laid in place, but we brought with us some
> candles, and later some bulbs and batteries. Some of us brought food and water
> and beer. Some of us brought hammers and chisels. Some of us brought maps
> of the cosmos so as not to forget the night sky. Some of us brought sound
> systems and amplification devices. Some of us brought more bricks. Some of
> us brought canvasses.[57]

This prologue to *Underneath the Arches* was written by Murray Wason and performed by Kieran Hurley in the role of compère for the evening's performance. It preceded the departure of the seven tour groups in different directions around the building. In setting up

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[54] Bourriaud, 2002, p.15
[55] Smith, 2009a, p.160
[56] Smith, 2009a, p.161, 160
[57] Murray Wason, 'Prologue', *Underneath the Arches* (perf.), dir. David Overend, Glasgow: The Arches, 2009. Wason is a writer and performer who was an original member of the creative team, but later had to drop out due to touring commitments with another company

the guided tours, the text referred to left behind objects as the visible remnants of the stories that gradually accumulate and constitute our experience of a site. It also paved the way for a 'hands-on' engagement with the building,[58] inviting the audience to 'smell things' and to 'touch things'.[59] This exploration of the site has its roots in Walter Benjamin's materialist preoccupation with the small details and objects of everyday urban life; his 'revalorisation of the everyday and insignificant'.[60] Benjamin observes the decrease in social significance engendered by mass reproduction, which in the case of the mechanical reproduction of the work of art 'substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence'.[61] Revalorisation of apparently insignificant details represents a way of engaging with the world that recognises the importance of individual material relationships.

This engagement with the material aspects of the Arches is not intended as a return to the object-orientated art that relational aesthetics reacts against, but rather a way of situating a relational practice in the tangible 'here and now' of a site.[62] As with Whybrow's study of Brecht and Benjamin in contemporary Berlin, in which he centres his exploration on key locations in the city, 'it is the immediacy of *locale* that is central in this practice'.[63] The guided tour, as a walking practice that allows access to all of the spaces of the Arches, albeit within a guided and controlled context, is a particularly valuable approach to this material engagement with the site. Walking promises 'a corporeal brushing with the "real" and "immediate" (as well as "ever-shifting")' aspects of its site.[64] Engaging with the objects, textures and architecture of the Arches is therefore intended to establish the materiality of the building as the nexus of multiple relational processes.

Benjamin's project of 'revalorisation' has particular implications for our use of objects in *Underneath the Arches*, as a means by which a site's history might be creatively explored.

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[58] Bourriaud, 2002, p.15

[59] Wason, 2009; the process of devising this part of the performance is evident in my rehearsal diary: 'Wandering round the derelict basement rooms, the performers and I had found a pile of old shoes, a broken mirror ball, and two detuned pianos. We played with these forgotten and discarded objects, making our own associations and imagining what they might have been used for; bringing them back to life through our creative practice'. (David Overend, *Underneath the Arches* rehearsal diary, Nov 2008)

[60] Cheryl Beaver, 'Walter Benjamin's Exegesis of Stuff', *Epoché: The University of California Journal for the Study of Religion* 24, 2006, pp. 69-87, p.81

[61] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' [1935], in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, London: Pimlico, 1999, p.221

[62] Bourriaud, 2002, p.41

[63] Nicolas Whybrow, *Street Scenes: Brecht, Benjamin & Berlin*, Bristol: Intellect, 2005, p.21

[64] Whybrow, 2005, p.19

Likening memory to an endlessly unfolding fan, Benjamin evokes the surplus of fragmented meanings that even the smallest of objects invokes.[65] The only way to ensure that nothing be lost to history would be to chronicle all of its events, without distinguishing between major and minor importance. Such an undertaking is impossible for two reasons: firstly, like the unfolding fan, there is no end point in the 'exegesis of stuff' that would form the basis of this chronology; secondly, the processes and constant becoming of history mean that new 'stuff' is constantly piled on top of old.[66]

Conceiving of our relationship with history as an endlessly unfolding fan, our approach to the site of the Arches was intended to capture something of the fragmented, poetic rendering of objects in Benjamin's *One-Way Street*. Using the material text of billboards, street names, advertisements and slogans, Benjamin conjures up a series of dream descriptions, satirical passages, social commentary and other eclectic reflections on contemporary urban life. A similar project is undertaken in modern day London by Iain Sinclair in *Lights out for the Territory*.[67] *Underneath the Arches* was influenced by these texts in its use of the material site (objects, architecture, signage, etc.) to structure the 'script' of the tours. In this way, our approach to understanding the site was informed by the objects that we encountered.

However, this was a dialectical engagement with objects and their space, as not only did the objects encountered determine our relationship with the space of the Arches; they only became meaningful as we brought them to life through the narratives of the tours. This dual process is discussed by de Certeau who outlines two types of spatial 'determinations' of stories. The first is through objects which are 'ultimately reducible to the *being-there* of something dead'. The second is through 'operations' which bring objects out of their stable inertia and 'transform the place where they lay motionless into the foreignness of their own

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[65] Walter Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', *'One Way Street' and Other Writings*, London: Verso, 1979, pp. 293-346, p.296

[66] This is what Benjamin sees in Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, a surrealist painting of an angel about to move away from contemplation of something outside the frame: 'This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress' (Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'*, Illuminations: Essays and reflections*, New York, Schocken Books, 1968, p.258)

[67] Iain Sinclair, *Lights out for the Territory: 9 excursions in the secret history of London*, London: Penguin, 2003

space'.[68] In other words, for de Certeau, the processes of spatial narratives, such as guided tours, transform objects from their fixed and isolated location (place) into the relational realm that surrounds them (space). This is knowable, stable place transforming into 'foreign', nebulous space.

In de Certeau's theory, place is fixed and motionless, brought to life through spatial practices, such as the tour. However, this understanding of place is challenged by a significant number of critics across several disciplines. As Michel Foucault explains, Galileo showed that 'a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down', and this has been central to a great deal of thinking about space and architecture.[69] Lefebvre identifies the 'complex process' of space, which links 'the mental and the cultural, the social and the historical';[70] Iain Borden *et al* argue that architecture and the city should be understood through 'flows';[71] and Massey states that 'a reimagination of things as processes is necessary'.[72] While de Certeau identifies a clear distinction between places as fixed, proper and ordered, and space as multiple, plural and moving, there are now many arguing that everything is always in process. This blurs the boundaries between space and place, problematising de Certeau's dichotomy.

The guided tour, then, does not bring a dead, fixed place to life, it brings us into a relationship with the processes of 'continuous becoming' through which it is constituted.[73] With this in mind, two main principles of guided tours can be proposed:

1. The sites that we tour are changing all the time, even as we pass through them.
2. The very act of passing through, of touring, is part of the relational processes which continually construct the site. In other words, the guided tour 'writes' sites as well as 'reading' them.

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[68] de Certeau, 1984, p.117, 118
[69] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité*, 1984, foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html (accessed 17/05/10)
[70] Lefebvre, 2003, p.209
[71] Borden, Kerr & Rendell, with Pivaro, 2001
[72] Massey, 2005, p.20
[73] Massey, 2005, p.21

An understanding of everything as always in process problematises de Certeau's notion of stable inertia, proposing instead that the space that contains these objects is continually shifting, and relationships between objects and the 'foreignness' of their space are never stable. The Arches offered us many objects and architectural features that we understood as part of the shifting spaces of the building. This notion informed our movement through the space as we followed Benjamin by attempting a 'revalorisation of the everyday and insignificant':[74]

> We invite you to look again at the casually ignored, the insignificant, the forgotten parts. Look closely. We invite you to witness the stumbled upon curiosities of the chambers beneath our feet.[75]

However, objects can be deceitful - they are only a scratch on the surface of the multiplicity of memories, stories and histories that comprise a site. It is easy to fetishise objects, and to let them fool you into thinking you have direct access to the past. Here, the approach to understanding the site taken by *Underneath the Arches* focusses on the relationships between people and social groupings, more than the relationships between people and objects. Although we started with the 'lights and wires, the nooks and crannies, dripping water and railway lines',[76] *Underneath the Arches* aimed to go beyond what can be seen and touched, opening up a space for an engagement with the site as a relational construct. This was an exploration into the complex and constantly shifting relational processes that constitute the Arches, as well as the brickwork of the walls, the rooms packed full of old props and costumes, and the rumble of the trains passing overhead.

Alternative Touring Practice

In the photograph below, the group in the background is on the official *Doors Open Days* tour, guided by Front of House Duty Manager, David Bratchpiece. As *Underneath the Arches* guide Stewart Ennis noticed them he pointed them out, inviting our group to listen in on the official tour and instructing us to 'pretend we're still talking so they don't notice'. This was a playful and covert subversion of the other guided tour, which we set up as the 'grand narrative' of the Arches, aiming to provide an alternative to it.

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[74] Beaver, 2006, p.81
[75] Wason, 2009
[76] Wason, 2009

Doors Open Days: Stewart Ennis with the *Doors Open Days* tour in the background

As guided tours come into contact with the people and places that they visit, whether through imposing their presence or establishing dialogue, it is important that the tour itself is understood as a performative, relational process that contributes to the creation of the places that it visits. Conceived of in this way, the tour has a particular performative relationship with space which, in Simon Coleman and Mike Crang's words, 'stages' places as an 'event'.[77] By setting up the other tour as the official, authorised version of the building, which we challenged and distanced ourselves from, we were able to overtly reference the guided tour as one of the processes that constitute the space of the Arches ('a trajectory in places that are constructed of trajectories').[78]

The guided tour is one of the 'simultaneity of stories-so-far', mentioned in the introduction, which Massey understands to constitute space.[79] It is, however, a particular sort of story because not only does it take its place within the simultaneity, it also explicitly refers to the other stories that are present in a site. By making the guided tour one of the things that our tour referenced, it placed it in the same context as the bar/cafe, the technical staff rigging lights, and the other everyday occurrences that we continually referred to and occasionally interacted with. At this moment, our guided tour was 'touring' another guided tour and this meta-performativity aimed to reflect back on our own spatial practice.

In reality our tours were advertised and the staff all knew they were happening, so the 'unauthorised' tour was itself an illusion. Furthermore, in many ways, Bratchpiece's tour

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[77] Simon Coleman & Mike Crang, 'Grounded Tourists, Traveling Theory', *Tourism: Between place and performance*, ed. Simon Coleman & Mike Crang, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002, p.10
[78] Smith, 2009b, p.106
[79] Massey, 2005, p.9

was just as creative as our own (as well as his job at the Arches, he is part of the Bratchpiece Family of stand up comedians).[80] There were, however, a number of significant differences: Bratchpiece followed his script very closely, structuring his tour through the dissemination of facts, and offering little opportunity for dialogue. For the purpose of our tour, Bratchpiece's tour was therefore used to represent what Anke Schleper calls 'the official text of historiography'.[81] Within the construct of our fictitious rendering of the site, we were the self-reflexive, creative and relational tour group, and the other group was buying into the official, fixed, authoritative version, which we rejected.

Like Forced Entertainment's bus tour of Sheffield, I aimed to replace this 'official text' with 'an assemblage of heterogeneous memories, stories, dreams'.[82] Etchells described a 'writing over the city',[83] and our tours also created a level of make-believe over the top of the everyday life of the building that we encountered, as in the *Doors Open Days* tours when Ennis pointed out the office:

> Well in here... This is the original office. We're not allowed in here but in here it's like a sea of tranquility all the time. And in here there are big upholstered armchairs and sofas and a big long boardroom table. And there's eight or nine crusty old gentlemen wearing frockcoats with big grey sideburns. They're all almost dead actually, and they just sit there.

On the *Doors Open Days* tours the group then moved on, but in *Underneath the Arches* we used one of the rehearsal rooms in the basement as 'the Board Room', and allowed the groups to pass through the space while five actors improvised a meeting:

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[80] MySpace - The Bratchpiece Family, www.myspace.com/bratchpiece (accessed 05/08/10)
[81] Anke Schleper, 'Off the Route: Stretegies and approaches to the appropriation of space', *"Not Even a Game Anymore": The theatre of Forced Entertainment*, ed. Judith Helmer & Florian Malzacher, Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2004, pp.185-202, p.186
[82] Schleper, 2004, p.186
[83] Etchells, 1999, p.61, 80

Underneath the Arches: A tour group visits the Board Room

This fictional historical recreation was the only overtly theatrical moment in these tours. By moving from facts to lies and rumours, to actually staging one of our stories, the aim was to constantly shift the level of reality that these tours operated through, continually readjusting the relationships that the tour groups formed, not just between themselves and the site, but also with our semi-fictional text. In this way I aimed to raise questions about the possibility of ever accessing the 'truth' of the site, suggesting that no one version could claim authority.

However, it could be argued that on some occasions, such as when our tours covertly referenced the 'authorised' tour group, we were falling into Liz Tomlin's 'tourist trap', maintaining a distance from the everyday users or inhabitants of a site and transforming them into a 'passive' element of an artwork.[84] In fact, an uncomfortable moment was captured on the video footage of the *Doors Open Days* tours when a woman on Bratchpiece's tour notices the camera, and presumably our group, observing them, and quickly turns away. On another occasion one of the technicians hurriedly moves out of the path of the tour group. In these moments the casting of the people that we encountered in our theatre performance through the fiction of our 'unofficial' tour group is in many ways inimical to the open, relational engagement with the building and its many users that I was

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[84] Tomlin, 1999

aiming to facilitate. Just as one community is established or reinforced, others are excluded or rejected, and in these moments, Bratchpiece's group and the technicians were set apart from the developing unity of our group.

Our problematic relationship with the other tour group and the technician in these examples indicates the importance of recognising that the site has multiple 'stakeholders', including the contracted staff, visiting artists and members of the public, and that all of these groups use the building in very different ways. These tours revealed many of the particular requirements, 'contracts' and responsibilities of the building's multiple users. For example, on several occasions in both the *Doors Open Days* and *Underneath the Arches* tours, the groups encountered members of staff at work. When Kieran Hurley's group passed the cloakroom staff setting up for the club night, they stopped and chatted to them for a while, opening up the script to a dialogue with the multiple users of the site. On another tour, we encountered several technicians, who were setting up for club nights but on this occasion interaction was less appropriate as they were busy operating machinery and rigging lights. As with any site, the Arches is comprised of a complex interplay between the space and the many different types of individual and group relationships that occupy it. It is important that RTP engages with the people and places that it encounters on an individual, case-by-case basis. A sensitivity is required to a preexisting relational realm.

Antagonism and RTP

For Rosalyn Deutsche, to assign any sort of 'proper' usage to a space is to construct an essentialist spatial identity and therefore to close down the space to those who are excluded from this construct. Following Lefebvre, Deutsche argues that space is 'political, inseparable from the conflictual and uneven social relations that structure specific societies at specific historical moments'.[85] Public space is understood as a contended and unresolvable sphere, which necessarily operates through the exclusion of those who exist outside the established construct of 'the public'.[86] For Deutsche, the implication of this is

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[85] Deutsche, 1998, p.xiv
[86] Deutsche, 1998, p.289-90. It is worth pointing out here that Deutsche uses the term 'appropriation', not in the same way as Lefebvre defines the term, but rather in an opposite sense, as used by Claude Lefort: 'For Lefort, appropriation refers to an action of state power; for Lefebvre, it denotes an action against such power [...] (Lefort's) appropriation - the occupation of public space by giving it absolute meaning - resembles what Henri Lefebvre calls the domination of space - the technocratic designation of objective uses that bestow an ideological coherence on space' (Deutsche, 1998, p.364-5)

that the proprietary dimension of public space should be considered by artists, whose practice should strive to question what, or who, constitutes the 'public' that such work aims to address.[87] Deutsche therefore advocates public art that takes 'account of exclusions and differences, and consequent exposure of power where it has been naturalised and obscured'.[88] In this sense, public art has an explicitly political role in its relationship to 'capitalist and state power' as urban sites have an 'apparent coherence' that art has the potential to disrupt.[89]

Bishop's criticism of relational aesthetics is prompted by Deutsche's arguments for the democratic responsibility of public art. Bourriaud's relational artistic practice is criticised on these grounds, for its predication 'on the exclusion of those who hinder or prevent its realisation'.[90] It is Deutsche's argument that 'the public sphere remains democratic only insofar as its naturalised exclusions are taken into account and made open to contestation' and this introduces the importance of *agonism*, which is central to Bishop's critique.[91] For Bishop, the complete absence of any contestation of exclusions in relational aesthetics prevents any justification of the claim of inherent democracy.

The theoretical basis for Deutsche's theory of public art, and subsequently Bishop's 'relational antagonism', is Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theory of hegemony. Laclau and Mouffe explain how any socially constructed group (be it a nation, a tour group or a theatre audience) can only ever operate through hegemonic relations, which require the coalescence of elements 'whose own nature does not predetermine them to enter into one type of arrangement rather than another'.[92] In other words, there is no given condition that necessitates an individual to become part of a particular social group. Rather, 'the social' is an arbitrary category that should be constantly open to reconfiguration through *agonism*; the constant reassessment of society through a democratic process that permits difference rather than attempting to resolve it.[93] Rejecting the idea that society can be understood as 'a sutured and self-defined totality', Laclau and Mouffe argue that all identity is 'relational' and, as with Massey's concept of space, consequently exists in a

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[87] Deutsche, 1998, p.xxi
[88] Deutsche, 1998, p.365
[89] Deutsche, 1998, p.xvi
[90] Bishop, 2004, p.68
[91] Deutsche, 1998, p.289
[92] Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* 2nd edition, London: Verso, 2001 [1985], p.xiii
[93] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, London, Verso, 2000, p.33

continual state of becoming.[94] Any social identity is necessarily defined in relation to other subject positions, and antagonism with the 'outside' of that identity is an inevitability. Importantly, although Bishop uses the term 'antagonism', she draws on Mouffe's early work with Laclau to refer to a dialogical process, which Mouffe later refers to as 'agonism'. Bishop's 'relational antagonism' is not intended to subject contemporary art to conflict, but rather to open it up to that which lies beyond its boundaries.

As Bishop points out, notions of 'conflict, division, and instability' are central to an understanding of the democratic social sphere.[95] Laclau and Mouffe demonstrate how rather than preventing democracy, antagonism is necessary for its very existence, and Bishop translates this political theory to an aesthetic strategy, which avows antagonism beyond its own boundaries:[96]

> a fully functioning democratic society is not one in which all antagonisms have disappeared, but one in which new political frontiers are constantly being drawn and brought into debate - in other words, a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are *sustained*, not erased. Without antagonism there is only the imposed consensus of authoritarian order - a total suppression of debate and discussion, which is inimical to democracy.[97]

Deutsche and Bishop's application of Laclau and Mouffe's hegemonic socialist strategy centres around the place of antagonisms in the relational processes of an artwork. Because democratic society, by its very nature, is constantly redefining itself through processes of articulation and negotiation within a hegemonic structure, it is constituted through its political frontiers. Antagonism is what allows the redefinition of these frontiers, preventing the formation of clearly defined, fixed boundaries, which limit the inherent values of democracy. With the value of antagonisms in mind, Bishop argues that relational artistic practice should aim to acknowledge and avow antagonistic relations wherever possible, meaning that the social formations that the work operates through are never allowed to become fixed or stable.

Notions of antagonism were a key concern as I developed my practice at the Arches. Through the development of a relational performance text, the intention is that the

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[94] Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.111, 106
[95] Bishop, 2004, p.65
[96] Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.xiii
[97] Bishop, 2004, p.56-6

structure of RTP should be open to external elements, thereby permitting antagonisms into the structure of the performance. Without this relationship to the wider environment of the site, theatre remains a closed system, which limits opportunities for dialogue. Baz Kershaw discusses contemporary Western theatre as risking an abstraction from the problems and challenges of the world outside and ultimately an inability, an unwillingness even, to respond to or admit anything beyond its own constructed boundaries.[98]

For Kershaw, in dominant forms of theatre in the twenty-first century, there is a highly controlled, 'knife-edge challenge to perfection' in which performances are rehearsed to run as smoothly as possible, avoiding the unexpected and haphazard as much as possible.[99] Kershaw acknowledges 'partial' exceptions, from improvisation to various forms of participatory theatre, but asserts that these 'most usually work largely to this exclusionary aesthetic, marking out their own types of safe territory with more or less well-worn conventions.[100] Kershaw quotes French playwright Tristan Bernard, who stated that 'in the theatre the audience want to be surprised - but by things that they expect'.[101]

RTP is intended as a reaction and alternative to this dominant form of 'exclusionary' theatre, which relies on carefully rehearsed performances, allowing no opportunity for renegotiation of the script during performance, or for the unity of the 'audience' to be challenged or reconfigured. Laclau and Mouffe argue for the acceptance of 'the open, unsutured character of the social', and this is the intended condition of the relational theatre audience.[102] The form of democratic politics that this relates to 'is founded [...] on affirmation of the contingency and ambiguity of every "essence", and on the constitutive character of social division and antagonism'.[103] RTP aspires to this condition, as it attempts to avow a range of possible relationships with its site, including antagonism.

Nonetheless, the tour groups in *Doors Open Days* and *Underneath the Arches* remained rigidly within their tour group community. As Félix Guattari identifies, coalescence can be a positive social force, which holds the potential for unified objectives and working

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[98] Kershaw, 2007, p.18
[99] Kershaw, 2007, p.58
[100] Kershaw, 2007, p.58
[101] Tristan Bernard in John Daintith (ed.), *Biographical Quotations*, London: Bloomsbury, 1997, www.bloomsbury.com/ARC/browse.aspx?l=B&p=4 (accessed 28/12/08)
[102] Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.193
[103] Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.193

together.[104] Guattari proposes a model for social change, through which individuals can come together with unified objectives whilst retaining their unique, singular existence, and always with the possibility of 'pulling out' from the collective aims of the community. However, the tour group communities ultimately adhered to the authority of the guide and the predetermined tour script.

During my guided tours of the Arches, a number of instances of conflict from *outside* the groups tested the ability of the performance text to incorporate antagonism and revealed how such relationships are managed within the existing structures of the venue. During the *Doors Open Days* tours, there was a significant reminder of the exclusions that are potentially created by closed communities. On an early tour, Ennis took the group out of the Arches onto Argyle Street to point out the site of the old village of Grahamston. An elderly lady with her granddaughter joined the group, interrupting Ennis' narrative and aggressively enforcing her right to be heard. The other members of the group were clearly uncomfortable with her presence and as we moved back into the building I explained to her that the tour group was full, and that for health and safety reasons we were unable to accommodate her. In an effort to defuse conflict I pointed out that the other tour would be leaving very soon from the foyer if she would like to wait for that. Her reaction was very aggressive and confrontational, which resulted in her being asked to leave by the box office staff.

Significantly, this was the second person to be asked to leave as a result of my performance work in the building. On another occasion, during the 'playing' workshop, there was an altercation between one of the participants, James Baster (the photographer) and a bar/cafe customer. The customer was under the impression that the workshop participants were photographing him and despite reassurances to the contrary later grabbed the participant, ripping his shirt and necessitating the duty manager and a member of the box office staff to break up the aggression and evict the offending customer.

Putting participants and members of Arches staff into such a position is clearly problematic and highlights the unpredictability and interconnectedness of the Arches' public spaces. On this occasion, the relationships of our creative explorations were beyond our control, and

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[104] Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, London: Athlone Press, 2008 [1989], p.34

the incident served as an important reminder that in a busy cultural venue like the Arches, it is often necessary to manage relationships. For the majority of the workshops, we largely kept ourselves to ourselves, but when we moved into public spaces outside the safety of rehearsal rooms and performance areas, the relationships involved were unpredictable, sometimes confrontational, and far from the democratic 'micro-utopianism' of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics.[105] As I have argued, even moving through space alters it in some small way, and in these examples our tours were a problematic intervention into the existing relational processes of the site.[106]

Both of these moments of antagonism involved unusually confrontational situations, and could be dismissed on these grounds, but it is difficult to ignore the implication that relational artworks, operating within 'the sphere of human relations', do have a tendency to cause antagonism in a way that theatre or gallery-based practice does not.[107] Laclau and Mouffe show that antagonism is not necessarily negative or problematic, and can in fact have a positive effect on redefining boundaries and challenging the constitution of hegemonic relations. However, it is important to recognise that in the realm of the everyday, performance work runs the risk of alienating members of staff or public who are not part of the 'audience' community. In *Midland Street*, this issue became even more important as I moved even further outside the comfortable boundaries of a theatre performance into the volatile environment of the night club and the wider urban environment.

Forming Communities

As illustrated by the moments of confrontation in these guided tours, creating a temporary community through RTP can be problematic. Writing on the formation of society and the place of the individual within the group, Guattari observes a 'minefield, with questioners hidden in fortified dug-outs waiting to attack you'.[108] It is with trepidation, therefore, that I approach any notion of community-forming in RTP. Firstly, individuals experience things differently and any notion of a shared experience must account for this. Secondly, as

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[105] Bourriaud, 2002, p.31
[106] Massey, 2005, p.118
[107] Bourriaud, 2002, p.28
[108] Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and politics*, New York City: Puffin, 1984, p.24

Laclau and Mouffe discuss, any community selects its members and there will always be exclusions as a result.

The tours of the Arches met with both these problems to some extent. It is therefore vital for RTP to recognise that relationships *per se* are not necessarily always positive, and that when communities are created as part of relational practice, there will always be those who are excluded from the group. This applies not just to the communities that are formed through RTP performances, but also through the selections that are made beforehand as a particular venue is selected by funding bodies, artists and programmers. Bourriaud has been heavily criticised on these grounds as his concept of relational aesthetics fails to acknowledge the selections that it makes (as gallery-based art, as ticketed event, etc.).[109]

Another model of relational art practice, which is more thorough in its conceptualisation of its communities, is provided in Grant Kester's 'dialogical aesthetics'. For Kester, in similar terms to Guattari, 'it is possible to define oneself through solidarity with others while at the same time recognising the contingent nature of this identification'.[110] In this understanding, communities do not operate as fixed or complete entities, but as self-aware temporary constructs that can serve particular positive outcomes and benefits to their members.[111] In his discussion of artists working with communities, Kester calls for art to situate itself within the field of antagonisms at the boundaries of a constructed society or community. This approach addresses each artist-community interaction on its own terms as individual cases, as Guattari would advocate.[112]

Understanding the social as a space of temporary and contingent coalescence recognises that the unity of the group is always open to reconfiguration and change. For Guattari, the homogenising effects of the mass-media and consumer culture operate by closing down individual relationships through the cultivation of a unifying capitalist control system. The power structures of 'Integrated World Capitalism' have become 'decentered' so that control

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[109] Bishop, 2004
[110] Kester, 2005, p.163
[111] Kester cites the example of Cristen Crujido's sculptural work with Mexican migrant farm workers who have a constructed identity that they call *la familia*, which binds them together in the harsh Arizonian farming society. In these examples Kester sees a formation of community that is 'more accurately viewed as an ongoing process that shifts between moments of relative coherence and incoherence than as an adamantine opposition between the fixed and predictable on the one hand and the hybrid and ambiguous on the other' (Kester, 2005, p.170)
[112] Guattari, 2008, p.51

is no longer limited to marketable goods and services, but has also developed to encompass 'structures producing signs, syntax and (...) subjectivity'.[113] As such it is necessary to cultivate a revolutionary sensibility that takes into account the 'singularised' practices of 'sensibility, intelligence and desire', rather than relying on large scale strategies of force and revolution.[114]

By turning attention to the 'singular' levels of existence, Guattari advocates moments when the 'creative expression' of the individual takes precedence over collective aims.[115] In the tours of the Arches, the authority assumed by, or bestowed on, the guide meant that this never really happened. As the project developed beyond these initial explorations in relational form, the development of a performance text that contained a greater potential for individual agency within the structure of the 'audience' became a key concern.

