

# RHIZO-MEMETIC ART:

## The Production and Curation of Transdisciplinary Performance

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own, and that appropriate credit  
has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## ABSTRACT

Contemporary discourse in the field of Memetics offers potential new insights upon the ways and means of producing and curating contemporary Performance beyond the limits of discipline specific Performance taxonomies. Alongside the rise of Internet Culture and the rapid adoption of social media, it is argued that contemporary artistic practice is becoming 'more fluid, elastic, and dispersed' (Cornell, 2014: online). Given this circumstance, the researcher acknowledges that notions of disciplinarity, performative agency and materiality remain in a state of flux and in need of reconsideration.

Utilising a Practice-as-Research (PaR) framework, and based upon the above context, the researcher initiated an innovative three-phase methodological approach focused on the application of insights drawn from the concept of the 'Meme' (Dawkins, 1974) alongside a primarily Deleuze & Guattarian philosophy upon methods of artistic production, and the curation of transdisciplinary performance.

The resulting praxis: 'Rhizo-Memetic Art' produced three major artworks including the hypertextual assemblage - *Corpus 1* (2012-13), produced collaboratively online with users of Twitter and Facebook; the *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014): produced and curated alongside an invited group of contributing artists; and *Florilegium: Remix* (24<sup>th</sup> April 2015): an intermedial Live Art lecture. Each of these elements plugs into the following exegetic writing, and alongside the documentation of its artefacts (available on the project website), these elements produce the thesis.

The outcomes of this PaR are twofold. The first outcome is a new theoretical understanding of the mechanisms of interdisciplinary creative practice emerging out of

the synthesis of meme and rhizome. This outcome can be further developed to reveal insights relevant to the production of transdisciplinary performance and archival/curatorial discourses. The second outcome can be identified as the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork itself, or, rather the multiple creative artefacts and actions that combine to produce its assemblage.

The implications of this research suggest that the functioning of Rhizo-Memetic Art raises permanent questions about the status of Performance in terms of its materiality and efficacy outside of the limitations of disciplinarity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Key words:** production, curation, memetics, rhizome, performance, performativity, discipline, transdisciplinarity, materiality, agency, archive, documentation, social media, new-media, aesthetics, generative, internet, networks, digital, live, hybridity, nomadism

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## RESEARCH AIM & OBJECTIVES

The research aim and objectives for this project were developed and refined reflexively throughout the research process, focusing explicitly upon elucidating insights imbricated within the creative praxis.

The following aim emerged:

- To highlight the extent to which the application of insights drawn from Memetic Science and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome theory might impact upon methods of production, and the curation of transdisciplinary performance.

Within that aim, the specific methodological objectives are as follows:

1. To scrutinise the research capacity of curatorial and archival methods shaped to function as tools for research, produced via synthesis of 'rhizome' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and insights gained from the field of Memetics;
2. To discover how discrete knowledge types generated via this praxis may be operationalized as a mode of critique for future transdisciplinary works within Arts based Practice-as-Research;
3. To draw out the significance of the fields of agency responsible for the emergent transdisciplinary praxis generated in this instance.

## NAVIGATION

Project Website URL: [www.rhizo-meme.com](http://www.rhizo-meme.com)

Some features of the project website are password protected. In order to access these features please enter the following caps-sensitive information when prompted:

- USERNAME: flori16
- PASSWORD: wolfremix28

Please adhere to the terms of use outlined within the project license: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

The project website offers a re-contextualised encounter with the various elements of this research praxis and its exegesis. As a hypertextual assemblage, the project website houses all digitised ephemera and artistic contributions emerging from the following practical outcomes:

- *Corpus 1 (2012-13)*
- *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014)
- *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April 2015)

The project website is designed to be encountered alongside this written document. Please use the left-click function on your mouse to follow available hyperlinks within the website. The pointer icon indicating on-screen movement will shift from 'arrow' to 'hand' to indicate clickable content. The easiest way to navigate is to utilise the central menu panel on the homepage. A number of audio tutorials are available by clicking the audio playback buttons situated throughout the website.

## A NOTE ON TRANSDICIPLINARITY

Gilles Deleuze asks: 'What is an essence, as revealed in the work of art? It is a difference, the absolute and ultimate Difference. Difference is what constitutes being, what makes us conceive of being. This is why art, insofar as it manifests essences, is alone capable of giving us what we sought in vain from life' (Deleuze, 1972: 41). The essences of which Deleuze speaks are distinct, but they also mutate. Art, then, can be said to do this as well. Deleuze goes on to remark:

But what is an absolute, ultimate difference? Not an empirical difference between two things or two objects, always extrinsic. Proust gives a first approximation of essence when he says it is something in a subject, something like the presence of a final quality at the heart of a subject: an internal difference.... In this regard, Proust is a Leibnizian: the essences are veritable monads, each defined by the view point to which it expresses the world, each viewpoint itself referring to an ultimate quality at the heart of the monad.

(Deleuze, 1972: 41)

Deleuze sees works of art as individuated subjects to such a degree as to note that they should not be subsumed under the traditional objectifying and unifying rubrics of style and genre. These are all typical ways we understand individual works of art as belonging to a specific school of thought or type of expression. Groupings of this kind can obscure and even take away the uniqueness of a given work of art. The artwork's very subjectivity is concretized in sensation, giving to us that which cannot be actualised in reality, manifesting the work of art as a wholly different being. This is what Deleuze calls the 'essence' of an artwork. If we take seriously what Deleuze says, we no longer have disciplines, and styles of art; rather, we have a multiplicity of Different artworks, each marked with its own unicity or essence. This is how I conceptualise transdisciplinarity within this thesis.

## A NOTE ON PERFORMANCE

At the *Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics*, Columbia 2009, Guillermo Gómez-Peña imagined performance as: ‘...a conceptual territory with fluctuating weather and borders; a place where contradiction, ambiguity, and paradox are not only tolerated but encouraged.’ He went on to note that ‘the borders of our “performance country” are open to nomads, migrants, hybrids and outcasts’ (Gómez-Peña in Taylor, 2016: 3). As Diana Taylor reports: for many including Gómez-Peña, Performance is ‘not simply an act or an action, but an existential condition: an ontology’ (Taylor, 2016: 3). Understanding Performance as a conceptual hinterland, or sense of being that exerts influence across temporalities; existing somewhere between the ‘doing’ and ‘done’; the ‘is’ and the ‘as if’, is key to understanding this thesis.

I consider Performance beyond the provincial contours of disciplinarity. When inhabited by nomads, migrants, hybrids and outcasts, Performance can be understood to affect socio-political change both through its production and curation - itself a form of interpolation. It is exactly this quality of Performance – the ability to oscillate between past, present and future as an ever-shifting asignifying assemblage – which I infer through the use of the word within this thesis. In doing so, I attempt to work against the ‘disciplinary myopia’ that occurs in a refusal to ‘look across the boundaries of subjects or methodologies’ (Reason, et al, 2016: 118).

# MAPPING TERRAIN

## PLATEAUX

*At sunrise I stand in a vast plateau. It appears almost limitless, except for the shimmer of distant water and mountains on the horizon. Thistles, prickly scrubland, and the remains of trees protrude like bones from the surface. I hear a crow's alarm, and the ghostly intuitions that tie sinew to soul force me to walk out across bony shoulders and blades of flint. I find two streams, and in each I plunge my aching feet. In this moment of bliss I remember what I was searching for. Yet, in the water's flow I soon lose myself. In an attempt to catch my fleeting thoughts I cup my hands to drink. However many times I try, the water slips between my fingers and moves on, and so do I.*

*In midday heat, I approach a great mountain. Mustering my resolve, I climb. The incline is steep, and I claw my way along ever-shifting rubble, ripping great chunks of ramshackle earth from the mountainside. My nostrils fill with the pitchy vinegar of decay as objects emerge. There are photographs with faded faces rendered indecipherable. Books with rotten pages: relics from a place long forgotten.*

*I feel the mountain moan and shake as if great ruptures might burst forth from the rock and knock me from my footholds. Pressing myself close to the earth, I listen. Perhaps what I'm searching for is here. Amidst the growing schisms I dig my fingers further into the soil and rip a great tangle of roots from the debris. The rhizome wraps itself around my arm. Tendrils twist and intertwine: a whorl of wildness that connects me to the relics in the ground. I pull hard to release myself, ripping the root. I stow it in my pocket.*

*I climb a second peak, and then a third, searching for that which is lost. Yet I find nothing to hold my interest. The books and photographs remain upon the mountainside but I do not.*

*At dusk I stand at the summit of the third great mountain looking back upon my journey from the plateau: alabaster scorched white by daylight. My legs are heavy, and my hands raw. I want to stop. I take the creeper from my pocket and weigh it in my hand: hardly there at all. Compelled to walk on, I descend into the darkness on the far side of the mountains. In the black I hear the howling of wolves and the rhizome begins to twitch. I realise I am lost. Searching on I hear the singing of a child. She must be lost too. I follow the cries until I see a light in the distance, small like a pinprick but growing brighter. I move on, until I see not a child but a city. I know this place although I have never seen it before.*

*“This is Zora!” I cry, as I enter the labyrinthine metropolis. Wandering, I notice that into the walls of buildings there are carved: names of the famous, virtues, numbers, vegetable and mineral classifications, dates of battles, constellations, parts of speech. Ghostly images hang like shadows over pale stone. As if recognising something of its self the rhizome erupts from my pocket, sending out its tubers: connecting names and numbers, minerals and memories. Web-like, the rhizome spreads through the city at unfathomable speed. I climb now through roots to find there are stone pedestals upon which have been placed objects: photographs, their images clean and precise. Books with pristine pages. Between each idea and each point of this tangled warren I establish an affinity. I follow every vine; pluck at every knot, and memorise every item.*

*I follow the rhizome into a building and find a spiral staircase. Without hesitation I climb. At the highest point of this helix I find a window. It is not square, not circular, not arched. There is no glass, no walls surround it. It looks like no other window I have seen. As I approach it I feel connected. The wavelength of light around me shortens. Lost in recollection my memory is candescent: hotwired. Gravity rolls away and I feel information flow like the waters of the stream. I am at once inside my pocket climbing mountains of*



*moss. I hear the howling. I am chasing the cries of a girl in the dark. I am the rhizome. I have become wolf. Everything exists in this moment of delirium. But soon the light fades. I do not want it to fade. I want to stay.*

*My feet hit the floor. I rub my eyes and the day builds itself around me once more. I stand again in a vast plateau. It appears almost limitless: nothing except for the shimmer of distant water and mountains on the horizon. Thistles, prickly scrubland, and the remains of trees protrude like bones from the surface. I hear a crow's alarm, and ghostly intuitions force me to walk. Old sores open up and I forget what I am searching for. At a confluence of two rivers I stop. Staring into the stream I thumb a tangle of roots in my pocket, and weigh the labyrinth in my hand...*

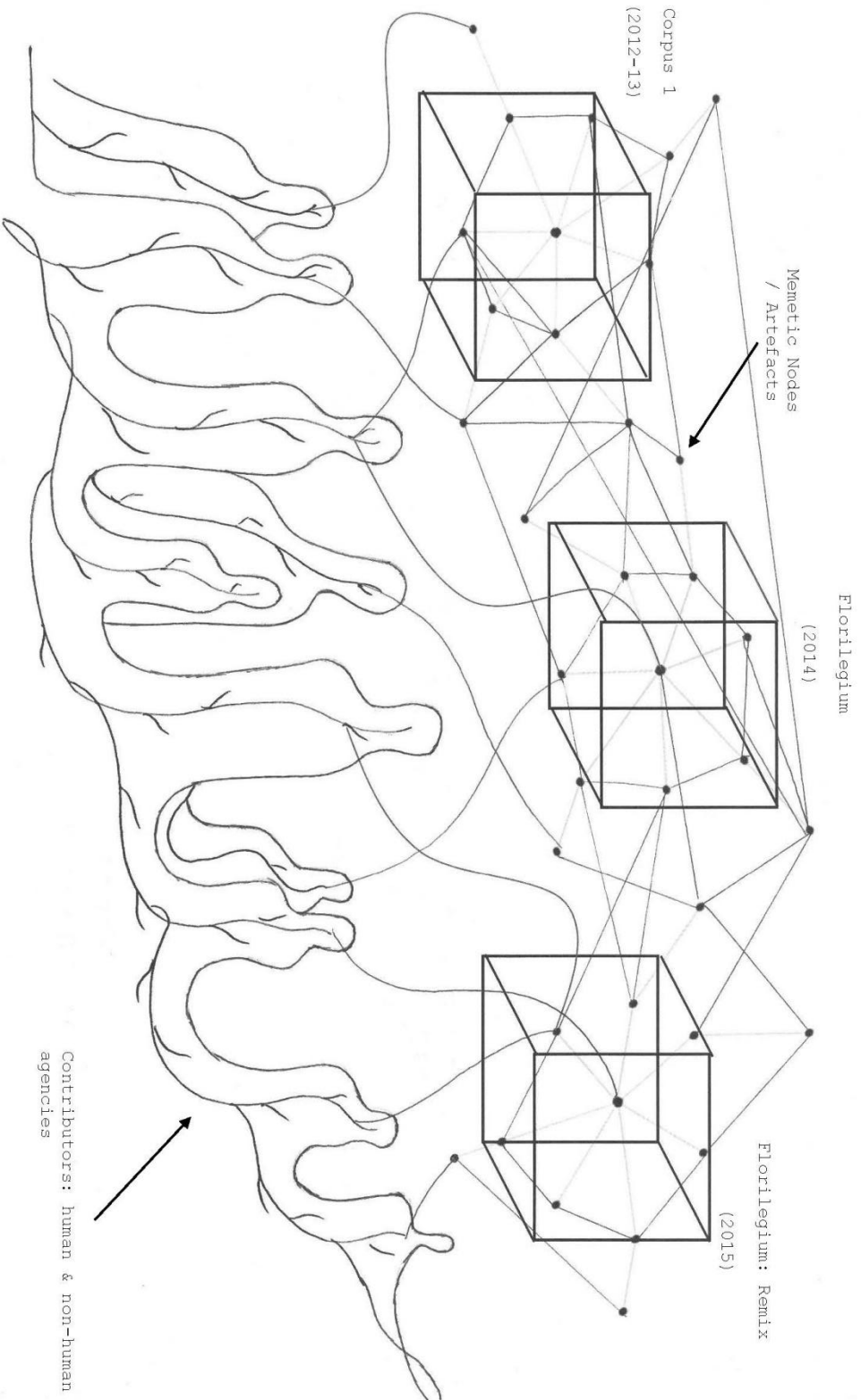
Burrows, J. (2015)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journal. 03.11.15. Written in reference to: Calvino, I. (1974) *Invisible Cities*. Trans. Weaver, W. Orlando. Harcourt Brace Brooks.

# MAP OF PRAXIS

Map of Rhizo-Memetic Arts Praxis. V.1



## FRAMEWORKS

As Derrida states in the exergue of *Archive Fever*, I have ‘cited before beginning...to give the tone through the resonance of a few words, the meaning or form of which ought to set the stage’ (1996: 7). In many ways, the journey I present within *Plateaux* acts as an allegory for the research journey that led to the formulation of this thesis. When I read *Invisible Cities* (1974) I was immediately struck by the ways in which Calvino playfully enacts modes of knowledge production through his writing. With *Plateaux* I offer the reader a similarly reflexive allegory which maps out the stages of the following writing by mirroring the idiosyncratic relationship between my creative practice and its exegetic narrativisation as a form of ‘interpretative recuperation’ (Fludernik, 2010: 24).

As with Calvino’s cities, the epistemic metaphors within *Plateaux* reconfigure themselves in the telling. As Jeannette Winterson proposes, reading *Invisible Cities* is a ‘reminder of how often the controlled, measured world of knowledge fails us’ (2001: online). In a parallel effort, my metaphors of the ‘stream’, the ‘mountain’ and the ‘metropolis’ within *Plateaux* disarticulate the nature of the project’s key practical phases. The significance of the root, or rhizome – I hope – should emerge for the reader in time. Peppered throughout the remainder of this exegesis are series of further reflective texts presented in italics. These texts, either drawn from my research journals, or excerpts from performance transcripts plug into both the research praxis and its exegesis through a continuation of this cartographic metaphor.

Constructed from directions of travel: of iterative and paradoxical milieus, we arrive now at multiple termini: sites of knowing, actualisation and dis-remembering. This research has from its inception been a venture into the relative unknown. It began with a question: a desire: a point upon the compass: a direction of travel.

Looking out from the plateau, I desired to understand how insights drawn out from the various conceptualisations of 'the meme' (Dawkins, 1974), might impact on the production and curation of collaborative performance practices. I wondered how the principles or qualities of the meme concept first articulated by Richard Dawkins might be utilised in order to illuminate or reveal the mechanisms of my artistic practice.<sup>3</sup> In doing so I wagered that the application of meme theory to my own practice might also illuminate Performance itself as a system of learning, storing and transmitting cultural knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

A study of this type necessitated a framework that could accommodate both multiplicity and individuality across quasi-collaborative practice. As Shannon Rose Riley suggests, Practice-as-Research (PAR) in the Arts can be seen as fundamentally transdisciplinary in its approaches to methodological development (Riley in Nelson, 2013: 187). This led me to explore the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari as a possible framework (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) for methodological development and literature review that not only enabled, but actively encouraged epistemic construction across multiple disciplinary strata. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that knowledge is subjective, multiplicitous and multivalent. Indeed within their terms, knowledge may be so multi-faceted that it cannot be confined to singular strata. Rather, knowledge is produced as an assemblage of elements (psychological, cultural and material) that do not originate to a singular source. Following Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, elements of knowledge consist of

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<sup>3</sup> I describe my artistic practice as fundamentally transdisciplinary. That is to say, my practice is often intensely collaborative with a focus on moving beyond discipline specificity in its modes of both production and curation.

<sup>4</sup> Applications of insights from Memetics have previously been made to the anthropological study of Theatre History (Davis, 2007), and Creative Arts Research by Estelle Barrett (2009). The insights generated by within this thesis by way of synthesis between meme (Dawkins, 1974) and rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) are (to date) unique within published Performance research.

forms of cultural and social units that can be co-opted and re-assembled by any given individual. This notion of the cultural *unit* struck a chord with my parallel reading in Memetics:

The term 'meme' was first coined by Richard Dawkins (1974), and it has been suggested that explosion of that which Dawkins considered to be fundamentally human (consciousness, culture, language and intellect) can be understood as the generation of an environ-*mental* space in which abstract elements or *units* drive biological selection as well as genes (Blackmore, 1999). A meme can be defined simply as a replicator, a cultural unit operating under Darwinian evolutionary principles analogous to a gene, but a distinct replicator in its own right (Dawkins, 1976; Goodenough and Dawkins, 1994). A meme in laypersons terms can be described as a concept embodied in a word, phrase, riff, image, gesture or other performative action<sup>5</sup>. A meme *exists* in the world of ideas and replicates via imitation. For Memeticists, memes can spread deep rooted cultural patterns such as those concomitant with religion or more fleeting fads such as catch-phrases, songs and fashions in clothing (Knobel and Lankshear, 2006).

The construction of knowledge as compromised of what might be considered trans-contextual units (or memes) within this thesis differs profoundly from a semiotic or linguistic approach to Performance Studies, within which knowledge is solely compromised of a set of signs and symbols that designate its various foundations. Within a Deleuze and Guattarian framework knowledge designated by sign and non-sign components can cooperate (and be co-opted). Names, words and accounts can be amassed alongside and equal to events, bodies and materials to produce a unique

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term performative in Austin's most basic sense - as statements whose utterance constitutes action in itself. (E.g. Saying "I do" in a marriage ceremony). [...] 'to utter [a performative sentence] is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it' (2003: 93).

epistemic assemblage. In *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari liken the structure of this assemblage to that of a rhizome, or biological grass root system. They suggest that unlike trees or their roots, a rhizome can connect any point to any other, and that its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature: bringing into play a 'very different regime of sign and non-sign states' (1987: 8). They note that:

[A rhizome]...operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots...In contrast to centred (or even polycentric systems) with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths, the rhizome is an acentered, non-hierarchical, non-signifying system without a General; without organising memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21)

Knowledge when understood as a rhizomic assemblage then can be differentiated from subjectivist or patriarchal models of knowledge construction. There is no unified or essential narrative voice that speaks truth. Rather, knowledge is assembled (and re-assembled) consciously from a vast terrain or milieu of cultural capital:

[the rhizomic]...assemblage is always like the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice...to write is perhaps to bring this assemblage to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call myself (Moi).

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 84)

We can see here how an epistemic assemblage of this kind is a cultural construction – actively so – rather than being the end result of imprinting or Oedipal circumcision (Derrida, 1996). 'I is an order-word' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 84). The rhizome is also an intensely material subjectivity arising from historical, biological, genetic and socio-economic positions. The rhizome is situated not outside of culture but located temporally and spatially within it, and constitutive of it. This tacit and active

form of viewing cultural construction can be seen as theoretically parallel to Larry Nucci and Michael Neblo's formulations of 'Postculture' (1998: 172). Within *The Emergence of Postculturalism* (1998), Nucci and Neblo advocate a position of continual shift, distinguishable from hierarchic and developmental concepts of progression when conceptualising the production of culture. Similarly, Lizardo notes that this stance 'takes cognition, experience and the somatic seriously in the study of cultural materials' (2010: 1).

Considering a 'rhizomic' framework for the construction and understanding of the discrete knowledge types that may be assembled out of this inquiry also had methodological consequences, shifting the understanding of my own practice away from what I now consider an outmoded coupling of process and product. Consequently this exegesis is not primarily concerned with documenting the processes emerging out of the application of memetics to my creative practice, nor about producing what might be considered as memetic analysis of its various products. Rather, it is about understanding my practice as *action*: as what Deleuze and Guattari call 'production' (1987: 18), meaning that the performance works created as part of the project are not processes although processes were used to make them. They are also not products in the sense of being finished accounts, repositories or sites of epistemic announcement. Rather, they enact memes –they bring together a range of ideas, stories and ways of doing that are assembled (and re-assembled) from out of the vast rhizomatic milieu.

Of course, the danger of considering what these works enact as dynamic and co-constructed assemblages is that they may lose significance in and of themselves, becoming mere signifiers for other cultural phenomena, information or dialogues - in this case specifically, Deleuze and Guattarian theory and/or memetics. It is important I believe, that these creative works whilst functioning as exegetic of this research

function equally as artistic works worthy of their own merit. Being endlessly intertextual in such an analysis, the inquiry that begins such a chain of meaning may ultimately become irrelevant in the wake of its endless meanings. That however is not the case here. A rhizomic framework for understanding knowledge produced from this inquiry has not been imposed upon my creative practice after the circumstance, but has arisen out of the creative practice itself. Examining the way meaning is structured through my practice (and its collaborations) led to a philosophical approach that would speak to its instantaneous heterogeneity, materiality, originality and cultural situatedness.

In the process of this search, I made increasing connections between my own creative practice, Deleuze and Guattarian philosophy and insights gained from literature concerning the meme. The creative practice proceeded and was coterminous with theory, and I understand this relationship as one of connectivity rather than isomorphism. This process led to a particular methodological shift in my thinking. When I began this project, I assumed that the construction of this writing would be an attempt to recognise and elucidate the discoveries I made through creative practice. However, over the course of developing the praxis, it became apparent that this paradigm creates significant problems in the context of this project specifically. The first problem being the supposition that practical research inquiry in the Arts will result in a single original, philosophical and/or aesthetic stance that the incumbent creative artefacts demonstrate. As I will argue, this is not essentially the case. The very intertextuality of the multiple creative artefacts produced during the production of this research (their multiple authorship, reference to diverse sign systems, conventions and interdisciplinarity) immediately precludes a singular perspective from which they can be



understood to emanate, or which they could be understood to embody or solely demonstrate.

The task of complementary writing in the context of this project specifically then, cannot be to 'reveal' what has transpired in and across the creative practice because there is not necessarily a singular concern that the multiple creative outputs expose. Rather, there can be multiple effects and concerns embodied within the multitude of creative artefacts, and these elements need not necessarily be coherent. That is to say, they need not all pull in the same direction conceptually, work within the same languages or even the same epistemological bases. I found myself faced with two possible approaches to this dilemma. The first was to make an active choice as to the main issues that these works investigated and focus solely on those. This choice (if made during the process of research) would shape the investigation as an interrogation of a fixed set of issues at the neglect of others. In this case, the role of this complementary writing would be clear: to examine the extent to which the creative outputs are successful in interrogating these issues and to articulate their outcomes as evidence within an exegesis. Alternatively, this choice could have been made upon reflection upon the 'finished' creative outputs, so that the exegesis became an articulation of what were perhaps largely unconscious interrogations implicit within the given works but which became manifest in later analysis.

This second approach eschews the assumption that a creative work can or even should be about investigating a finite and defined set of issues. In this instance, no single focus can be assumed in a creative work, but rather expectation of that work is that it will examine a diverse number of concerns. This is not to say that such creative works do not perform interrogations, but rather refuse to privilege or consider any one interrogation taking place as being of prime importance over simultaneous others. In

this instance, the task of the exegesis is more complex, because it must canvas the diversity of concerns embedded within a given body of work. Additionally, it must do this in such a way as to make explicit the fact that any such exegesis (such as this) is fractional and cannot represent or translate the full scope of the creative practice, meaning, it must be clear that the range of concerns it addresses is at the discretion of the writer as much as it is constructed within the creative works themselves. There cannot be inherent claim to completeness or truth.

My focus on the production of knowledge situated within forms of transdisciplinary creative practice quickly revealed the multiplicity and heterogeneity of purpose with which my inquiry would have to engage. In a sense, this is what first led me to investigate the works of Deleuze and Guattari as a possible framework. Once their understanding of knowledge as not just multivalent, but actively incoherent at the level of ideology was taken on board, the possibility of understanding (let alone representing in written form) the insights produced by my creative practice as a united set of outcomes was precluded. I therefore had to negotiate a terrain of fluctuation between the methodological options I describe above: developing what Robin Nelson terms as 'resonance' (2013: 11) between this writing and the praxis itself. What I found as lacking from a purely Deleuze and Guattarian framework became bolstered by insights I gained from the meme. The philosophical position presented by Deleuze and Guattari with regards to knowledge construction across epistemic strata, or discipline specific discourses (1987: 8) allowed a synthesis of rhizomic structure and memetic action, enabling the assembly of research paradigm that flickered between productive and curatorial forms. I called this paradigm Rhizo-Memetic Art.

## PRAXIS OUTLINE

I initiated the project's first artwork proper, though the collaborative production of a unique hypertextual body of writing, image, video, and sound alongside online users of Social Media platforms Facebook and Twitter worldwide (who acted in this instance as co-producers). I called this participatory artwork *Corpus 1* (2012 -13). This first stage was conducted as an attempt to explore the ways in which modifiable online content, or 'Internet Memes' (Memmot, 2014: online) might be circulated and transformed by mediated cultural participants. My aim here was to observe how processes of collaborative and highly mediated creative production might function akin to formulations of the memetic transmission as articulated in literature (Dawkins, 1974; Blackmore, 1999; Aunger, 2002; Dennett, 2004; McNamara, 2011; et al).

Protocols were initiated within these online encounters that enabled participants on both Facebook and Twitter to respond to monthly prompts and the posts of other users. Utilising the hash-tagging functions of both platforms, the project spread across and mobilised a following of 278 participants worldwide. Of which, a smaller number actively contributed to the growing body of *Corpus 1* (2012-13). Panmediation opened the project up to new discussants and lively new contributions. Whilst predominantly textual, this body of multimedia also braided connections through image, audio and video elements. Van Leeuwen (2009) notes that this multimodality is particularly important in Social Media discourse (Foucault, 1977) often since individual ideologies in mediated commentaries are not stated outright but can be projected in more subtle, visual ways (2009: 7). *Corpus 1* (2012-13) emerged as a chronotopic frame for a six month period of global socio-political events including leaked details of the NSA surveillance program; the death of Margaret Thatcher; the

Yewtree investigation and the Boston Marathon bombings. Whilst topics emerging from participant activity were engaged through co-ordinated prompts, these were not always defined in advance and responded in a fluid and reactive way to the prevalent flow of online participation. Often these prompts were ignored completely and the flow of contributions splintered, circulated and entwined around multiple symbolic artefacts as a form of heterogeneous movement, producing a fragmentary structure that at once encompassed sections of detailed fiction, alongside more abstract materials, shared news stories and looped, repetitive phraseology. In essence, this corpus emerged as deeply intertextual and interdiscursive.

Reisigl and Wodak see intertextuality and interdiscursivity as the bridge by which statements can be re-contextualised: transferred from one setting to another in order to produce juxtaposition, produce metaphor or posit universal truths (2009: 5). Jäger and Maier (2009) elaborate on how 'an entanglement of discursive strands' such as those I encountered within *Corpus 1* (2012-13) form 'discursive knots' (2009: 47). I noted the resonance between the knotted, discursive body of multimedia produced in this instance, and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome: particularly considering this discourse as decentred and active. In the case of *Corpus 1* (2012-13) various multimedia employed intertextual reference to mass media artefacts and archetype to internet culture and aesthetics. Individual media contained within *Corpus 1* (2012-13) interdiscursively connected to contemporary and historical socio-political events, news and philosophy. These intertextual and interdiscursive connections (alongside fragmentary authorship and timeframes) led to difficulty in interpreting singular perspectives or causal through-lines. Due to this methodological concern, I chose to examine the rhizome-like *Corpus 1* (2012-13) around the emergent discursive knots as points of connection

between colliding 'regimes of signs' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21). I called these points of connection Memetic Nodes.

These Memetic Nodes or rather the media residues that accrued around them were utilised as stimuli to which a further set of research participants (Contributing Artists) were invited to respond through the production of festival of transdisciplinary creative works. This second phase of the creative practice resulted in the second major artistic output: *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November. 2014). Through both the collaborative production and co-curation of this work, a set of diversifying and generative strata erupted out of the original rhizomic assemblage presented as *Corpus 1* (2012-13). These strata were investigated progressively from differing theoretical and practical perspectives by each Contributing Artist. Participants of this phase were given absolute freedom in their creative actions. It became increasingly clear during this period that whilst the resulting works would share a generative origin, they would also, by nature investigate a diverse set of issues: the subjectivity of each participant's own interpretation of stimuli (Memetic Nodes) alongside the various disciplinary practices would produce a unique collection of artistic works under the banner of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November. 2014).

In order to continue tracking the development of memetic content within the diversifying processes of production incumbent to this second phase, I requested that Contributing Artists document their art-making processes, charting (through their chosen media) the developmental shifts in their work. Documental artefacts provided by Contributing Artists during this period included text, photography, handwritten excerpts from artist's notebooks, rehearsal notation, lighting plans, technical drawings, recorded dialogues costume samples and rehearsal footage. The diversity of practice presented by these works provoked curatorial implications in developing an

appropriate exegesis of them. Throughout the curatorial process, any choice as to which artefacts to privilege and which to minimise in the public gaze was immediately a move towards distorting and under-representing the richness of the works produced on one hand, and presented the danger of overstating the interrogatory nature of others.

In order to stabilise this dynamic, I needed to develop a curatorial framework that could accommodate the diversity, dislocation and heterogeneity of these documental artefacts and processes. This approach also needed to enable critique of these works without totalising, or rather, without allowing my analysis to function as a definition of these works in itself. That is to say, I needed to position my curatorial strategy as constructed out of the same desires and inter-subjectivity that produced this collection of micro-narratives; their residues and processes rather than as an imposed final revelation or 'Grand Narrative' (Lyotard, 1979).