The models of community formation proposed by Guattari and Kester allow for notions of difference and privilege to be acknowledged within the construction of the artistic community. Kwon takes this further, drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's 'inoperative community' to suggest that 'only a community that questions its own legitimacy is legitimate'.[116] While Kester maintains a focus on working with exiting communities, he argues that dialogical artworks should not be based 'on some *a priori* calculation of the artists "right" to work across boundaries of difference', but crucially, should remain 'attentive to the artist's capacity to treat those same differences critically and self-reflexively as part of the work itself'.[117] This critical self-reflection, described by Kwon as a 'critical unsiting', is not always achieved by Bourriaud, but is central to the development of RTP, and integral to relational performance in a busy cultural centre such as the Arches.[118]

In *Underneath the Arches*, there was some evidence of self-reflexivity in our approach to community formation. By mobilising seven groups simultaneously and setting up the inevitability of contact between them (the groups followed two routes into the lower level

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[113] Guattari, 2008, p.32
[114] Guattari, 2008, p.20
[115] Guattari, 2008, p.34
[116] Kwon, 2004, p.155; Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991
[117] Kester, 2005, p.131
[118] Kwon, 2004, p.155

of the building and were forced to negotiate with each other as they met in the narrow corridors), a certain level of self-awareness may have resulted from guided tours that referred explicitly to their relationships with the other tour groups as they encountered them. Furthermore, at the beginning of the tours the formation of the groups, managed by Hurley as compère, occurred through dialogue and negotiation within the audience-community as the groups chose their guides rather than the other way round. However, once the tours had departed there was no evidence of the groups opening up to reconfiguration, and not one person 'pulled out' from the collective.[119]

Bound by a double set of conventions - those of the guided tour and those of the theatre performance - the relationships of these tours only formed within rigid boundaries, both due to established conventions and the decisions that had been made about the route and the script prior to the event. In this sense, these early attempts to develop RTP struggled with deeply rooted codes and conventions, which determined the types of relationship that were generated.[120] These codes and conventions remained throughout my subsequent practice-as-research projects, but in *Midland Street* and *A Work on Progress*, my practice moved on from written scripts and rehearsed performances, and explored ways in which RTP could develop even further beyond a predetermined, scripted text.

Conclusion

Kester makes a distinction between two types of artwork; those which are conceived and created as *a priori* constructs or events, and those that are dependent on dialogue or interaction.[121] The ideal for RTP is the latter, but importantly, Kester does not reject prior creation of the 'object' or the 'script' entirely. Adopting the terminology of British artist Peter Dunn, he calls relational artworks 'context providers', rather than 'content providers'. This distinction is valuable to the development of RTP because it acknowledges that there is a creative process occurring before the performance, and that the director and creative team make certain decisions that inform the relationships that will be made during the performance. However, in performance these prior decisions become the context rather

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[119] Guattari, 2008, p.34
[120] Wilkie, 2002b, p.255
[121] Kester, 2005, p.54

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than the content, and the multiplicity of interpersonal and interspatial relationships that are incorporated into the event ultimately determine the performance text.

A relational performance text, then, can be conceived and created *a priori* to some extent, as it sets up a context within which dialogue and relationships can occur. In many ways my work with guided tours has shown how the interpersonal and interspatial processes of a site such as the Arches can be used to encourage a particular mode of audience engagement. A number of strategies have been used by the tour guides to open up the script to its wider environment; instigating communal creative practice, acknowledging the production process and incorporating moments of everyday reality into the text. These strategies have provided the context for a relational engagement with the site which, as I have argued, is changing all the time, even as we pass through it. This work has also engaged with the operations of our performance text becoming part of the relational processes which construct the site. By setting up the guided tour as something to be toured itself, by referring to the many guided groups touring at the same time, and by weaving disagreements, contradictions and arguments into the fabric of our tours, we reflected back on our own spatial processes and explored how the stories of the tour construct the sites that they move through.

The form of the guided tour has proved a valuable model for a relational performance text. It is, however, a very particular spatial practice in which relationships, behaviour and experience are guided. This has its benefits and its limitations: on the one hand, a particular mode of engagement with a site can be encouraged that is sensitive to the continual relational processes which constitute it; in overt ways the site can be 'sign-posted' and the performance contextualised; on the other hand, there is an unavoidable hierarchy between artist/guide/performer and spectator/group/audience, which is in constant danger of naturalising power relations and performing a route and script which have been created *a priori* whilst creating the illusion of spontaneity and improvisation.

For these reasons, in the next stage of my research I consciously moved my practice into an environment in which the relational performance text would be subject to a far wider range of external influence. The second phase of my practice therefore converged around the multiple spatial practices of the Death Disco nightclub, which is where the *Underneath*

the Arches performance literally ended. In *Midland Street* I created a performance that used chance encounters and improvised exchanges to a much greater level than the guided tours. Although this took place within the context of the performance structure that I set up before the event, the aim was to move away from playwrights' texts and subject the performance to the dynamic relational field of the club. Having developed my concept of relational performance text, I wanted to explore the possibilities of increasing the authorship and agency of the audience, which was re-conceived through the development of a performance for a clubbing crowd rather than a theatre audience.

Chapter Three: The Clubbing Crowd as Relational Theatre Audience

At the end of *Underneath the Arches*, the audience left the studio theatre and entered the main dance arch as the Death Disco club night began. My intention was to find a way of bringing the club and the theatre into a relationship with each other, in order to explore the possibility of creating 'ecotones' through my practice. This ecological term refers to the 'edge effects' that occur when two autonomous environments come into contact with each other.[1] An ecotone is defined by Baz Kershaw as 'a place where two or more ecologies meet and mingle, such as, say, riverbanks, seashores and deep volcanic vents'.[2] Where ecotones occur, between forests and clearings, rivers and banks, (or for Kershaw, stages and auditoriums), significant changes can occur, boundaries can be redrawn and new relationships can form. Kershaw discusses 'actor-audience or performer-spectator interactions' as a particular theatre ecotone,[3] but it is clear to see how the model can be applied not just to other boundaries within theatre, but also to boundaries within a wider cultural context.

Kershaw conceives of an 'ecology' of theatre as a way of understanding the interrelationships of all the factors of a performance, from 'the smallest and/or simplest to the greatest or/and most complex' as well as the interrelationships between theatre and its wider environment.[4] Conceiving of theatre and clubbing as two separate 'ecosystems' that were brought into contact with one another, the final section of *Underneath the Arches* was an attempt to form an ecotone, in which the boundaries of theatre performance might be interrogated and momentarily redrawn. For Kershaw, theatre has to form such 'hybrid' relationships at its edges in order to constantly reassess the place of the artform within its environment.

In practice, although a group of dancers continued to perform in the main dance arch, as the performers left the studio, the audience paused briefly, some hesitantly making to follow before gradually breaking into applause. Perhaps naïvely, I had hoped that the event

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[1] Kershaw, 2007, p.19
[2] Kershaw, 2007, p.19
[3] Kershaw, 2007, p.185
[4] Kershaw, 2007, p.16

would not end at this point, but a stage empty of performers appeared to signify a culmination of the performance. The final section had taken place in the studio theatre with a thirty minute narrative about the history of the site. Due to the physical and dialogical separation between stage and auditorium, in many ways this was the sort of theatre rejected by Bourriaud, where no 'live comment' is made during the event.[5] Although it followed the 'relational texts' of the guided tours and the promenade route through the derelict space below the theatre, *Underneath the Arches* culminated with a scripted, rehearsed theatre model. I had attempted to set up a transition into the club space but the audience engaged with the performance by following the codes and conventions of theatre and applauding at the end.

For Kershaw, the act of applause has become so habitual in today's consumerist theatrical landscape that it is always in danger of merely reinforcing a 'narcissistic self-regard'.[6] Kershaw discusses a very particular type of situation - the first night crowd in London's West End - but he detects a similar trend throughout contemporary Western theatre. Applause, in this view, is 'a signal that all is exactly as it should be in the theatre ecology - reassuringly self-satisfying'.[7] Kershaw's portrayal of the self-serving, applauding audience is intentionally provocative and there is no evidence to suggest that the *Underneath the Arches* audience was indulging in an 'orgy of compulsive narcissism'.[8] Rather than a 'relinquishing of cultural power', which implies a passive complicity, the applause of the studio audience can be interpreted as an active decision that the event should come to an end at that point in the evening.

Rather than the habitual applause that Kershaw rejects, at the end of *Underneath the Arches*, the applause might be understood as an 'unruly' act, through which the audience affected the course of the performance through direct participation.[9] This is exactly what Kershaw demands of contemporary theatre, arguing that such agency is essential for an environmentally and politically progressive artform.[10] Nonetheless, on this particular occasion, the direct participation of the audience had the unplanned effect of closing down

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[5] Bourriaud, 2002, p.16
[6] Kershaw, 2007, p.195
[7] Kershaw, 2007, p.183
[8] Kershaw, 2007, p.196
[9] Kershaw, 2007, p.205
[10] Kershaw, 2007, p.205

the opportunity for 'ecotonal' transfer between the theatre and the club. In RTP, such unexpected interventions of the audience in the performance text are encouraged. However, as I began work on the next stage of my practice I was keen to find a way of maintaining and developing an active participation in the performance, whilst also finding a more effective way to work with the relationship between theatre and clubbing at the Arches.

Clubbing is arguably the most important part of the Arches programme; it brings the most people into the building and generates the majority of the income, which in turn funds approximately eighty per cent of the artistic programme. Most of the people who visit the venue know it as a club and many are unaware that theatre happens there at all. The club and the theatre have entrances at opposite ends of the building, they are programmed from separate offices, and they take place at different times with mostly different clientele. Although there is some cross over, particularly in Death Disco (which has recently seen performances from American performance artist Ann Liv Young and the Bristol based theatre company Action Hero) there is little dialogue between these two sides of the venue. The club therefore operates separately to the theatre, and this provides the opportunity to explore the development of RTP within the ecotone between two aspects of the Arches' programme, which are brought together when performance work is created for the club.

Focussing this research on one of the Arches' club nights has proved an effective strategy to learn from a relational realm that operates very differently to the traditional theatre environment, while at the same time bringing my theatre practice into a relationship with another important part of the venue's cultural activities. As with the crowd at a nightclub, my argument is that a theatre audience has to be understood as engaging with relational performance through a variety of alternating modes of engagement, including one-to-one interaction and communal spectatorship. The theory and practice of clubbing serves as a valuable way into understanding this alternating experience, which Ben Malbon discusses as a fluctuation between resistance and submission, inclusion and exclusion, involvement and separation.[11] Rather than seeing clubbing as a hedonistic space that is completely

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[11] Ben Malbon, *Clubbing: Dancing, ecstasy and vitality*, London: Routledge, 1999, p.19

separated from everyday life (a common trope in early clubbing theory),[12] it can be more usefully conceptualised as a place of fluctuations, with the clubber moving between connection and separation from each other and their wider environment. The spaces and practices of clubbing are therefore understood as constituted through a complex set of relationships between consumption and production, power and resistance, performance and reception.

While useful comparisons can be made, it is also important to recognise that there are many different, and occasionally conflicting, 'rules' in operation in each environment. Wilkie refers to the 'repertoire' of any site - 'a set of choices (culturally, traditionally, personally or physically defined) available to people in a particular place'.[13] Our experience of any place is determined to some degree by a repertoire of 'spatial rules', a set of 'codes and conventions' that determine our behaviour.[14] The 'rules' of clubbing are different to the 'rules' of theatre and as I discuss in this chapter, this has revealed itself in a number of different ways during this project. For example, an important part of the following discussion focusses on relationships with security staff and the effects of health and safety regulations on RTP, which significantly determined the types of relationship that formed between performers, staff and 'audiences'. The relationships of the club include DJs, promoters, staff and regular clubbers, who do not necessarily wish to engage with performance work. Although sensitivity to the existing relationships of the site has been an important principle as I developed this project, tension has occasionally arisen between the relational aspirations of my theatre practice and the practical demands of running a club night.

Furthermore, making theatre performances for a club night is to choose a site that is determined by commercial systems. In many ways, this is also true of theatre-based work, but in the club the visual symbols of sales and promotion (posters, logos, price lists, etc.) take a more prominent position than on the bare brick walls of the designated theatre studio. This phase of my research has therefore provided an opportunity to examine the

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[12] For example, Antonio Melechi calls clubbing a 'fantasy of liberation' (Antonio Melechi, 'The Ecstasy of Disappearance', *Rave Off: Politics and deviance in contemporary youth culture*, ed. Steve Redhead, Aldershot: Avebury, 1993, pp.29-40, p.37); and Jean Baudrillard argued that nothing was a better signifier of the 'complete disappearance of a culture of meaning and aesthetic sensibility' than 'a spinning of strobe lights and gyroscopes streaking the space whose moving pedestal is created by the crowd' (Jean Baudrillard, 'The Beaubourg Effect: Implosion and deterrence', *October* 20 (Spring), 1982, pp.3-13, p.5)
[13] Wilkie, 2002b, p.250
[14] Wilkie, 2002b, p.249, 255

wider systems that contain and define RTP in a cultural site like the Arches, which funds the majority of its arts programme through commercial operations such as the club. As will become clear, the clubbing environment is frequently controlled, managed and policed. The relationship between power and resistance is a key area of study for a great deal of clubbing theory and this chapter explores connections between these debates and my theatre practice in order to understand the ways in which RTP negotiates a dual position as a system of control and a space of resistance.[15]

Midland Street (September 2009)[16]

Midland Street was a performance for Death Disco, the Arches' 'alternative, open-minded' club night 'for the straight, gay and not-sure-yets'.[17] The night is self-consciously theatrical with clubbers regularly wearing neon face-paint, wigs and elaborate costumes. My research focus on clubbing practices coincided with a policy promoted by the Arches' music programming team to encourage theatricality at Death Disco. Funding was available for projects that brought theatre into the club and *Midland Street* was therefore developed in collaboration with a number of local artists who had proposed projects for Death Disco. My initial proposal to the programmers was that I would work with some of these artists to create performances for a small fleet of cars parked outside the club, thereby creating a temporary gallery for the queue of clubbers on Midland Street, which runs perpendicular to the Arches to the south of the building, underneath the bridge supporting the train line crossing the River Clyde.

Midland Street subsequently developed into a performance in three parts, the first of which took place in four cars parked outside the venue on Midland Street and in the smoking area on Midland Lane while clubbers arrived between 10.30pm and midnight. A cast of overtly theatrical characters including a clown played by James Oakley, a bride played by Rose Ruane, and an aristocrat played by Ed Cartwright, were positioned in cars on Midland Street as clubbers entered the building; and Mhairi McGhee, Louise Emslie, David Crompi

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[15] For example, Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, media and subcultural capital*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1995, p.25

[16] A more detailed description of this event is provided in the Appendix, and a video of the performance is also provided, which is available to view at www.underneaththearches.co.uk

[17] Death Disco, September 2009, www.thearches.co.uk/Death-Disco-September.htm (accessed 24/08/09) No longer available

and Karen Fishwick, dressed as urban animal-like clubbers, occupied a car on Midland Lane, inside the cordoned-off smoking area.

Using theatricality in such an overt way initially resulted from the music team's programming policies, but it also provided a way for staff and clubbers to recognise the performances of *Midland Street* within the already theatrical clubbing environment. Pearson and Shanks understand performance as a section of behaviour marked as separate from everyday life, relying upon 'the shared competence of all the participants to identify and to mark off a strip of behaviour (...) as being performative'.[18] In the guided tours of *Underneath the Arches,* because the audience engaged with the building as a theatre audience, the smallest details of the site and its relationships were framed and identified as part of the performance - the graffiti on the walls, the technicians and bar staff setting up for the club, etc. In contrast, creating site-specific theatre for Death Disco presented a significant challenge: how to mark this 'strip of behaviour' as distinct from the rest of the club. The theatrical characters allowed Arches staff and clubbers to 'share competence'; immediately identifying that a theatre performance was taking place and choosing whether or not they want to be involved in it. The choice of characters was made with the artists, and they represented a collaborative development process that drew on the rich history of theatrical activity that constitutes the site. Costumes were taken from the Arches' costume store and all of them had been used in previous Arches Theatre Company productions.

The use of cars on Midland Street is partly due to its literal function as a roadway underneath a railway line. Cars symbolise journeys and movement, and the road and railway are spaces of constant movings-on; journeys past the Arches. The performances in the cars were durational installations, which were developed for clubbers to pass by, encountering the characters and interacting with them before moving on into the club. The particular choice of characters and the nature of the performances differed from car to car as I worked individually with the performers to develop their own routines and actions for the cars; Oakley sat in an open top Triumph Spitfire eating bananas, throwing the skins onto the floor and shooting bubbles from a gun at the clubbers as they passed; Cartwright wore a top hat and tails and sat in a Morris Minor handing out chocolate money, reading the *Financial Times* and drinking cognac; Ruane sat in the passenger seat of a wedding car

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[18] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.28

(a Mercedes C-Class with ribbons on the bonnet and white fur inside) playing a recorded text from the car stereo and throwing confetti from the window; and McGhee, Emslie, Crompi and Fishwick danced on and around a battered old Renault. As I go on to discuss, my initial plan for the audience to pass by the cars was not possible for the Renault due to licensing regulations necessitating a last minute change of location to the smoking area; a move that had significant implications for the types of relationship that formed during the event.

In the second part of the performance, which took place in Arch 6 - the southernmost arch - between midnight and 12.30am, the characters from the cars constructed a 'chill out' area behind a muslin screen. Over the course of half an hour, they arranged this space, taking furniture from a pile and setting up seating areas and a poker table on which they began to play. While the animal characters set up the space, Cartwright sat in a leather armchair reading, Ruane drank constantly, and Oakley cycled round the space and mopped up fake snow as it fell behind the screen along with bubbles that floated round the arch throughout. The environment that we created using these set pieces was intended to elicit a playfulness that would encourage interaction and draw clubbers into the space. Towards the end of this section, Oakley engaged one of the clubbers in a dance on the other side of the screen and they mirrored each other's movements.

The third part then began as Oakley ripped the screen down, opening up the space for use by the clubbers and allowing the performers out into the rest of the club. A convivial atmosphere was created very quickly as clubbers entered the space and actively engaged with the event; dancing in the snow, chatting to the performers and playing poker. Later, Oakley and Ruane disappeared into the club to dance and at this stage in the night, clubbers high-fived the clown, borrowed his hat or tweaked his nose; they sat and chatted to the aristocrat, danced with the bride and chased the animals. Gradually, as the night went on, *Midland Street* gave way to the main DJs, and the space in Arch 6 became a more chaotic and less popular part of the club. The majority of people who used the space at the beginning of the night moved on, leaving the debris of drink and poker behind them. The club night finished at 3am, but the performance interventions of *Midland Street* had gradually wound down some time before that.

Midland Street relied heavily on interactions with clubbers. Because the performance took place in and around a nightclub, it was always happening concurrently with a range of other activities and dance spaces. The ways in which clubbers would engage with the performance was therefore unpredictable, and unlike the more rigidly planned and rehearsed 'scripted' elements of *Underneath the Arches*, the outcome of *Midland Street* could only be discovered on the night. As I began my exploration of the clubbing activities of the Arches, I aimed to discover ways in which the fluctuating experience of the clubbing crowd might apply to audiences of RTP. Avowing a shifting and multiple audience experience allows for an aesthetic that uses the formation of communities, not as a problematically exclusive and reductive construct (as suggested by Miwon Kwon),[19] but as a temporary and dynamic social grouping.[20] A wider political imperative underlies this focus on contingent community and fluctuating audience experience, which accounts for the formation of audience/crowd communities, while at the same time recognising the individual agency within them.

Clubbing is often regarded as autotelic - it has no overt political agenda. However, as I go on to discuss, much clubbing theory has identified a 'micro-political' set of practices, which operate through the creation of 'alternative spaces' rather than large-scale, unified acts of resistance.[21] *Midland Street* explored ways in which RTP might adopt this political strategy, using the fluctuating experience of the clubbing crowd in order to find ways of practicing Guattari's 'eco-logical' approach. In this way, the performance attempted to provide a context for a contingent, conditional social grouping, which temporarily aligned its individual members without attempting to 'resolve' their differences or limit their individual agency.[22] Developing performance for the club meant that the 'audiences' that came together for brief moments would always have the freedom to separate themselves from this temporary community.

Working at Death Disco was a valuable opportunity to research an audience who could easily engage in a number of different ways, from active participation, to observation, to simply exercising the freedom to walk away. However, it is important to recognise that

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[19] Kwon, 2004, pp.149-51
[20] Kester, 2005, p.163
[21] For example, Stuart Hall & Tony Jefferson (eds.), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*, London: Routledge, 1993 [1975]
[22] Guattari, 2008, p.34

although there may be a greater range of options available to the clubbing crowd than to the conventional theatre audience, the apparent freedom of the club is in fact heavily regulated. Clubbing is frequently referred to as a sort of abstracted space, removed from the trials and concerns of everyday life.[23] As I go on to discuss later in this chapter, the commercial structures of the club complicate any understanding of the practices of the clubbing crowd as acts of resistance. In many ways, the resistant or empowering practices of clubbing are only possible due to a rigidly commercial system, which profits from the commodification of the clubbing experience.[24]

In the discussion that follows, I critically reflect on the types of relationship that developed during *Midland Street*. The first section, 'Performance and Fluctuation' is concerned with the ways in which clubbing practices can be used to develop a relational performance aesthetic, and the lessons that the clubbing experience might teach us about the variety of ways in which an audience might engage with RTP. The second section, 'Limitations and Antagonism' reflects on the difficulties that were encountered during the project and the 'edge effects' that occurred in the ecotone between theatre and club.

Towards a Relational Theatre Audience

Performance and Fluctuation

Jill Dolan discusses the 'utopian' moments of performance, in which the theatre performance connects with the audience in such a way as to bring everyone into 'a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense'.[25] The terms in which Dolan describes these 'utopian performatives' strongly recalls Malbon's discussion of 'oceanic moments' in the club which provide 'powerful sensations of personal and group identity formation, amendment and consolidation'.[26] However, whereas the 'oceanic', or 'ecstatic', experience of clubbing is usually discussed as emerging from the relationships of the clubbing crowd, occasionally

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[23] For example, Melechi, 1993, p.37
[24] Thornton, 1995, p.25
[25] Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding hope at the theatre,* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005, p.5
[26] Malbon, 1999, p.106

under the influence of drugs, similar moments in the theatre-going experience are discussed as relying in some way on the on-stage performance.

For example, Dolan's discussion of *communitas* is concerned with a form of 'spectatorship'. 'Communitas' is used by Victor Turner to define those moments when the 'duties and rights' of work and leisure time can be subverted into an atmosphere of communal unity.[27] Dolan applies this concept to theatre performance:

> Considering theatre audiences as such participatory publics might also expand how the *communitas* they experience through utopian performatives might become a model for other social interactions. (...) Attending performance, disparate people constitute these temporary publics; such spectatorship might encourage them to be active in other public spheres, to participate in civic conversations that performance perhaps begins.[28]

This theory of 'utopian performatives' is a valuable contribution to understanding the importance of group relationships to the theatre going experience. As this passage indicates, *communitas* in the theatre has the potential to transfer positive communal practice into other areas of social interaction. However, the word 'spectatorship' retains a prominent place in this passage. While this spectatorship may be *emancipated*, as argued by Rancière, it is nonetheless limited to a specific relational formation.

RTP aims to incorporate any possible relationship into its aesthetic, and an activated spectatorship is just one of many potential modes of engagement. If *Midland Street* offered instances of 'utopian performatives', perhaps it did so through a more experiential, participatory audience position than the spectator-based theatre discussed by Dolan. For example, immediately prior to the removal of the muslin screen, which opened up the performance space to the clubbing crowd, Oakley, playing the part of a clown, instigated a shadowing dance as he came to the front of the performance space and began to interact with one of the clubbers through the screen. For a few minutes they danced together - mirroring each others' movements and moving across the width of the screen. In this photograph it is possible to faintly make out the clown at the other side of the screen:

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[27] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The human seriousness of play*, New York: PAJ, 1982, p.45. See also *The Ritual Process: Structure and anti-structure*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995 [1969]
[28] Dolan, 2005, p.11

Oakley and a clubber dance together through the muslin screen

The crowd of clubbers who had gathered in the area to find out what was going on stood back and watched this dance - clown and clubber engaged in an impromptu mirroring game. The individual relationship between one clubber and one performer therefore became framed as a performance for the other clubbers.

As I have discussed in relation to my work with guided tours, for Pearson and Shanks, when a 'grouping of activities and objects' is identified as being performative, participants will 'expect, search for and indeed generate meaning in everything they see'.[29] Every single element of a performance will therefore be ascribed meaning and 'however utilitarian, prosaic or banal, nothing will be neutral or simply decorative'. This theory presents the performance space as 'saturated' by meaning. However, Pearson and Shanks are uncharacteristically structuralist in this understanding of performance and their theory does not seem to account for the relational aesthetic of this shadowing dance. At this point in the performance, the clubber dancing with Oakley was not necessarily searching for meaning in the encounter. It is also possible that she was experiencing the event on a phenomenological level.

Bert O. States' 'binocular vision' is valuable here. As States points out, the Prague Linguists argued, like Pearson and Shanks, that 'all that is on the stage is a sign'.[30] Drawing on the theory of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, theatre

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[29] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.28
[30] Jiri Veltrusky, 'Man and Object in the Theater', *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, ed. Paul L. Garvin, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1964, pp. 83-91, p.84

phenomenologists counter that some signs 'achieve their vitality - and in turn the vitality of theatre - not simply by signifying the world but being *of* it'.[31] This immediate experiential mode of engagement with a theatre performance paves the way for an understanding of how RTP might operate. For States, one mode of experience does not necessarily preclude the other. So, engaging with a theatre performance is an ongoing negotiation between reading objects on stage as a series of signs, and experiencing them phenomenologically as themselves.

However, States' theory also remains firmly within traditional spectator-based theatre. 'Binocular vision' is a way of seeing, of spectating, but RTP aims for a wider range of possible relationships with the performance. Phenomenology might account for the moment when something on stage has an immediate, experiential impact on the spectator, but the interactions of RTP require theory that moves beyond the audience/ spectator dichotomy.[32] When one of the clubbers noticed the clown on the other side of the muslin screen and the two of them danced together, her experience cannot be explained through 'binocular vision' alone, which implies spectatorship rather than participation. Not only did she identify the clown's actions as a performance; she also joined in. In this moment, and in other moments of interaction that occurred afterwards, the performance was simultaneously identified as separate from, and also incorporated into, the clubbing experience.

Simon Frith discusses how clubbers create their own environment through spatial practices such as dancing:

> Space becomes movement as dancehall, club, and warehouse are shaped
> by the dancing bodies that fill them; when silence falls, the setting
> disappears. The dancers are performers, programmed by the deejay (sic);
> the music stops, play time - the *scene* - is over.[33]

Two important points are raised in this passage: Firstly, the interconnectedness of the physically located site ('dancehall') and spatial practices ('movement') are presented

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[31] Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of theater*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, p.20

[32] Phenomenology has been used to discuss praxis in theatre and dance, but this has tended to focus on the bodily experience of the performer, not on the audience/performer relationship. For example, Sondra Farleigh, 'A Vulnerable Glance: Seeing dance through phenomenology', *Dance Research Journal* 23(1), 1991, pp.11-16; and Phillip B. Zarrilli, 'Toward a Phenomenological Model of the Actor's Embodied Modes of Experience', *Theatre Journal* 56(4), 2004, pp.653-66

[33] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the value of popular music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 156

as significantly blurred (the word 'club' can apply to both). Secondly, Frith introduces the importance of performativity to the clubbing experience.

The centrality of performance to clubbing was explored during *Midland Street* as the spatial practices of those clubbers and staff members who engaged with the performance clearly defined the space, transforming an abandoned corner of the club, populated only by theatrical characters, into a busy party scene with drinking, dancing and poker. As with any relational artwork, a context had been established in advance, as the performers set up the poker table and seating areas, but the interactions of the clubbers with each other, the performers, the staff and with the space, was central to the aesthetic of this section of the performance:

Arch 6 before it was opened up for clubbers

Arch 6 after it was opened up for clubbers

Frith understands the entire club as a '*scene*', and casts all of the clubbers as 'performers'. However, just as any understanding of 'audience' must remain sensitive to 'multiple contingencies of subjective response, context, and environment',[34] it is important to recognise that any individual clubber can change their position in complex and contradictory relationships with each other and their environment. Clubbing crowds, like theatre audiences, can not be assumed to be only performing, or only spectating.