Eventually, my explorations led me to consider the curatorial potential of the paradigm I was developing concurrently as a thesis framework: the concept of Rhizo-Memetic Art. As O'Neill states, 'to study the practice of curating is to expose the ways in which creative works have been displayed, mediated and discussed' (2012: 1). I sought a curatorial strategy that would enact an understanding of the act of exhibiting as part of generative and developmental process. I wished to analyse through the act of curating these diverse works, how their presentations might be framed and encountered alongside how they are self-articulated through authorship. This led to a return to the work of Deleuze and Guattari. In particular, their conception of the rhizome as a 'desiring machine' (1987: 86). This concept provided a way in which both my writing and the creative artefacts of this study could be understood as a meaningful coalition of diverse and multiplicitous elements which privileged none. Equally, my formulation of the Memetic Node enabled me to develop a spatial dramaturgy for curated artefacts

within the exhibition. Elements within this curatorial assemblage would not have to be limited to ideologically or logically cohesive systems. That is to say, ideas from diverse fields of reference (i.e. my curatorial methodology, the writing of others, their creative artefacts and processes) could function alongside each other rather than as one system of reference deciphering or amplifying the other. The notion of the Memetic Node alongside Deleuze and Guattarian formulations of the rhizome allowed me to see the curatorial as a single albeit mountainous terrain: characterised by epistemic ruptures induced by multiple inter-subjective perspectives. The production and curation of the total work's 'meaning' therefore, would arise out from the interplay of these elements on what Deleuze and Guattari call a plane of exteriority:

...the idea would be to lay everything out of a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations...

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9)

This methodological choice inferred implications for understanding the act of curation as part of broader cultural and theoretical contexts without subsuming them. In the context of my synthesis of the meme and the rhizome, the integrity of curated elements (in this case the documental artefacts and processes of this study, and the experiences of its contributors) can be preserved without the distortions of ideological or causal interference. Broader cultural significances and relationships within these works could then be articulated without having to be explained by, or decoded into symbolic schemes from other discourses. I found myself conceptually resituated by this curatorial framework in relation to both the research praxis and exegesis. I found myself inhabiting a 'nomadic' (Braidotti, 2010) position within the constellation of critical and creative activities assembled to produce this work, rather than operating as a caretaker or critical arbiter of taste.

## AUTO-PORTRAITS IN LOVE-LIKE CONDITIONS<sup>6</sup>

*Auto-portraits in love-like conditions*

*Virgin with a memory*

*Better the rebel you know*

*Ghostly portraits*

*My father's house*

*Hiker meat*

*Urgent copy*

*We were all here once*

*Double indemnity*

*A frog in my barbeque sauce*

*Network traces*

*From the ground up*

*What do you do with your revolution once you've got it?*

*Octopus*

*Subject to constant change*

*4*

*A portrait of the artist*

*Top bunk*

*How are you feeling?*

*Indents*

*Hard drive*

*It's cool, I'm good*

*HOME*

*Forming a line*

*Subversion*

*Landings*

*Strangers 3*

*Contour states*

*Lost is found*

*QR 3D*

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<sup>6</sup> Script excerpt from the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015). Content sampled from *RSVP* (24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014) performed by WeAreCodeX as part of *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014).



## EXEGESIS

Within the context of this project, matters concerning the relationship between creative practice and writing *about* practice as two separate entities are interrupted and reconfigured. If any element can be connected to any other on a level of functionality rather than conceptual consistency, then I am able to talk about lots of different categories of things without having to assume they may or may not be part of compatible regimes of meaning. As Hann and Guevara (2015) recount, 'Practice-as-Research has emerged as one of the most significant methodological developments within theatre, dance and performance scholarship internationally' (2015: 3). Signalled as an epistemological shift, PaR offers a method expressing knowledge claims that embrace the fundamental qualities and processes that inform artistic practice (Allegue, et al, 2009). Within her essay *The Trouble with Apples and Oranges* (1998), Marcia Siegal argues that Performance and language, like oranges and apples cannot be compared. However, with a combined framework of both meme and rhizome I am freed to associate many different types of 'fruit' in order to clarify my practice. It also provides a way of positioning this exegesis itself as simply a different kind of fruit of the same plane of exteriority as the other elements of this study.

In utilising this structure – my creative practice, the work of the project's contributors, my writing and curatorial methodology are re-situated in an active state of inter-connectivity. If writing about and curating Performance is in and of itself an assemblage of the rhizome and the meme then my writing cannot be assumed to decipher or signify the intrinsic meaning of other components of the same assemblage. Rather, my writing produces a unique combination of cyphers and allegories that insert multiple possible meanings into the creative-praxis and concurrently, the creative-

praxis into my writing. The implications of this concept for the development of this writing alongside a final performative articulation of my thesis were profound. Seeing this entire study as a hybrid assemblage of rhizome and meme, or a Rhizo-Memetic Artwork in its own right inferred that no one curatorial vantage point would be able to adequately comprehend or re-map another.

Within the final aspect of the project's creative practice: *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015) I performed my thesis through the format of a semi-improvised intermedial Live Art lecture: a performed archive of iterative, multiple and heterogeneous artefacts and processes that constituted the prior Rhizo-Memetic milieu. From this fractious perspective characterised by unpredictability, failing memory, fragmentation and inconsistency I was able to construct a live articulation as an unfolding stream of cognizance. The success of this work was dependant not on my ability to relate elements of the Rhizo-Meme (as provoked either by the physical milieu or by memory) causally or linearly, as if all ghost-written by a singular ideological voice, but by entering a state of memetic 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013) and re-contextualising documental residues as a live 'constellation of relations' (Schneider, 2001: 43).

Accordingly, I have also written about my practice and its collaborative relationships in a way that includes multiple perspectives on the creative and critical terrain without intentionally privileging a dominant epistemological frame. I have utilised multiple registers or writing (including poetic, hyperbolic and descriptive excerpts) interspersed within my analytical writing in order to subvert the idea that any one form of text can represent my creative practice totally. In doing so, I aim to reveal the multiple registers of thinking and engagement implicit across the research praxis (Swales, 1990). I consistently develop subjective perspectives that suggest interpretation only to later undercut them by explaining how this body of work escapes

the confines of total analysis. In doing so, I have attempted to structure this writing as a series of movements across a metaphoric landscape. Through this cartographic process, the numerous components of the praxis are recognised and subject to dialogue. The remainder of this exegesis is structured across five key sections of writing which are to be considered in parallel to the project website which houses all digitised versions of all documental residues.

Deleuze and Guattari highlight the dynamic, generative power of a rhizomic assemblage. Coupled with insights gained from the field of memetics (Dawkins, 1974; Blackmore, 1999; Aunger, 2002; Dennett, 2004; McNamara, 2011; et al), this study offers what I believe to be significant new insights for the production and curation of transdisciplinary performance. That is to say, that this Rhizo-Memetic Artwork does not function as a reproduction or tracing of existing ideologies, but rather produces new knowledge pulled forth from a sometimes fragmentary terrain of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986). This exegesis resituates critical writing and creative practice as similarly productive in that they do not articulate pre-existing ideologies but rather construct new lines of flight that connect elements of both. This Rhizo-Memetic Artwork combines overly subjective viewpoints on cultural materials that both expand and reduce across a plane of exteriority.

From a methodological vantage point, I have endeavoured to locate this study as part of larger contextual field concerning Performance, digital cultures, and Curation. The production of this exegesis as theorising and enacting a new methodology for transdisciplinary practice constitutes the research for this thesis. Its outcomes are twofold. The first outcome is a new theoretical understanding of the mechanisms of creative practice emerging out of the synthesis of meme and rhizome. This outcome can be further developed to reveal insights relevant to the processes of Performance and

curatorial discourses. The second outcome can be defined as the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork itself, or, rather the multiple creative artefacts and actions that combine to produce its assemblage. These include the project website, *Corpus 1* (2012-13), *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014) and *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April 2015). These outcomes each plug into the various subjective and theoretical perspectives generating multiple interrogatory avenues, exploring issues of value, agency, memory, archive, remix, copyright, scale and distribution.

This methodology represents a departure from what may be considered as the standard PaR model (Nelson, 2013), whereby epistemic contributions and insights are understood to be produced within the processes of creative practice and then elucidated in a less ambiguous way through some form of complementary text. The methodology of this thesis re-maps the concept of knowledge in relation to written texts and creative practice that have traditionally been employed to fit the 'memorialising needs of those in power' (Taylor, 2003: 17): erasing the poly-vocality of inherently collaborative processes and diminishing the value of experiential knowledge resistant to textual narrativisation. This understanding manifests as a rejection within this work to allow the ideologically contradictory elements of this study (and the contributions of its participants) to be funnelled into a textual paradigm of artifice that assumes closure and unification of purpose. I contend that to do so would be to lose sight of what has been uniquely produced in this instance. As a radical assemblage or 'ontological theatre' (Pickering, 2010), this Rhizo-Memetic Artwork draws together multiple entities: bodies, gestures, visual and auditory languages, interdisciplinary conventions and inter-textual references to produce an assemblage which is only ultimately insightful in its entirety.

## **CROSSING STREAMS**

## TRIBUTARIES

*The speed of exchange*  
*Or is my Daddy?*  
*The fabric of culture*  
*Our hands will be wrinkled*  
*Two streams*  
*Endless flow*  
*Mirror on the Wall*  
*One ocean*  
*Dreams of escape*  
*Something wicked*  
*No prefix*  
*Flight paths*  
*Look at me*  
*Hybrid*  
*In the Darkest Hour*  
*Our Father*  
*Honeycomb*  
*Bumblebee wings*  
*Tear us apart*  
*Raison d'être*  
*Bumblebee wings*  
*We were all here once*  
*Liquid*  
*Violence*  
*Except Jesus*  
*Sing to the bumblebee*  
*System maintenance*  
*One ocean*  
*Night sweats*  
*I can't quite make it out.*  
*Afterthought*  
*New trajectories*  
*Thy Kingdom Come*  
*Hybrid*  
*Rainfall*  
*Upheaval*  
*No orator*  
*Is that your Wine?<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journal: 'Playing with textual bricolage'. 25.06.2015

## CONFLUENCE

Within this aspect of writing I explore the critical and creative streams of thought that shaped the research praxis during the production and curation of the initial artwork *Corpus 1* (2012-13). These streams of thought which Colombo defines as 'discursive theoretical flows' (2004: 3) emerged out of the literature review primarily concerning implications of the meme and rhizome in connection to understandings of digital interactivity, Net Art and 'poly-vocal cultures' (Milner, 2013). The transdisciplinary nature of this review was encouraged by understandings of epistemic construction as rhizomic and existing across a 'plane of exteriority' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), I imagined these streams of thought flowing out and across a plane exteriority as they would a plateau: forming tributaries; confluences of thinking that at once connect and diverge.

I imagined knowledge engendered by this inquiry spreading generatively like the surface of a body of water, dispersing towards available spaces or trickling downwards towards new spaces through fissures and gaps, eroding what might be in its way. The surface of this body might be interrupted and moved, but these disturbances leave no trace as the water is charged with pressure and potential to always seek its equilibrium, thereby establishing a smooth space. Equally, Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome attacks rigidity of form on all epistemological levels. Rather than fixed, static systems of knowledge, they prefer the idea of flows, intensities, movements and velocities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 162). Equally, my application of the meme re-stratifies the governing connections of the rhizome as transitive, replicating and mutational: always in a state of becoming and never static.

The insights gained from this 'liquid' (Novak, 1991) investigation shaped the terrain of the resulting creative practice: depositing rich epistemic sediments in some areas whilst eroding and negating other possible lines of inquiry (Nelson, 2013). The resulting creative practice emerged as one of collaborative production taking form as *Corpus 1* (2012-13). This section of the exegesis tracks the flows and divergences of this preliminary enquiry from theoretical confluence of meme and rhizome, through to subsequent conceptualisations of Rhizo-Memetic Art and its ultimate creative production. I conclude this aspect with a series of reflective accounts of the Rhizo-Memetic process, and a unique analysis of the digital corpus produced.

In keeping with the over-arching meme/rhizome synthesis that this thesis cultivates in conceptualising Rhizo-Memetic Art, my writing is also presented in such a way as to demonstrate its potentials. In that regard, the streams of thought presented within this section are not prescribed; rather you may choose whichever is useful – whichever route/root makes the elements of meaning function. The subsections of this writing act as units. Throughout, I suggest a number of routes through the exegesis that operate outside of the limitations of arborescent systems like the book (which suggest hierarchy and bifurcation). These suggested pathways are not exhaustive, simply emblematic:

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections...organisations or power, and circumstance relative to the Arts, sciences and social struggles. [A rhizome]... is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural and cognitive. There is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs and specialised languages.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 7)

These suggested jumps function akin to Janet Murray's formulation of the quintessential properties of digital environments: procedural, participatory, spatial and encyclopaedic (Murray, 1998). These qualities can be equally applied to the rhizome



and converge in Murray's assertion of the Internet as a 'behavioural engine' (Murray, 1998: 72) and formulations of the rhizome as a 'desiring machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Within the version of this document available within the project website these non-linear jumps are enacted through the application of hypertextual links. Within the remainder of this written document, the individual interpretation of particular subsections or units is less important than examining the range of ideas or memes that the total assemblage connects. In this context, the insights generated by this study (whilst explicated fully in the conclusive section for the sake of research clarity) emerge in the process of enacted connection and akin to contemporary formulations of media 'remixing' (Lessig, 2008). As Deleuze and Guattari assert: 'we will never ask what a book means...we will not look for anything to understand in it' (1987: 4), rather I invite the reader to question the following:

*What functions?*

*What connects?*

*What other things transmit intensities?*

*What plugs in?*

*What converges?*

## INTRODUCING THE MEME

An interrogation of the literature concerning the meme led to a number of speculative characterisations of models of cultural transmission. This subsection engages with these characterisations through an examination of the dominant ideas extant specifically in literature concerning the meme. This is not to preclude the existence of alternative viewpoints; however, an exhaustive examination of every perspective on cultural transmission is beyond the scope of this thesis. I have confined the focus therefore, to implications of Memetic theory that have been most influential in my own creative practice. Richard Dawkins (1974) first theorised memes as replicants operating under Darwinian evolutionary principles analogous to a gene (1974: 192), with three prerequisite properties for producing an evolutionary or culturally propagative system: replication, variance, and selection (Dawkins, 1974: 194):

There is a new kind of replicator that has emerged on this planet: it is staring us in the face. It is still in its infancy; still drifting around in the primeval soup, but already it is achieving evolutionary change at a rate that leaves the old gene panting far behind.

(Dawkins, 1974: 192)

Dawkins continued by theorising that memes replicate within the environment of human behaviour using human imitative behaviour as their method for replication (Donald, 1993). In order to replicate, Dawkins suggests that memes must pass through four key stages:

- Assimilation (multimodal perception by an individual);
- Retention (within memory or inscription within an artefact);
- Expression (by some motoric act, speech or gesture, perceivable to others);
- Transmission (to another individual; Heylighen and Chielens, 2008).

A meme, therefore, can be understood as a concept or idea, enacted by a word, phrase, riff, image, gesture or performative action. A meme exists in the world of ideas and replicates primarily by imitation. For memeticists, memes can spread deep-rooted cultural patterns such as those concomitant with religion or more fleeting fads including catch-phrases, songs, and fashion (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006). Thus, cultural traits can be seen as analogous to 'mind viruses' (Dawkins, 1993; Brodie, 1996), 'idea viruses' (Godin, 2002) or 'thought contagions' (Lynch, 1996). The virus metaphor has previously been seen as attractive in that it suggests a new perspective and new methods such as epidemiology (Aunger, 2002) for studying the dynamics of a given cultural group. However, a deeper understanding of the underlying assumptions and implications of this analogy are needed in order to formulate a cohesive (and useful) theory of memetic cultural transmission. Over the last three decades, several models of memetic transmission have been proposed that study the propagation of memes, similarly defined cultural traits, 'culturgens' (Lumsden and Wilson, 1981) and 'mnemons' (Campbell, 1974). I use Dawkin's neologism 'meme' here to discuss the entity encompassed by all of these prior terminologies.