Malbon's theory of fluctuations between the experience of 'social situations through notions of self and through being part of, and submerged within, the crowd' complicates Frith's proposal of the centrality of performance to the clubbing experience, as clubbers may alternate between performing as Frith understands it, and observing or reflecting from a separated position.[35] However, while it is important to recognise the fluctuations in the clubbing experience, performance remains a key component and clubbing can be understood as the negotiated 'inhabitations of stage, set, props, scenery and costume'.[36] Introducing contemporary theatre practice into this already theatrical realm is therefore to add another level of performance, with its own set of available modes of engagement.

In *Midland Street*, clubbers' relationships with the theatrical performance moved through different spaces and different modes of engagement. These were not discrete, but blurred into each other, shifting and redefining themselves all the time. The same person might have walked past the cars on Midland Street, unsure about what was happening, before entering the club and watching the performance behind the screen, intrigued enough to enter the space after the screen was pulled down, watching the poker game and dancing in the bubbles, then followed Oakley, dressed as a clown, into the main arches and danced with him. In all of these moments, the choices made were not only determined by the environment; they also contributed to the aesthetic of the performance and in so doing constructed the site of the club.

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[34] Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p.5. See also Alice Rayner, 'The Audience: Subjectivity, community and the ethics of listening', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 7(2), 1993, pp.3-24
[35] Malbon, 1999, p.29
[36] Malbon, 1999, p.92

This dual process can be understood by Edward Soja's concept of the 'socio-spatial dialectic', which conceives of social and spatial relationships as interdependent.[37] This complex relationship is characterised by a 'mix of opposition, unity and contradiction', and cannot be reduced to a cause and effect dichotomy.[38] Space and sociality in the clubbing environment are not simply interconnected or blurred, as Frith shows them to be; they are 'dialectically intertwined and inseparable'.[39] This is true of all socio-spatial relationships, but in the club it becomes particularly evident as lights, music and dancing bodies create the spaces of the club at the same time as being controlled and contained within them.

The socio-spatial dialectic is used by Soja as an argument against political and ideological control. Soja uses the concept to develop Lefebvre's theory of the ways in which advanced capitalism operates by occupying and producing space.[40] It is important to remember, therefore, that in the clubbing environment, as with any socially produced space, there are systems of control in operation. During *Midland Street*, the mechanisms that control the clubbing environment were revealed as the interventions of security staff, health and safety regulations and processes of opening and closing access to different spaces in the Arches came to define the aesthetic of the performance as much as our own interventions into the club.

Limitations and Antagonism

The relational realm of the club is not limited to the clubbing crowd; it also includes the staff running the event. Developing RTP requires sensitivity to the full range of relationships that already exist in a site, as well as those that will be generated by the work. The DJs, bar staff, technicians, promoters and security staff who were working during *Midland Street* were all implicated in the performance. As I developed *Midland Street*, I attended several club events and had a series of meetings with Arches staff in order to develop a strong understanding of the operational structures that the performance would take place within. Technicians and front of house staff were all

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[37] Soja, 1980, p.211
[38] Soja, 1980, p.208
[39] Soja, 1980, p.209
[40] Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1976, p.21

involved in developing the performance and several staff members attended a dress rehearsal in the afternoon before the performance. This collaborative approach ensured that staff understood that *Midland Street* was designed to work with the existing relationships of the club, and that their interventions, from walking across the 'stage' for access to store rooms, to moving furniture during the event, would not be to the detriment of the work.

However, on a number of occasions, a certain tension manifested itself between the rigid operational requirements of the club and the relational aesthetic of the performance. For example, shortly after the performance had started in the smoking area, where the animals were dancing on top of an old Renault, metal barriers were put in place between the performers and the clubbers, preventing any form of physical interaction. Later on, as Oakley ripped down the muslin screen, a crowd of clubbers surged forward into the space, sitting on the chairs and standing around the poker table to watch the game. Immediately four security staff held back the crowd and moved the majority out of the space again while the technicians removed the floor light and secured the bar which had supported the muslin. Once the area was safe the space was once again filled with clubbers, but noticeably slower and more reluctant this time.

Following the performance I was asked by Arches staff for feedback about *Midland Street*. I responded to this request by sending a summary of two focus group discussions, which I had conducted after the event with some of the performers and five research assistants, who I had employed to observe and feedback about their experience of the performance. I also outlined some key recommendations and observations which formed the basis for a feedback meeting across the several departments that were involved in the event (artistic, music, front of house, technical, etc.). The role of the security team in the project was one of the main points that I raised. This prompted a lengthy response from the Front of House Manager who felt compelled to defend the position of the security staff. His point was that the staff were 'just doing their job'. The meeting emphasised clear health and safety reasons behind their interventions and presence throughout the evening. The challenge that therefore

arises is how performance practice can fit into these very necessary protocols and work with the existing relationships of the venue.

Due to the perceived or actual hedonistic nature of clubbing, the health and safety regulations, licensing law, and the avoidance of criminal behaviour at the club nights are far more pressing issues than other events at the Arches. Compared to theatre audiences there are hundreds, even thousands, more people (the maximum capacity is three thousand), and the sale of alcohol is far greater. As a result, without the necessary security measures, the club could not exist. Security staff are therefore as integral to the event as the clubbers themselves. Furthermore, the 'rules' of behaviour in the theatre and the club differ significantly. During rehearsals for *Underneath the Arches*, Rob Watson, the lighting designer and Technical Manager at the Arches, pointed out that if you draw a line across the floor in one of the arches, a theatre audience will always stay on their side, whereas clubbers will always cross it without hesitation.

Despite an acute awareness of the different 'rules' of a clubbing environment, in many ways my theatre practice did not sit well within the 'repertoire' of the club. Death Disco proved an extremely challenging environment in which to create theatre. Firstly, health and safety regulations meant constantly adjusting the content of the performance. Secondly, the last minute decisions made in relation to ticket sales meant that the spaces we would be using were not confirmed until the last minute, literally. Thirdly, technical support and equipment availability was extremely low due to the Arches LIVE Festival occurring at the same time. Fourthly, poor ticket sales meant that there were not as many clubbers as we had hoped, resulting in little queuing on Midland Street and fewer clubbers entering the space in Arch 6. As a result of all these difficulties, my directorial role was often sidelined into that of production manager, ironing out problems and negotiating with the Arches staff about what we were allowed to do.

Members of the creative team reported a similar sense of resistance to the performance from the club and its staff as we developed it. This feeling was corroborated by the research assistants who focussed their discussion very closely on

the security team who they felt were 'heavy-handed', 'irritable' and 'on edge'.[41] This is not to single out the security team as this is part of a wider issue that incorporates technical support, space allocation, funding and much more. Site-specific theatre often has to negotiate complex and fixed set of rules and regulations.[42] This poses significant challenges for a theatre practice that aims to open up a space for relationships and to limit *a priori* decisions. Perhaps some of the tensions that we experienced during *Midland Street* could be understood as arising from the fact that the performance was attempting to open up a space of relations, and the club was attempting to control it.

This raises questions about ownership and control of space, a debate which features in spatial theory (Lefebvre),[43] architecture (Tschumi),[44] and art (Deutsche),[45] as well as featuring heavily in clubbing theory.[46] In RTP, relationships are determined by a complex interaction between the 'audience', the director, the performers, the venue and its spaces. None of these on their own can be said to control the relationships within a particular space, so any performance aiming to provide an open and democratic space for its audience has to be scrutinised in terms of the wider relational field.

Debates in clubbing theory about control and resistance are also relevant to RTP. The idea of clubbers performing space through different practices, such as dancing, implies a level of control over space. Clubbing has been described as removed in some way from everyday life; representing a 'freedom' from the modern 'habitus',[47] offering 'other-worldly environments in which to escape',[48] and operating as a

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[41] All quotations from research assistants are taken from the transcripts of a group discussion with five research assistants who were appointed to attend the event and reflect on the experience, October 2009
[42] For example, Grid Iron's *Roam* at Edinburgh Airport (2006) involved considerable planning and expense, which was possible through a collaboration with the National Theatre of Scotland. The production was 'the first time anywhere in the world a full-scale promenade theatre production was allowed to take place in both the landside and airside passenger areas of a working airport' (*Decky Does a Bronco* Programme Note, Edinburgh: 2010)
[43] Lefebvre, 2003
[44] Tschumi, 1990
[45] Deutsche, 1998
[46] For example, Thornton, 1995, p.25
[47] Phil Jackson, *Inside Clubbing: Sensual experiments in the art of being human*, Oxford: Berg, 2004
[48] Thornton, 1995, p.21

'heterotopia'.[49] This separation of the clubbing environment has been seen by many as a positive condition of 'subcultural autonomy' that allows 'subordinate social groups to control and define their own cultural space'.[50] Early theorists contended that subcultures 'win space for the young: cultural space in the neighbourhood and institutions', which can be marked as separate from the other spaces of society.[51]

In the 1970s, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham was at the centre of a growing academic interest in 'youth culture'. Much of this work saw the 'subculture' of young people as operating through strategies of resistance, frequently focussed on the apparent powerlessness of young people, and their subsequent relationship to power structures. This theory implied an overtly antagonistic relationship with those in power, operating through 'rituals of resistance' such as clubbing practices.[52] This initial research was criticised by many social theorists for upholding a rigid dichotomy, which failed to account for the intricacies and complexities of what Steven Pile termed the 'alternative spatialities' of resistance.[53] In this model, oppression and exploitation could be side-stepped or avoided through the creation of alternative modes of experience, rather than through direct challenge to systems of power. Angela McRobbie, herself an original member of the CCCS, revised the centre's early work by suggesting that conceptions of resistance might be 'down-sized' and understood as existing as a 'more mundane, micrological level of everyday practices and choices'.[54] Focus subsequently shifted towards the 'alternative possibilities' of clubbing culture, as opposed to an overarching discourse of overt political resistance.[55]

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[49] Graham St John, 'Electronic Dance Music Culture and Religion: An overview', *Culture and Religion* 7(1), 2006, pp.1-25, p.17. Michel Foucault's concept of the 'heterotopia' refers to sites that are linked to the 'real' sites of the society in which we live, but also contradict them as a sort of 'counter-site' in which the 'real' sites that can be found within a culture are 'simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'. Theatres, as well as churches, brothels, cemeteries and fairgrounds are all examples of heterotopias, removed from the other sites of a society, but also intrinsically related to them (Foucault, 1984)
[50] Thornton, 1995, p.25
[51] John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson & Brian Roberts, 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A theoretical overview', *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*, ed. Stuart Hall & Tony Jefferson, London: Routledge, 1993 [1975], pp.9-74, p.46
[52] Hall & Jefferson, 1993
[53] Steve Pile, 'Introduction: Opposition, political identities and spaces of resistance', *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile & Michael Keith, London: Routledge, 1997, pp.1-32, p.2-3
[54] Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.162
[55] Malbon, 1999, p.19

RTP might employ the same rhetoric as the early CCCS model: The idea of audiences forming relationships with the performance and their environment implies a level of control over the space and the artwork. However, in light of the criticism of the power/resistance dichotomy, this notion of 'controlling' or 'winning' space is problematic. For Thornton, clubbers winning space is an illusion created by promoters and marketers:

> To a large extent, places are 'won' when social groups are recognised as profitable markets. Venue owners hire club organisers (or club organisers hire venues) to target, promote and advertise to both 'rebellious' and 'conforming' youth. Crucially, in the case of dance clubs and raves, their marketing has been most successful when youth feel they have 'won' it for themselves.[56]

This passage illustrates the complex relationship between contracted consumerism and micro-political utopian sensibility. The question that is raised is that if resistance can be marketed and sold, can it ever really function as resistance?

However, Thornton's argument actually upholds the dichotomies that she is attempting to criticise as the clubbers/promoters division presented here is just as deterministic as the early CCCS model. In reality, clubs are generally set up by clubbers and the relationship between production and reception is far more complex than Thornton's theory suggests.[57] This problematises my earlier assertion (that *Midland Street* was attempting to open up a space of relations, and Death Disco was attempting to control it). In fact, the security team and many of the other measures that affected our performance were part of the relational realm of the club long before our intervention, and were necessary for the existence of the entire event. Without these measures there would be no club, and without the club there would be no *Midland Street*.

The power/resistance debate in clubbing theory can be understood relatively. At one level, clubbing is a cultural practice that provides an opportunity to resist the power structures of capitalist society through subversive communal practice.[58] From another perspective, the club itself constitutes a control system, with its own rigid power

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[56] Thornton, 1995, p.25
[57] For a discussion of the relationship between production and reception in theatre see Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A theory of production and reception* 2nd edition, London: Routledge, 1997, p.106
[58] Hall & Jefferson, 1993

structures. Within this commodified system, resistance can be found at the level of practices of individual clubbers, which can operate on a micro-political level. It is therefore important to acknowledge the operation of shifting power relations, which mean that the subversive 'tactics' of everyday life are prone to reappropriation by the systems that they operate against.[59]

Recognising this shifting locus of power, the political role of RTP should be understood relatively: on one hand the theatre event itself might be considered progressive in its ecologically sensitive relationship to its wider environment, and its concern to 'give everyone their chance';[60] on the other hand, the planned, scripted and rehearsed elements of the performance could be understood to close down relations and to fix space. With relativity in mind, it is important that RTP is not assumed to be a progressive political act without considering its relationships on a case-by-case basis. As argued by Bishop, 'it is no longer enough to say that activating the viewer *tout court* is a democratic act'.[61]

Through unexpected and undetermined relationships with another ecosystem, *Midland Street* took an unpredictable and risky approach to developing a performance aesthetic. Although this 'risk' was situated within a systematic research plan, it was also very much informed by John Freeman's assertion that 'for practitioners, not knowing what happens next is in the nature of the making and the ambiguity of chaos is something to be embraced rather than feared'.[62]

This ambiguous chaos manifested itself in a number of different ways, from the playful subversion of stealing the clown's hat or throwing the poker chips around the space, to more antagonistic responses. On several occasions during *Midland Street,* clubbers or members of the public became confrontational towards the performers. Ruane recounted one such experience in her car on Midland Street, which I was unaware of until after the event:

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[59] For example, Smith discusses 'the uptake of "our" ideas by unexpected consumers'. He refers to Eyal Weizman and Slavoj Žižek, who have both 'noted the study of the ideas and tactics of Foucault, Debord, Deleuze and Guattari by officers training for the Israeli Defence Force' (Smith, 2010, p.35)
[60] Bourriaud, 2002, p.58
[61] Bishop, 2004, p.78
[62] Freeman, 2010, p.60

> ... It was quite near the end - there were some guys who shouted and shouted and shouted at me and I wouldn't give them a reaction, and then he came round to the driver's side and tried to open the car door. But I knew it was locked (...) So the paper that I was blotting my lips on - he took the other end and started pretending to wipe his arse on it and getting his friends to take photos. And I still didn't do anything so he was starting to look more and more and more of an arsehole, and a couple of his friends walked away. And then because I still wasn't reacting to that he ripped the paper out of my hand, and then I still didn't react, and then the rest of his friends walked away.[63]

This instance of confrontation, outside the boundaries of the club, was the only one to reach this level, where the performer felt threatened. We had discussed the possibility of this happening; there were security staff in the area in case this incident had escalated, and Ruane, who was prepared for difficult situations such as this, safely locked herself inside the car. Nonetheless, important questions are raised regarding the degree to which relational artworks can ever really be open to whatever relationships might be generated. On this occasion, Bishop's and Deutsche's call for the avowal and acknowledgement of antagonism in artistic practice was tested.[64] This incident indicates that some antagonisms need to be prevented and avoided, if only for the safety of the performers.

There is an important distinction to be made between antagonism as Laclau, Mouffe, Bishop and Deutsche use the term (which is later referred to by Mouffe as *agonism*),[65] and the particular type of *ant*-agonism Ruane encountered. While avoiding and disavowing antagonism is inimical to an open, relational engagement with a site; avoiding and disavowing aggressive confrontation can be conducive to such a project. Antagonism may be key to a fully functioning democratic society, but this has to be understood as a two-way process. Bishop's argument is based on Laclau and Mouffe's call for antagonism in democratic politics, but if the democratic system is subjected to aggressive confrontation, then the social '*discursive* space' that is necessary for democracy is no longer possible.[66]

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[63] All quotations from performers are taken from a transcript of a group discussion with *Midland Street* performers, October 2009
[64] Deutsche, 1998, p.289
[65] Mouffe, 2000
[66] Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.x

As my work in the Arches has shown on several occasions, whenever performance leaves the safety of the designated theatre space and enters the relational space beyond the studio door, confrontation is a common outcome. Wilkie's repertoire of 'spatial rules' goes some way to explaining this; performance in public spaces may be considered by some to be breaking the rules that are in place in non-theatre spaces. This is hopefully not the result of the arrogance that Jan Cohen-Cruz identifies in imposing work on 'people who have not chosen to be spectators'.[67] In fact, not imposing the work on the Death Disco clubbers was a guiding principle as I developed the performance. However, despite my best efforts there have often been moments of confrontation in the public spaces of the Arches, and this seems to be an unavoidable consequence of presenting my work outside the studio.

The implications of this for RTP are that relationships have to be simultaneously open to 'outside' voices, which impede the realisation of a utopian democracy,[68] and also managed, to prevent non-dialogical forms of antagonism. Furthermore, it is important to remember that as Bishop points out, all dialogical relationships are not automatically democratic and cannot be assumed to constitute a progressive politics.[69] In *Midland Street*, the interactions of passers-by and clubbers were incorporated into the performance, and a wide range of reactions were avowed, but when this became confrontational, it was impossible for Ruane to continue. This apparent contradiction is in fact crucial to the workings of any social construct, be it a theatre audience or a nation. Progressive politics can only be achieved when relationships are made open to contestation, and constantly renegotiated through dialogue and democratic processes, rather than opposed with unidirectional force and confrontation.

Conclusion

Midland Street was the only major relational theatre performance during this project that took place outside the Arches theatre programme. Bringing my theatre practice into a relationship with another important cultural ecosystem operating within the venue was an opportunity to explore the implications of bringing two sets of codes, conventions and

[67] Jan Cohen-Cruz, 'General Introduction', *Radical Street Performance: An international anthology*, London: Routledge, 1998, pp.1-6
[68] Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.xviii
[69] Bishop, 2004, p.65

rules into a dialogue with each other. The synergies, contradictions, confrontations and antagonisms that resulted from this ecotonal transfer revealed a complex set of fluctuating modes of engagement with the club and the theatre practice that occurred within it.

A particular feature of ecotones is that they 'often produce new hybrid life-forms as a result of the "edge effects" characteristic of the meeting of ecosystems'.[70] The relational performance of *Midland Street* could be understood as a hybrid art-form, which emerged from the ecotone between theatre and clubbing. The different modes of engagement with the performance were illustrative of a very different type of experience to that of a more traditional theatre performance. *Midland Street* was open to alternation between participation and observation, and between individual and collective experience. Identifying this fluctuating audience experience has been extremely valuable to the development of RTP, which attempts to provide a context for a wide range of relationships.

Recalling Soja's socio-spatial dialectic, in which 'people make places and places make people',[71] the relationships of *Midland Street* can be understood as part of a dialectical process, both constitutive of and determined by the wider environment of Death Disco. In RTP, these processes all define the work, and to interact with the space and the people within it is therefore to become a part of the performance aesthetic. However, as Laclau and Mouffe have shown, any socially constructed group, such as a theatre audience, selects its members, and there will always be 'an "outside" that impedes its full realisation'.[72] RTP therefore attempts to remain open to outside voices, acknowledging the impossibility of a utopian democracy. Crucially, this has to be understood as a two-way process and whilst it is important to constantly interrogate and develop the relationships of RTP, it is equally important that the health, safety and well being of performers and audience members is ensured. These two goals are not always compatible, and the latter must always take precedence.

One of the main principles behind RTP is that the situation - meaning both site and circumstance - of the performance has a significant bearing on the relationships that it is possible to generate. In the case of *Midland Street*, this manifested itself in the limitations

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[70] Kershaw, 2007, p.19
[71] Borden *et al*, 2001, p.5
[72] Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.xviii

and demands of institutional protocol. By encountering and negotiating tensions and limitations in the clubbing environment, *Midland Street* serves as a valuable case-study into developing performance practice within the relational sphere of an already existing cultural environment. The recommendation that emerges from this experience is that the organisational structures that RTP takes place within should always be carefully considered when developing a performance. This applies especially to site-specific artists creating work in response to a cultural centre, as the rules and regulations of these sites can be particularly challenging.

Focussing on the practices and relationships of the audience as opposed to the structures and content of a performance text is an important analytical approach for RTP. *Midland Street* aimed to open up a performative space that people could choose to engage with or not. As Bourriaud asks, 'why wouldn't the meaning of a work have as much to do with the use one makes of it as with the artist's intentions for it?'[73] This choice about how to engage with the performance was explored further in my final practice-as-research project. In *A Work on Progress*, I researched the production processes of theatre at the Arches in order to understand the political potential of RTP. Making performance that aims to operate as an open, relational engagement with its site is in many ways problematic within the increasingly commercialised structures of a cultural site like the Arches. My final project therefore aimed to interrogate its position within the control systems of commercial production processes.

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[73] Bourriaud, 2001, p.20

Chapter Four: Use and Reconfiguration as Relational Theatre Production

During the production process for *Underneath the Arches* and *Midland Street*, I became increasingly aware of an uneasy relationship between the commercial demands of the Arches and the political aspirations of my practice, which aims to operate through dialogue and community rather than reinforcing 'supplier/client relations'.[1] The difficulties that were experienced during *Midland Street*, including the relationship of the security staff to the performance, have been discussed in the previous chapter. In the following section I also discuss the relationship between my practice and *Alien Wars*, a highly commercialised interactive performance event that ran in the Arches' derelict basement space throughout 2009. Prompted by these experiences, in the final phase of my practice-as-research, I aimed to interrogate the commercial context of my work by focussing on the production processes of RTP. My practice has always attempted to avoid the presentation of a completed artistic 'product', but in *A Work on Progress* (April 2010), I developed this concern by exploring the possibility of an alternative model of production, which could be continually reconfigured at the point of performance.

By focussing on the processes of theatrical production, I aimed to contribute to Kershaw's ecological model of theatre and performance, which identifies the interrelations of all the separate elements of a production. Kershaw identifies 'interdependencies' that exist throughout a theatre performance, connecting the 'event' to its 'environment'. In this model, the smallest of changes in any aspect of a performance could have serious implications to the entire production.[2] This idea suggests that decisions made in the production process could significantly affect the way in which a theatre performance is experienced, including the relationships that are generated and the meaning that is taken from the event.

This interrelatedness of production and reception is discussed by Ric Knowles, who suggests that 'a wide range of material factors frame, contain, and contribute to the ways in which audiences understand theatrical productions'.[3] Knowles understands the material

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[1] Bourriaud, 2002, p.83
[2] Kershaw, 2007, p.24
[3] Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.5

conditions of theatre production as a sort of 'political unconsciousness', which reveals itself through performance as a result of the 'taken-for-granted delivery systems', including all the conditions of production, from training and rehearsal to work conditions and cultural contexts:

> Such systems profess neutrality and aspire to invisibility, but they silently carry considerable ideological weight that can work to reinforce, complicate, or undermine the conscious 'thematic' content of the work (and the stated intentions of its creators).[4]

Knowles therefore proposes a model for performance analysis, which broadens the focus of traditional research on the script and the contents of the stage and considers the wider picture of theatrical production and reception through focussing on the 'specifics and politics of location'.[5]

Through 'materialist semiotics', a combination of semiotic analysis and cultural materialism, Knowles reveals how conditions of production and reception significantly determine 'what is traditionally thought of as performance "itself"'.[6] A materialist semiotic analysis of my practice at the Arches might begin with the commercial structures of the venue, which establishes the ways in which performances are experienced. The first port-of-call for an audience member entering the building is usually the box-office, where a ticket is purchased, immediately framing performances as a commodity.

As I go on to discuss, the commodification of art is not always acknowledged by Bourriaud, who is criticised by Martin for failing to acknowledge the 'exchange-value' of relational practice.[7] The commercial context that relational art takes place within implicates the relationships that it generates as 'politically formed to (their) innermost core'.[8] This is an 'economy of social exchange' that Bourriaud obscures through claims of aesthetic autonomy and democratic social relations.[9] Martin therefore proposes a *dialectical* approach to the relationship between art and commerce, which this phase of my practice-as-research aims to adopt and explore. For Martin, rather than assuming 'an essentially critical relation to capitalist culture', it is important to directly address the

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[4] Knowles, 2004, p.20
[5] Knowles, 2004, p.12
[6] Knowles, 2004, p.3
[7] Martin, 2007, p.377
[8] Martin, 2007, p.372
[9] Martin, 2007, p.371

tensions involved in presenting social relations as an emancipatory aesthetic strategy within the context of a commercially orientated arts venue.[10]

Due to its 'liveness' and 'presence', theatre has often been proposed as resistant to commodification in a way that other artforms are not. For example, Hans-Thies Lehmann argues that 'theatre does not produce a tangible object which may enter into circulation as a marketable commodity, such as a video, a film, a disc, or even a book'.[11] In this chapter, I interrogate this proposition, arguing that strategies such as postdramatic theatre are limited to a *representational* exploration of the spaces and systems that they operate within, which is ultimately contained within the systems that it sets itself against. Postdramatic theatre is proposed as an alternative to the '*fictive cosmos*' offered by an illusory reality.[12] For Lehmann, the political potential of theatre in contemporary society is located in its '*mode of representation*' through a self-reflexive approach to its commercial context, in which performance reveals the dynamic between 'between "real" contiguity (connection with reality) and "staged" construct'.[13] Lehmann suggests that theatre has only managed to co-exist alongside more 'technically advanced media', through tactics of self-reflexivity and self-thematisation.[14]

Developing the concerns of postdramatic cultural strategies, which I go on to discuss in relation to late twentieth century 'postmodern' theory, my final project at the Arches shifts the focus from modes of representation to modes of production, exploring the potential for a model of performance that constructs an alternative production process in the same time and space as its consumption, incorporating these processes into its aesthetic. This approach aims for a 'critique of the dialectics of social exchange in capitalist culture', which Martin argues should be adopted as a primary concern of relational practice.[15]

As Forced Entertainment's Richard Lowdon reminds us, theatre is 'more or less the only field which still insists on presence'.[16] The concept of theatrical presence has been widely

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[10] Martin, 2007, p.376
[11] Lehmann, 2006, p.16
[12] Lehmann, 2006, p.22
[13] Lehmann, 2006, p.103
[14] Lehmann, 2006, p.17
[15] Martin, 2007, p.386
[16] Forced Entertainment, *A Decade of Forced Entertainment*, (performance / lecture), dir. Tim Etchells, London: ICA, 1994. See Etchells, 1999, pp.29-46, p.44

debated and 'presence' has often been problematised in contemporary performance.[17] Cormac Power suggests that the work of Forced Entertainment often undermines the idea of presence 'to the point of parody'.[18] However, Lowdon's usage of the term here does not refer to the presence of fictional characters and illusory stage worlds, but rather to the 'here and now' of live performance, which is foregrounded in postdramatic theatre:

> Theatre is the site [...] of a real gathering, a place where a unique intersection of aesthetically organized and everyday real life takes place. In contrast to other arts, which produce an object and/or are communicated through media, here the aesthetic act itself (the performing) as well as the act of reception (the theatre going) take place as a real doing in the here and now. Theatre means the collectively spent and used up lifetime in the collectively breathed air of that space in which the performing and the spectating take place. The emission and reception of signs and signals take place simultaneously.[19]

Theatre is there in the same space as its audience. It is made in front of them, and without them it could not exist. This insistence on the 'here and now' of performance has a particular implication to a model of RTP that questions its own status as a commercial product. As Ridout points out, 'in the theatre you always know you are there, at the scene of the action, at the site of production'.[20] This implicates the audience in the production process and may suggest ways in which RTP can interrogate the commercial systems that it operates within.