The bulk of these models are purely theoretical, proposing various conceptualisations, implications and speculations based on the memetic perspective (Blackmore, 2000; Dennett, 1995; Flinn and Alexander, 1982; Hull, 1982; Lake, 1998 et al). Some of these studies have been mathematical in nature, applying techniques from mathematical genetics or epidemiology to quantitatively estimate the spread of particular types of memes or patterns of culture with a given assemblage (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman, 1981; Lumsden and Wilson, 1981; Boyd and Richerson, 1985; Lynch, 1998). Others have been computational in their analysis; simulating the spread of memes between software agents (Gabora, 1995; Best, 1997; Bull, Holland and Blackmore, 2001). A few

cases have been observational in their analysis, where the spread of a particular cultural phenomenon such as a chain letter, urban legend or social stereotype has been investigated qualitatively or quantitatively (Goodenough and Dawkins, 2002; Schaller et al, 2002; Cheilens, 2003; Bangerter and Heath, 2004).

However, and in spite of these theoretical advances, a purely memetic perspective on culture is yet to be fully developed and remains controversial (Aunger, 2001; Atran, 2001; Edmonds, 2002). The difficulties inherent to a purely memetic perspective on culture have previously been attributed to the gene analogy and its material embodiment in DNA, and a subsequent assumption that a meme should have a clear well delineated and stable structure similar to the gene evidenced within biology (Heylighen and Cheilens, 2009). Cultural constructs, however, are arguably ambiguous and difficult to delineate (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961). It has been suggested that a purely Memetic model of social transmission based on “hard” and explicitly defined units fails to account for the shifting multiplicity of culture:

[If a] word is a meme, say for instance the word ‘chair’, what in the physical world constitutes the ‘chair’ meme? [...] Recognising a chair? Knowing what to do with a chair? [...] The neural substrates linked to your current sense of needing a chair? [...] The neural substrates linking a particular chair to a particularly nightmarish or orgasmic past experience? Is the chair itself a meme? [...] Is the image of a chair a meme? When does the meme for ‘chair’ become the meme for ‘seat’?

(McNamara, 2012: 4)<sup>8</sup>

Developments in the field of memetics outlined by Adam McNamara (2012) have included functional intersections with an influential discovery in neuroscience, offering potential answers to the questions posed above. Over a decade ago, mirror neurons

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<sup>8</sup> The genesis of McNamara’s ‘chair’ allegory can be traced to Plato’s theory of Form, and in particular, his utilisation of the ‘carpenter’s chair’. Equally, Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave* within *Republic* (514a–520a) can be understood as similarly productive in this context.

encoding the intention of 'others' were discovered (Gallese et al, 1996; Rizzolatti et al, 1996). It was quickly proposed that neurons located in regions of the brain highly involved in imitation were the neural substrate upon which linguistic communication evolved (Rizzolatti and Arbib, 1998). The biological observation of neurons enabling action recognition and replication fully supported a theory of memetics (Blackmore, 2005). And the field of memetics has grown (Heylighen and Cheilens, 2008). McNamara posits that given these insights, the concept of a meme can be delineated to comprise of external and internal components (E-memes and I-memes concurrently), noting that I-memes can be understood as the neurological substrates that map a particular concept or idea within the human brain and that these substrates have already been measured within the human central nervous system: enabling transmission of cognitions through links to cognitive motor function (Gautier and Tarr, 1997; McNamara, 2012: 6). E-memes on the other hand are a far more slippery concept – having been theorised as the material residues or relics of transmission and conceptualised in the same way that Aunger theorised 'memetic artefacts' (2001: 277) eleven years earlier:

[Memetic artefacts] [...] are templates of multi-modal perception: hosts for replicating information that provoke copies of themselves.

(Aunger, 2001: 277)

Understood in this way, the idea of McNamara's 'chair', your sense of needing one, and memories of previously encountered 'chairs' form a neural network or I-meme (akin to the dynamics of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome) that encode all possible versions of 'chair' as a form of shared inter-subjectivity. Following this logic, the internal 'chair' network can be understood as connected externally by E-memes or memetic artefacts in much the same way that wireless Internet is joined by an array of routers, nodes, hotspots and mobile devices (Mackenzie, 2010: 196). In that regard, the image of

a 'chair', memories of 'chair' inscribed in writing (or image) and the physical construct of an actual 'chair' all route, direct and join together in a fragile, fluctuating and inter-subjective agglomeration of possible 'chairs' without a dominant conceptual hierarchy or sense of material difference. McNamara postulates that it is for this exact reason that human beings have gone to considerable lengths in order to ensure the fidelity and tracking of individual memetic artefacts (or E-memes) through developments in copyright law and claimed authorship (2012: 12). Equally, Aunger notes the potentials of memetic transmission without the need for organic hosts through the development of 'closed feedback loops' (2001: 96) such as the computer virus, which copies itself through mediated systems bypassing many of Dawkin's original principles for the transmission of cultural information (2001: 285).

McNamara's assertion that the meme can be quantified as a form of network substrate linking neurological rhizome-like structures to physical networks of memetic artefacts (or E-memes) reinvigorates the potentials of a memetic model for cultural transmission (although these insights are far from comprehensive in isolation). Whilst McNamara's assertion that alongside the advent of evolutionary neuroscience it is possible to map I-memes as neural substrate within the human central nervous system (2011: 1), the problem with the E-meme or memetic artefact (as a variety of objections suggest – Boyd and Richardson, 2000; Dugatkin 2000; and Sperber, 2000) and with notable silence in the most relevant areas of contemporary cognitive neuroscientific research (Lacoboni, 2005; Rizzolatti, 2005), is the lack of a comparative form of measurement between the two components. McNamara defends his position however, by claiming that it is erroneous to perceive E-memes as a substitute term for 'stimulus' or 'object' as neither or these terms account for the way in which memetic artefacts appear to evolve as

observable within the shifting manifestations of culture (the development of the wheel, for example) (2011: 1).

Equally, criticisms of a purely memetic theory of cultural transmission can be characterised by the de-humanising effects (Blackmore, 2005) of the individual as 'vehicle' or 'carrier' paradigm extant within several models outlined (Lynch, 1996). Indeed within Blackmore's theoretical model of memetic transmission, concepts of self and consciousness are eroded to such a degree that acts of creativity become essentialised as the selective pressures of both genes and memes played out across time (Blackmore, 2005: 223). Rather, it can be argued that humans actively interpret received information in light of existing knowledge and values and on that basis, may decide to reject, accept or modify information that is communicated to them (Heylighen and Cheilens, 2009). In other words, individuals and groups actively intervene in the production and curation of cultural materials from within.

## MEME/RHIZOME SYNTHESIS

In light of insights gained from memetic theory, particularly those concerning the relationship between the neurological rhizome-like structures McNamara terms 'I-memes' (2012), I began to formulate a theoretical synthesis between the structural qualities of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome and the transitive properties of the meme. I was struck by the way Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome allows for physical and material objects to contribute directly to the construction of meaning in cultural activity. Rather than understanding human beings as mere 'carriers' (Lynch, 1996) for information and instruments of memetic and genetic inscription as postulated within aspects of memetic literature (Blackmore, 2005), the human being can also be understood as a rhizomic structure in itself. Existing as a form of desiring *mise-en-abyme*<sup>9</sup> within the larger 'culture rhizome'.

In that regard, human interventions in the propagation of culture can be understood within a multiplicity of disparate elements including social production (the construction of creative artefacts and processes for example), biological structures (bodies), genetic effects (behaviours) and histories (both personal and shared): all resonating to produce meaning. In many ways Julia Kristeva (1978) predicted this stance in relation to Performance suggesting that the thinking, moving body is not a vessel of denotation such that the gesture denotes some signified by means of socially determined codes, but is rather a process of inclusion within the same semiotic space:

[Gesture is] ...a practice of designation, a gesture which shows not to signify, but to englobe in one and the same space (without the dichotomies of the idea-word, sign-signifier), let us say in one and the same semiotic text, 'subject' and 'object' and practice.

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<sup>9</sup> I utilise the term the term '*mise-en-abyme*' to denote the self-reflexive nature of representation as a central tenet of postmodern philosophy (Dillon in Sim, 2001: 274).



(Kristeva, 1978: 269)

This flattening of the relations between the gestural or performed action, and the psychological renounces the privileges commonly attributed to either, so that there remains neither a relation of causation nor of hierarchies, levels, grounds or foundations (Grosz, 1994: 180). Indeed, the idea of the rhizome which is constantly productive provides a way of mapping physical and theoretical undertakings that does not assume that the map itself has a consistent core or a temporal stability. I therefore developed a perspective that defined the meme *as* the network substrate of these fragile connections; in essence as the molecular substrate of the rhizome:

There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds. There are only haecceities, affects, subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages. [...] We call this plane, which knows only longitudes and latitudes, speeds and haecceities the plane of consistency or composition.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 266)

Deleuze and Guattari's 'haecceities, molecules and particles' are understood here as commensurate with Dawkin's 'meme': replicating propagating and mutating the rhizomic structure of a given assemblage with varying speed and direction. The rhizomic structure or 'plane' is reconfigured in this synthesis as McNamara's neural network jointed in the physical by 'memetic artefacts' (Aunger, 2001). From this initial point of synthesis, further points of connection were discovered, not as theoretical parallels but rather as movements into, as, and through the 'discursive knotting' (Jäger and Maier, 2009) of memes themselves. I began to consider how Heylighen and Cheilens' (2008) stages of memetic transmission might connect with Deleuze and Guattari's formulations of the rhizome. The key stages characteristic of memetic processes as outlined by Heylighen and Cheilens (assimilation, retention, expression

and transmission) were repurposed as the linking qualities of rhizomic appendages. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari's own writings on the qualities of rhizomic structures can be understood to share many of the same qualities as the meme:

Memetic 'transmission' (Heylighen and Cheilens, 2008) is enacted when a Deleuze and Guattarian rhizome 'copies itself' (1987: 8), 'metamorphosis' (1987: 8) when the rhizome 'mutates' (2008). Concepts of 'assimilation' (2008) are enacted when the rhizome 'connects to existing multiplicities' (1987: 10), and memes are 'expressed' (2008) when the rhizome 'folds out, not as a tracing but as an extension' (1987: 12). Deleuze and Guattari also elucidate a concept of memetic 'retention' (2008) when they speak of a rhizome's 'assignifying rupture': a rhizome may fracture, shatter even, but will always 'start up again' (1987: 11). The rhizome's cartographic quality as a system of multiple entryways also obligates an inherent (if not fragmentary) narrative dynamic that resonates with Daniel Dennett's proposal that memes produce a 'narrative centre of gravity' both for the individual and for larger social groups (Dennett, 1991: 42). Indeed the process of cartography itself as a form of 'geospatial storytelling' (Caquard, 2013: 135) is subject to constant transmission, growth, and modification and can be seen as intrinsically rhizomic.

I saw this synthesis of meme and rhizome as the liberation of the creative act, and the individual from perception as carriers of signifying cultural forces, the meaning of which were created elsewhere and inscribed into passive bodies and objects. The non-hierarchical nature of the rhizome coupled with a new understanding of its transitive, enacting qualities as memetic generated a level playing field for all possible elements of meaning-making (both material and non-material, sign and non-sign). This plane of

consistency<sup>10</sup> allowed understandings of interactivity and inter-subjectivity as primary markers in the production of meaning extant within my creative practice. In response to this synthesis I began to formulate a provisional outline of what I understood as the governing qualities an artistic practice governed by the qualities of rhizome/meme synthesis. I termed this type of assemblage as a Rhizo-Meme and utilise the phrase 'Rhizo-Memetic' throughout the remainder of this writing to describe constructs that display its qualities.

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<sup>10</sup> See: Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 9) where they define a 'plane of consistency' as a surface with no depth. That is, no element on a plane of consistency stands for, or indicates another.

## TOWARD RHIZO-MEMETIC ART<sup>11</sup>

*When all the Artist's efforts are directed toward the transmission of nature's own creative forms we move in but one direction. When Art is pure re-iteration we thieves as counterfeiters clone the coin.*

*Add one*

*Add one*

*Add one*

*Accumulate*

*Stagnate*

*Only when we align our efforts with the conceptual do we fly outward from the plateau and toward the imminent: our efforts synchronise with the realms of Form which are always already entangled in our own materiality.*

*When we find resonance between the meme and the rhizome and free our Art from thoughts of subject, object and singularity, we too become free. We see material, physical and none: we see shape, and sadness and energy and death. In the stream we see the flow of mass from which all forms are made: we witness the performativity of matter. Our genes, our memes and our materiality - nature's beating heart - is a complex web of influence, energy and pace. We are her process. We are not progression. We are change. We are Rhizo-Memetic.*

*Our Art is transmission*

*Our Art is not only replication*

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<sup>11</sup> This propositional outline takes the form of an artistic manifesto, developing many fundamental precepts for what I consider Rhizo-Memetic Art. I suggest the reader consider this manifesto less a consistent aesthetic or philosophical credo, and rather as speculation on the potential nature of an imminent Rhizo-Memetic Artwork.

*Our Art is Mutation*

*Our Art is connection, interaction and re-conceptualisation. Our Art is the anti-thesis of metaphysics; of fundamentalism. Our Art is square peg in round hole. Our Art is always an aggregate of that which is never complete. Our Art is sedimentary and in constant accrual.*

*When all is equally non-signifying, everything becomes significant...*

*My thoughts at the swimming pool...*

*The taste of the apple I am eating...*

*The temperature of the water when I shower...*

*Sleeping*

*Reading*

*The rhizome allows me to connect these things asymmetrically and without bias. The meme shows me how. An array of inter-subjectivity, encounters and objects combined over time. All time? I think of past, present and future times. I write about past, present and future times. I imagine past, present and future times...I climb through a web of past, present and future times. I am part of the rhizome and the meme is part of me.*

*Our thoughts melt, blur and bump up against those I mark into paper, or type into a machine, or clench into a fist, or send vibrating through the air to the back of the auditorium, or save to the hard drive.*

*These memes hunt in packs*

*Animal*

*This is not mimesis*

*The Rhizo-Meme assimilates existing networks, narratives and structures, yet it is not these things itself. It formulates new connections, it is formless like information. It is code. It manifests as the dancer's shift of balance and the writer's flick of the pen. It is the technician's placement of the rostrum and the seamstress' thread. The Rhizo-Meme is never just one of these things. It is always... and... and... and... change... and... copy... change... and...*

*Within the Rhizo-Meme thought is action: movement. We swim in streams of thought. We climb through roots, folded, knotted, fused, broken and rebuilt. In this transmission, in this mutation, the cohesiveness of Things disappears. Whilst Things might tell stories, whilst they may project images or produce sound, the specificity of their form, genre and classification is meaningless. The Rhizo-Meme is the inter-subjectivity of perception and the agency of its inter-actors. Rhizo-Memetic Art is the shifting materiality of Form and Subject produced by the inter-action of its collaborators. It manifests (only ever for a short while) as a network of residues and artefacts. It is always emergent, iterative and performative. It is engaged in the endless re-imagining of human worlds.*

*An Artwork without fixed form*

*An Artwork of fluctuating materiality*

*A network of multiple forms and of shifting content*

*Of interactors, replicants, mutations*

*Of intensity, exchange and flow...*

## CONCEPTUALISING RHIZO-MEMETIC ART

In light of potential insights produced by my theoretical formulations of the Rhizo-Meme, I began the process of producing a Rhizo-Memetic assemblage through creative practice. I theorised that given the appropriate research environment I might initiate a traceable Rhizo-Memetic process and that the produced assemblage might operate as a unique form of contemporary artwork governed by the qualities outlined through my rhizome/meme synthesis. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on the interactivity of rhizomic systems, with individuals seen as heterogeneous link-makers suggested that the produced Rhizo-Memetic Artwork would take form as a generative, affective process: 'something is produced: the effects of a machine, not mere metaphors' (1998: 2).