Postdramatic theatre addresses the 'here and now' of the live experience as a key thematic concern. Lehmann explains how in the late twentieth century, contemporary theatre practice 'has made use of this basic given of theatre, has specifically reflected on it and directly turned it into the *content* and *theme* of its presentation'.[21] However, the preoccupation with content and theme is limited to a representational engagement with the material conditions of theatrical production. RTP aims to extend the concerns of postdramatic theatre by directly turning the 'basic given' of live performance into the *form* of its presentation.

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[17] For example, Jane Goodall, *Stage Presence: The actor as mesmerist*, London: Routledge, 2008; and Cormac Power, *Presence in Play: A critique of theories of presence in the theatre*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008
[18] Cormac Power, '"Bringing the Story to Life": Presenting history as text in *The World in Pictures*', *Performance Research* 14(1), 2009, pp.115-122, p.116
[19] Lehmann, 2006, p.17
[20] Ridout, 2006, p.29
[21] Lehmann, 2006, p.17. My italics

In RTP, processes of production are constantly in operation as new relationships are formed and the space of the performance is reconfigured. This is not to obscure the production work that has taken place beforehand (the *a priori* establishment of an artistic context). However, my interest in this chapter is in the types of production that take place at the point of performance; the ways in which the RTP audience become producers of a performance aesthetic through their interactions and uses of the work. RTP aims to take its form from the processes of its own creation.

Whybrow explains how 'relationality' in art can be understood as bringing the process of *work* into the aesthetic:

> For me the term presents an opportunity to view art as containing the potential to be *doing work* or to be 'serious play' - as performing contextually, if not necessarily *in context* - as well as for that work/play to be seen to come about, or to come into its own, as the product of an encounter with an interlocutor or spectator.[22]

This notion of artistic practice *doing work* suggests a way of moving beyond the representational cultural strategies of Lehmann's 'postdramatic theatre'. Because this work is 'the product of an encounter', it is a necessarily 'embodied' and 'situated' experience.[23] In RTP, the *work* comes about because the performance engages with its site through 'continual change and reconfiguration of relationships in space'.[24] In this way, a 'relational theatre production' might be developed that is seen to 'come about' in the 'here and now' of its performance.

If RTP aspires to resist commercial structures, then it has to find a way of acknowledging and scrutinising the relationships that determine its own means of production. Moving beyond a concern with modes of representation, my final practice-as-research project at the Arches therefore aimed to provide an 'open' and relational space, in which the processes of theatrical production and the conditions of its reception could be explored, enacted and interrogated. In this way, the project aimed to suggest an alternative to some of the more explicitly commercial activities of the Arches.

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[22] Whybrow, 2011, p.35
[23] Whybrow, 2011, p.37
[24] Massey, 2005, p.38

Alien Wars vs. _Underneath the Arches_

Alien Wars was a fifteen minute performance that ran several times a day throughout 2009 in the derelict space in the Arches basement. Trading on the film series by 20th Century Fox, with whom the production company was previously affiliated, the performance took groups on a guided tour of a recently discovered 'alien spacecraft'. This tour operated very differently to my own tours of the Arches as the script and the route were fixed to work with carefully plotted sound and light cues with no opportunity for divergence from this predetermined structure. Dialogue between the performers and the tour group was kept to a minimum. Early on in the tour, something apparently goes wrong and the routine public visit soon turns into a frantic escape from a locked down military unit, with aliens in pursuit.[25] Complete with merchandise including posters, mugs and t-shirts, and celebrity endorsements by anyone from Tony Blair to Sigourney Weaver, _Alien Wars_ was a heavily marketed, commodified event, which in many ways sat uneasily within (or against) an experimental contemporary arts programme.

During rehearsals for _Underneath the Arches_, my first large-scale practice-as-research project, the creative team and I frequently found ourselves competing for space with _Alien Wars._ For the majority of the rehearsal period, literally up to the minute before the performance itself, gunfire and screaming echoed round the building. Certain doors and corridors were out of bounds, access to the derelict space was severely restricted, and constant negotiation was required between our production team and the _Alien Wars_ staff to allocate time for technical and dress rehearsals, plotting, rigging and set builds and installations.

The decision to programme this event came at a time when global recession had significantly affected the Arches' income, and the profits generated from the event were intended to plug a hole in the company's finances. Our fraught rehearsal experience was therefore symptomatic of the effect of financial recession on artistic activity. The Arches is in a unique position among contemporary arts venues in Scotland as its arts programme is mainly funded by its commercial activity. Approximately eighty per cent of arts funding relies on profits from the club nights and corporate venue hire. In real terms this means the

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[25] Henry Northmore, 'Alien War: Beauty of the beast', _The List_, Issue 618, November 2008, www.list.co.uk/article/14594-alien-war (accessed 07/06/10)

Arches relies on alcohol sales, corporate sponsorship and commercial events such as *Alien Wars* in order to support the theatre programme.

While the programming of theatre and other arts events continued regardless, a materialist semiotic analysis of *Alien Wars* in relation to the rest of the artistic activity in the building would reveal how the spaces of rehearsal, interrupted by the sounds of gunfire, and the limited access to dressing rooms and workshops in the adjacent space, can have significant effects on performances that have had to adjust their production processes in response to the event. Furthermore, the presence of merchandise and *Alien Wars* customers in the public spaces of the building may have had an effect on conditions of reception. As argued by Gay McAuley, 'the commercial activity around the theatre underscores the commercial basis for the theatre itself and is to an extent in conflict with the idea of theatre as art'.[26] The 'meaning' of *Underneath the Arches* was therefore determined not only by the performance event itself, but also by the wide range of material conditions created by the presence of *Alien Wars* in the building at the time.

The final phase of my research was a result of such occasions when my creative practice was affected by commercial prioritisation in the Arches' programming and operations. I am interested in the extent to which RTP is part of the commercial systems of the Arches, and also in the ways in which it can resist these processes, suggesting an alternative to commercial relationships. As such, my initial practical explorations began with an investigation into the various 'currencies' of theatre.

Initial Practical Explorations (March 2010)

For the first stage of my practical exploration into 'relational theatre production', I organised two workshops exploring 'currencies' of theatre. Participants were mainly researchers and practitioners who had some prior knowledge of, or involvement with, my research project. I was keen to encourage an exchange of ideas, and for the first session I set up a group discussion to which participants could come and go as they pleased. Over the course of ninety minutes we identified several forms of currency and discussed the ways in which each of these operated and interrelated. We then chose four of these (*time*,

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[26] Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making meaning in theatre*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, p.62

applause, *physical exertion* and *money*) and devised practical explorations into the ways in which they operate in performance. These performances were filmed and they are available to view online.[27]

Each of the performances was valuable in beginning to explore the systems of exchange that are in operation in performance. For example, Chris Hall and Kieran Hurley devised a performance that was controlled by the level of applause they received. An individual audience member turned on a projector and applauded if they liked what they saw, but stopped if they wanted something new. This process also became part of a wider aesthetic as the rest of the group watched from the stairwell above. This was a good example of the exchange of currency comprising the artwork as well as paying for it.

In a second workshop I further investigated the physical exertion of theatre production and the different forms of labour that operate during the event. For this workshop I identified four different components of theatrical production requiring various forms of labour - *sound*, *lighting*, *script* and *set* - and assigned one of these to each of the four participants. For one hour we each worked on our task; typing at the keyboard, cycling to get various cables, running up and down stairs with heavy staging, etc. I wanted to explore how this work could be used to 'pay' for the performance, and in what ways the participants would work individually, or as a group, to produce the show. One hour later, a fifth participant arrived to perform the piece that we had worked on. The video of this performance is also available online.[28]

For the first half hour, we tended to work on our own, getting straight into the basic labour of theatrical production. When the initial materials were more or less assembled, we began to work more collaboratively: James Oakley worked out cues from Kieran Hurley's script, Julia Taudevin put lights amongst the various set elements I had found, and I connected the laptop to a monitor for the performer to read Hurley's text. An hour later, Rob Drummond arrived to perform without any prior knowledge of the set up. A number of useful points were raised from this workshop. Firstly, our investment in the performance was considered an important element in our enjoyment of it, and seeing our own work realised was key to

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[27] The performances that were devised during this workshop can be viewed at web.me.com/davidoverend/ David_Overend/commerce.html (accessed 03/08/10)
[28] This performance can be viewed at web.me.com/davidoverend/David_Overend/commerce3.html (accessed 03/08/10)

this experience. Conversely, Drummond was very appreciative of the work that we had put in before his arrival. Secondly, our 'hands-on' engagement with the materials of production gave each of us a strong sense of ownership of the performance. Thirdly, given a common goal, we moved from individual to collective labour. In this way, the process of theatrical production brought us together. Fourthly, relating this workshop to the focus on 'currencies', we all clearly paid for the performance in a variety of ways, particularly with our time and our physical exertion.

As Robert L. Heilbroner points out, in capitalist society, 'the earnings of capital are not paid to those who use it, or those who made it, but to those who own it'.[29] In these workshop performances, an alternative to this model potentially emerged as ownership, use and production were shared by the same people. In this way, the boundaries between the production process and the 'consumption' of the artwork were significantly blurred. As I developed my final project for the Arches, I focussed on the particular types of relationships involved in the production processes of RTP, using the labour of visitors to the space to produce a continually changing performance aesthetic.

A Work on Progress (April 2010)[30]

A Work on Progress was a three hour durational installation presented as part of the Forest Fringe Micro-Festival.[31] Programmed alongside 'a carnival of intimate encounters, audio walks, installations, works-in-progress, secret adventures and interactive experiences',[32] the event took place in the studio theatre, separated from the rest of the festival in the Arches' only designated theatre space. This project aimed to create an environment that could be continually altered and reconfigured by the labour of visitors to the studio. The title refers to the prevalence of the 'work-*in*-progress' model in contemporary theatre practice, indicating the unfinished, constantly developing aesthetic that I hoped to create.[33] It also refers to the 'progressive' political aims underlying the work, particularly Massey's

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[29] Heilbroner, 1993, p.107
[30] A more detailed description of this event is provided in the Appendix, and a video of the performance is also provided, which is available to view at www.underneaththearches.co.uk
[31] Forest Fringe, www.forestfringe.co.uk (accessed 10/05/10)
[32] The Arches' Season Brochure, March - April, Glasgow: The Arches, 2010b
[33] Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling, *Devising Performance: A critical history*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p.21-22

understanding of the political dimension of social space as continually open to reconfiguration.[34]

Visitors to the studio encountered an 'Aladdin's cave of resources',[35] centred around six interactive 'stations' (*light*, *sound*, *titles*, *text*, *costume* and *computer*). Musical instruments, effects machines, projections, sound and light equipment, and various texts filled the space, and these were all available for visitors to use in a variety of undetermined ways. Although choices were made about everything that was available in the space, from the type of instruments to the configuration of the staging, this event was intended to adopt Dunn's model as discussed in Chapter One, providing a 'context' for relationships to form, rather than serving as a 'content provider'.[36]

In order to acknowledge the significant amount of production work that had been conducted *a priori*, we recorded hours of footage of our work in the studio leading up to the event. This film was made available to visitors on piles of mini-DV tapes on the 'text table' in the middle of the studio, and on several occasions it was played on a small monitor. Furthermore, two video cameras were available in the space for visitors to record their own production process. One of these was connected to a live feed projection outside the studio, so that festival-goers outside the space could watch the activity in the studio. This offered another level of aesthetic experience, which framed the entire event as an artwork to be observed. Many visitors to the studio watched the activity in the studio on the live-feed screens before or after engaging with the stations themselves. This dynamic was repeated inside the studio, as participants fluctuated between observation and participation, in a similar way to the clubbing 'audience' in *Midland Street*.

As I developed *A Work on Progress*, I collaborated with several artists who had regularly presented work at the Arches and the in-house technical team that had worked with me on my previous practice-as-research projects. A small amount of funding was available from the visual art budget to employ the musician and sound artist Iain Campbell, who was not present at the event, but contributed significantly to the music and sound set up, supplying the majority of the equipment. Due to the complicated technical requirements, I worked

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[34] Massey, 2005, p.11
[35] Brennan, 2010
[36] Kester, 2005, p.54

very closely with technician and performer Chris Hall, a member of the core devising team for *Underneath the Arches* and participant in the workshops. Hall worked as Creative Assistant on this project and his thorough understanding of my research and practice was invaluable to the development process as we talked through ideas and sourced equipment. I was also supported by several student volunteers from the Theatre, Film and Television Studies Department. At all times during the event there were members of this small creative team on hand, to ensure health and safety regulations were maintained, and to provide assistance in using the equipment. However, the aim was that our own involvement would support visitors' interactions with the stations, rather than imposing any sort of pre-rehearsed performance on the space. *A Work on Progress* aspired to the condition of 'interdisciplinary experimentation', which finds its precedent in the work of artists such as John Cage and Merce Cunningham at the Black Mountain College.[37] Cage's untitled event in 1952 operated through a 'radical interdisciplinary juxtaposition of dance, visual arts, music/sound, and poetry and text readings'. However, while Cage brought together a group of artists from various disciplines, *A Work on Progress* explored the possibility of removing the professional artist from the space altogether.

The environment that we created in the studio was intended to provide an 'open' and relational performance text, with the potential for a range of different modes of engagement and relationships with the artwork, the space and its users. Over the course of the two nights of the festival, there was a gradual accumulation of user-generated material. Traces of previous interactions remained - in texts thrown down into a pit in the middle of the room; in a series of titles written on the back wall; and also in the increasingly entangled wires and rearranged equipment.

In addition to the creative team, I employed three research assistants who observed the variety of ways that visitors to the studio engaged with the stations and each other. This was invaluable in identifying the different types of relationship that emerged during the event, which I discuss later in this chapter, including individual interactions with the equipment, collective creative practice through impromptu performances, disengagement from the event, and antagonistic relations with the performance aesthetic such as disruption of others' performances. The performance aesthetic was therefore produced by 'users' of

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[37] Scott deLahunta, 'Virtual Reality and Performance', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 24(1), 2002, pp.105-114, p.106

the stations through their engagement with the space. In this way, *A Work on Progress* highlighted the observation of different strategies of use as a key analytical methodology for RTP.

In the following exegesis, I identify the individual and collective uses of the stations, relating the relational aesthetic of the performance to the wider production processes of RTP. The aim of the project is a recognition of the tensions and contradictions involved in presenting this work within the wider institutional structures of a commercial arts venue. Ultimately, RTP is intended to operate through an aesthetic that is determined by the input of its 'users'.

Beyond Postmodernism

For Bourriaud, daily life is constituted by a 'chaotic mass of objects, names, and references', and the challenge for artists is to find a way of producing 'meaning' from this 'precarious' social realm.[38] Bourriaud's concept of 'postproduction' introduces a particular formal strategy in which artists refuse to accept the cultural products offered by capitalist society and, like de Certeau's 'users' of everyday life, resist power systems from within. These artists, like DJs, web surfers and film editors, are 'semionauts', producing original pathways through signs. By employing this model, *A Work on Progress* aimed to use the shift that informs 'postproduction' from an aesthetic based on representation to an aesthetic that incorporates the material conditions of cultural production. In this way, the 'supplier/client relations' of theatre were challenged and an alternative practice was suggested, which aspires to operate through alternative modes of currency to those of the commercial market.[39]

In a similar way to de Certeau's 'users' of everyday life, this approach offers a way for participants to 'inhabit' various cultural forms, making them their own.[40] This relates strategies of use to modes of production and reception, as the work of art operates as a context for the creative practices of 'users', who engage with performance as an act of 'everyday creativity'.[41] The aim of relational aesthetics lies in 'art's capabilities of

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[38] Bourriaud, 2001, p.17; Bourriaud, 2009c, p.87
[39] Bourriaud, 2002, p.83
[40] Bourriaud, 2001, p.18; Bourriaud, 2009c, p.88
[41] de Certeau, 1984, p.xiv

resistance within the overall social arena', rather than through the direct criticism of society from the basis of illusory marginality.[42] However, Bourriaud reformulates postmodern understandings of resistance by introducing a particular strategy based on *use* rather than representation.

The question of whether cultural practice can ever position itself outside the systems of capitalist production was a major concern in postmodern theory at the end of the twentieth century. For Fredric Jameson and Hal Foster, cultural acts can only operate as a *resistant* form, abandoning almost all hope of transgressing the conditions of capitalist society, and placing art as a means of struggle and contestation *within* the systems that they critique.[43] For Jameson, late capitalist society ushered in a new cultural logic in which distinctions between economic and cultural realms broke down.[44] The result of this is that it is no longer possible for culture to assume a critical distance from the economic conditions that contain and determine it. This 'postmodern' condition functions as a 'cultural dominant' which is inextricably linked to late capitalist society, and through which all forms of contemporary political art must articulate their position. Jameson argues that there is no longer any 'possibility of the positioning of the cultural act outside the massive Being of capital'.[45] This resonates with my own practice, which is not only defined by its reliance on the commercial activities of the Arches, but also through the academic framework that it takes place within - the funding structures, institutional demands and research criteria of the academy.

Like Lehmann, Jameson's theory of 'the cultural logic of late capitalism' proposed that new modes of *representation* were required, which would allow us to 'map' our place within the world space of multinational capital.[46] The model that Jameson proposed for negotiating the problems bequeathed by late capitalism was an explicitly cognitive and pedagogical approach to political art and culture, not dissimilar to the complex conception of the relationship between culture and pedagogy developed by Brecht, but in the context

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[42] Bourriaud, 2002, p.31. My italics
[43] Hal Foster, 'For a Concept of the Political in Contemporary Art', *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*, Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1985; and Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1991
[44] Jameson, 1991, p.4
[45] Jameson, 1991, p.48
[46] Jameson, 1991, p.54

of late capitalist society. Jameson defines this new cultural form as 'an aesthetic of cognitive mapping':

> ... the new political art (if it is possible at all) will have to hold to the truth of postmodernism, that is to say, to its fundamental object - the world space of multinational capital - at the same time at which it achieves a breakthrough to some as yet unimaginable new mode of *representing* this last, in which we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralised by our spatial as well as our social confusion.[47]

In this model, the aim is to teach us about our place within systems of global capitalism, thereby allowing us to struggle against it. The cognitive map enables an understanding of our own 'relationship to the totality',[48] and in so doing helps us to begin to find ways to challenge it.

Despite recent shifts in understanding of the role of the spectator in contemporary theatre, such as the arguments of Rancière and Rebellato,[49] in many ways, questions of representation and illusion have dominated contemporary theatre practices, many of which have their roots in postmodern cultural strategies. For Lehmann, because theatre is not easily commodified, because it does not produce a 'tangible object', its mass media potential is limited in a world that is defined by the 'primarily passive consumption of images and data'.[50] For Lehmann, theatre relies on 'active energies of imagination', and as the cultural sector becomes increasingly driven by marketability and profitability, theatre has only managed to co-exist alongside more technically advanced media through 'postdramatic' tactics of self-reflexivity.[51]

However, there is a real danger that practices that move away from the traditional audience-performer separation are assumed to be automatically progressive. There is an unacknowledged paradox in Lehmann's theory: on the one hand, theatre is conceived as inherently resistant to commodification, due to its liveness and ephemerality; on the other hand, the tactics of the postdramatic theatre are explicitly identified as prompted by the demands of the cultural market.

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[47] Jameson, 1991, p.54. My italics
[48] Jameson, 1991, p.52
[49] Jacques Rancière (2007, p.277) describes the active role of the 'emancipated spectator', and Dan Rebellato (2009b, p.18) rejects the assumption that illusion defines the experience of 'representational theatre' (theatre in which 'people and things on stage represent other people and things')
[50] Lehmann, 2006, p.16
[51] Lehmann, 2006, p.17

Companies like Forced Entertainment, who Lehmann's translator, Karen Jürs-Munby cites as 'postdramatic',[52] often aim for a production process that interrogates the commercial systems that determine their own work, even if they refuse to commit to an overtly political agenda, as explained by company member Robin Arthur:

> ... if you look at the most overtly social or politically social theatre work that has come out of this country in the last twenty or thirty years, most of it has been made in the context of an incredibly, perniciously, nasty, not just capitalist system but a kind of really strange world. Where notions of democracy or commitment are utterly out of the window. (...) And I don't understand how you can think about making political or social work if you haven't sorted out your own means of production to start with. It's utterly ludicrous for someone to claim that they are writing left-wing, social critiques when the mechanism that they use for bringing that stuff out into the world is highly suspect, by anybody's standards.[53]

Underlying Arthur's argument is the implication that the production processes of dramatic theatre are often undemocratic and defined by capitalist production processes; hence an obsession in the company's work with 'breaking and remaking the apparatus of theatre'.[54]

In many ways Lehmann's postdramatic theatre remains bound within systems of commerce, and functions as a completed product to be bought and sold as such. This complicates an anti-capitalist reading of such work. Watching Forced Entertainment's *Bloody Mess* in Glasgow was for me much the same as watching it again in Riga several months later. I bought the script from the company's website for £6.75, and could also have paid £44.50 for the DVD. A sense of a complete commodity is created around this work, which the audience can literally buy into. Rebellato discusses how the franchised mega-musical employs multiple strategies to market itself as a commodity,[55] but it is important to recognise that Forced Entertainment is also a brand name.

In any attempt to provide an alternative to the relationships of the commercial market, there is always a risk of simply reinforcing the structures of capitalist society that such work is trying to distance itself from. Philip Auslander highlights this problem by referring to Jacques Derrida's argument that in attempting to 'change terrain' and place oneself

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[52] Karen Jürs-Munby, 'Introduction', Lehmann, 2006, pp.1-15, p.7
[53] Robin Arthur, interview with Michelle McGuire, 'Forced Entertainment on Politics and Pleasure', *Variant* 5, 1998, www.variant.org.uk/5texts/Michelle_McGuire.html (accessed 04/03/10)
[54] Tim Etchells, 'Programme Note', *Void Story*, dir. Tim Etchells, Glasgow: Tramway, 2010b
[55] Dan Rebellato, *Theatre & Globalisation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009a, pp.39-46

outside the systems that are being critiqued, there is a great danger of 'inhabiting more naively and more strictly than ever the inside one declares one has deserted'.[56] Martin criticises relational aesthetics on similar grounds, as the commercial context of relational art is not addressed by Bourriaud, who fails to explain 'how the *form* of relational art relates to or opposes the commodity form or the value form'.[57] As a result, relational aesthetics risks becoming 'a naive mimesis or aestheticisation of novel forms of capitalist exploitation' which fails to interrogate the relationship between relational art and the systems of capitalist exchange that it is presented within.[58]

Bourriaud makes an assumption that the value systems of the 'general economy' remain separate from those of the relational artwork's 'own economy'.[59] Martin problematises this position, arguing that 'the social exchange of relational art (is) subjected to the dominant social relations of capitalist exchange'.[60] The implication of this is that the 'micro-utopias' proposed by Bourriaud should be reinterpreted in terms of a 'dialectical theory of commodification and art'.[61] Martin therefore suggests that much of the work discussed by Bourriaud might be better understood 'as an immanent critique of capitalist exchange relations' as opposed to an autonomous artistic space.[62]

For Knowles, in many contemporary theatre productions 'radical, experimental, or political content, at the conscious thematic level, is undercut or constrained by the delivery system itself, which packages *any* content as a product for consumption, and which thereby reinscribes and naturalises ideologies of consumer society'.[63] 'Postdramatic' theatrical forms often fall into this trap. Liz Tomlin argues that presenting a self-reflexive, subjective, poetics is not in itself enough to escape the forces of controlling systems and authorial hierarchies. There is a seductive quality to postmodern discourses that we should guard against in order to avoid the authority of the narrative freedom that they offer lest they should 'represent, by default, the new "grand", or dominant, narrative, due to the millions

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[56] Jacques Derrida, 'The Ends of Man', *Margins of Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p.135; Cited in Philip Auslander, 'Toward a Concept of the Political in Postmodern Theatre', *Theatre Journal* 39(1), The John Hopkins University Press, 1987, pp.20-34, p.24
[57] Martin, 2007, p.371
[58] Martin, 2007, p.371
[59] Bourriaud, 2002, p.42
[60] Martin, 2007, p.377
[61] Bourriaud, 2002, p.31; Martin, 2007, p.380
[62] Martin, 2007, p.380
[63] Knowles, 2004, p.26

of voices left without the resources, or the cultural credibility, to answer back'.[64] Postmodernism creates its own totalising narratives and often runs the risk of strengthening the controlling systems that it attempts to distance itself from.

A Work on Progress therefore aims to move beyond the conception of resistant cultural practice developed through postmodernism and postdramatic theatre. Knowles argues that 'whatever the nature, content, or conscious theme of the production, *as product*, and as the record of a particular ideologically coded *process*, its central and essentially capitalist message is inscribed virtually by necessity, within the system itself, and as such it tends to be overwhelmingly culturally affirmative'.[65] The implication of this is that if an alternative cultural model can be located in RTP, it has to go further than simply mapping its position within the systems of commerce that contain and determine it; it has to go further than simply using commerce as its subject.

Currency and Production

The Forest Fringe Micro-Festival was a ticketed event. For £10, or a concession rate of £5, visitors gained access to three of the main arches and several basement rooms as well as the studio where *A Work on Progress* took place. Although the development workshops indicated a range of 'currencies' operating in theatre, money is the hard, tangible currency that pays for theatre production. Processes of capitalist production therefore determine the entire experience.[66] As David Greig points out, money functions dramaturgically in this sense as 'the theatrical experience becomes shaped (...) so as to best get our money from us'.[67] Despite the relatively small returns on an event that would have cost the Arches a great deal more in associated costs such as technical support and marketing, the commercially orientated business structures of the Arches necessitated an entry fee.

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[64] Tomlin, 1999, p.147
[65] Knowles, 2004, p.32
[66] Many critics have articulated a sense that theatre has a very problematic position within the structures of capitalism: Caridad Svich discusses how limitations are imposed before creative work can begin; ('Theatre in Crisis? Living memory in an unstable time', *Theatre in Crisis?: Performance manifestos for a new century*, ed. Meria M. Delgado & Caridad Svich, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, pp.15-19, p.15); and Roberta Levitow observes how 'the corporate model has demeaned the making of theatre from art form to consumer product' ('Some Words About Theatre Today', Delgado & Svich, 2002, pp.25-31, p.29). As the reviewer Michael Billington points out, 'if you start to play the numbers game, theatre is vulnerable: it cannot easily compete with the mass-audiences commanded by film, television, popular music' ('The State of Reviewing Today', Delgado & Svich, 2002, pp.54-57, p.55)
[67] David Greig, 'The Actress and the Bishop', paper presented at the Tramway, Glasgow, November 2004, as part of Suspect Culture's *Strange Behaviour* symposium on 'Theatre and the World of Money', www.suspectculture.com/content/microsites/strangebehaviour/money_greig.html (accessed 07/12/09)

However, the purchase of a ticket for a theatre performance is about more than an abstracted financial transaction. The purchase of a ticket for the festival has implications for the emotional and artistic investment in the event as well as setting the financial value for access to the programme. Knowles' materialist semiotic analysis of the conditions of theatre reception gives little attention to this important initial transaction, which is arguably the most significant material condition determining theatrical experience in modern times.

The Forest Fringe was started in 2006 by Debbie Pearson and Andy Field as an Edinburgh Festival venue presenting low-budget theatre for free as an alternative to the increasing 'McDonaldisation' of the Edinburgh Fringe.[68] An anti-commercial politics has always been at the heart of the company and this remains the case as the micro-festivals toured the UK throughout 2010. However, significantly, the company now receives funding from various sources including the Arts Council of England. Although the Forest Fringe continues to redefine itself and to question its place within the wider context of funding structures and commercial demands, the nominal entry fee to the event at the Arches perhaps suggests a contradictory system, in which a conventional 'supplier/client' relationship remains in place despite the politics of the company.[69]

However, despite the commercial framework for this event, rather than the capitalist labour division between performers and audience members that Ridout identifies in traditional Western theatre, this project required a reassessment of these roles.[70] As Chris Hall commented during focus group discussions after the event, with *A Work on Progress*, 'as much as you put in you'll get out; if you don't want to put anything in that's fine, but you're just going to get a room full of stuff'.[71] The event demanded an effort from its audience in order to make anything happen and in so doing, the role of audience was merged with that of producer of the performance aesthetic.

This dynamic created a sort of tension which, as observed by one of the research assistants, made some visitors feel 'a scary self-conscious embarrassment (due to) the responsibility

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[68] Jen Harvie, *Staging the UK*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005, p.90
[69] Bourriaud, 2002, p.83
[70] Ridout, 2006, p.64
[71] All quotations from research assistants or members of the creative team are taken from the transcripts of two group discussions with three research assistants who were appointed to attend the event and reflect on the experience, or Chris Hall (Creative Assistant) and Christine Halsall (Costume Designer), April 2010

you have for yourself'. The 'rules' of what was required of visitors to the space were not immediately clear and this resulted in 'a sense of people skirting round the edges and gathering by the door'. This uneasiness was expressed by one of the research assistants who described her own reaction to the event:

> I thought it was fun in a tentative sort of way. It almost felt like the room represented fun with all the crazy, amazing things that you had in it. But that somehow it wasn't .. Am I actually allowed to have fun? And feeling a little bit scared, and how much I can and can't do.

For many participants, this feeling seemed to be the initial position on entering the space, which was largely due to my decision to raise the floor so that the majority of the room became a sort of stage, and the absence of a seating bank or any sort of 'safe zone' from which a separated spectator position could be adopted, apart from that outside the studio.

A Work on Progress took place alongside a variety of simultaneous performance events, including Tim Etchells' poster installation, a 'research map' for Third Angel's *What I Heard About the World*, and the Forest Fringe Travelling Sounds Library. These events continued throughout the event and provided an additional mode of access to *A Work on Progress*, which positioned the activities taking place within the studio within a wider field of performances, many of which had a relational dimension.[72] Visitors to the studio therefore had the option of encountering several performances, and *A Work on Progress* offered an experience that could be continually returned to throughout the night as the aesthetic of the studio shifted and developed. The experience of alternating between different audience experiences and contributing to the aesthetic of the performances was integral to the festival.

Inside the studio, the set up created a barrier for some visitors, who did not feel able, or did not wish to participate when faced with 'quite intimidating... things I don't know how to work with'. However, the event began to 'work' as visitors gradually moved beyond this barrier and made an effort to engage with the stations. As one of the research assistants observed, 'when people first come in they do just want to stand back and watch and then they get involved when they see what's going on'. The performance aesthetic was therefore

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[72] For example, in Stadium Rock's *First Up Best Dressed*, visitors were invited to participate in an 'interactive-clothes-swap-party-installation', in which items of clothing could be exchanged throughout the night, complete with a tag telling 'its story' (Xana Marwick, 'Stadium Rock', www.mynameisxana.co.uk/page2.htm (accessed 22/03/11))

created by the labour of those visitors who were willing to 'give' to the project in ways that moved far beyond the initial financial transaction at the box office.

There is a close connection here to my work in the clubbing environment. As Malbon points out, 'dancing clubbers constantly both produce and consume the activity in which they partake'.[73] This understanding of clubbing, which sees clubbers as producers of their own product, was applied to the RTP audience in *Midland Street*. As with de Certeau's 'art of using',[74] in which we all become active producers through processes of consumption, applying this theory of clubbing to RTP reveals the ways in which audiences produce a performance aesthetic through the ways in which they use the space. In *A Work on Progress*, this dynamic manifested itself in a number of different performance modes, from karaoke songs and guitar solos to disco dancing and costume displays.

It is important to recognise that the modes of performance available to 'users' were limited by the decisions that I had already made with the creative team, and by the equipment that we had made available. For example, there were usually a number of performances with various musical accompaniment taking place simultaneously. This was due to the large number of amplifiers, microphones and instruments, and the provision of staging all over the studio rather than in just one location. If the stage area had been smaller and the equipment limited, it is likely that a very different performance style would have developed. Furthermore, as Bishop points out, 'every artwork - even the most "open-ended" - determines in advance the type of participation that the viewer may have within it'.[75] Apart from the occasional occurrence of 'rehearsed' performance, such as the recital of poems or the performance of songs, the majority of uses of the stage and microphones was for impromptu, improvised performance.

Strategies of Use in *A Work on Progress*

Following *A Work on Progress*, I arranged two focus group discussions. The first was with two members of the creative team, who had been closely involved with the project in the weeks leading up to the event. The second was with the three research assistants who were

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[73] Malbon, 1999, p.92
[74] de Certeau, 1984, p.xvii
[75] Bishop, 2005, p.127

familiar with the research context but who were not directly involved with the development of the practice. These discussions were key to identifying the different types of relationships that emerged over the two nights of the festival. Another important means of researching the outcomes of the event was the gathering of feedback from participants. This took a number of forms including a questionnaire and comments book. These were used by a small number of visitors, which provided some valuable comments but by no means a comprehensive account. A far more useful method of gathering responses was through analysis of the hundreds of texts generated by 'users' throughout the event. The writing and pictures contributed to the text area and the titles added to the list of the back wall, as well as texts on t-shirts, acetates and labels, all provided a wealth of textual input. We also recorded hours of footage using two video cameras, and this provided film from different stages of the event. Two short newspaper reviews were also useful in providing a critical overview of the event within the wider context of the festival.[76]

Using all of these sources, I have built up a picture of the different types of relationship that emerged in *A Work on Progress*. The discussion that follows is not intended to provide a definitive, exclusive or exhaustive typology of relationships, but rather to indicate the variety of ways in which visitors engaged with the stations. Furthermore, as with the fluctuations of individual and group relationships in the clubbing environment, visitors to the studio theatre moved between these modes of engagement.

Many visitors to the studio interacted with the stations on an *individual* level as 'users' and would spend time exploring each station, perhaps playing an LP or contributing to the text area. On one occasion, a visitor entered the space and immediately picked up one of the guitars, which he played for several minutes before engaging with the rest of the stations. Similarly, the text area was used on an individual basis by visitors who sat on the edge of the pit reading what others had written, before adding their own texts to the growing pile of paper.

Frequently this individual engagement became part of a *communal* aesthetic, as it was prompted by other activity. For example, several times when one person was playing a guitar or speaking into the microphone, someone else rearranged the lighting to illuminate

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[76] See Brennan, 2010; and Richardson, 2010

the performance. On these occasions, the event began to operate through the formation of temporary communities, which were either *self-contained* or *permeable*. Self-contained communities occurred whenever visitors entered the studio in groups of two or more, and engaged with the stations exclusively within these previously formed groups. One of the research assistants observed a lot of this type of relationship:

> The way that I saw people was often people sticking together in their little groups of friends and doing things with their little group friends. But it did feel as though when one person would go and do something they would look for reassurance to their friends and it was like that little group were having their moment of performance. But it never felt to me that they were engaging with the other group in the other corner having their own little moment.

Despite this observation, there was also evidence of more permeable communities, which formed on those occasions when interaction occurred between previously unconnected individuals or groups in order to work together to produce something. For example, half way through the second night, someone had put an Eighties disco track on the record player and a small group, myself included, took the opportunity to dance together. Responding to this, someone adjusted the lighting state and someone else projected the title, 'House party, 4.52am. Keep it going, keep it up', thus framing the activity as a performance as well as aligning themselves with this temporary community.

These moments, of which there were many, could be understood as examples of Guattari's 'eco-logic', which resembles the way in which 'an artist may be led to alter his work after the intrusion of some accidental detail, an event-incident that suddenly makes his initial project bifurcate, making it drift [*dérivier*] far from its previous path, however certain it had once appeared to be'.[77] *A Work on Progress* operated through a whole series of event-incidents, as common objectives emerged from a multiplicity of individual and collective creative expressions and experimentations.[78]

However, it is problematic to portray RTP as a utopian vision of communal experience. Alongside the 'successful' relationships of the work, a common reaction was an unwillingness or refusal to participate. Several visitors were observed entering the space, briefly looking around and then leaving again. One commented 'I don't feel comfortable with this sort of thing'. I had anticipated this reaction, and made a great deal of effort to

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[77] Guattari, 2008, p.35
[78] Guattari, 2008, p.34

create an environment in which participation was not compulsory, setting up several performance 'areas' in the space that could be entered into by choice. However, disengagement from the artwork was a common reaction, which is difficult to measure, and which is problematic to any work that claims a democratic concern to 'give everyone their chance'.[79]

An important distinction should be made here: choosing not to take part in the performance is a different thing to not being able to take part it in. One represents agency; the other exclusion. The Arches' audience are selected by geographical location, programming decisions, ticketing and marketing strategies, etc. and as a result there will always be an 'outside' to the different groups that use the venue.[80] As Laclau and Mouffe point out, exclusions are an inevitable part of any social group, but this should not prevent the pursuit of utopian ideals of democracy or transgression. The artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, whose work is discussed by Bourriaud as operating through a relational aesthetic, supports this pursuit of ideals:

> Even if it is illusory and utopian, what matters is introducing a sort of equality, assuming the same capacities, the possibility of an equal relationship, between me - at the origins of an arrangement, a system - and others, allowing them to organise their own story in response to what they have just seen, with their own references.[81]

The key word here is 'possibility'. Within the previously selected community of Forest Fringe and Arches audiences, the *possibility* was always there for festival-goers to engage with the work in a variety of ways, including a reactionary or antagonistic relationship with the performance.

For example, in response to the projection of the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* above the space, one visitor added to the collection of texts by writing '*Breakfast at Tiffany's* is a shockingly misogynistic film. Fuck off Paul Varjak!'. In this case, an individual statement was made in relation to another element of the event. Elsewhere, when group activity materialised, there was evidence of playful subversion of the communal aesthetic. This frequently took the form of music being turned up to drown out spoken text, or lights being

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[79] Bourriaud, 2002, p.58
[80] Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.xviii
[81] Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, 'Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno in Conversation with Jean-Christophe Royoux', *Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno Exhibition Catalogue*, Paris: Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1998, p.82; Cited in Bourriaud, 2001, p.19

turned off on impromptu performances. Foster urges the political artist to resist the 'processes and apparatuses' of their context, and not to simply represent them, and here this resistant practice extended beyond the artist to the participation of 'users' of the artwork.[82]

However, the establishment of any constant or fixed form performance aesthetic in the context of a relational artwork has connotations of fixing and controlling the space, because it can potentially be extremely difficult for any individual to react against any dominant group aesthetic. At the end of the second night, my regular collaborator, Kieran Hurley, began a reading into a microphone of all the texts that had been written during the event. This prompted Chris Hall into taking another microphone and joining in. As one of my thesis supervisors played a piano accompaniment and the other, dancing to the music, shouted out titles as they were projected onto the back wall, I joined in myself, plugging another microphone into a practice amp and reading texts at the same time as Hurley and Hall. At this stage in the event almost everyone engaging with the work had prior involvement with it, and their own agendas for its success, however that might be measured.

In some ways, this group performance could be considered inimical to the aims of RTP. A clear hegemonic relational system established itself, in which the performance aesthetic was dominated by a group of people who were familiar with the project, the Arches and each other. For Laclau and Mouffe, a hegemony forms when 'a *particular* social force assumes the representation of a *totality* that is radically incommensurable with it', and at this moment in the event, the performing group did exercise a certain hegemonic dominance over the space.[83] However, even if the studio can be considered a 'totality', there is no evidence to suggest that the performance instigated by Hurley was 'radically incommensurable' with the practices of the other people in the room at that time.

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82 Foster, 1985, p.153
83 Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.x

Power and Resistance

For Bourriaud, the important question to ask of contemporary art is no longer 'what can we make that is new?', but rather 'how can we make do with what we have?'.[84] *A Work on Progress* adopted this approach as the ways in which 'users' engaged with the stations were determined by the context that we had already established. This reflects the wider structures in which my practice-as-research took place in the Arches as various material conditions, including the allocation of space, funding criteria and programming decisions all determined the nature my practice.

For Bourriaud, following Guattari, any attempt to directly 'transform' the conditions of capitalist production is bound to fail.[85] However, the 'molecular' strategies of Guattari, which inform the aesthetic models proposed by Bourriaud, are predicated on the gradual change that is possible through multiple relational processes operating *within* systems of control. There is a strong connection here to de Certeau, who argues for critical attention on 'the thousands of people who buy a health magazine, the consumers of newspaper stories and of legends', to shift to questions of how these systems are *used*, not just what they are, or how often they are experienced. De Certeau asks 'what do they make of what they 'absorb', receive, and pay for? What do they do with it?'[86] The distinction that de Certeau makes between 'strategies' as fixed power-systems, and 'tactics' as everyday resistant practices, is framed within rigourous institutional frameworks and systems, such as those of urban planning. De Certeau presents these systems as solid but endows their users with a high degree of agency in gradually 'eroding' and 'displacing' them.[87]

A comparison could be made here with the 'strategies' of the Arches institutional systems and the 'tactics' of RTP. However, as I have discussed in relation to clubbing practices, the relationship between power and resistance is far more complex than de Certeau's theory suggests. As Massey argues, de Certeau presents a problematic dichotomy between 'power in society as monolithic order on the one hand and the tactics of the weak on the other'.[88] Massey's primary objection is to de Certeau's equation of power as spatial and resistance

[84] Bourriaud, 2001, p.17
[85] Bourriaud, 2002, p.31
[86] de Certeau, 1984, p.31
[87] de Certeau, 1984, p.34
[88] Massey, 2005, p.45; see also Smith, 2010, p.35

as temporal, a dichotomy that is significantly problematised by a theory of space as constantly in process.[89]

There is also a danger, as Phil Smith points out, that the 'tactics' of the weak are assumed to be resistant *tout court*. Smith argues that a number of influential theorists of the everyday make an assumption 'that the qualities of the everyday are by their very nature resistant to power, automatically subversive'.[90] Smith includes Guattari in this warning, and this is worth bearing in mind; the wide range of 'expressions and experimentations' that Guattari calls forward to 'eat into the semiology of the dominant order' should not be simply assumed to constitute a revolutionary politics.[91] RTP, then, can not assume a progressive politics through its stratagem of use. Ultimately, its value can only be derived through exegesis of the individual and collective uses that visitors made of the artwork.

Bourriaud also falls into the trap identified by Massey and Smith, as Bishop points out. Bishop criticises relational aesthetics for its assumption that the relationships that it operates through are democratic by their very nature. The criteria of aesthetic judgement proposed by Bishop is therefore concerned with a thorough analysis of the individual circumstances of the relationships that are created through artistic practice:

> The tasks facing us today are to analyse *how* contemporary art addresses the viewer and to assess the *quality* of the audience relations it produces: the subject position that any work presupposes and the democratic notions it upholds, and how these are manifested in our experience of the work.[92]

With this criteria in mind, the exegesis of my RTP projects has focussed on the relationships that have been produced at an individual level, always careful to avoid assumptions about inherent democratic qualities.

Conclusion

The variety of ways in which visitors to the studio engaged with the space is indicative of a performance aesthetic that is determined by the individual and communal creative practice of its 'users'. In this way, *A Work on Progress* focusses on the relationships of theatre

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[89] Massey, 2005, p.46
[90] Smith, 2010, p.35
[91] Guattari, 1984, p.84
[92] Bishop, 2004, p.78

production in order to suggest an alternative to the 'supplier/client relations' of the commercial market.[93] Employing Bourriaud's stratagem of use, this project develops the representational strategies of postmodernism and postdramatic theatre, incorporating the material conditions of its own production process into the aesthetic of the performance.

Discussing 'postproduction' artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, Bourriaud observes that the chaos of a constantly changing social environment 'is preexisting, and they operate from the midst of it'.[94] This notion of form emerging from the surrounding chaos is encapsulated in *Loveless*, an album by the Irish band My Bloody Valentine. As Bourriaud explains, 'within an undifferentiated aural chaos of electric guitars, the melody of each piece seemed to emerge by a series of subtractions, by emptying out, as if carved from some dense, preexisitng magma'.[95] Perhaps this is the model by which relationships are able to form in contemporary urban life: for a brief moment, from the chaos of a precarious urban milieu, relational elements align. While the 'chaos' of *A Work on Progress*, and indeed all of my practice-as-research projects at the Arches, was contained within the predetermined context of the artwork and the preexisting site of the Arches, this work suggests the possibility of a performance aesthetic developing from this relational dynamic. This model of relationship formation echoes Guattari's description of the way that social movements should be conceived - as temporary alignments of autonomous individuals. In an urban environment that closes down relationships and breaks down signs and ideologies into a 'precarious chaos', relationships can be understood as 'singular, exceptional and rare' expressions of 'sensibility, intelligence and desire'.[96]

However, these 'singular' expressions are understood by Guattari as operating *within* the systems of Integrated World Capitalism. My practice has therefore aimed to address the tension between the democratic, utopian aspirations of RTP, and the commercial context that such work takes place within. Incorporating the production process into the 'here and now' of performance, *A Work on Progress* aimed to establish a *dialectical* relationship with the organisational structures of the Arches, and their place within the 'general economy'.[97] Rather than attempting to create an autonomous social realm that resists the commercial

[93] Bourriaud, 2002, p.83
[94] Bourriaud, 2009c, p.87
[95] Bourriaud, 2009c, p.87
[96] Bourriaud, 2009c, p.87; Guattari, 2008, p.24, 20
[97] Martin, 2007, p.376

relationships of capitalist society, as with Bourriaud's 'micro-utopias', the aim has been to find ways of incorporating the commercial context of the site into the relational performance aesthetic.[98]

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[98] Bourriaud, 2002, p.31

Conclusion

Despite its prevailing popularity and enduring influence on contemporary art practice and criticism, Bourriaud's model of relational aesthetics has been strongly criticised for his assumption of an inherently democratic aesthetic form. As I have discussed previously, these claims of democracy are never made as explicitly as Bourriaud's critics seem to imply. Nevertheless, the institutional, commercial and organisational conditions of relational artworks are neglected by Bourriaud due to the presentation of 'models of action within the existing real' without acknowledgement of the specificity of the context within which such work takes place.[1] Hence, for Bishop, despite claims that relational aesthetics function as a 'social interstice', much of the work discussed 'reduces its scope to the pleasures of a private group who identify with one another as gallery-goers'.[2] The specific boundaries, exclusions and antagonisms of the 'artwork venue' are obscured through the assumption that simply bringing people together has an emancipatory potential.[3]

Applying Bourriaud's model to site-specific theatre practice, this project has aimed to develop a relational performance aesthetic that responds to and generates relationships not only between the artwork and the 'audience', but through a sensitivity to the specificity of its site as historically, geographically, culturally and socially located. My intention has not been to create a relational performance aesthetic *par excellence* that engages with the multiple relationships of the site all at once (this would be impossible, as Pearson and Shanks, and Tschumi identify),[4] but rather to focus on several key relationships of the Arches' cultural activity and to explore ways in which RTP can make connections within and beyond these diverse areas of the venue's relational space.

My approach to working with the relationships of the site has necessarily been selective, but my intention has been to focus on a range of the venue's day-to-day activities and histories, including the heritage of the site, the club nights, and the production of theatre performances. Correspondingly, I have focussed on the relational potential of three key areas of theatre performance; the performance text, the audience and the production process. Each of the three performance projects that I have directed - *Underneath the*

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[1] Bourriaud, 2002, p.13
[2] Bourriaud, 2002, p.14; Bishop, 2004, p.69
[3] Bourriaud, 2002, p.44
[4] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.111; and Tschumi, 1990, p.28

Arches, *Midland Street* and *A Work on Progress* - have focussed on these areas respectively. Individually, these projects have provided insights into key areas of the Arches' cultural and institutional identity, and suggested ways in which a theatre practice can be developed from the existing relationships of the site. At the same time, my practical interventions into this relational space have brought the building's multiple users and activities into new relationships with each other, suggesting the possibility of continual reconfigurations. Taken as a whole, some general principles can be extrapolated, which I outline in this conclusion in order to suggest ways in which theatre practice can operate through a relational performance aesthetic in response to its site.

The relationships that my practice operated through were in constant flux, as individual audience members alternated between participation and observation, individual and collective experience. These relationships only existed for a short time before the individuals involved exercised Guattarian 'eco-logic', separating themselves from the collective experience as individual expression took precedence over the communal aesthetic.[5] In this way, RTP used the 'precariousness' and 'chaos' of its site to create a context for the temporary alignment of the relational practices of individual audience members.[6] Bourriaud's ecological metaphor of the *radicant* is a valuable concept for understanding this process. This is a shift of focus from the radical, which roots a plant to its location, to the radicant, which makes a journey and lays new roots as it travels.[7] Like the My Bloody Valentine tracks described by Bourriaud, the relational formations that comprised my theatre practice in the Arches materialised from the 'preexisting magma' of the site before the individuals involved moved on to something, or somewhere, else.[8]

It is important to recognise, however, that the 'precariousness' that these particular relationships emerge from operates within the existing structures of the Arches. As argued by Massey, space should be understood as multiplicitous 'in the sense of contemporaneous plurality', and 'always under construction'.[9] However, the Arches is also marked as separate and removed from the other spaces that surround it as it is determined by various temporal and spatial regulations, which I discuss below in relation to the specific

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[5] Guattari, 2008, p.34
[6] Bourriaud, 2009c, p.87
[7] Bourriaud, 2009c, p.51
[8] Bourriaud, 2009c, p.87
[9] Massey, 2005, p.9

conditions of my practice.[10] Paradoxically, this means that the 'chaos' of the relational space at the Arches is contained within boundaries; it is managed, policed and monitored.

Foucault's fifth principle of the heterotopia states that because the heterotopian site is 'not freely accessible like a public space', entry is according to certain conditions.[11] It may be compulsory, like a prison, or regulated by contracts and rites, and requiring permission. At the Arches, in different ways, the operational procedures of the business, the architectural features of the building and the artistic approach and budgets of the programming teams have all determined the relational potential of my practice. RTP forms 'relational microterritories', to use Bourriaud's term, which take place within the boundaries of the art programme and venue, but which model themselves on relationships in the world outside.[12] Limitations will always exist, then, but RTP attempts to find ways to incorporate them into its aesthetic.

The practical projects that comprise half of this thesis have explored the relational potential of theatre by setting up a context for performance, which is conceived beforehand and developed *a priori*. Through a relational performance text, the predetermined script then becomes open to new relational formations at the point of performance. The relational performance text therefore operates as a negotiation between the predetermined, planned and rehearsed 'script' of performance, and the incorporation of new and unpredictable relational formations during the performance event. As with the clubbing crowd, a relational theatre audience has to be understood as fluctuating between one-on-one interaction and communal spectatorship; between participation and spectatorship. All of these modes of engagement are understood as active choices on the part of the individual.

The key factors that determine the sorts of relationships that can form in a cultural site like the Arches can be broadly understood as deriving from the temporal and spatial boundaries of the performances, although these categories are by no means self-contained. The time of a relational theatre performance and the duration of the development process have a significant influence on the relationships that are able to develop; and the spatial organisation of the venue dictates the boundaries that relationships can operate within.

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[10] Foucault, 1984, p.6
[11] Foucault, 1984, p.5
[12] Bourriaud, 2002, p.32

Each of these dimensions require elucidation, as the specific temporal and spatial conditions of my practice reveal the level of autonomy of the theatre performance from the other events taking place in the building, and from its wider social and cultural context.

Relational Temporality

Bourriaud asserts that any 'successful' work of art, whether relational or object-based, 'will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space', opening up to 'dialogue' and 'discussion' as 'a temporal process, being played out here and now'.[13] All works of art are relational in this sense; a recognition of transitivity that, as Bourriaud points out, is 'as old as the hills'.[14] However, this notion of the 'playing out' of these dialogical processes in the 'here and now' implies a temporal limitation to the experience of the artwork. While the relationships generated through relational art are intended to extend beyond the gallery experience, the relationality of the artwork is nonetheless contained within the duration of the encounter.

The implication of this is that within the performance structures of RTP, relationships can only be temporary. In the fixed time periods of each individual performance, a number of different types of relationship were in operation, but as my regular collaborator Chris Hall wryly observed of *A Work on Progress*, 'the biggest problem comes as having to frame it as part of a festival, and having to have a start time... "Relationships may occur between the hours of seven and ten on these dates"'. A similar limitation is identified by Clifford McLucas in his discussion of his work with the influential site-specific theatre company Brith Gof:

> ...at the end of the day we make a theatre show that's an hour-and-a-half long and that an audience pays for, comes and watches, and goes away again. That form brings with it a number of things that we've either got to go with or deny. (...) there's a kind of conflict between the form that we've chosen - the hour-and-a-half show - and the materials we're addressing.[15]

The conflict that McLucas refers to concerns the relationship between work that attempts to engage with a site through open, relational processes, while at the same time closing these relationships down into a predetermined time slot. In conventional

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[13] Bourriaud, 2002, p.41
[14] Bourriaud, 2002, p.26
[15] Clifford McLucas in Kaye, c.1996, p.227

theatre, the set timing of the performance - often less than an hour in contemporary performance practice - has clear limitations as to the type of relationships that can form.

Durational performance introduces a relational dynamic in which the 'shifting rhythms' of performance can be experienced over time.[16] In durational performances that I have encountered, such as Forced Entertainment's *...And on the Thousandth Night*, in which several performers dressed as kings and queens tell hundreds of unfinished stories for six hours, and Marcia Farquhar's thirty hour 'lecture' at the final NRLA at the Arches, duration introduces an element of endurance. This is a different type of 'energy', that introduces new 'demands and possibilities [...] on the development of relationships, between performers and between performers and spectators'.[17]

A Work on Progress differed from these examples through an absence of any distinction between performers and audience members and a lack of coherent 'narrative' other than that created by the participants themselves. Running for six hours over two nights, the durational structure of the event was a key aspect in determining the outcome of the work. One of the research assistants made a valuable observation regarding the time it took for relationships to form:

> My friend A--- wandered in quite a lot of times over the two nights (...) and it was only on the last night when she was near the mic doing something weird with the horn and chatting away. And it was only going in a few times with other people and just watching - not engaging with it - that gave her confidence. It took her quite a long time to build up to engaging with it in the way that she actually wanted to.[18]

This observation suggests that extending the duration of a theatre performance allows a more relational engagement with the performance to develop. In this example A--- spent time with the performance, coming and going over six hours across two days. Only near the end of this time did she feel comfortable enough to participate.

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[16] Frances Babbage, 'Performing Love: A week's discourse with Forced Entertainment', *Contemporary Theatre Review* 12(4), 2002, pp.63-76, p.74
[17] Babbage, 2002, p.74, 63
[18] *A Work on Progress* research assistant focus group discussion, April 2010

The durational limitation of the conventional theatre performance is one of the reasons that Bourriaud rejects theatre as a relational form, instead preferring the 'real time' relationships of the gallery exhibition.[19] One of the main criteria outlined for relational aesthetics is that 'the space-time factor suggested or described by this work, together with the laws governing it' have to correspond to 'real life'.[20] My own practice at the Arches extends beyond the duration of the performance itself and includes the relationships I have developed over the three years of the project with the Arches staff and a number of regular collaborators, audience members and other participants. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that in many ways relational art, whether in a gallery exhibition or a theatre performance, operates through various systems of spatial and temporal regulation and as such, the relationships that it operates through are necessarily removed to some degree from the relational sphere of 'real life'.

Relational Spatiality

For Lefebvre, advanced capitalism operates by occupying and producing space. Capitalism ensures its survival through fragmenting space into units that can be bought and sold; through the occupation of social space.[21] This is symbolised clearly at the Arches by the huge glass door in the centre of the main foyer, creating a sort of spatial window shopping for the 'experiential consumerism' of the Arches' many events.[22] Use of the space is only possible through the contracted access of the work force, or by the ticketed access of customers. The entire building in this sense is controlled by the systems of commerce, and space is produced as a commodity. My practice has necessarily worked in and against the processes of spatial organisation and control at the Arches.