The concept of 'generative' art-making, as explicated by Philip Galanter (2006), refers to any art practice where the artist initiates a process, 'such as a set of rules, ... a program, a machine, or other procedural invention' (2006: 8), which is then 'set into motion' (2006: 8) with some degree of autonomy dissociated from the artist, which contributes to a resulting work of art. Similarly, Adrian Ward (1999) suggests that creative works which concentrate on the processes of artistic production, 'usually (although not strictly) automated by the use of a machine or computer, or by using mathematic or pragmatic instructions as rules by which such artworks are executed' (1999: online) be termed Generative Art.

Here, several streams of thought began to merge and cluster: concepts of generative art-making started to plug into and connect with my theorisations of the Rhizo-Meme. I established an affinity between concepts of autonomy, distribution, motion, rule and machine to my synthesis of the rhizome and meme theory. These

connections tapped into Deleuze and Guattari's explication of the rhizome as a 'desiring machine' (1987: 86) alongside the procedural and connection properties of memetic transmission (Heylighen and Cheilens, 2008). I wondered whether the distributed network qualities of the rhizome, with its tubers reaching out and across a multiplicity of states, agencies, bodies, media and acts might be theorised as a form of expanded generative artwork. I began to understand that my formulation of the governing principles of the Rhizo-Meme might also function as 'pragmatic instructions' (Ward, 1999: online) for the making of Rhizo-Memetic Art. I theorised the Rhizo-Meme as multiple autonomy: endlessly expansive and reductive in motion, and governed by transmission, replication and mutation – a plethora of orders, forms, wills and forces that cannot be controlled - an art-work that is also the net-work.



## WE ARE THE BORG<sup>12</sup>

*How do you 'program' a rhizome?! You can't. You don't. The Rhizo-Meme moves past and through concepts of Generative Art.*

*Too rigid...*

*Too formal...*

*It does replicate some of its properties though.*

*But it delineates others.*

*I'm reminded of Janet Murray's investigations again. Digital environments as 'spatial and encyclopaedic' (1998: 71).*

*I think about the Internet*

*I imagine vast electronic webs inside of webs inside of webs inside of webs*

*\*Pinch screen\**

*"We are the Borg"*

*"Lower your shields and surrender your ships..."*

*\*Zoom out\**

*I imagine points of connection that spark like synapses*

*I think about the Internet, and I think about the Social Network...*

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<sup>12</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journal. 23.10.12: Free-writing session reflecting on my decision to utilise Social Media platforms as a foundation for the production of Rhizo-Memetic Art.

## CONCEPTUALISING RHIZO-MEMETIC ART (CONT. 1)

Activity on the Internet has predominantly manifested within discourse (Turkle, 1995) facilitated by the Internet through low-cost reproduction, immediate dissemination and decentralisation (Jones, 1999; Poster, 2001). Due to its digital substructure, discourses within Internet enabled media are stored in online repositories, web pages, caches and so on, enabling easy access, retrievability and manipulation without the loss or corruption of data (Sharf, 1999:244). Given the diversity, accessibility and persistence of activity within online sites of transmission (Castells, 2000; Jones, 1999; Negroponte, 1996; Turkle, 1995), I formulated an understanding of Rhizo-Memetic art across live and technologically assisted networks.

Built upon constellations of Internet technologies, the World Wide Web is constructed from groups of decentralised web sites within open and unrestricted areas of access and are hypertextually linked, producing 'overt intertextuality' (Mitra and Cohen, 1999;183) or 'discursive knotting' (Jäger and Maier, 2009: 47). The rapid adoption of social media applications and micro-blogging sites Facebook and Twitter has also been facilitated in part by the network capabilities of the Internet (Barton, 2007).

Gillen and Merchant (2013) suggest that studies of discourse within social media such as Twitter illuminate understandings of digital communication as activities characterised by instability of meaning, with potential for actualising creativity through the innovation of accessible functionality (2013:49). I began to imagine a Rhizo-Memetic Artwork that utilises the Internet, and the functions of online social media as a gravitational nexus; a form of networked performance art without a singular platform. I imagined an artwork that is inherently transitive, that might utilise the Internet, for example to transmit, assemble, and present itself both online and offline.

## THE ETERNAL NETWORK<sup>13</sup>

*I am reminded of Ray Johnson, Fluxus and Correspondence Art. Communication... the speed, flow and exchange of information.*

*...Robert Filliou's Eternal Network (Danto, 1999)...*

*I remember Harm Van Den Dorpel's Assemblage (2012).*



*I imagine information that exists in motion...*

*Spans across diverse relations and existences...reproducing, traversing, mutating...*

*Occupying different spaces and forms... always reconstituting itself*

*Activated as network of nodes and channels of transmission...*

*A distributed process and an independent occurrence...*

*An expanding object, ceaselessly...*

*Circulating...*

*Assembling...*

*... And dispersing*

**Image 1:** Photograph: *Assemblage*, New Museum, New York. Image credit: Harm Van Dorpel, Wilkinson Gallery.

<sup>13</sup> Adaptation of researcher's journal/image scrapbook. 21.09.12.

## CONCEPTUALISING RHIZO-MEMETIC ART (CONT. 2)

Harm van den Dorpel's *Assemblage* (2012) is emblematic of the fluidity and movement of network-dependent information. Constructed of Perspex plastic bands tied together in circular forms and suspended in the air by small chains, *Assemblage* resembles tumbleweed floating in space; a gestural form that dramatizes the vast circulation of digital information; image, video, text and sound. The turn towards online social networks (such as those used to produce *Assemblage*) for more than one billion users globally (Statista, 2015: online), illuminated the potential of a Rhizo-Memetic Artwork to employ social media as a way of archiving circulating detritus, and reflecting on multiple notions of identity and experience implied by its users.

Equally, in light of Goffman's "front and backstage metaphor" for impression management and the enactment of social roles (Goffman, 1959), a number of recent studies (Peesapati, 2010) have theorised the use of social media as sites of context-specific social performance. More recently Hogan (2010) extended Goffman's theory; arguing that social media's 'reviewability' and 'searchability' render the interfaces of social media with an ambiance similar to that of an exhibition or archival space (2010: 385).

Through social media, digital "performances of self" transmit traceable residues (tweets, posts, image uploads, video, hyperlinks) that through 'the performative nature of digital code' (Hayles, 2005) act as artefacts of cultural transmission. The accrual and compilation of these artefacts; these digital 'E-Memes' (McNamara, 2012) enable the profiles and news-feeds of social media sites to take on the character of collaboratively produced and curated exhibitions. I began to formulate ways in which these qualities might operate as procedural tools for the initiation of a Rhizo-Memetic Artwork.

Gillen and Merchant (2013) describe the addressivity and conversational coherence of Twitter, elucidating that subscribers to the online platform are invited to respond to 'deceptively simple' (2013: 52) prompt questions using only 140 characters. These responses form part of the processional flow or streams of "tweets" that enable subscription to and adaption of heterogeneous flows of communication at the discretion of the user.

Furthermore, their suggestion that this form of 'micro-blogging' (2013: 53) embodies the 'postmodern fluidity' of relationships and the exchange of information (2013: 56) was striking in relation to theories of informational flow within Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome. I noted Honeycutt and Herring's (2009) assertion that the 'Twittersphere' (2009: 31) could be observed upon entry as a 'cacophonous multi-party online environment' in opposition 'everyday dyadic interaction' (2009: 32). Indeed, the 'schizophrenic nature of the postmodern cultural narratives' (Currie, 1998: 96) such as those evidenced within Twitter (Gillen and Merchant, 2013; Honeycutt and Herring, 2009) plugged into my understandings of the rhizome, and thus my own formulations of Rhizo-Memetic Art as an infinitely diverse agglomeration of cultural influence.

During this period I also noted the connective intensities, or resonance between the communicative protocols of the Twittersphere outlined by Gillen and Merchant (2013) alongside Hogan's (2013) formulations of social media as a form of virtual exhibit. Similarly in 1992, Gilbert Simondon proposed a compelling understanding of the relationship between digital information and network communication, observing that information is not simply the content of communication, but an unfolding process within its own material constitution (Simondson, 1992).

In essence, digital information could be understood as "enacting" or "performing" its own constitution. Further, Simondon notes that such informational

processes exist in digital environments in a way that is inherently 'immersive, excessive, and dynamic' (1992: 26), pointing towards an interpretation of information and communication that is not reduced simply to signal and noise, or dyadic interaction. Equally, Tiziana Terranova's 'informational milieu' (2004) extrapolates from the processual dynamics of Simondon's model in characterising the contemporary as a period in which nearly all aspects of the human environment exist in ongoing exchange with digital communication; asking us to consider how the logic and demands of information's 'massless flows' are integral to the reorganization of culture, representation and performativity:

...information is not simply the content of a message, or the main form assumed by the commodity in late capitalist economies, but also another name for the increasing visibility and importance of such 'massless flows' as they become the environment within which contemporary culture unfolds. In this sense, we can refer to informational cultures as involving the explicit constitution of an informational milieu – a milieu composed of dynamic and shifting relations between such “massless flows”

(Terranova, 2004: 34).

Terranova's view of digital information and digital communication as a “massless flow” - or equally, form and content as always already immersed in each other's constitution rather than as distinct others, became significant in the development of this creative practice – particularly in relation to the materiality of Rhizo-Memetic Art.

Recent theorisations within Memetics have begun to correlate with understandings of information as a physical materiality – rather than existing in one way or another as abstraction (Aunger, 2002: 137). Within a Memetic framework, ideas or any other form of information don't have a mass, or charge or length - and equally, matter cannot be measured in bytes; it doesn't have redundancy, fidelity or any other descriptor commonly utilised to express replicators such as the gene.

This scarcity of shared descriptors has commonly resulted in the discussion of matter and information as existing within different realms of existence. This dualism, essentially between thought and matter can be traced back through Cartesian Dualism to Plato's 'abstract heaven'. Plato argued that ideas, and therefore "thought" existed within that which he called the 'Realm of Form'. This aspect of Platonism, Aunger argues, places replicators (namely the meme) within a separate plane of forms, whilst "interactors" or "communicators" such as humans exist within a material realm (Aunger, 2002: 139).

Memetic replicators then, surely cannot be physical objects? Much like the physical gene – that is, the string of atoms comprising the DNA molecule – is not what biological evolution conserves and passes on (Dawkins, 1974). The same could be said of Memetic Artefacts (costumes, props or lighting rigs) - only the information embedded (might one say encoded?) into these materials is passed on. Like both Plato and McNamara's 'chair' - the atoms that construct every physical chair changes, yet transmission of the idea of a chair transfers from communicator to communicator; from human to human. Nevertheless, it seems that the transmission of information remains irrefutably entangled within physical substrates, or Memetic Artefacts that enable their transmission – just as the coding of the gene remains entangled in DNA.

Whilst it remains true that information doesn't have a number of physical properties like mass, charge or length; ideas are not immaterial. I also argue that they are not entirely ephemeral - information doesn't exist independently of the material through which it is made manifest. Even our thoughts (as McNamara outlines with I-Memes) are structured through the fluctuation of electrical charges within the brain (McNamara, 2011). It seems then, that the relationships between information and communication; form and content; I-Meme and E-meme remains a measure associated with the quality

and performativity of matter. Whilst not matter itself, information, an idea, a meme remains a physical quantity entangled within the relationship between form and content; of materiality and coding - an idea which is made explicit in the massless flows and informational milieu of networked interactivity...

*An Artwork without a fixed form...*

*An Artwork based on fluctuating materiality...*

*A Network of multiple forms...*

Within *Nettitudes: Let's Talk Net Art* (2011) Josephine Bosma connects the work of Simondon and other thinkers including Brian Massumi and Gilles Deleuze when elaborating upon a non-reductive approach towards artistic production. Bosma writes in an effort to reconsider the role of medium - that is to say, the material that is employed within artistic processes.

Rather than viewing matter, medium, and body as static objects, Bosma reorients the conversation toward an understanding that matter (and therefore, medium) are constantly in a state of movement and change (Bosma, 2011: 54). Vital to her thesis is Brian Massumi's definition of "matter" in *Parables of the Virtual* (2002). Massumi defines matter as 'form-taking activity immanent to an event of taking form' (Massumi, 2002: 67). Within this definition, we can understand how Massumi, and thus Bosma conceptualise digital matter as a form of potentiality rather than inertia.

Thus, we can understand that when artists activate the components, or multiple materialities that aggregate an artwork, they participate in what Simondon terms 'resonance' (Simondon, 1992) where all elements - matter, technology, body - momentarily synchronise. In light of these insights, one might define Rhizo-Memetic Art as the ontology of performative becoming in action. According to which, there exists no



divide between humans and non-humans, people and objects. This network of relations between agencies may not remain intrinsically coherent, and encompass conflicts of traditional logic. As Rebecca Schneider notes similarly of the Performing Arts archive - it unfolds as 'a constellation of residues produced by performance; a [mediated] network of relations between bodies and objects that remains live' (Schneider, 2001: 108). Equally, Rhizo-Memetic Art might be considered as the heterogeneous composition of memetic networks, in much the same way that Music is considered as the composition of sound.

Returning to my earlier speculations on the potential nature of Rhizo-Memetic Art within the manifesto: *Towards the Rhizo-Meme*, we can see how Bosma's characterisations of Net-Art overlap, with aspects of my own meme/rhizome synthesis. Indeed my philosophical framework converges with Bosma's own in Deleuzian theory. Undeniably, emergent neologisms including 'Post Internet' (Debatty, 2008), 'Post Media' (McHugh, 2011), 'Post Media Aesthetics' (Manovich, 2000), 'Radicant Art' (Bourriaud, 2009), 'Dispersion' (Price, 2009), 'Formatting' (Sanchez, 2011), 'Circulationism' (Steverl, 2013) - all recent terms to describe contemporary net-based art making similar to Rhizo-Memetic Art, share in a sense that given the rise of mainstream internet culture and rapid adoption of social media, contemporary art practice is becoming 'more fluid, elastic, and dispersed' (Cornell, 2014: online).

As Lauren Cornell (2014) astutely asserts 'terms are always placeholders for more complex and overlapping ideas, and when successful, can instigate deeper understandings of the contemporary' (Cornell, 2014: online). Memetically speaking, the increase in quantity and copying fidelity of these terminologies may suggest a confluence of thinking within the contemporary Zeitgeist, signalling the emergence of a new and unique forms of artistic practice - of which Rhizo-Memetic, Radicant,

Dispersed and Circulatory forms, share common practical, theoretical and philosophical features. Bridle summarises the situation perfectly:

All our metaphors are broken. The network is not a space (notional, cyber or otherwise) and it is not time (while it is embedded in it at an odd angle). It is some other kind of dimension entirely. However, meaning is always emergent in the network, it is the apophatic silence at the heart of everything – that which can be pointed to. That is what the *New Aesthetic* in part, is an attempt to do, maybe, possibly, contingently, to point at these things and go 'but what does it mean'.

(Bridle, 2012: online)

## **THE EMERGENCE OF RHIZO-MEMETIC ARTS PRACTICE (1900 – 2017)**

The practices discussed in this review have been selected in order to expose the theoretical features of the Rhizo-Meme as encountered in existing artistic works. These works all use Performance to propose a new outlook, a different apprehension of reality. They are resistant yet malleable; both disruptive and innovative. By formulation, Rhizo-Memetic practices do not merely present, with a greater or lesser degree of skill, the culturally active forms, norms structures and habits, and in so doing, continually suggest changes and amendments that make up our social reality. That they are simultaneously resistant and malleable suggests that they work both with and against habituation. The Rhizo-Meme's theoretical asymmetry and assimilative qualities place Rhizo-Memetic practice in a symbiotic relationship with notions of hegemony. This is important because habituation is closely linked to hegemony as the sphere of culturally and politically implicit practices that have become naturalised, and serve the goals and interests of a dominant group:

Hegemony is... a whole body of practices over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy... a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming.

(Williams, 1977: 124).