As a negotiation between power and resistance, the organisation of space can be interpreted relatively. On the one hand, the existence of an arts venue underneath the brick arches of the railway bridge might be considered a resistant act - a claiming back of space from the corporations and councils that own the site and control the multiple spaces of the city. In this sense, my practice has worked *with* the space of the Arches,

[19] Bourriaud, 2002, p.39
[20] Bourriaud, 2002, p.57
[21] Lefebvre, 1976, pp.18-19
[22] Malbon, 1999, p.22

challenging official and authoritative versions of the site through the playful subversion of the guided tours, and aligning itself with the 'resistant' practices of clubbing. On the other hand, however, the Arches was created as an arts venue as part of Glasgow's winning bid as City of Culture in 1990. The project was funded by various organisations including the Scottish Arts Council and Glasgow City Council, and any notion of resistance has to be understood as part of a politicised context of cultural development. Furthermore, since the keys to the building were handed over to the first artistic director, the Arches has become increasingly commercial in its policies and operations, with the club nights now accounting for seventy three per cent of the total attendance at the venue and generating the vast majority of the company's income.[23] With this shift in policy, the organisation and control of space in the building has become increasingly rigid and as a result my research has occasionally entered into an antagonistic relationship with some of the other activities in the Arches.
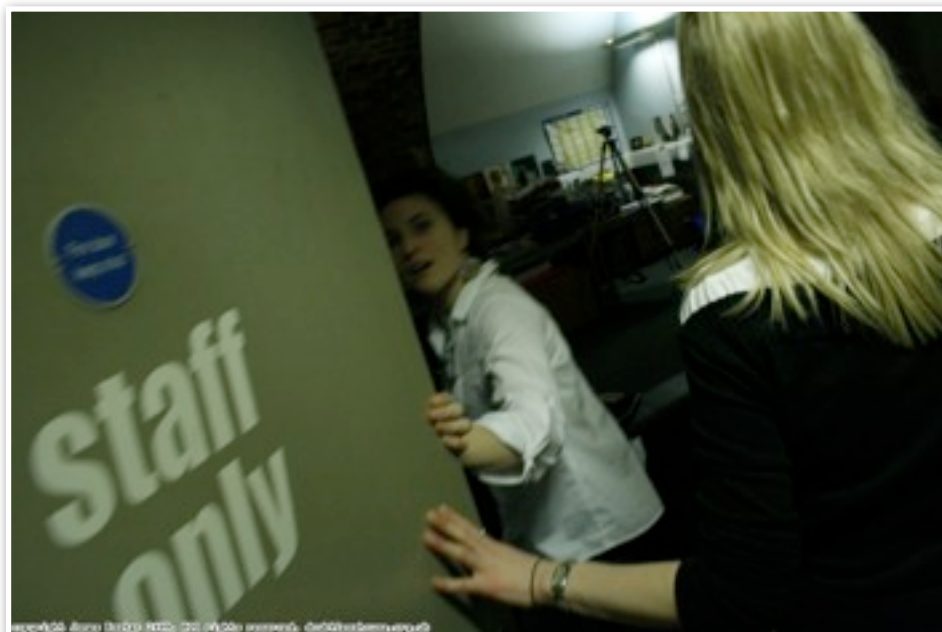
Erin Brubacher leading her tour group into the main office

Whenever my practice has encountered locked doors, staff only signs and cordoned off areas, the tendency has been to find ways to use RTP as a tool for resistance. Unwilling to accept the fixity of space, the project has included journeys into offices, secret parties in the dressing rooms, and public use of technical equipment. This is

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[23] The Arches, 2010a

very much in the spirit of the Arches' arts programme, which constantly looks for new ways of using space.

However, most of this activity has occurred within a schedule of meticulously planned, health and safety approved, tightly budgeted and carefully programmed work. Given the funding and programming conditions of my practice-as-research and the academic and institutional framework that the project took place within, there is an unavoidable sense in which the potential of the work is contained, limited and managed. As with any site-specific work, the 'rules' of the site have frequently dictated the outcome of the work.[24] In this sense, the project has indicated some of the ways in which RTP is compelled to operate within boundaries, follow rules, and work with all the existing relationships of its site. The work can always make these conditions evident; at times, it can challenge and push at boundaries. However, it is not always possible for it to affect them directly.

Relational Intervention

Acknowledging and avowing its limitations and boundaries, RTP enacts a performative intervention into its own relational space. Maintaining the 'democratic concern' of Bourriaud's model, this is a theatre practice that reveals the limitations of its own aspirations. My intention for the Midland Lane section of *Midland Street* was that performers and clubbers would dance together, experiencing a sense of community and forming new relationships with each other and the site. However, in practice, the 'rules' of the venue necessitated the separation imposed by metal barriers between performers and clubbers. In many ways, this example serves as a paradigm for the entire project. Over and over again throughout my practice-as-research projects, the 'existing real' of the site has closed down, rather than opened up social relationships.[25]

When a workshop participant was assaulted by a member of public for allegedly taking photographs of him; when a group of Death Disco clubbers were ushered out of the 'chill out' area by several 'heavy-handed' security staff;[26] when a group of passers-by harassed a

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[24] Wilkie, 2002b, p.249
[25] Bourriaud, 2002, p.13
[26] *Midland Street* research assistant focus group discussion, October 2009

performer in a Mercedes parked on Midland Street: these were moments when the 'micro-utopia' of my practice was ruptured.[27] As with Guattari's understanding of human subjectivity, the intricacies, subtleties and complexities of plural and ever-changing relationships means that sites are comprised of 'multiple components, each relatively autonomous from each other, and, if need be, in open conflict'.[28] When conflicts have arisen as a result of my practice, the site has revealed itself as a complex plurality of relationships, many of which exist in tension with one another.

It is clear that the value of this project lies not in setting out to radically transform the theatrical landscape (I make no Artaudian claims of this theatre bringing about any kind of 'severe moral purity').[29] Nor does it claim to operate outside the systems that it sets out to critique, triumphing over the ideologies of our post-postmodern, pan-capitalist society. Rather, by actively engaging with the relationships of the site, my practice has mobilised a set of critical interventions, exploring the limits of developing a relational performance aesthetic in response to a cultural site; an in-process interrogation of the spatial and temporal boundaries that contain and constitute the work.

By engaging with the site as a product of these myriad relationships, RTP acts as a catalyst through which the relational theatre audience is confronted with the 'here and now' of the site.[30] The individual encountering the work becomes an 'interlocutor' between the site, the performance and the other members of the audience.[31] Whybrow discusses the 'interlocutor [...] mov(ing) amidst the terms proposed by the artwork: engaging with its problematic, making connections, recognising disjunctions and, ultimately, participating in a productive process of assembling provisional meaning around the question "what does this artwork *do*?"'.[32] I would suggest, also, that this productive assembly of meaning is centred around the questions 'what does this site *do*?', 'how does it operate?' and 'what is *my* relationship within it?'. The 'situational encounter' that is brought about by RTP is therefore an opportunity to reveal the relational construction of the site through

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[27] Bourriaud, 2002, p.31
[28] Guattari, 2008, p.25
[29] Antonin Artaud, 'The Theatre of Cruelty' [1938], *The Theory of the Modern Stage*, ed. Eric Bentley, London: Penguin, 1968, p.66
[30] Bourriaud, 2002, p.41
[31] Whybrow, 2011, p.36
[32] Whybrow, 2011, p.36

performance, and to reveal the relationships of theatre practice through an engagement with the site.[33]

Through RTP, many of the relationships of theatre - between script and performance, between individual or collective audiences and performers, between the production and reception of performance - are subjected to the continual relational constructedness of space. As with practice-as-research, RTP is necessarily 'unpredictable' and 'uncontrollable'.[34] Boundaries between site, audience and theatre are renegotiated in the moment of performance. To adapt the words of Frith, space becomes performance as the site is shaped by the audience and performers who occupy it.[35] Conversely, the theatre performance incorporates the relationships of the site into its aesthetic. As a result, the aesthetic form of RTP can never be fixed. Through a relational engagement with its site, this model of theatre practice therefore remains open to continual dialogue and reconfiguration. In RTP, the 'specific, unmistakable images' of Bourriaud's conception of theatre are ultimately replaced by open, dialectic relationships.[36]

[33] Whybrow, 2011, p.36; Whybrow, c.2010, p.10
[34] Freeman, 2010, p.81
[35] Frith, 1996, p.156
[36] Bourriaud, 2002, p.16

Appendix

Introduction

This appendix comprises a description of the performances that resulted from my three main practice-as-research projects: *Underneath the Arches* (January 2009), *Midland Street* (September 2009) and *A Work on Progress* (April 2010). I have also made four short films of my practice at the Arches and a website at www.underneaththearches.co.uk. At the site, there is a map of the Arches which contains a number of links to video, audio, photographs, scripts, and accounts from audience members and performers. This website will remain a work-in-process as anyone can add material. The intention is to indicate multiple experiences, and a continuation of the relationships that have been generated through my performance practice.

In the descriptions that follow, along with the website and the DVD, I have aimed for a plural and fragmented document which constitutes a personal and subjective retelling of three devised performances. As Pearson and Shanks suggest, 'the description and documentation of devised performance - that matrix of places, objects and activities, of performer and context, worker and workspace, agency and structure - constitute a sort of archaeology, a rescue archaeology of the event'.[1] So what follows is an archeology of my own. The multiple records, experiences, 'fragments and traces' left behind after a performance mean that 'we can neither create the authoritative record nor control its reception'.[2] My use of a range of documents, including an interactive website, is intended to offer multiple perspectives, as well as allowing the document to be continually added to, reworked and reformed - a collective archaeology of the performances and of other memories and experiences in the building during my associateship.

As the director I am at once the best and worst person to assemble this appendix. Best, because I am the only person that has seen every element of the performances, albeit in many cases before changes were made and new elements improvised on the night. Worst, because I risk mixing up rehearsals, my own ideas about what should have happened,

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[1] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.57
[2] Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.58

meetings, original plans that were never realised, the technical and dress rehearsals and the final performances. Due to much of this work taking place during club nights and in one case the demolition of the entire set during performance, two of these performances happened only once. But the months of work that went into their development, and the multitude of ideas that never made the final cut, are all an important part of the project, so they deserve a place here.

This is therefore intended to document an entire process, not just the moment of the performances. Much of what is written and photographed below may have been changed, discarded or forgotten by the time of the performances. Perhaps this unreliable, incomplete and selective approach is the most appropriate way to document a project which advocates a deep suspicion of authoritative narratives and fixed histories. As most of the *Underneath the Arches* tour guides said, or planned to say, in one way or another, 'we haven't been able to confirm these stories; to be honest, we haven't really wanted to in case they turn out not to be true'.

Underneath the Arches, January 2009 [3]
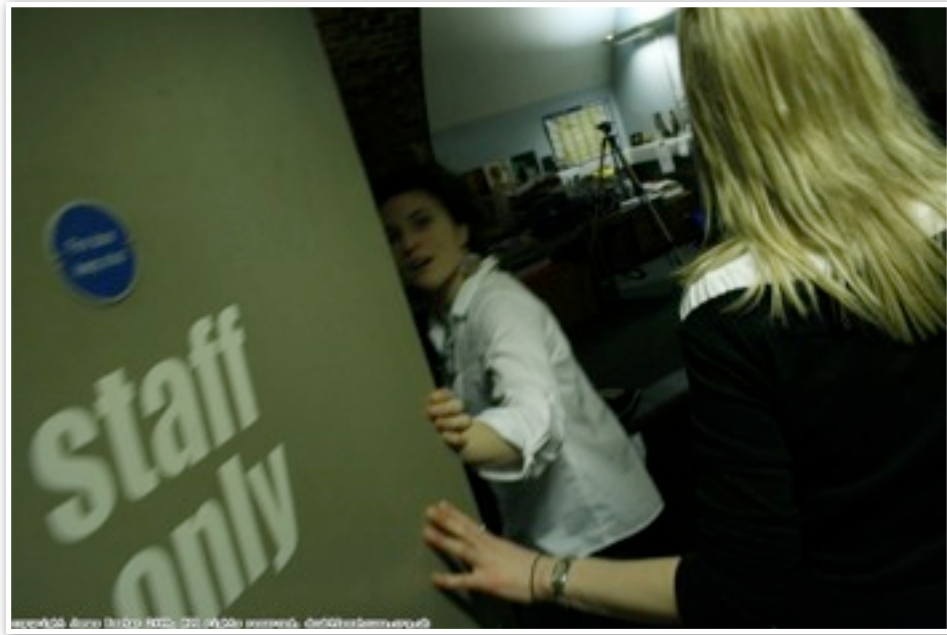
Erin Brubacher leading her tour group into the main office

Underneath the Arches was a one-night-only promenade performance at the Arches on 17th January 2009. For most of the event, several different spaces were being utilised at any one time, and the majority of the text was improvised. Only in the studio theatre, near the end of the route, did the entire audience stop moving and come together in the same space at the same time, and even then there were multiple focal points. As a result, I did not see the vast majority of *Underneath the Arches*, and moreover I have little idea of much that happened in those sections that I missed.

In documenting the performance, I have tried to capture some of this incomplete, fragmented experience. The text that follows will shift tenses, jump across spaces, fast forward in time, lose its way and admit partial knowledge. As it meanders through a single audience member's experience of the performance, it is important to remember that ninety nine alternative versions were being experienced at the same time.

21:00[4] The Midland Street doors and the South Bar opened, and gradually, over the course of an hour, the audience arrived for pre-show drinks.

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[3] Photographs of *Underneath the Arches* were either taken by James Baster (www.doubtlesshouse.org.uk) at the technical rehearsal or Sophie Malleson at the dress rehearsal
[4] All times are approximate, if not inaccurate

Trainline set between Arch 6 and Arch 5,
separating the audience in the South Bar from the dancers in the Casbah

Cabaret style seating, free whisky vouchers, a train line set, a model of the village of Grahamston, and four dancers moving to a soundscape of birdsong, wind and rain, trees being cut down, construction, steam trains, noises of the city, machinery, and the growing volume of the audience and many of the performers, chatting and ordering drinks from the South Bar. For this first hour there was no point of focus, and nobody addressing the audience directly. Rather, it was intended as a convivial time which aimed to establish an informal, unstructured, yet performative atmosphere prior to the opening address.

Rosalind Masson dancing in Arch 6 as the audience arrived,
with Monica de Ioanni, Merav Israel and Monika Smekot

22:00 Two technicians set up a small stage and a microphone beside the trainline at the other side from the audience. As the dancers moved away into the periphery, Kieran Hurley took the stage and delivered the opening address, setting up the departure of seven guided tours:

We are on our way now and your eyes and ears are beginning to adapt to the light and the sound. We have been in the shadows since the dawning of the last century when the last brick was laid in place but we brought with us some candles and later some bulbs and batteries. Some of us brought food and water and beer. Some of us brought hammers and chisels. Some of us brought maps of the cosmos so as not to forget the night sky. Some of us brought sound systems and amplification devices. Some of us brought more bricks. Some of us brought canvasses... It is easy to get lost because it all looks the same down there. You will be guided. You know this, don't worry, you know all of this.

Kieran Hurley delivers the opening address

22:05 - 22:15 Tour groups of approximately fourteen departed one by one with their guides Chris Hall, David Lees, Julia Taudevin, Erin Brubacher, James Oakley, Maca Andrews and finally, Kieran Hurley. Hurley orchestrated these departures, ensuring enough people went on each tour and timing their departure as evenly as possible over the scheduled ten minutes. And in the technical rehearsal, 'Ladies and Gentlemen; due to some technical problems there will be a slight delay to your departure, which is ironic really seeing as how we're underneath a train station'.

22:05 - 22:25 The tour groups moved around the building, each guide following their own route and telling their own histories, stories, lies and rumours about the site. Often, their

paths would cross - sometimes greetings exchanged between tour guides, sometimes eavesdropping; snide comments, sarcastic dismissals, outright rejections of the other voices round corners, down corridors and up stairs; routes changed, guides slowed down or sped up to avoid or catch up with each other. The guided tour becoming the toured - 'Oh look - there's Kieran!'

The guides started by churning out all the clichés of guided tours that some of the guides and I had been on for research - the caverns at Matlock Bath in Derbyshire, the distillery at Edradour in Perthshire. Facts and dates; the important parts of the site's history distilled into an easily reeled off introduction to the route. The tour guides all delivered something similar to this:

> These arches have been here for over a century now. They were built between 1902 and 1905 in a large-scale extension to Central Station, including the construction of the Argyle Street bridge, thirteen new platforms and an eight-track bridge over the Clyde.

And each of the tour guides made reference to the old village of Grahamston. The destruction of the village to make way for Central Station became the main focus in many ways, and retrospectively I might have called the piece *Grahamston*:

> Before the station itself was built, the village of Grahamston stood in its place. The Duncan's Hotel building on the west side of Union Street, and the Grant Arms pub on Argyle Street are all that remain, but Alston Street – once running parallel to Union Street and Hope Street – was demolished along with the rest of the village to make way for the station. Bear that in mind as we move through this place. We're walking through Grahamston as well as through the Arches.

But in different ways, all of the guides subverted this fact-based historical narrative. Andrews read it from a piece of paper - this was what she had been told to say, and she never really understood it; Oakley concluded by asking 'who really cares?'; Brubacher confessed that she had only just started working there so would probably be making mistakes. The conventions of the guided tour were played with from the start, and the figure of the authoritative tour guide was never allowed to be fully present.

The tours reduced in duration from Hall's departure, from twenty minutes to ten, meaning that they all finally arrived in Arch 2 at roughly the same time. On each of the tours, however, the guides went off route in some way - apparently leaving the script behind for a moment, playfully breaking the rules and doing their own thing.

Chris Hall in the Lower East Corridor

Hall took his group into the rehearsal room where he allowed them to rifle through our scripts and notes, and gave out shots of cheap coconut rum. He drank constantly throughout his tour - first in the bar at the start, then ducking into one of the derelict B Rooms where he left his group in the corridor and closed the door behind him, describing a vast banqueting hall and emerging with a glass of wine. After the detour into the rehearsal room Hall took his group into the Lower Office where he took bottles of wine from the staff fridge, sharing them out with his group. The tour guide breaking the rules, gradually getting drunker and drunker, and encouraging his group to join him.

David Lees in Dressing Room B

Lees took his group into the Dressing Room B where he stole beers from the Death Disco club night DJ's rider and handed them out. An unconfirmed rumour about horses being kept in the arches became an obsession for him, and at every opportunity he pointed out

the location of the stables and the sleeping quarters for the stable boys. Here in the dressing room he turned out the lights and asked his group to imagine what it must have been like:

> Imagine again, this space as its dark, damp cavernous former self. Imagine the sound of horses in stables overhead. These horses pull the great and the good along the Glasgow streets. From Salt Market to Sauchiehall Street, and from the Cathedral in the East, to the new University in the West. The space is dark, with a single gas lamp for light. Along the walls of the arch are single cot style beds, uncomfortable with ticked mattresses and coarse woolen covers. Imagine the biting cold, after day upon day of hard work, mucking out stables, washing down great steaming Hansom draggers. Imagine the cracks and callouses on your strong young hands. Imagine the nails on these hands, ingrained with dirt and grime. Imagine these strong hands of yours running through hair the same colour as the straw you toil with, day after day. Imagine the way your muscles flex under the thin, dirty shirt you're wearing. Imagine your back, aching, yet perfectly sculpted. Imagine your breath, as you exhale from that between those cherry red lips. Imagine yourself unbuttoning your shirt, and stuffing underneath your pillow. Imagine yourself unbuttoning the coarse woolen trousers which cage hips, thighs and calfs rippling with muscles and with tension. Imagine this. Now imagine you are being watched. You feel steely blue eyes on you, piercing, through the darkness. Imagine the sound of hooves dying out, shrinking. Imagine their place taken by the soft pad of his feet as he crosses the room towards you. Imagine how your body twitches as he pulls the coarse blankets back to half reveal through the shadows your perfect, hard body. Imagine the hairs on your neck standing on end as he climbs in beside you. Imagine that world-shrinking moment as he places his lips on yours. The heat as he pulls his body close to yours. Imagine the passion and your bodies twist and turn together on the old, hard mattress. Imagine it. Feel it. You know this. You know this. Yes. Yes. Yes.[5]

With this he turned the lights back on and immediately continued the tour. Moving himself on as much as the group - the tour guide becoming too involved in his own narrative.

Taudevin took her group into the dressing room, gave out the performers' complimentary wine and held an impromptu party. Apparently in the dress rehearsal this worked particularly well - the tour group dancing to Prince. When the party rejoined the rest of the audience later on many of them were carrying balloons. And she entreated her group to keep the party secret. It was their special moment.

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[5] All of the tour guides wrote out the script for their tours, not to learn them word for word, but to hold loosely as they performed their tours, improvising around them and changing things in the moment

Julia Taudevin in the Midland Street Stairwell

Erin Brubacher in the Canadian Arctic / Costume Store

Brubacher showed her group a secret corner of the Arches where she created the Canadian Arctic using costumes from the Costume Store and a hidden slide projector. Moving aside a rail of coats, like in C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, she revealed boxes piled up with the names of places she had lived - Nunavut, Montreal, Toronto, Newfoundland, Sackville, New Brunswick, Paris and Strasbourg. In Nunavut, she produced a Parka coat which she put on, turning the slide projector to an image of people in a snow-covered landscape. Something Hurley had said earlier was recalled - didn't he say 'take your imagination with you?' But then didn't he also say 'try not to let your imagination run away with you?' It's a fine balance.

James Oakley

Oakley took his group to the Playroom where he used the opportunity to pitch a new one-man theatre show based on *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. My mum and dad went on this tour and he had them harmonising Wet Wet Wet songs at one point. My mum and dad!

Maca Andrews in Arch 2

Andrews literally got lost and had a personal crisis about what a terrible tour guide she was before handing over to one of her group, instructing them to 'get us upstairs'. As a Chilean who had just moved to Glasgow, with very little knowledge of the Arches, Andrews played with the idea of the tour guide deferring to the group. All of the guides asked their groups whether anyone knew the Arches already (the vast majority knew it well), but in this case there was a clear reversal to the usual balance of knowledge between the guide and the group. This culminated in Andrews taking the wrong corridor (planned, but based on a real lack of direction) and handing over the role of guide to a random member of the group. In

the dress rehearsal and on the night, following encouragement form Andrews, the new guides even delivered tour guide style comments on the spaces that they moved through - 'this is the corridor', 'we're just going up these stairs now'.

Kieran Hurley in Arch 2

Hurley's tour was the shortest, and there was little time to do more than follow a route to the final location, but he did manage to make time to take his group into the Main Office, showing them the photographs of staff nights out, including those of the old artistic director:

> Of course it is Andy Arnold himself. There he is, shortly before the end, you can see he's losing his grip on normality, the wild eyes and the anguished expression. I believe this was the moment of his final resignation speech, an event which was of course highly emotionally charged. But for all the wrong reasons. I'll say no more. It's heartbreaking really.

The photographs showed evidence of drunken debauchery and hedonistic abandonment never meant for public perusal. There's a reason it says 'Staff Only' on big letters on the door.

Although each of the tours took their own route, there was one room which they all passed through - the Practice Room, which we rebranded 'the Board Room'. Outside this room the tour guides explained that a meeting was in progress, and that the board had very kindly agreed to allow the tour groups to pass through and watch them at work. The guides stressed the importance of remaining quiet and moving on quickly - we were very privileged to be allowed in here.

Inside the room, in the only overtly theatrical moment on the routes, six elderly actors in frockcoats and sideburns improvised a fictional meeting held in 1870. On the agenda was the proposed demolition of Grahamston, and present were the Lord Provost, representatives from the businesses in the area, and the head of Caledonian Railway and the construction company contracted to carry out the work. Starting ten minutes before the first group entered, and continuing until the last group had moved through the room, the men debated various topics including the relocation of the residents, compensation and employment. The actors improvised a heated debate which frequently lapsed into argument. Each group could only access a fragment of this scene, and none were allowed to linger. The general rule was to allow the audience enough time to enjoy it, but not enough to get comfortable.

A tour group enters the Practice Room, where a meeting is in progress

22:25 Later, all seven tours converged in Arch 2 at roughly the same time, give or take a few minutes. Hall was the first to arrive, and as he explained how this very site used to be Grahamston's orchard, one by one the other tour groups arrived. By the time everyone had got there, seven tour guides were speaking at the same time, and if the audience tuned in to the other groups, they would notice that different versions of the site were being told - Arch 2 as a prison, Arch 2 as a stable, Arch 2 as an orchard.

Julia Taudevin pointing out where the orchard used to be in Arch 2

Taudevin shouting to Hall across the space, clarifying a date or asking about the trade routes for the apples and pears. Here the low thud of a train in motion. Hurley overhearing this exchange and pointing out that it was a prison, not an orchard. Lees pretending to be a horse by now, galloping round the arch with his scarf tucked inside the back of his trousers for a tail. The train gathering speed, and volume. The discussion turning into an argument and Lees, Brubacher, Oakley and Andrews getting involved, each maintaining their own version or giving support to one of the others.

Kieran Hurley arguing with Julia Taudevin about the history of Arch 2

The train louder than the tour guides now. A full blown shouting match with screaming and arms flailing wildly. And in Arch 3 club music starting up, perfectly synchronised with the rhythm of the train in Arch 2... and then a fight. Hall throwing his drink in Lees' face, a scuffle, Lees thrown to the floor, Taudevin and Hurley running to his aid...

David Lees thrown to the floor as the performance moved from Arch 2 into Arch 3

22:35 As the fight reached its crescendo and Lees, Hall, Hurley and Taudevin disappeared into the darkness by the Middle Bar, the club music in Arch 3 grew louder than the train sound effect in Arch 2, gradually replacing it; coloured lighting and a projector came on as Arch 2 went into blackout; and four dancers began to perform on the dancefloor.

Joan Marshall-Beattie, Suzi Kelly, Emma Park and Lisa Yip danced to the 'glitch-bitch-step-pop-house' of Magic Daddy as the audience moved from Arch 2 to Arch 3, led by the lighting and sound cross-fades, and the three remaining tour guides.[6] From this point onwards, the whole audience would follow the same route. Although Oakley, Brubacher and Andrews stayed with them to keep them moving in the right direction, the audience moved at their own pace, and there were no longer tour guides leading the performance.

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[6] Myspace - Magic Daddy, www.myspace.com/magicdaddy (accessed 15/02/09)
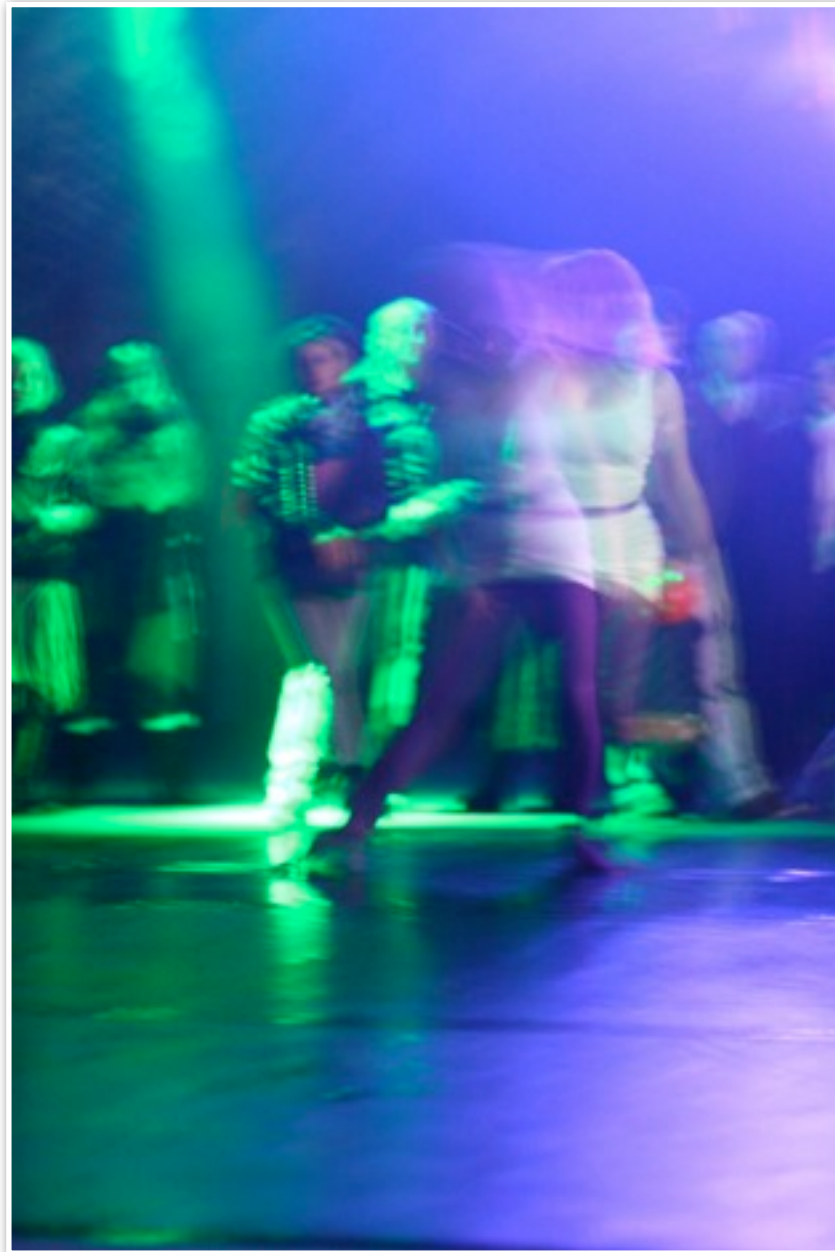
Firebox Dance Theatre perform *As the Sparks Fly Upwards...* in Arch 3

After several minutes of the dance piece, the lighting and music moved towards the door into the East Corridor, and the remaining tour guides indicated the continuation of the promenade. In the dress rehearsal the audience were reluctant to move, and then they all went at once causing queues to form along the route. On the night, Oakley, Brubacher and Andrews had to manage the audience slightly more strictly so that an even flow could be achieved.

22:35 - 23:00 Over the next twenty-five minutes, the route descended the stairwell into the lower East Corridor, passed the Archive Room towards the Workshop, past Dressing Rooms C and D, into the derelict space underneath the Studio, and finally ascended the stairs into the Studio where the audience took a seat.

Julia Taudevin's video installation in the basement corridors

In the stairwell, and spilling out into the basement corridors, Taudevin and I created an installation using videos and projectors, showing vox-pop style interviews with people who had memories of the site before it was an arts venue. These videos were played on loop and showed members of the public in their homes and workplaces, interviewed about their experiences of the Arches, or the site of Grahamston. One of these was my grandfather recalling the old village of Grahamston - the shops and houses, traveling into the village from Kilsyth, and staying there during the war. Of course, this was impossible because Grahamston was demolished over a century ago. But I doubt that anyone noticed that.

The brass band in the derelict space by the Practice Room

At the end of the video installation, the sound of a brass band could be heard round the corner, and as the route moved on the audience were met with the source - a brass quartet playing in the derelict space. The band played conventional brass band tunes from their repertoire. Their incongruous placement just inside the Alien Wars set was, for me, one of the most successful moments in the promenade. Unexpected elements at every turn.

The route then passed what I now like to call Norrie's Wall - a crumbling brick wall set in the corridor beyond the dressing rooms, with the voice of Norrie Gilliland describing Grahamston coming from behind it. Most of this text was read by Gilliland from his book *Glasgow's Forgotten Village: The Grahamston Story,*[7] which we used several times during the performance. As the audience passed they overheard fragments of information about the old roads and buildings, Alston Street, the theatre and the Grant Arms. Gilliland is a wealth of information about the village and for this recording he added many new pieces of information to his original text.
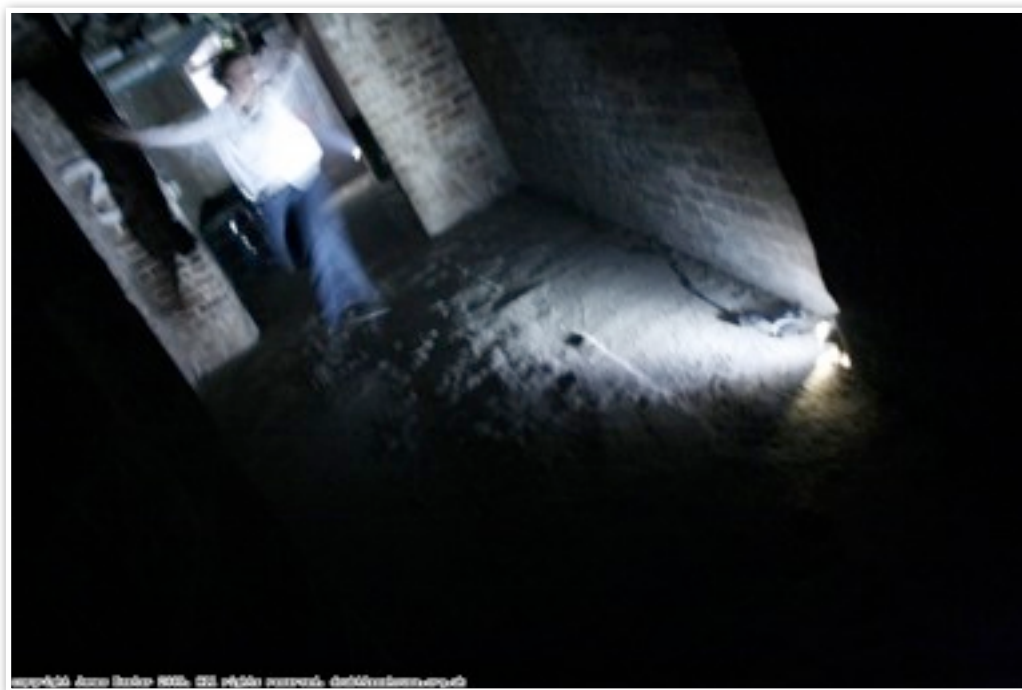
Me in the derelict space where Rosalind Masson, Monica de Ioanni,
Merav Israel and Monika Smekot danced as the promenade moved on

By now Death Disco was starting upstairs, the monthly electro club night at the Arches - the heavy bass bleeding through the concrete floor and filling the basement. Beyond Norrie's Wall the route entered the derelict space below the studio. Here, Rosalind Masson,

_____

[7] Gilliland, 2002

Monica de Ioanni, Monika Smekot and Merav Israel danced to the muffled club music, filling the length of the corridor and responding to the movements of the audience. At one point the ushers, positioned by the entrance to this space, failed to notice a group of audience members walking past the intended route up the stairs to the studio, and heading towards the dancers. Me shouting 'Dawn! Dawn! Get them upstairs!', an unintended frantic addition to the piece, probably mistaken by some as an intended part of the performance.

23:00 ...and into the Studio. Over the course of several minutes the audience entered the Studio Theatre by way of the backstage stairs. As they took a seat in the auditorium, nipped out to use the toilet and made themselves comfortable, the voice of Andy Arnold talking about the Studio played:

> the arches studio this is really the soul of the arches really its our spiritual
> home this is really why the whole thing began to put on theatre in this one little
> room and before it was a theatre space it was just an empty arch with cobbles
> on the floor that got screeded over and damp everywhere that had to be clad
> over but it always had this wonderful atmosphere to it magic feeling of being
> the perfect sort of space to produce theatre its the perfect chemistry between an
> audience and the performers...

At the same time, Hurley chalked out the four streets that make up the perimeter of Central Station - Argyle Street, Union Street, Gordon Street and Hope Street.

The street names chalked out on the studio floor as the audience enter

When all the audience were comfortably seated the lights came up on Taudevin, sitting at a table downstage left, where she had been annotating piles of books and documents. Taudevin delivered a text using a microphone so as to be heard over the sound of the club

thundering through the walls, and the occasional rumble of trains passing overhead. The text was made up of fragments, taken mostly from Norrie's book, including newspaper articles, descriptive passages, court orders and adverts. These multiple sources were edited together to form the instructions for a walking tour round Grahamston.
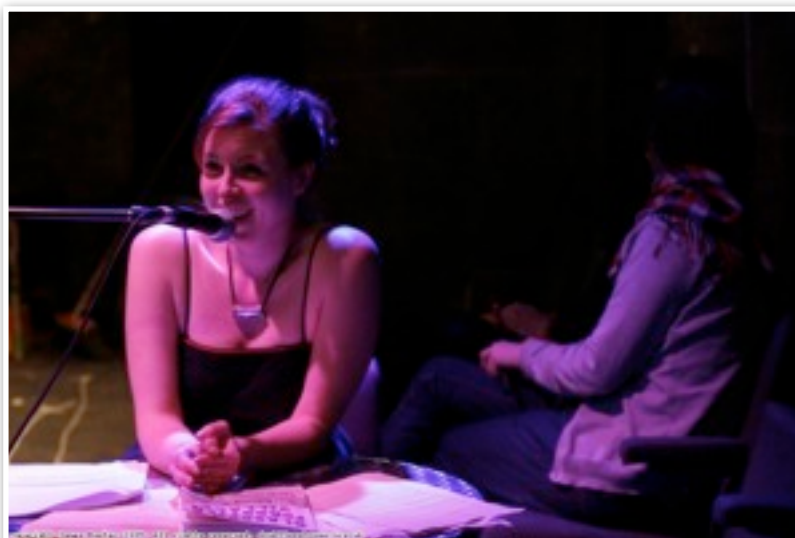
Julia Taudevin reading fragments of text about Grahamston

The tour jumped across time, but loosely followed a route starting at the Grant Arms on Argyle Street, up Union Street, along Gordon Street, down Alston Street, which once ran parallel to Hope Street and Union Street, and back up to Gordon Street along Hope Street. Along the way, Taudevin described several key buildings and gave additional information about them. As Taudevin read out this text, Hurley and Hall built a miniature Grahamston on the stage, using a mixture of cardboard boxes and models made by our designer, Amy Cummings. The village started with the Grant Arms, still standing to this day:

> Stand with me, in the cold, stand with me outside the Grant Arms. You know the one. Just along the road from here, opposite MacDonalds. You know it. You've passed it. Tonight probably. The one that looks like it might be really old? Stand with me at the corner of Argyle Street and Union Street and look in. Look in through the windows with me. The bare tables and chairs. The threadbare carpet. The punters and their pints. Close your eyes and listen. Feel the cold on your cheeks and listen.

Kieran Hurley putting the Grant Arms in place
while Julia Taudevin reads from Norrie Gilliland's book

After setting the Grant Arms, Hurley chalked out Alston Street, then with Hall's help slowly constructed the village, building by building.

...the Duncan's Hotel, Aitkensens Grain Store, Lawrie's Stores, the Sugar House...

> Children scavenging for the used and broken moulds from the Sugar House, sucking them of the sugar residue. Yes, that is Wilson and Company's Sugar House with its chimneystack rising ten feet above the gable end. You can see it. You can see the smoke curling into the air. You can hear the clack and hum of the machines inside.

The Sugar Refinery, made from hundreds of sugar cubes

... Ancells Bar, the Theatre, Milnton's Brewery, St Columba's Gaelic Church, the Corn Exchange...

> We are at the western edge of Grahamston, bounded by the pleasant, trout-laden burn called Glagshu running south to the Clyde. And this piece of marshy wasteland through which this burn runs, was once a favourite spot for the youth of Grahamston to fly fire balloons, made from silk paper, sponge and thatch...

The buildings of Grahamston

As the Theatre was put in place Taudevin gave an extra bit of history. We were in a theatre, after all:

> No, lets move on. Onwards, past the Theatre. Glasgow's first theatre, a shack near the cathedral was instantly leveled to the ground by a mob, urged on by the Reverend George Whitefield, who himself had once been an actor. Never again would the scrupulous citizens of Glasgow let within the Royal bounds a devil house, and so a theatre was built in Glasgow's neighbouring village, Grahamston, on Alston street. On the opening night a crowd stormed the stage and set the building alight urged on by a preacher who had dreamed he was in the infernal regions and saw a grand entertainment at which Lucifer gave a toast in honour of Mr Miller who had sold his ground to build him a house. But the theatre reopened and on the play bill tonight is, Satan.

David Lees, as the Devil, emerges from the Playhouse

At this point Lees emerged from inside the building, dressed as the Devil. A red light flared up and Lees leapt onto the stage. None of the others paid him any attention whatsoever though, and so he spent the rest of the construction wandering aimlessly up and down the streets inspecting the buildings before despondently sitting at the back of the stage with a can of beer.

David Lees exploring the village during the tech rehearsal

Having placed all the buildings, Hurley, Lees and Taudevin opened cans of lager, taken earlier from inside the Ancell's Bar model, and sat at the side of the stage admiring their

hard work. As they took their seats, they failed to notice Hall moving to the back of the stage, picking up a cricket bat and putting a sign reading 'Central Station' round his neck.

Chris Hall, as Central Station, about to begin the demolition

Hall picked up a glass from Ancell's Bar and threw it against the brick arch over the others' heads. As it smashed the Death Disco music was turned up in the studio and a strobe light came on. Hall ran franticly around the village smashing up the buildings and boxes until the entire stage was a demolition site. Finally, only the Grant Arms remained, and as Hall made to destroy it Taudevin and Lees tackled him to the ground and struggled to hold him back.

Julia Taudevin and David Lees hold Chris Hall back from destroying the Grant Arms

During the struggle Hurley picked up the microphone and signaled to the deputy stage manager to stop the music and the strobe. He explained that as the Grant Arms was still standing they were still within the realms of historical accuracy and could therefore continue their narrative. However, as he made to carry on Hall broke free, grabbed the bat and quickly destroyed the Grant Arms.

Chris Hall breaks free and smashes up the last remaining building

In a state of shock, Hurley dropped the microphone and retreated into the shadows. At this point Lees came to the rescue, picking up where Hurley tailed off:

> Well… I. Hm. I suppose, it wasn't always there, was it? Just… Just imagine that we are going back. Back to a time before the Grant Arms was built, even. When Grahamston was still there, but smaller. Less developed perhaps. Smellier, even.
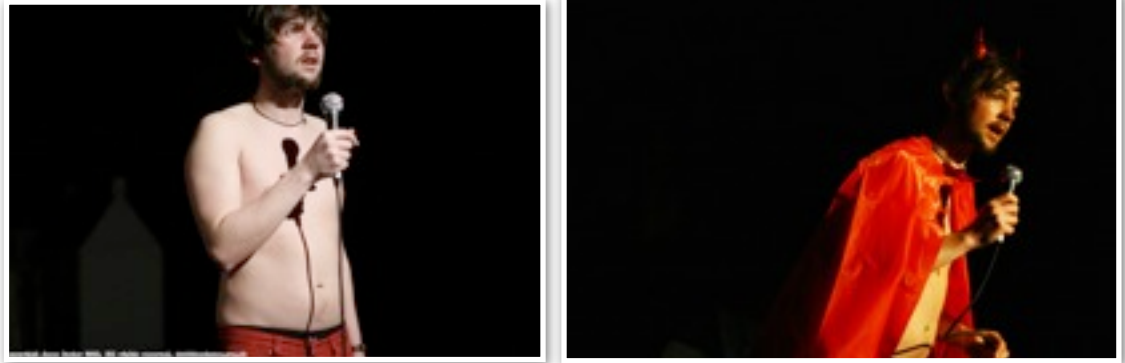
David Lees delivers the final monologue

Lees now delivered a long monologue, during which the others cleared the stage of the broken village. The text took the audience on an imaginative journey back in time, from the days of the primitive settlement that would become Glasgow, the formation of the landscape - Glacial shifts and Appalatia, Tropical climates, dinosaurs, the ocean covering the entire planet, the Big Bang, and before:

> You realize intuitively the beautiful simplicity of the eternal expansion and contraction of the universe. Exploding out. Contracting in. In Out. In. Out. Like a heartbeat. The endless, eternal rhythm of infinite universes being born and dying. In this, you realize everything physically possible has to have happened already. Here and gone. In a breath. A pulse. A beat. You exist now on the cusp of this beat. Just a nothingness. Just you, and everything that ever was and ever could be. Suspended. No weight. No smell. No movement. No laughter. No hatred. No happiness. No sadness. No taste. No memory. No thought. No colour. No light. No rhythm. No sound.

As the monologue came to an end, the sound of Death Disco was coupled with coloured lighting and mirror balls in the Studio. 'No colour. No light. No rhythm. No sound' was juxtaposed with the very real and present club in the space next door.

At the end of the monologue, Lees dropped the microphone in front of the speakers causing the build up of feedback, and as he left the Studio, with Taudevin, Hurley and Hall following, the other tour guides - Oakley, Brubacher and Andrews - stood up and left with

them, indicating that the rest of the audience should follow on. The audience now left the Studio, and entered the Dance Arch where the club was underway.
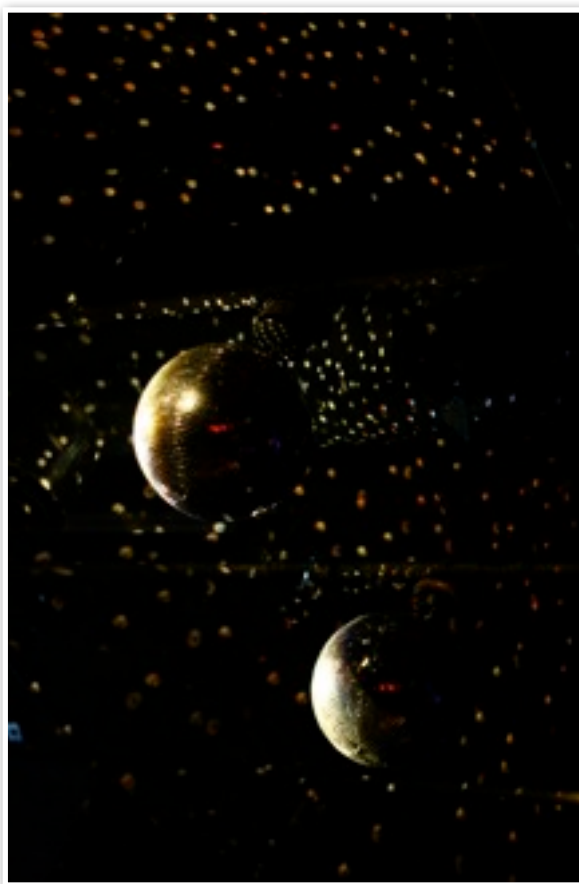
Mirror balls start up as the monologue draws to an end

Throughout the studio performance a live feed from the CCTV was projected onto a screen above the stage. At eleven o'clock, when the audience first entered the studio, this showed an empty space. As the piece went on, Masson, de Ioanni, Smekot and Israel danced to the Death Disco music. At one point some of the technicians even joined in. Gradually, as the doors to the club opened, clubbers filled the space and the club started up. All this watched by the studio audience and when Lees and the other performers left the studio they were immediately picked up by the camera and projected onto the screen. This was the space that the audience were about to move into.

And then *Underneath the Arches* entered Death Disco. Many of the audience collected their coats from the cloakroom and left at this point, but others stayed for the club, only leaving in the early hours of the morning, or in one reported case, unceremoniously early for undisclosed reasons. Well behaved theatre-goers becoming unruly clubbers. I take no responsibility for the audience at this stage in the evening.

The devil horns at Death Disco

Remnants from the show spilling into the club. The wigs and devil horns become costumes for Death Disco; the dancers continuing to perform the show in drunken parodies of themselves; a party in the Dressing Room, then the Studio. My memory not great here, but I remember two members of security staff and Will Potts, our Technical Manager, telling us we weren't allowed in there anymore. Maybe we were just doing this for ourselves and our friends by now, all the rest of the audience in bed asleep. Maybe the show had finished.
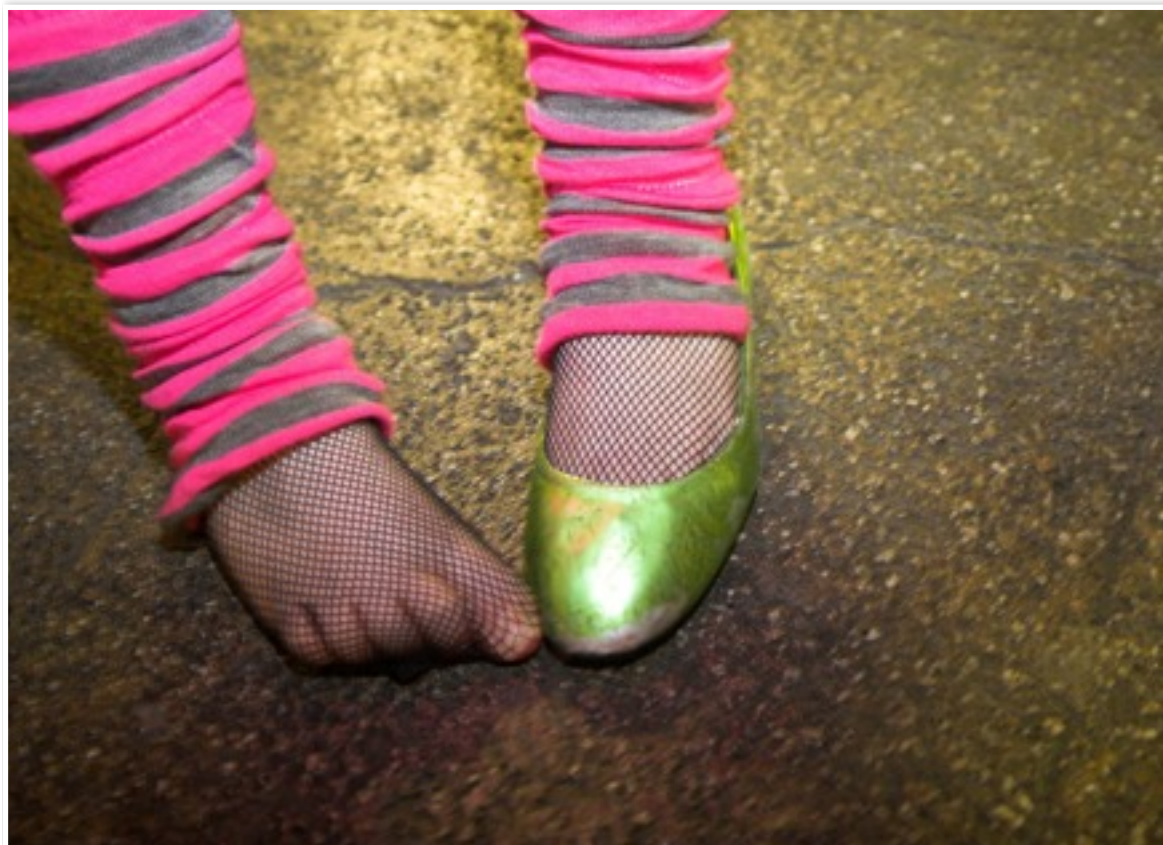
A Death Disco clubber on Midland Street

Midland Street was performed for one night on 19th September 2009 at the Arches's monthly electro club, Death Disco. This was a performance for clubbers in three parts. The first part took place in four cars parked outside the venue, on Midland Street and in the smoking area on Midland Lane, while clubbers arrived between 10.30pm and midnight. The second part took place in Arch 6 between midnight and 12.30am, where the performers constructed a 'chill out' area behind a muslin screen. The third part began when the screen was ripped down, opening up the space for use by the clubbers, and allowing the performers out into the rest of the club. The night finished at 3am, but the performance interventions had gradually wound down some time before that.

It is important to point out that my own experience of this performance was very different to that of the majority of clubbers who did not know that *Midland Street* would be happening, and did not have prior knowledge of the areas where the performance would take place. My intention was that the piece would operate through unexpected encounters

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[8] Photographs of *Midland Street* either by myself, or Bart Photography (www.bartphoto.co.uk)

with the performance, and I conceived it for an audience that would be constantly moving on from it, whether in the queue outside or on their way between the different areas inside the club. In practice, due to poor ticket sales, a queue never really formed on Midland Street and this significantly affected the way that clubbers and performers interacted. Furthermore, a small number of people, mostly regular theatre-goers at the Arches, watched the performance in Arch 6 as though it were a traditional play, remaining for the duration of the piece.

22:30 - 00:00 The club opened and the performers got into position in their cars on Midland Street and Midland Lane. There were very few clubbers at this point, but around twenty front of house and security staff positioned at the doors outside and inside the Arches. A strong security presence featured throughout the performance and on several occasions they intervened in the performance, their own relationships with the piece coming to define the artwork as much as those of the clubbers and performers.

During the first two hours a film was projected onto the wall across the road from the entrance. The harsh street lighting unfortunately made this very difficult to make out and nobody that I have spoken to noticed it, unless it was pointed out to them. If any of the clubbers did notice the film, they would have seen the faint image of Rose Ruane dressed as a bride being chased through the streets of Glasgow towards the Arches by James Oakley, dressed as a clown. The same film was planned to be projected on a screen inside the main dance space. In the event, this never happened due to a last minute reconfiguration of the space by the technical team.

While the film played, the performers sat or stood in (or on top of) their cars. Performers dressed as a clown, a bride and an aristocrat were positioned in cars on Midland Street as clubbers entered the building, and there were also four performers dressed as animal-like clubbers in a car on Midland Lane, inside the cordoned off smoking area. These were durational installations and the intention was that clubbers would pass by them, encountering the performers and interacting with them before moving on into the club. Each of the cars operated very differently in terms of the relationships that they generated.

James Oakley as a clown in a Triumph Spitfire

Oakley sat in an open top Triumph Spitfire eating bananas, throwing the skins onto the floor. He also shot bubbles from a gun at the clubbers as they passed. For the first hour very few people had arrived and there was a tangible reluctance from the clubbers to engage with the performance in any way. However, as the guest list queue formed towards midnight, there were many more interactions due to the clubbers' proximity to the car. Oakley reported a number of significant experiences, from an elderly lady throwing the banana skins back into the car, to the owner of the car and a member of staff engaging in a war of attrition, turning the music up, down, up again and finally off. Many clubbers approached Oakley throughout the night, and his clown character proved particularly popular, especially inside the club.

Across the road, Ed Cartwright, as an aristocrat, wore a top hat and tails and sat in a Morris Minor reading the *Financial Times* and drinking cognac. He was later joined by Ruane as the bride, after her own car was collected.

Rose Ruane as the bride and Ed Cartwright as the aristocrat in a Morris Minor

Because the Morris Minor was parked at the other side of Midland Street from the entrance to the Arches, it appears that the vast majority of clubbers failed to notice that he was there. There were several significant moments of interaction despite this. One of the Arches LIVE performers got into his car at one point,[9] and when the bride's car was taken away just before midnight, Ruane joined Cartwright in his car for a while, sharing a cigarette and throwing confetti from the window.

Prior to switching cars, Ruane sat in the passenger seat of a wedding car (a Mercedes C-Class with ribbons on the bonnet and white fur inside):

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[9] *Midland Street* took place during Arches LIVE, an annual festival of live art. Many of the performers in the festival were at Death Disco, some especially for *Midland Street*

Rose Ruane as a bride in a Mercedes C-Class

Ruane repeatedly applied lipstick and planted kisses onto a roll of paper which she passed out of the window. She constantly scattered confetti onto the floor. A prerecorded text played from the stereo as she sat there. This text, written by Ruane, was intended to be accessed in fragments, and looped so that there was no start or end. Ruane was present in the same space and the intention was that the recorded text would be ignored, spoken over and layered by interactions between the installation and the clubbers. The most striking of these interactions was highly antagonistic, as a group of men on their way past the venue shouted at her, tried to get into her car, and ended up ripping the paper out of her hand. It is worth noting that these were not Death Disco clubbers, as this was the only significantly confrontational reaction any of the performers reported.