Therefore, the practices discussed in this review all confront (in some way or other) deeply memetic habits, hierarchies of value, notions of truth and inconspicuous forms of oppression. This is partly the reason why Rhizo-Memetic practices can also be categorised as avant-garde; they are methodologically innovative, and signify a rupture, in all senses of the word. In understanding Rhizo-Memetic practice as avant-garde however, I do not suggest that the reader will not have encountered aspects of them

before; such an understanding would be naïve at best, and entails a linear concept of time, and purely accumulative approach to ontology which this thesis opposes. Each practice encountered in this review can be traced to a previous concept or practice. It is far more accurate to describe Rhizo-Memetic practices as those that break with the oppressive and ossified order whose hierarchies resist heterogeneity.

What makes the practices encountered in this review uniquely Rhizo-Memetic is the way in Performance (as theorised specifically in this thesis) is mobilised in each instance as a vehicle for transdisciplinary synthesis; assimilating disciplinary hegemonies and making them hybrid. In this act of hybridisation, Rhizo-Memetic practices present different ways of doing in so much as they create provisional alternatives to dominant systems, which is to say that they are always emergent, iterative and intensely performative. They are engaged in the endless re-coding of human worlds. They work against that which Foucault identifies as the inherent penalties of monodisciplinary (1977:223). Through Performance, Rhizo-Memetic practices re-characterise, de-classify, broaden; they combine rather than allocate. They create exceptions, and re-stratify relations by qualifying and validating the heterogeneous.

In such a regard, this review does not attempt to reference every practice that demonstrates Rhizo-Memetic qualities in detail, nor does it focus on extensive historical context. Rather, it sheds light on the socio-historic constellations that have produced the performative strategies under discussion in the main body of this thesis.

From Modernism through Postmodernism, performance and installation art have joined literature and the figurative arts in the exploration of technology through narrative themes of transformation and metamorphosis, shifting from mechanic aesthetics and

discontinuous narratives to questions of identity, complicity and agency within artistic systems. As performance artists began to challenge grand narratives, they also challenged the Cartesian subject-event relationship through breaking the fourth-wall and seeking to envelop the audience, and finally co-opting the audience as participants. Questions of audience agency and materiality have been central to this development with the spaces of performance, characterised by shifts from the proscenium stage to site-specific, or blended and digitised spaces, inviting discussion of the 'stage' itself as an interface. Each of these shifts in modality suggests a 'Rhizo-Memetic turn' within the performance and digital arts practices. In the following writing, I articulate these turns in relation to the aesthetic credo discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis.

In *The Interface Effect*, Galloway opens up the definition of interface to include the constructed environment in which we move physically, with thresholds and openings presenting points on 'intersection' or "transition between different mediatic layers with any nested system" and their codes (Galloway, 2012:31-33), and narratives emerging through the interaction with interfaces and the friction between their encoded layers. By extension, Galloway's nested systems and the interfaces they present to us are not limited to the technological interfaces with have become accustomed to associating with the term; they include the urban and the built environment, as well as older forms of technology such as theatre, written texts and filmic productions. Of particular interest to this study, are the interfaces constructed in the production and curation of works of performance, they allow for a focus on interaction design prior to, and leading up to the development of a Rhizo-Memetic coding of interaction across socio-cultural interfaces, as well as exemplifying embodied approaches to the making and parsing of nested systems of meaning.

Key to the selection the performing arts as the object of study for research of Rhizo-Memetic systems is their association with play, and the recognition of play as an adaptive or differential function within systems. Play, according to Galloway, locally smoothes or manages the friction between the encoded, mediatic layers of interfaces via our capacity for meaning-making:

Play is the thing that overcomes systemic contradiction but always via recourse to that special, ineffable thing that makes us most human. It is as it were, a melodrama of the rhizome.

(Galloway, 2012, 29)

Galloway's association of play with the rhizomic in this argument, i.e. as the human faculty that allows us to overcome systemic contradiction, emphasises the role of performance as a form of local, de-centred and site-responsive adaptive tactic to systemic contradictions, which introduces the notion of the minor register and points to the role of minor tactics within systems as both yielding and distorting. The minor in this context is that which is subordinated to the transcendent measure, the "supposedly universal model of man" and that which deviates, or differs from expressions and representations that support normative centrality. In performing arts, the minor is expressed through non-conventional organisational forms that seek to distort and create 'variation' (Dawkins, Aunger, et al) (e.g. plot, choreography, language, staging, costumes, props) (Cull, 2012: 20). This chapter therefore explores emergent expressions in theatre, performance their intermediaries, as Rhizo-Memetic systems in a minor scale, and their articulations of, and challenges to dominant hegemonic structures of thought from 1900 to the present day.

## **Deconstruction and Entanglement**

*Superpositions* opens with Deleuze's essay in minor theatre, *Un Manifeste de Moins*, in which he discusses the substrative operations performed by Carmelo Bene in the production of *Richard III*. To this effect, he underscores subtractive methods in theatre that strip and distort narratives, and defines the role of the theatre maker as an "operator", allowing for interpretations including the performance of functions (often technical) within a system and the operations of a surgeon (Bene and Deleuze, 1979: 89).

Rhizomic, rather than linear operations in a 'minor theatre' make incisions into representational layers that support established systems of meaning. Some of these are obviously narrative, such as the stage décor, costumes and script, while others are representational elements, found on a more structural level, e.g. the relative coherence of a narrative, the structure and organisation of the performance space, and the centrality of the distribution of authorship. 'Minor' as those forms of expression that challenge established systems of meaning (Cull, 2012: 20), and often include distortion, discontinuity, and distribution of authorship and agency. The trajectory of experimental performance and theatre that breaks the fourth wall to envelop compromise and immerse audience forms part of this particular register, alongside another breakaway trajectory that challenges traditional forms of representation through subtraction and incision. Initially, acentric narratives and disruptive staging embraced absurdity and a futuristic aesthetic, and the earlier part of this history of the Rhizo-Memetic draws of the anti-realistic tendency in Modernism, from symbolism through to Italian and Russian futurism, DaDa and German Expressionism. These include early examples of anti-representational performance, the machinic aesthetic, Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, *acentric narratives*, forms of theatre building on Artaud's vision of a Total Theatre, and the challenges of the proscenium stage that can be seen in the early modernist and

experimental theatre, in particular Max Reinhardt's 'theatre-machines' and the introduction of theatre in the round and ambulatory audiences in Russian experimental theatre in the 1930s.

With postmodernity, theoretical perspectives and practices in experimental theatre and performance shifted towards the notion of the imminent, defining the performance space as discursive environment. Lyotard's discussion of the legitimisation of 'narrative knowledge' through performance articulates developments in post-war European performance art, and remains relevant to the discourse on Rhizo-Memetic systems (Lyotard, 1984:18-20), to which, later exponents of the immersive aesthetic in participatory performance theatre contribute. The more recent part of the history described herein, is concerned with complicity, including the re-emergence of ideas of agency, materiality and transformation through quasi-ritualistic participation, and the deprioritisation (and in some cases, radical deconstruction) of central authorship, with agency at times extended to include the audience, and sometimes - beyond them. Experimentation with the subject-event relationship and the situated agency of the body in a discursively structured performance space characterises the avant-garde through this period, often expressed through performance theatre, ritualistic performances, site specific theatre, happenings, installations and live art.

Indeed, the Rhizo-Memetic aesthetic (as I suggest it emerges) within the postmodern is approached via participatory theatre and performance, companies working with augmented reality and pervasive immersive games, and performance theatre with hyper-responsive and localised narratives. The work selected for this section emphasises questions of agency and complicity in formats drawing on first-person shooter games or funfair rides, or through the creation of augmented or blended



media-extensions of story-worlds – those which Jenkins calls ‘transmedial’ (2003). Some companies presented, including Blast Theory, Agency of Coney and PunchDrunk work directly with formats that articulate knowledge that is generated through Rhizo-Memetic systems, foregrounding the heterogeneous construction of individual agency within such systems as part of sense-making processes.

### **The Modernist Avant-Garde**

Symbolism, a branch of late 19<sup>th</sup> century romanticism that came to inspire futurism, Dadaism and surrealism, was a reaction to naturalism and realism that emphasises the subjective, and sought to elicit states of mind and direct experiences of the sublime; an amalgamate of awe and terror that within the context of an aesthetic experience produces pleasure due to the suspension or ‘not happening’ of the perceived, imminent threat: the secondary privation of the soul being ‘deprived of the threat of being deprived of light, language, life’ (Lyotard, 1991: 99). This definition of the sublime as a deviant form, or even the destruction of totalising concepts of harmony or naturalised ‘good sense’ was key to the symbolist urge to articulate that which lies beyond such constructs; not from a position of critical distance, but from a yearning to collapse the distances created by the hierarchic separation of mind and body.

Separating art-making from technically proficient representation forms the basis of antirealist modernism in both art and performance; whether expressed in aesthetic spiritualisation (e.g. Symbolism) or abstraction. The symbolists, e.g. painters such as Puvis de Chavannes, Odilon Redon, Edward Munch and Pierre Bonnard, and poets Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine and Stephane Mallarme, formed a vantage point from which Alfred Jarry created his absurdist theatre and explored key themes of the recesses of the soul, the complexity of sexuality, and the nature of

existence seen from an often highly subjective position (Bowness, 1972: 78-86). The symbolists distanced themselves both from traditional representations and allegorical rhetoric in keeping with the romantic sublime, and sought expression beyond conventional aesthetic means.

The search for expression beyond conventional aesthetics presents a more persistent challenge in theatre and performance than it does in the arts where abstraction of form is performed more readily: the physical presence of the actor problematises escape from the commodity form (Blau, 1992: 4). Abstraction, associated with the search for pure artistic expression beyond representation that characterised much of modern art, is compromised by the physical body of the actor, which is already always entangled in hierarchies of visibility. The challenge and embodiment of presence therefore share the experimental stage with early 20<sup>th</sup> century theatre and performance devices for attempting to escape the conventional expression and commodity form of the physical body, including a deliberate lack of technical perfection, alienation of the audience and machinic aesthetic.

The opening performance of *Ubu Roi* in 1896 was to be only one of two, as the vigorous criticism the play received prompted the director of *Theatre de l'Oeuvre*, Aurelien Lugne Poe, to close the production after two performances. Jarry, whose *Ubu Roi* is regarded by some as the beginning of experimental theatre, was embedded in the Parisian symbolist circles of artists and writers with roots in the humourist groups of artistic cabarets of Montmartre in the 1880s and 1890s (Dubbelboer, 2012: 41-45). *Ubu Roi* was produced and staged with disregard for theatrical convention, lacking a coherent plot and believable characters. The play opened with the word 'merdre!' and

satirised in concurrent parallel narratives the stupidity, vulgarity, cruelty and greed of modern man.

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, with references to Jarry, presented *Roi Bombance* at *Theatre de 'Oeuvre* in 1909, two months after publishing his first futurist manifesto. The futurist vision for theatre, like Artaud's would later, excelled in manifestos more than in realised performances, but futurist evening gatherings presented provocative cabaret or variety style theatre that expressed the spirit in which these manifestos were written. Marinetti admired the striving in variety theatre for novelty rather than narrative depth, and preferred the more active and irreverent role of the cabaret audiences: he was inspired by variety theatre to proclaim the purpose of futurist theatre being to "destroy the Solemn, the Sacred, the Serious, and the Sublime in Art with a capital A' (Goldberg, 2011: 17). Key features of futurism theatre were the use of atonal sounds, nonsense text and mechanical physical movement: at the time provocative attempts at machinic performance, which resulted in many evenings being rounded off by a barrage of vegetables thrown at the stage, and/or arrests (Goldberg, 2011: 16).

In Moscow, Vladimir Mayakovski, David Burlyuk, Velemir Khlebnikov, Aleksey Kruchenykh and Vasily Kemensky formed an artist's collective under the name Hylaea from 1911-1912 around their avant-garde cage theatre, where they presented tragedies and operas sharing some of the characteristics of Italian futurists. Other futurist groups formed in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev, but Hylaea is widely regarded as the most influential. The members of the group soon took their theatre outside the performance space, seeking to extend the non-theatricality of their work beyond the confines of the stage. An affinity for the circus, and a Cubist, non-objective aesthetic characterised Kruchenykh's futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun* and Mayakovski's tragedy *Vladimir*

Mayakovski, both created in 1913. The two productions ran simultaneously, and sought to integrate not just set, costume, actor and gesture, but also promoted a disintegration of the boundary between stage and auditorium through spectator participation (Goldberg, 2011: 34-38). Their activities off-stage included public appearances in outlandish outfits, poetry readings in the streets and assaults on members of the public, reflecting the title of their manifesto 'A Slap in the Face of the Public Taste' (published in 1913), and foreshadowed much later transmedial experiments, including pervasive mixed-reality games. Vsevolod Meyerhold, who, like Jarry, began his career in a symbolist vein, was inspired by Konstantin Stanislavski and produced several of Mayakovski's works for the stage. Meyerhold experimented with circus-like effects on stage and formulated a method of acting termed 'biomechanics' that deprioritised the spoken word and which has influenced much of later developments in physical theatre. His biomechanical method challenged Stanislavski's focus on the psychological processes of the actor, as well as traditional forms of representation relying on the spoken language and illusion.

At *Cabaret Voltaire* in Zurich, the birthplace of dada, Tristan Tzara, Hugo Ball, Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Jean Arp staged cabaret events between 1915 and 1917 (featuring dance, puppeteering, music and poetry in early experiments with transmedial performance. Like the Russian Futurists, they soon decided to take performance beyond the cabaret stage, and did so with the Dada-Season of 1921 (Bishop, 2012: 66). The desire to break down the boundary between stage and auditorium that was expressed in futurist cabaret and theatre developed in the 1920s in two strands that have continued relevance for Rhizo-Memetic Art and performance: one seeking to disrupt and provoke, the other to ameliorate and celebrate collective creativity. Common to both are the desire to emancipate, empower and activate the participating subject

through physical and/or symbolic enactment. The result in both cases presents a challenge to authorship as a hierarchic principle through a collaborative approach to processes of production and the assumption of collective curatorial responsibility. The latter is relevant to the perceived state of alienation persistent within the Rhizo-Memetic Arts practice incumbent to the practical strands of this thesis. In both cases, collective responsibility is seen as the remedy through which a “restoration of the social bond through a collaborative elaboration of meaning” (Bishop, 2006:11-12). To such ends Nikolai Evreinov who shared his background in symbolism with Meyerhold, staged the mass spectacle of *The Storming of the Winter Palace* in 1920 in Saint Petersburg. The performance dramatized, in ritualised form, its historical counterpart during the October Revolution and involved 2,500 performers and military vehicles in a mass scale in situ re-enactment of the events between the February Revolution and the storming of the Winter Palace in 1917. Similarly, with *Corpus 1*, online participants remediated contemporary socio-political events, weaving these narratives within the hypertextual network.

The Dada-Season of 1921 in Paris programmed art events intended to actively engage the public. The St. Julien le Pauvre excursion, which, according to Andre Breton (a speaker at the event), drew over 100 participants, was part of a series of art events that intended to attract visitors to “places that have no reason to exist”. Breton, who shortly after coined the phrase “artificial hells” to describe the wave of dada events which placed the spectator at the heart of their aesthetic, and beyond the cabaret stage, found the willingness to participate in the “dada game” evidence of failure, and began shifting the dada aesthetic towards a strategy of intellectual provocation (Bishop, 2012:67-70). Later the same year, Breton’s ascendance as leader of the dada movement culminated in the Barres Trial, a mock trial of the symbolist novelist Auguste-Maurice Barres which

marked a shift away from “anarchic provocation”, paving the way for the surrealist movement (Bishop, 2012: 73).

Jarry’s work inspired the foundation of *Theatre Alfred Jarry* in Paris in 1926 by Artaud, Roger Vitrac and Robert Aron (Artaud, 1976:610). Artaud’s vision of theatre drew on surrealism and the absurdist writing of Jarry, and sought to shock the spectator out of complacency by removing aesthetic distance and inciting chaos (Jamieson, 2007: 21-22): placing the audience at the centre of the spectacle and using incantations, guttural utterances and screams, pulsing light and disorientating scale so that they would be “engulfed and physically affected” (Banes, 1993: 115). Artaud attempted to integrate the text and the body, and sought to create a theatre where representation became compromised by direct, unmediated experience, dissolving the barriers between audience and actor: a theatre that “summons the totality of existence and no longer tolerates either the incidence of interpretation or the distinction between actor and author”. (Derrida, 2001: 232-235).

In his discussion of the *Theatre of Cruelty*, Derrida called the traditional stage theological: “dominated by speech’ with an “author creator” who controls what is represented to a “passive, seated public, a public of spectators, or consumers” (Derrida, 2001: 297). Unlike traditionally seated theatre, where the audience role is passive and receiving, experimental theatres tend to position spectators in different relations to textual and spatio-temporal aspects of the narrative, often bringing theatre into venues and arenas, including public spaces, which do not have a proscenium stage. Boundaries are challenged between disciplines (e.g. actors, dancers, singers), questioning the hierarchy of traditional theatre-making, with actors often contributing more actively to the devising of the play. Artaud intended to write for a theatre that was not based on

speech, but on physicality and “language of sounds, cries, lights and onomatopoeia”: a “language in space” (Derrida, 2001: 303): formative in becoming. In that regard, themes of absurdity, dream-states, and hybridity are central to the emergence of Rhizo-Memetic Arts practices, grounded in both historical Dadaism and Surrealist practices.

Reinhardt and *Deutsches Theater* produced *Das Mirakel* (written by Vollmoeller) in 1911, which sought to embody the *Gesamtkunstwerk*: the Wagnerian vision of total theatre. The production toured Europe and incorporated more than 2,000 actors, dancers/performers and stage technicians, and used staged machinery, music and lighting, but no dramatic dialogue. The production played before nightly audiences of 8,000, and received widespread critical acclaim. Together with Reinhardt’s other works, such as *Jedermann* (performed in Salzburg cathedral square) and *Faust* (staged on a mountainside near Salzburg) *Das Mirakel* “transformed stage technology’ (Roose-Evans, 1996:65). The stage production of *Das Mirakel* was followed in 1912 by a feature film, marketed as a filmitisation of the original, and thus positioning the project as an early prototype for the transmedial development of theatre.

In 1917 Erik Satie, Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau and Leonide Massine collaborated in the production of *Parade*, a ballet that employed Jarry-like devices and which sought to embody the change in public sentiment immediately after WWI that Guillaume Apollinaire defined in his 1918 manifesto *L’Esprit nouveau et les Poetes*. Apollinaire’s manifesto was based on a lecture he delivered in Paris in 1917, and proclaimed a renewal of art and cultural life that embraced modern technology and liberated poetry from the burden of representation and repetition. Apollinaire was keenly aware of the possibilities created by new technology (in addition to cinema, radio, telephone and phonograph) to open the field for a ‘synthetic’ theatre-art through interdisciplinarity,

calling for artists to eschew aestheticism and formulae, and embrace “sublime novelty” or be left to the forms of pastiche, satire and lamentation (Apollinaire, 1918: 385-396). *Parade* incorporated influences from popular culture (notably silent movies), fairgrounds and the music-hall tradition, for which everyday materials were used to produce costumes and sound, forcing the dancers to move in a machinic fashion outside the ballet that remained the foundation of formal dance training throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Reinhardt disciple Erwin Piscator further evolved the use of stage machinery from 1919 at the *Volksbühne* in Berlin, where he worked with Brecht to develop epic theatre. Brecht created what he termed *Verfremdungseffekt* or purposeful alienation of the audience through dramatic devices that disrupted the illusion of representation, including breaking the fourth wall and addressing the audience directly from the stage. Piscator wanted to create epic techniques and stage technology to amplify his political vision: his idea was a “theatre-machine” with “hoists, cranes, practicable traversing platforms with which weights of several tonnes could be shifted around the stage at the press of a button” (Roose-Evans, 1996: 66-77). In the 1920s, Piscator introduced still and moving image projections to augment his theatre productions in addition of his use of theatre machinery to extend and expand the stage.

Collectively created under the artistic leadership of Oskar Schlemmer, the Bauhaus collective in Germany produced early transdisciplinary theatre in the 1920s that represented an authored, classicist-modernist aesthetic, and pointed in its sophistication and formalist toward the much later work of Robert Wilson. The more anarchic expression of the Dadaists and surrealists was formalised and brought together under a coherent vision; still celebrating modernity and mechanisation and



striving for a synthesis of art and technology, but expressing a more refined and expertly executed modernist aesthetic. Schlemmer's theory of performance: a modernist aesthetic, positioned within an intellectual framework placing more emphasis on structure and purity of expression than the Dadaist and surrealist movements. The introduction of classicist principles in Schlemmer's work is reflected by his use of the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy to express the tension between control and abandon in his method and aesthetic (Goldberg, 2011:97-103). Nietzsche's account of the Apollonian and Dionysian describes Apollo as the ruler of form, brightness and individuation, and Dionysus as the god of rapture, ecstasy and "obliteration of self". Nietzsche regarded the two principles as primary influences on ancient Greek tragedy, alternating in dominance until they, according to Nietzsche, fused in the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles (Nietzsche, 1993:14-27). This tension between the Dionysian and the Apollonian in the theatre continued to play out across the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through expressions of minimalist restraint and ritualistic abandon, and came to serve the challenge of rationalist that prevailed in postmodernist theatre through expressions based on subtraction and transgression.

Schlemmer remained at Bauhaus until 1929, when increasing political tensions caused him to leave the school. Bauhaus remained open until 1933, when it finally closed under pressure from Hitler's new government. The same year, Piscator, Reinhardt, Brecht and many other artists left Germany, and Schlemmer, who at that point was professor at the United State School for Applied and Fine Art in Berlin, was forced to resign. In 1937, in a discussion of rationalism and its causes against the background of political developments in Europe in his German diary, playwright Samuel Beckett wrote: "Rationalism is the last form of animism. Whereas the pure incoherence of times and men and places is at least amusing." (Knowlson, 1996: 228). This

sentiment, challenging the liberal humanist structure of thought that could not prevent the eruption of two world wars in Europe, came to define post-war experimental European performance art, together with Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* which was published in 1938.

At the point in time when *Theatre of Cruelty* was published, theatre makers were already working with unconventional staging and audiences that were activated as participants, playing active parts in both the narrative and the physical composition of that narrative. In 1935, Nikolay Okhlopkov, who was strongly influenced by Meyerhold, started experimenting with theatre in the round at the Realistic Theatre in Moscow, where he was appointed director in 1930 (Roose-Evans, 1996: 78). By operating several stages, he was able to stage and cut between several scenes, breaking away from the linear presentation of narrative. A contemporary account by the British actor and director Andre van Gysegem of Okhlopkov's production *The Iron Flood* describes audiences being invited into an auditorium where actors were already acting on even, rocky banks built up to 5' in a long hall. During the performance, the audience was made part of the narrative in a scene when they were suddenly identified by the actors as comrades, believed lost in a hostile country (Roose-Evans, 1996:79-81). Influenced by Artaud's work, The Living Theatre was founded in New York in 1947. Their early work included stage productions of European modernists Brecht and Cocteau, and they continued to experiment with unusual performance spaces and non-conformist expression that in part shared the Beat aesthetic, challenging in particular, grand narratives of patriotism and war. *Theatre of Cruelty*, with its emphasis on a theatre beyond words, served as a bridge between inter-war and post-war experimental theatre in Europe. It informed the *Theatre of the Absurd*, which emerged in the 1950's from a distrust of language as a means of communication, embracing bewilderment and

confusion. Primarily literary, the movement included Beckett, Tom Stoppard, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter; a group of playwrights whose work was influenced by Jarry's pataphysics, dada, Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, and silent film. The playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd, as well as their contemporaries in the Art Informel movement in figurative arts, began to articulate the prevailing Zeitgeist in the post WW11 period in European art: existentialist, absurd, questioning and broken.

### **Agency & Participation**

Experimentation with the extension and alteration of the physical performance space gathered pace again in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, when theatre makers including Luca Ronconi, Ariane Mnouchkine and Richard Schechner began to experiment with multiple, enveloping, and fluidly boundaried stages. In 1969, Ronconi produced *Orlando Furioso*, a play in which the audience were not allowed to see the full picture, or follow a linear narrative, but instead could move around to piece together the story from a series of isolated scenes played by actors on wooden floats, often collaborating together to move these modulated 'platforms' into new formations, re-ordering the fragmented scenes.

Like modernist art and theatre of the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, participatory performance and art juxtaposes the idea of audience agency with the idea of the passively consuming spectator, iterating a narrative that traverses the modern and the postmodern: the desire to emancipate the audience from alienation, consumerism and totalitarian social order (Bishop: 2012: 275). Modernist and postmodernist aesthetics can be suggestively positioned in tandem with the two main tendencies (often coinciding) within participatory and live art practices: gestures intended to create social impact, and gestures that mirror and re-double alienation.

Responses to war and emerging media technologies in experimental performance and participatory art during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century often resulted in an anti-art stance, embracing new forms of rhizomic melodrama; articulating a rejection of central authorship, both 'on' and 'off' stage, through pervasive forms of performance theatre and games. Discursive performance spaces can impose or superimpose themselves upon given contexts, rather than being bound by the conventions of the traditional stage; a format utilised by performance artists and media art practitioners in both physical and virtual spaces. The Rhizo-Memetic in that regard, emerges out of the Social Turn in live art from the 1990's onward, with reference points placed in the theories of Debord, de Certeau, the Situationist International, Deleuze and Guattari, Hakim Bey and others, and produces art, often dematerialised, and anti-market in tone, that reaffirms collectivism and offers a counterculture of social unity. Unlike early 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde art, which tended to be associated with centralised political and ideological entities, contemporary social practice reflects the 'decentred and heterogeneous net that composes post-Fordist social co-operation' (Bishop, 2012:12). Works of this type, and the mirrors of which within *Florilegium: Exhibition & Remix* often centred around utopian themes of collective desires turning away from neoliberal individualism and its implications for the fetishized artist and single author. While utopian and collaborative, performance art in this vein often includes tension and confrontation and invites the possibility of failure developing strategies and aesthetics on the cusp of failure that involve a challenged, even compromised audience.

Two important examples here, in relation to the emergence of the Rhizo-Memetic aesthetic, are companies Elevator Repair Service and Forced Entertainment: their works foregrounding failures of theatrical representation, and exploring the potentials of those failures as in both structural and aesthetic ways. Linked here to

Deleuze's notion of the minor (Cull, 2013:20), and of Becoming & failure is here articulated in relation to the transcendent rationality construct, and is not only a critique of its regime, but also a starting point for the emergence of new forms of expression. Similarly, an analysis based on de Certeau's theory of space and place positions the work of Elevator Repair Company and Forced Entertainment as disruptive to the order of place, and thus as spatial operations that expand potentiality. Elevator Repair Service, founded as a company in 1991, also incorporate elements of popular or 'low' art in the vein of early modernist theatre; ensemble dancing and slapstick inspired by musicals, 1930's films and cartoons (which often include parodies of 'serious' drama), unusual re-mediations of scripts and choreography (Bailes, 2011:160-161). Many of their productions work with themes of social awkwardness and communication difficulties, making the live audience complicit as witness to failure within both social and theatrical frames of expectation. As with *Florilegium: Exhibitions* curatorial strategy, and its effects upon *Remix*, Elevator Repair Shop's fragmentary re-mediations punctuate failures in communication, and serve as absurdist commentaries on Rhizo-Memetic shifts in modality and materiality, as well as theatrical hierarchies through the incorporation of mundane gesture and movement (Bailes, 2011: 154). In the UK, Forced Entertainment have worked since 1984 with anti-heroic, broken aesthetic that expresses the failure of both theatrical continuity and the coherence of human society. Phelan positions the work of Forced Entertainment as occupying a territory between experimental theatre and live art, in the extended context of the 'collapsed world', echoing Art Informel: the artistic voice of society-wide existential crisis in the wake of war that could still be felt in Thatcher's Britain in the 1980's, particularly in northern towns like Sheffield, where the company is based (Bailes, 2011: 66).

In 1958, Guy Debord published *Theory of the Derive*, which outlined the Situationist practice of 'drift' in which the participant adopted ways of moving within the urban landscape unrelated to aims associated with work or travelling from one location to another in efficient or planned ways. Derive as practice is immanent in its essence, but also constitutes a form of blended reality in which an alternative embodied discourse is superimposed on the existing order of a city. In a similar way, the Rhizo-Memetic networks explored within *Corpus 1* imposed their relational aesthetic upon the curatorial strategy of *Florilegium: Exhibition*; an immanent sense of 'ghosting' within the exhibition space. The Situationists International (SI) were influenced by dada and surrealism via lettrism, a post-war art movement that, in common with contemporaries in *The Theater of the Absurd*, challenged conventional meaning; in particular meaning carried by written language. The SI exploration of games and the practice of derive as a form of social art activist practice have had an enduring influence on counterculture, participatory art and pervasive game design in the subsequent decades. Further examples of playful performative practices that were broadly contemporary with the SI include Fluxus and the New Games Movement. The art collective Fluxus included performance artists Wolf Vostell, Joseph Beuys, Al Hansen, Nam June Paik and Yoko Ono, and pioneered an anti-art, neo-dada aesthetic, blending live performance, video, spoken-word, installation art and music in a range of early transdisciplinary happenings. The New Games Movement emerged from 1960's American counterculture as a reaction to the Cold War mentality and the Vietnam War, and developed participatory public games that were intended to encourage 'minor' behaviours: non-aggressive and non-competitive models (Montola, Stenros and Waern, 2009: 55-56). Their activities included the purchase of a 14-acre farm to establish the Games Preserve in 1971 in a retreat where participants could study play through practice.

While associated with the Viennese Actionists, performance and media artist Valie EXPORT's early work with 'Expanded Cinema' incorporated technology in performance, and extended the performance space beyond the limitations of the screen. Export's *Touch Cinema* (1968) emphasised the voyeuristic relationship to the female body in cinema, and the wider contemporary mass media culture through public performance. Passers-by were invited to touch EXPORT's breasts by putting their hands through the curtained screen of the cardboard television set she wore, strapped to the front of her torso. The artist called this the 'first genuine women's film' (Mueller, 1994: 15-18). EXPORT uses reflection on several levels within her work, moving between mediated and physical spaces. In *Ping Pong* (1968), she critiqued the passive immersion offered by traditional cinema environments, an actor representing the audience performed in front of a screen, equipped with a ping pong bat and ball. The screen displayed dots, appearing and disappearing, as targets for the actor to try and hit (Mueller, 1994: 9). While at the time, this performance was acclaimed as a political statement on the reactive role of the conventional cinema audience, developments in digital media technologies decades later also suggest further layers of interpretation, including the questioning of enactive rhetoric and agency within social media platforms.

The deconstruction of theatrical convention and the distinction between elements of popular and 'high' culture cuts across 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde theatre and art, with the inclusion of motifs from a variety of cabaret theatres, films, fairgrounds, television, and later computers and networked technologies. While the modernist sensibility is driven by centralistic visions, the postmodern aesthetic that Rhizo-Memetic Art draws upon most readily, takes a fragmented and pluralistic perspective that suggests the possibility of concurrent, unscripted interpretations (Fisher-Lichte, 2008: 147-148). Indeed, *Pervasive Games in the U.S* adopted a transdisciplinary

aesthetic from the mid 1960's, where mediated story-worlds were extended through live-action role-playing, which in turn was sometimes re-mediated. The film *La Decima Vittima* from 1965 spawned a trend for live action assassination games on U.S university campuses. This subsequently formed the subject of an episode of the TV series *The Saint* called *The Death Game* (Montola, Stenros and Waern, 2009: 67); extending the Rhizo-Memetic practice further. Assassination games became a popular genre for live action role-playing games (LARPs), which developed from the early 1980's in games communities that started to perform their characters physically (Montola, Stenros and Waern, 2009: 64). LARPs form around story-worlds in books or games and are typically enacted as superimposed realities that can out over several days or weeks (Montola, Stenros and Waern, 2009: 36-37). The relationship here between Rhizo-Memetic Arts, and the LARP community emerges in the superimposition of the story-worlds within *Corpus 1* as a layer within the Twitter and Facebook social feeds, and emerging into physical domains through the contributions of artists to *Florilegium: Exhibition*.