Mhairi McGhee, Louise Emslie, David Crompi and Karen Fishwick had a very different experience to the others due to their position in the smoking area on Midland Lane. Originally, this car was planned to be parked on Midland Street as well, but because their performance used the space outside the car, licensing regulations meant that they were not allowed to be on a public street. The implication of this was that they ended up constantly performing for a captive audience as smokers stayed in this location for ten minutes or more. This was compounded by the fact that shortly after the club opened, security staff put two metal barriers between the car and the clubbers, very much establishing their car as a separate performance space, and significantly limiting the possibility of personal interaction.

David Crompi, Mhairi McGhee and Karen Fishwick as animals dancing on top of an old Renault

Dressed as urban animal-like clubbers - a mink, a mouse, a hedgehog and an owl - these performers danced on and around a battered old Renault behind the metal barriers. The barriers, and the constant presence of the security staff, meant that again, most clubbers watched this as though it were a play, with only a few coming up to engage with the performers in any sort of dialogue.

I moved from car to car, in and out of the club, to the smoking area and behind the muslin screen. A golden ticket, literally, allowing me access to all areas. Every time I had reached somewhere I had already been it had always changed considerably. It reminded me of Doreen Massey's journey from London to Milton Keynes; 'the truth is that you can never simply "go back" (...) when you get 'there' the place will have moved on'.[10] Early in the night the animal characters were standing around, chatting to the security staff and our cameraman; later the two metal barriers had been placed between the car and the smoking area, and tens of clubbers gathered round to watch them. Back on Midland Street a girl was chatting to the clown and playing with the bubbles, pretending to slip on the banana skins. It was impossible to keep up with everything so I stopped trying and went inside the club to wait for the performance behind the screen. But I stood back, so I could see everyone else as well.

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[10] Massey, 2005, p.124

00:00 At midnight, all of the characters left their vehicles and congregated in Arch 6. Half of this arch was cordoned off behind a muslin screen, through which a pile of furniture was only just discernible in the half-light.

A poker table lit up behind the muslin screen

Shortly after midnight a snow machine was turned on and fake snow fell, casting its shadow onto the screen. This was gradually lit up and the clown began to mop up the snow as it fell. As he cleared the area and then cycled round the space, two of the animals emerged from behind the furniture and set up an armchair and table for the aristocrat and a bar table and stool for the bride. The others then set up a poker table and all the animals began to play. The clown joined them for a while before his attention was drawn to the clubbers on the other side of the screen, and he came forward to investigate.

At this stage a crowd of theatre-goers from Arches LIVE had gathered round to watch the performance, crowding in front of the screen and remaining there for a long time. This had two effects; to block off the screen for anyone else, and to alert everyone's attention to the fact that something was happening, attracting more interest in the performance. Gradually, this crowd dispersed and after about ten minutes the relationship of the clubbing crowd and the screen shifted dramatically into a far more curious and playful interaction with the performance.

Clubbers peering through the muslin screen

00:25 As Oakley came to the front of the performance space he began to interact with the clubbers through the muslin screen. For a few minutes he danced with one of them - mirroring her movements and moving across the width of the screen. For me this was one of the most successful moments of relational performance in the entire event, as clubber and performer danced together for some time, mirroring each others' movements before the clown began to pull at the muslin, eventually making a farce of ripping the material down, and suddenly opening up the space.

The clown rips down the muslin screen

00:30 As the screen came down a crowd of clubbers surged forward into the space, sitting on the chairs and standing around the poker table to watch the game. A convivial

atmosphere was created very quickly and clubbers actively wanted to engage with the performers; dancing, chatting and playing poker. However, before this mode of engagement could fully establish itself, four security staff held back the crowd and moved the majority out of the space again while the technicians struck the floor light and secured the bar which had supported the muslin. Once these safety precautions had been carried out, the space was again filled with clubbers, playing cards with the performers and dancing in the bubbles.

Unfortunately, the Arches' lighting stock, and technical support, were stretched to breaking point due to the biggest ever Arches LIVE festival happening at the same time. As a result we only had five lights to use, and very little time with a technician to set up the space. The lighting for this part of the performance was very basic, and the space behind the screen was not as well designed as it should have been. It is possible that when the screen was pulled down at the end of this section, and the space opened up to the clubbers, fewer clubbers entered the space as a result, but it is impossible to know this for sure.

Clubbers joining and watching the poker game

00:30 - 01:00 Oakley, McGhee and Fishwick left the poker table at this point, and Cartwright joined in the game, leaving empty seats which were immediately filled up by

clubbers eager to be part of the game. Of course, some of these were friends of the performers, but there were also many who were unknown to us. Contrary to what I had planned with the performers, a real poker game never got going, but the chaos and playfulness of making up rules and disregarding others meant that there were always people at the table playing with the chips and cards.

Elsewhere, Oakley and Ruane disappeared into the club to dance. Although I didn't see this, both reported a high level of interaction. In contrast to the uncertainty and reluctance that characterised the relationships on Midland Street, the relationships between the clubbers and the performers inside the club were notably more open, playful and convivial. People high-fived the clown, borrowed his hat or tweaked his nose; they sat and chatted to the aristocrat, danced with the bride and chased the animals. A whole series of tiny personal interactions took place between the clubbers and the performers.

01:00 - 03:00 As the performers got tired of staying in character, and the drink continued to flow, *Midland Street* slowly gave way to the main DJs, and the space in Arch 6 became more chaotic and less popular.

Cartwright chatting to clubbers

As the performance wound to an end I surveyed the space. Most of the performers had either gone home by now or were lost somewhere amongst a thousand dancing bodies, the sound of Mix Hell, the main DJ act, pulsating through the Arches. The poker table was deserted now, save for a few chips and cards and some empty bottles. Two girls, already wearing their coats, slowly and lethargically danced together, moving their hands through

the bubbles which were still filling the space. A drunk couple sat together in the armchair - clearly at the end of their partying for the evening. Bar staff had begun the clear up. I stood watching all this for some time, reflecting on a challenging and not entirely satisfactory night. This was all still part of *Midland Street* though, and the strange feeling of something coming to an end seemed to me to be an important point of the event. But maybe I was the only one there to experience all this as part of the performance. Everybody else in this arch was just ready to go home now.

A Work on Progress, April 2010 [11]

A visitor plays a guitar during the event

A Work on Progress was a three hour durational installation presented at the Arches on

16th and 17th April 2010 as part of the Forest Fringe Micro-Festival.[12] Programmed

alongside 'a carnival of intimate encounters, audio walks, installations, works-in-progress,

secret adventures and interactive experiences', including Tim Etchells' poster installation

and the Forest Fringe Travelling Sounds Library, *A Work on Progress* took place in the

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[11] Photographs of *A Work on Progress* either by Sophie Malleson or James Baster
(www.doubtlesshouse.org.uk)
[12] Forest Fringe, www.forestfringe.co.uk (accessed 10/04/10)

studio theatre, separated from the rest of the festival in the Arches' only designated theatre space.

Visitors to the space encountered an 'Aladdin's cave of resources',[13] centred around six interactive 'stations' (*light*, *sound*, *titles*, *text*, *costume* and *computer*). Musical instruments, effects machines, projections, sound and light equipment, and various texts filled the space, and these were all available for visitors to use in a variety of undetermined ways. At all times during the event there were members of the small creative team on hand, to ensure health and safety regulations were maintained, and to provide assistance in using the equipment. However, the aim was that our own involvement with the event would support visitors' interactions with the stations, rather than imposing any sort of pre-rehearsed performance on the space.

This set up intended to present an open space with the potential for a range of different modes of engagement and relationships with the artwork, the space and its users. Over the course of the two nights of the festival, there was a gradual accumulation of user-generated material. Traces of previous interactions remained - in texts thrown down into a pit in the middle of the room; in a series of titles written on the back wall; and also in the increasingly entangled wires and rearranged equipment.

The chronology of the event functioned on various levels as some visitors came and went in minutes, some stayed for hours, while others repeatedly returned for short periods throughout the festival. This chronological complexity makes it difficult to describe the event by timings, as I have done previously. It will be more useful here to provide a detailed description of each station. Each section begins with the text that was written on A5 size gallery-style signs on the wall beside each station.
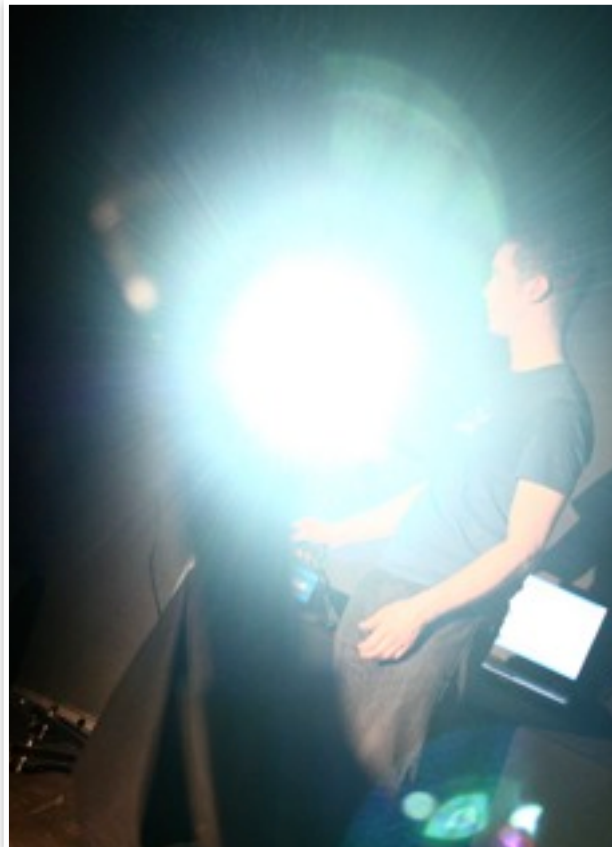
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[13] Brennan, 2010

Experimenting with lighting sources in the studio at Gilmorehill

There were two types of lighting in the studio: lights that had already been rigged and
lights that could be moved around the room. The Arches' own theatre lights are usually
controlled from a desk in the control booth above the seating bank, which is only
accessible by Arches staff and visiting crew. In *A Work on Progress*, this computerised
lighting desk was replaced with an older version, easily controllable by simple faders. It
was also set up in the middle of the room in a 'tech area', which included the majority of
the sound equipment. This lighting was focussed on the different stations beforehand by
Davey Thompson, one of the Arches technicians. However, the levels of lighting in the
space could be controlled by anyone who felt comfortable using the desk. Our team were
on hand to provide assistance where required, but it was evident that many visitors to the

space were put off by unfamiliar technical equipment. As one visitor commented, these were 'quite intimidating... things I don't know how to work with', which may explain why the lighting desk and the mixer amplifier were not used as much as the more simple forms of technology such as lamps and practice amps.[14]

As well as the professional theatre lighting, a number of torches and lamps were available to be moved around the space. The lamps could be plugged into points around the room, and had adjustable heads with their own dimmers attached, so that light could be arranged in various directions and levels of intensity. A range of different lighting states was used, and often when a tangible theatrical performance occurred (if somebody spoke into the microphone or played a guitar for example), others would direct lights towards them, creating temporary 'stages' around the room. The lighting also worked with other elements of the space - a torch shone through smoke or a moment of darkness while solemn music was played. This was one of the key areas where visitors to the space worked together to create the overall aesthetic. The simple operation of lighting using the lamps had the potential to significantly affect the atmosphere in the room, yet afforded the anonymity of an operating position removed from the areas where theatrical performances were occurring. Perhaps for this reason moving and controlling the lamps was one of the most popular uses of the space, even though few visitors operated lighting from the desk.

Station #2 Sound

every sound can be channelled through the mixer amp,
or the smaller amps, which can be moved around the room
don't worry - it's very difficult to break them

records, tapes, MP3s, guitars, dictaphones, your own voice...
music players, instruments, microphones, and amps

a cacophony of media, karaoke, instrumentals, soundscapes, songs, speeches, sermons...

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[14] All quotations from research assistants or members of the creative team are taken from the transcripts of two group discussions with three research assistants who were appointed to attend the event and reflect on the experience, or Chris Hall (Creative Assistant) and Christine Halsall (Costume Designer), April 2010

An impromptu performance on the Saturday night

The sound equipment consisted of a large mixer amp with two large speakers that could be wheeled around the space in trolleys, and three practice amps that could be plugged in around the room. Available inputs included two record players, two radios and several microphones, two electric guitars and three dictaphones / cassette players. There was also a slightly broken, out of tune piano, and a selection of percussion instruments. A collection of LPs and cassettes with a variety of musical styles was also provided.

Music played almost all the time, and was a significant factor in determining the atmosphere in the room. At times it was played very loudly and had a tendency to dominate the space. Frequently, a number of sound outputs existed simultaneously, sometimes complementing each other and at other times in conflict. Poetry spoken through the microphone, a talk show on the radio, a Shirley Bassey record, piano scales and an electric guitar riff - all filling the space discordantly.
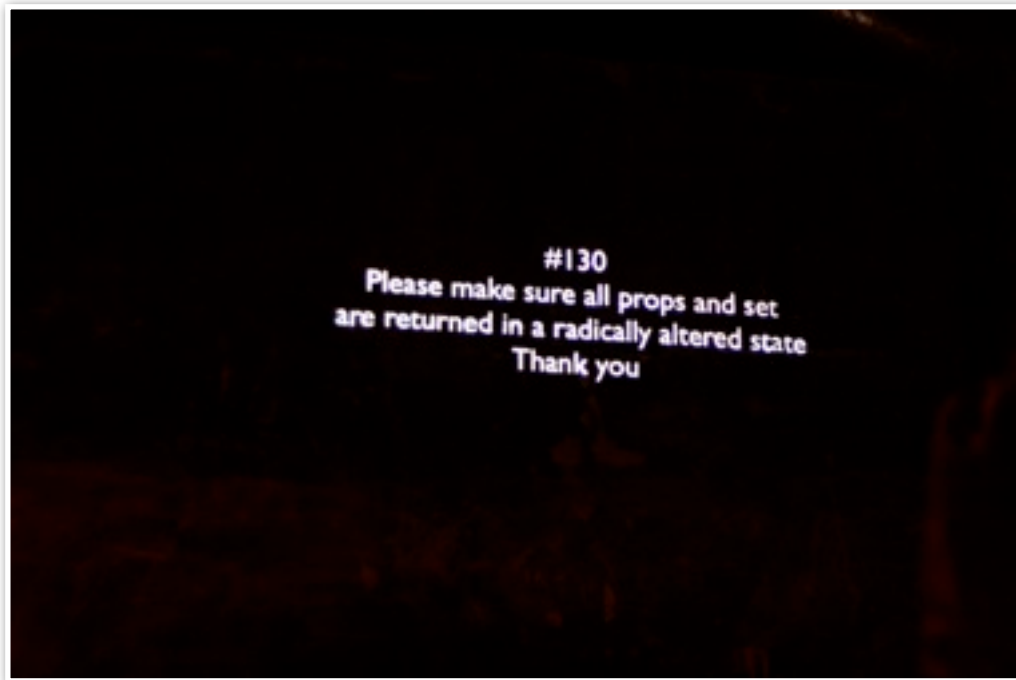
Title #130 projected onto the back wall

On the back wall of the studio was a list of titles, numbered from one to two hundred, and including blank spaces for visitors to add their own. These titles were entered into a computer programme, which was connected to a projector. By typing a number from the list into a numeric keypad and pressing 'enter', the title was projected on the wall above the space. The titles included quotes, '#1 Work as if you live in the early days of a better nation'; slogans, '#67 Just do it'; and instructions, '#130 Please make sure all props and set are returned in a radically altered state'. Visitors also added their own, which were added to the projection before each evening. For example, '#140 Get rid of your TV. Burn it. While you're at it delete facebook', and '#148 Nick for PM'.

These titles were used in several different ways: As framing text, such as '#63 This is your brain at the theatre', projected above the space at one of its messiest, loudest and least

coordinated moments; as performance script, scrolled through by one visitor and read out through the microphone by another; or as a sort of textual juke box when someone would sit browsing the list and choosing their favourites, projecting them for short periods before moving on to the next one.
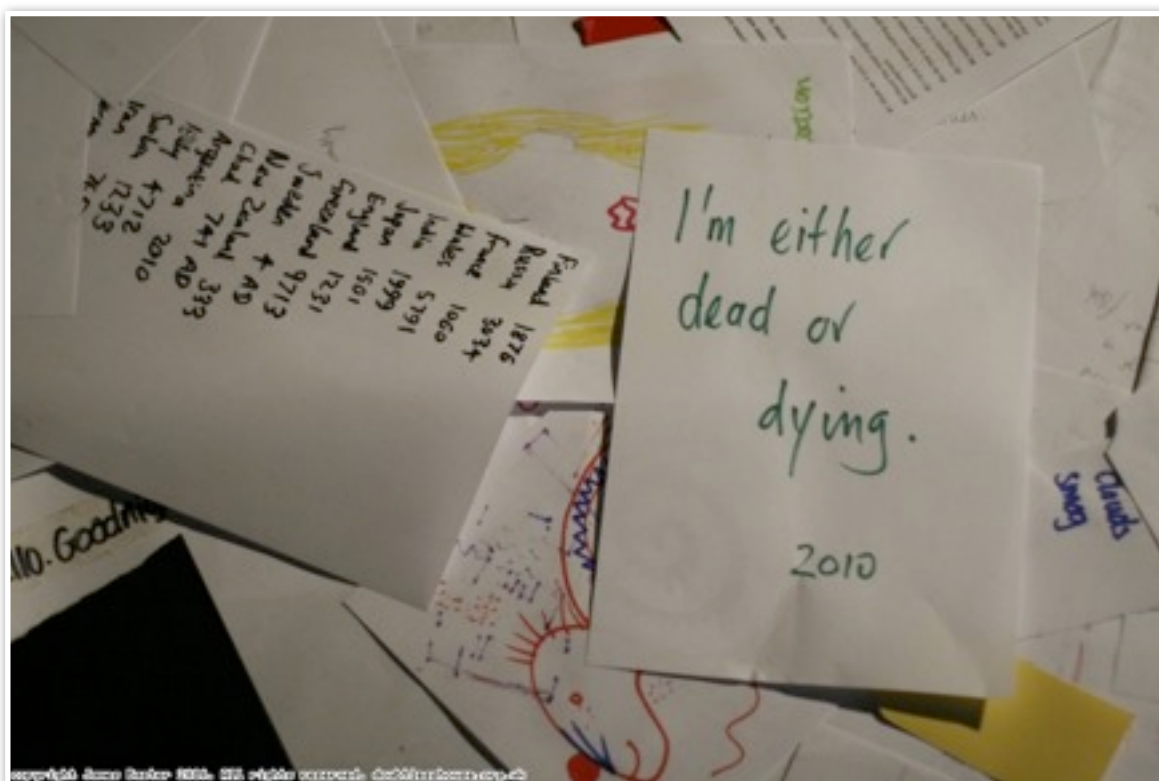

Station #4 Text

on the table: paper, acetates, cameras, dictaphones

add something?
a poem, a story, an essay, a list, a letter, a script, an instruction, a confession, a manifesto, a prediction...
record it, capture it, play it back, leave it behind for somebody else to play with

don't forget, tomorrow this may be all we have left

A selection of texts thrown into the 'pit'

In the middle of the space an eight by eight foot area, one foot deep, was used as a repository for texts written on A4 paper, using the pens provided. On a table above the 'pit' were piles of paper, acetates and labels, and a selection of disposable cameras and dictaphones for the event to be recorded. A small monitor and video camera were also

available, for past footage of the set up or the previous evening's action to be screened, or recorded over.

This proved a particularly popular section, and prompted a variety of uses. Over the course of the event, more and more text was generated, covering a variety of types - lists, stories, confessions, etc. A common use of the space was for visitors to sit on the edge of the staging and read through what others had written. Occasionally, these texts would be read out over the microphone or recorded onto the dictaphones. At the end of the second evening, Kieran Hurley, a previous *Underneath the Arches* collaborator and performer, instigated a reading of everything that had been written, one text after the other. This lasted for around half an hour until the end of the event.
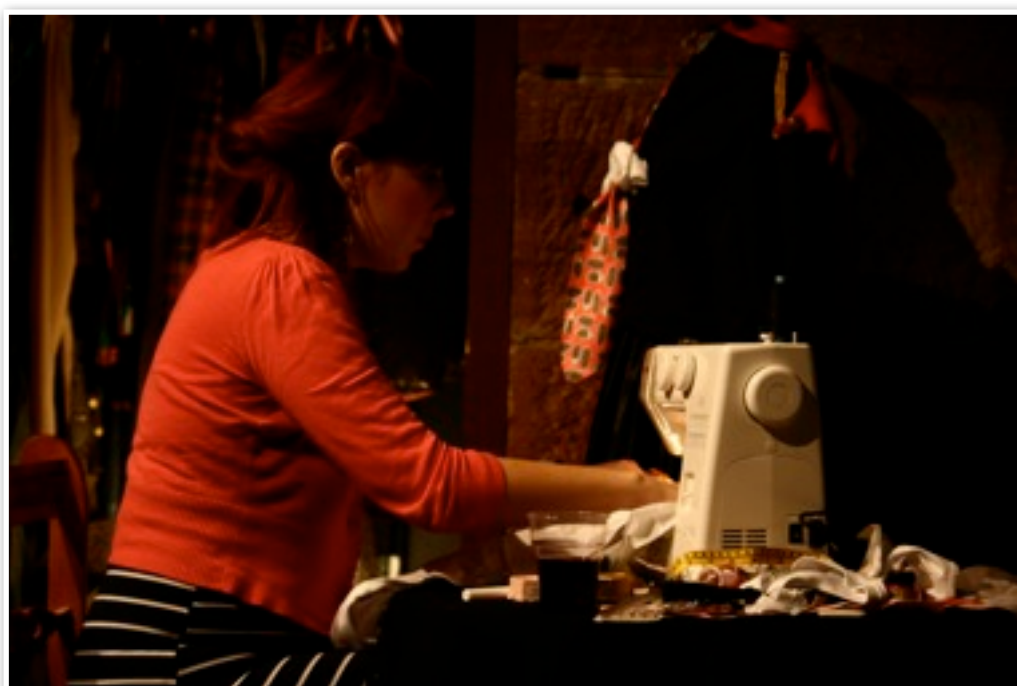
Station #5 Costume

wigs, hats, dresses, trousers, suit jackets, fabric, pens, scissors, a sewing machine...

put them on, take them off, sew them up, cut them to bits, hang them from the ceiling, contribute something to the dressing-up box...

GO INCOGNITO!
dress more like yourself than you usually do

A visitor making a t-shirt on the Friday night

This station consisted of a rail of costumes from past Arches shows, including 'madly glam frou-frou costumes',[15] wigs and clown suits, a sewing machine and various fabrics, and blank t-shirts with fabric pens for do-it-yourself design. The rail was situated inside an alcove in the wall, and a fabric screen was positioned in front of it, creating a dressing room. A mannequin body and separate head displayed costumes and wigs, and were re-dressed several times over the two nights.

For health and safety reasons only our costume designer Christine Halsall was permitted to operate the sewing machine, but on one occasion this rule was broken as a textiles student created a t-shirt, which was subsequently displayed on the mannequin for most of the event. The costume station was not used extensively, but there were several occasions such as this when people dressed up and made costumes. Home made t-shirts were also added to the rail, with various pictures and slogans.

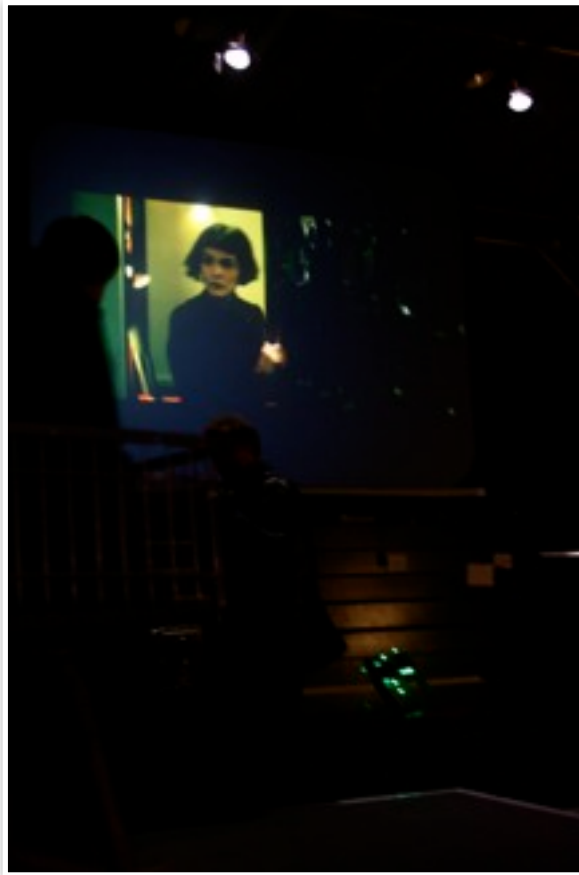---

Station #6 Computer

an internet browser, word processors, a selection of videos on the desktop...
all connected to a projector

press 'escape' and project something else

find the words to a song, write a monologue, tweet, stream a video, check your email...

We are all connected. Anything is possible!

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[15] Brennan, 2010

Le fabuleux destin d'Amelie Poulain projected above the studio

A laptop was connected to a large ten by seven foot projected image, so that users could interact with the word programme, DVD player and internet. Having met several times with the technical department, purchased an internet cable and persuaded the technicians to spend a considerable amount of time installing an internet point in the studio, it was disappointing that in the end technical difficulties meant that this was not possible. Our solution was to provide a selection of films on DVD, which played for the majority of the event.

During the development of *A Work on Progress* I had set up a test version in the university's theatre studio. The internet that was in operation for this development work proved particularly popular, with visitors selecting videos on YouTube, finding images and lyrics to songs. In the Arches, without the interactive possibilities of the web, the computer remained an underused station, and film was played for long periods without changing. However, the film often prompted activity in other areas of the space. For example, in response to *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, one vistor added to the collection of texts by writing '*Breakfast at Tiffany's* is a shockingly misogynistic film. Fuck off Paul Varjak!'.

One visitor's response to the screening of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

Outside the studio

Between the studio and the main space of the festival, which centred round the Middle Bar, the dance arch was used as an extension of *A Work on Progress*. Using the video set up for the club night that followed, we screened a live feed from the studio across six monitors. Before or after spending time in the studio, visitors could therefore watch the event as it happened.

Also in this space, beside the entrance to the studio I provided a leather armchair and a table with reading materials including a number of books that I had read in the development of the project such as Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, as well as the programme and a document explaining the research context. A comments book and questionnaire were also available.

Effects

Alongside the six stations were snow, bubble and smoke machines, which could be operated by control pads hanging down from the rig. These proved very popular as the various effects could be controlled at the push of a button. As with *Midland Street*, filling the space with snow and bubbles seemed to immediately instigate a childish playfulness, and many visitors danced under the snow, gathering handfuls of foam and catching the bubbles as they drifted.

Bubbles fill the room

The snow, bubbles and smoke also worked alongside the other elements in the space in a number of unexpected ways, and often seemed to draw everything together. At one point a visitor shone a torch light through the smoke, and whenever the bubbles drifted behind the projection screen they cast a shadow onto the projection of the films that were playing. On the second night the smoke machine broke, so only snow and bubbles were available.

Staging

The tiered staging levels

A key feature of the event was the tiered staging configuration. Starting at floor level by the entrance to the space we positioned the majority of the technical equipment and an area of turf to stop the snow causing a slipping hazard. This raised a few inches onto flat section of steel decking, which led up to a foot high platform with trolleys containing the speakers and various amps, radios and records. Above this, against the back wall, the staging was two feet high including the drop from the text table down into the floor level 'pit' where the paper accumulated. The costume area was at ground level at the back of the space. Raising the majority of the stations above floor level meant that to interact with the space visitors were required to step up onto a sort of stage, framing everything that happened as a performance and discouraging a passive spectator position.

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