In 1971, Ronconi produced *XX*, a theatre performance in a two-story building with twenty rooms, ten on each floor, in which spectators divided into two groups, watched fragmented scenes depicting the arrest and interrogation of a revolutionary threatening a fascist regime. Critics at the time accused Ronconi of celebrating fascism, to which he responded that it was more important to 'plunge the spectator [...] into the confusion of all conditions' (Roose-Evans, 1996: 81-83). Mnouchkine, founder of the Theatre du Soleil in 1964, staged *1789* on a circle of stages surrounding the spectators, simultaneously presenting scenes from the French Revolution in a way that challenged the canonical interpretation of events and outcomes of the historical period, likewise, *Florilegium: Remix* with an inverse of this staging, re-stratified materials contained



within the Rhizo-Memetic corpus through a sense of simultaneity, fragmentation and a challenge to the authority of singular authorship.

Augusto Boal published *Theatre of the Oppressed* in 1973, and introduced interactive methods intended to turn audiences into 'spect-actors' through confrontational practical training in participatory theatre. Boal's methods, developed and expanded since the publication of the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, include forum theatre, invisible theatre and legislative theatre, and seek to generate change not through engendering emotional responses to his work, but through enactment of semi-staged conflict: a rehearsal of revolution. Boal wanted the theatre, whether it took place in the political, therapeutic, pedagogic or legislative contexts he worked with through his career, to leave a sense of unease through a lack of resolution, stimulating the 'spect-actors' to seek resolution in real life. 'I don't want the people to use the theatre as a way of not doing life' (Bishop, 2012: 122-125). Boal's work with rituals and masks brings light to the ideological culture of a society that is articulated and maintained by social interaction patterns by asking actors to enact the roles of participants in cultural rituals, for example confession according to Catholic rites. By changing their vantage point within those roles according to class and relative status throughout the performance, the actors embody the tension between ritual role and socio-economic background: simultaneously highlighting ideological superstructure and the power relationships within society (Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort, 2003: 351-352).

Ronconi, Mnouchkine and Boal involved the participants in the proceedings of performance within more or less controlled physical environments where the boundary between stage and auditorium was ambiguous or erased. Taking this approach a step further, Fiona Templeton adopted a method influenced by live action role play in the

production *You – The City* (1988), where one audience member at a time was taken on a two-hour journey through intimate and public spaces in New York, after introducing themselves as the doorman at One Times Square with the words ‘I’m looking for you’. The production involved a cast of 15, including the driver of a cab into which the participating audience member was pushed during the performance (Montola, Stenros and Waern, 2009: 59). In the UK, Blast Theory began creating transmedial experiences in 1991. They initially focused on participatory installation performances, but turned to more extreme forms of audience participation that articulated questions around agency in 1997, when they began working on *Kidnap*, which premiered in 1998. For this production, two members of the audience were kidnapped, and the ensuing events were streamed on an online platform. A year later, they began working with the Mixed Reality Lab to create *Desert Rain* a game and installation performance using virtual reality. The company has remained prolific, and has since their inception produced *Can You See Me Now?* (a chase game taking place in the streets using handheld computers) in 2001, *Rider Spoke* (a street game for cyclists using handlebar mounted computers) in 2007, *A Machine To See With* (a participatory mystery game communicated via messages sent on social media and mobile applications) in 2010, and in 2015, they released the app *Karen*, an interactive performance that unfolds between the participant and synonymous digital avatar; a work that engages with psychological spaces mediated by smartphone technologies and computational processes (Blast Theory, 2015).

### **Hybrid Spaces and Affective Narratives**

Contemporary performances that place the participant within processes of both making and curating their own experiences, aim to give audiences an experience of being fully psychologically involved and sensorial enveloped, often to the point of being near-

overpowered is often called immersive. I argue that the relationships between immersive practices and the Rhizo-Memetic are distinct, particularly considering the relationships to the use of projection to amplify visceral experience, the transdisciplinary nature of narrative presentation, and the blended realities through which the experience is mediated, e.g. social media, blogs, and geolocate devices (Machon, 2013: 35-36). Themes of transformation via the body situated in both virtual and physical domains have been explored throughout the history of experimental theatre, from both the vantage point of the formal stage and from participatory art and intervention practices, in the WWII period often drawing on Artaud. Contemporary expressions in this genre include performance work that is inspired by computer networks in terms of content, aesthetic, narrative or spatial development, e.g. Slingshots live action zombie performance game *2.8 Hrs Later* (2010), PunchDrunk's *Sleep No More* (2011) and *The Drowned Man* (2013); works consisting of audience participation, blended realities supported by digital platforms, e.g. Blast Theory's *Can You See Me Now?* (2001), *Rider Spoke* (2007), *A Machine To See With* (2010); site responsive works that primarily consist of audience navigation (both ambulatory, and digitally hypertextual) e.g. DreamThinkSpeak's *Before I Sleep* (2010), *The Rest is Silence* (2012), and *Absent* (2015); and work where audiences perform 'algorithmic' functions in a similar manner to participants in *Corpus 1* in the construction of the hypertextual assemblage, e.g. Agency of Coney's *A Small Town Anywhere* (2009) and *Codename: REMOTE* (2014). Arguably, the Rhizo-Memetic also includes fandoms comprising of transmedial fan fiction and role-play across physical and digital platforms, where the 'world' enacted and extended by its participants may have its origins across a range of transdisciplinary performative practices.

Ilya Kabakov and Char Davies (*Osmose*) used the term 'immersive' in the 1990's to describe the 'totality of audience experience' (Machon, 2013: 28) and like the work inspired by the Wagnerian vision of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* referred to earlier in this review, the aesthetic that has emerged in the Rhizo-Memetic is fundamentally transdisciplinary and includes relationships to architecture, sound, lighting, projection, digital technologies, choreography and installation art. Although not performing live in the West, Ilya Kabakov, who calls his spectators 'actors', created *Albums* (1972-1975): a series of illustrated narratives issuing from multiple fictional authors who, in order to embellish their own stories, create alternative identities that for the most part, exist in isolation on the margins of society, drawing parallels to the ways through which contributors to *Corpus 1* enacted the Rhizo-Memetic assemblage. The artist called this work 'domestic theatre' and began to realise them as fully immersive installations after emigrating in 1987 from the USSR to Europe and subsequently the United States. Canadian artist Davies, combining influences from her fine art painting and scuba diving, created the virtual reality installation environments *Osmose* (1995) and *Ephemere* (1998). In 1995, Robert Wilson created the Artangel-produced *H.G* together with Hans Peter Kuhn, a work that positioned the audience member as the central agency within the production. *H.G* as a theatrical installation was situated in Clink Street Vaults, beneath the ruins of a medieval prison in London. *H.G*, which had a direct influence on the later work of PunchDrunk was a series of 20 underground rooms – a theatrical space in which the spectator's navigation through space was a central metaphor (Hess-Luttich, Muller & Zoest, 1998: 224-230). Wilson is best known for his work in theatre, opera, dance and theatre design, and operates a range of strategies, one may suggest bare resemblance to the Rhizo-Memetic, in their questioning of language, disjunction, discontinuity and decontextualizing in order to dramatise the gaps between

visual and verbal representation, and question the control that language exerts over what is knowable.

As outlined in this review, the key elements of the Rhizo-Memetic as they have emerged across discipline and genre, have featured within experimental theatre and live art throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Artaud's influence is often explicit, and the participatory elements of the Rhizo-Memetic aesthetic and the associated transdisciplinary aspirations can be seen in some ways as a continuation of Boal's work with ritualistic participatory theatre, as well as drawing on situationism and practices of performance artists such as Ono and Beuys. Concurrent and discontinuous narratives draw on the fragmentation of narrative presentation that has been explored since *Ubu Roi* premiered in 1896: by Okhlopkov in the 1930s, Mnouchkine and Ronconi from the 1960s, and Wilson from the 1970s to the present. The extension of the performance space to address and finally include the audience has developed from Brecht's breaking of the fourth wall to Ronconi's involvement of the audience in the composition and curation of the performance space itself, and the immersive aesthetics of Kabakov, Wilson and Davies. Blended realities and later, the use of social media aesthetics have featured in experimental performance practices since the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Russian Futurist street art, dada public performances, situationist art interventions, New Games Movement and LARPs superimposing story-worlds on quotidian reality. Taken together, these practices articulate the emergence of what this thesis suggests is the Rhizo-Memetic; a challenge of transcendence, a shift in the performativity of matter, and a re-stratification of the hierarchies of agency that run through productive and curatorial models in performance and art-making.

The critiques of agency and materiality within Rhizo-Memetic practices are at the heart of a wider critique of the discursive constructs that allow for the creation of externalities, and the trajectory from breaking fourth wall, to the networked and digital aesthetics in early 21<sup>st</sup> century performance serve to challenge the subject-event relationship. Performance artists who address and investigate this idea more specifically in relation to notions of Becoming and agency include Elmgreen & Dragset and PunchDrunk. Elmgreen & Dragset's work includes *Try* (1997), where the instigating artists hired non-professionals (neither artists nor performers) to realise the artwork by enacting the artwork within the gallery, and their *Geg(u)arding the Guards* (2005), where unemployed people were hired to act as invigilators in the gallery (Bishop, 2012: 220). Elmgreen and Dragset's later work include *Tomorrow* at the V&A in London (2013): an entire apartment created for an imaginary architect, where the performance had been delegated to visitors to the museum. The work of Elmgreen & Dragset and *La Monnaie Vivante* (2006-2010), an itinerant exhibition curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc, reflects the self-exploitation within late capitalism that underpins network based production and affective labour (Bishop, 2012: 277), and which has expanded in tandem with interactive internet technologies. *La Monnaie Vivante*, presented multiple 'delegated performances' in Paris, London, Warsaw and Berlin, in a single space and time, shared with visitors to the venues. At Tate Modern in 2008, performances took place on the Turbine Hall Bridge, including horse-mounted policemen demonstrating audience control techniques on the visitors while dancers were performing an independent routine among them (Bishop, 2012: 232-233). The title of the exhibition *La Monnaie Vivante* was inspired by Klossowski's book with the same name, positioning humans as 'living currency' and money as they mediator between 'libidinal pleasure and industrial/institutional world of normative imposition' (Bishop, 2012: 234). The *La*

*Monnaie Vivante* exhibition sought to foreground ‘interpassivity’ (as opposed to interactivity) as the normative state promoted by mass media and commodity culture, by juxtaposing passive entertainment imposed by such institutions and the perceived perversity of artworks that demonstrably deviate from these norms.

Social and political agency within commodified cultures is one of the key themes of *The Drowned Man – a Hollywood fable* by PunchDrunk, further emphasised by the onus on audiences to actively pursue sense-making activities within the work. While not aesthetically explicit, but revealed through the structure of participation, PunchDrunk’s work works on digital culture. Felix Barratt, Artistic Director of PunchDrunk, discusses their work as a theatre counterpart to computer-networked interactivity (McMullan, 2014), particular in relationship to instances where narrative is never made explicit, and is made evident primarily through conspicuous absences. The possibility that there is no sense-making presence ‘outside’ of the performed system leads the participant to enact the critique of agency that runs through postmodernist experimental theatre.

In *Codename: REMOTE* (2014), Agency of Coney asks their audience: ‘imagine you’re in a theatre of the future, powered by an algorithm. We’re here to help you be more like people like you. And we know that people like you like choice’ (Coneyhq.org, 2014). This work, much like *Florilegium: Remix*, elucidates the semblance of individual freedom offered by interactivity masking the deeper homogenisation of contemporary culture through demographic data harvesting, algorithmic profiling and extended network technologies.

Some transdisciplinary forms of storytelling that include performance practice through the incorporation of fandom culture across digital and real-world communities

have come to articulate the critique of centralistic narratives and ‘good sense’: *Homestuck*, which began in 2009 and ended formally in 2016 (although fandom activity continues), is an emergent Rhizo-Memetic story-world in the form of a web-comic with multiple, splintered narratives and extensive participatory co-production and curation. Drawing on early internet community aesthetics, the simplicity of the aesthetic was a stylistic choice, maximising the opportunities for heterogeneous development from participants. The *Homestuck* artwork extends across Tumblr, Facebook, Youtube, and DeviantArt. *Homestuck*, like *Corpus 1*, with its faux-naïve aesthetic and rhizomic assemblage, does not seek to appear to make sense; mobilising dada, futurism and the Theatre of the Absurd through an embodied critique of blended reality play.

As a contemporary to *Corpus 1*, *9MOTHER9HORSE9EYES9* emerged unannounced in 2016 as a cross-platform hypertextual assemblage across a number of seemingly random Reddit communities, as comments to a wide variety of topics. The style, resembling an internet-age Lovecraft, draws on established science fiction and online conspiracy horror stories. An online wiki that documents not just all the entries but all of the individual wikis developed to piece together the assemblage of *9M9H9E9* was quickly developed under the rubric of the *Interface Series* (Reddit.com, 2016), to enable followers to gain an overall understanding of the work. Not just the tactics of disseminating the elaborate work but also the speed and perseverance with which new followers took the documentation and interpretation of the phenomenon on-board, marks *9M9H9E9* as a highly potent Rhizo-Memetic artwork. The initial post from a user called ‘MotherBoard’ described ‘a body that has undergone gnosis’ (Motherboard, 2016), bringing to mind Clarke’s Posthuman metamorphic narratives (Clarke, 2008). Also characteristic of Rhizo-Memetic practice is the deliberate blurring of fact and fiction, as exemplified by this statement issued by the author as a self-post in the



9M9H9E9 subreddit, and documented in the narrative wiki with reference to sections of the *Interface Series*:

I should clarify that information is not fiction. Nor is it true. It is a mix of things which happened and this which almost happened. Things which were and things which could have been. You must understand the present moment in which we exist is simply a nexus from which trillions of possible pasts and possible futures outbranch. The important thing to realise is that these unreal pasts and unrealised futures are related to each other. By examining what might have been, we can come to understand what might come to be.

(Reddit, 2016)

Here, the purposeful diffusion of the boundary between fact and fiction invokes the sublime by way of the vertiginous, and possibly monstrous, potential for extension brought to the interaction by the imagination of its participants: they are co-opted in the creation of experiential space.

Bringing this review full circle to the influence formed through the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* and postmodernism's questioning of subjectivity and the relationships between materiality and agency examined by the likes of Lyotard, Derrida and Deleuze, amongst others, and its expression in art championed by Lyotard as the primary arena for the emergence of Difference; the failure of representation to present an image that is true and 'gap' at the edge of reason, where representations of reality that can be described as good or proper sense fail. The resulting Rhizo-Memetic milieu articulated across disciplinary performance strata serve as subtractions and distortions that transgress and overwhelm. The historical events against which the emergence of the Rhizo-Memetic aesthetic has emerged in performance art, transmedial art and within audiences include distant mediated wars and the ongoing pervasion on the personal via computational interfaces, social media and networked communication devices. Speculatively, the Rhizo-Memetic serves as a reminder to explore the edges of

interface (both physical and virtual), or perhaps serve as a guide to tactics in a reality that increasingly blended by default.

## DOOMSDAY<sup>14</sup>

*“The Ancient Mayans predicted that the world would come to an end on the 21 December*

*2012 –*

*- And one in ten of us is said to be anxious that this Friday marks the end of the world.”*

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<sup>14</sup> Script excerpt from the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015). Content sampled from Twitter contribution to *Corpus 1* (2012-13) and subsequently exhibited as part of *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014).

## CORPUS 1 (2012-13)

In November 2012, I began the production of Corpus 1 (2012-13). I opened a Twitter account under the handle “@ProjectTime”, and began to search for, and select other users to follow. This processes of searching and selecting followers as a form of audience, was structured through the inbuilt conventions of the Twitter interface. In order to build an audience, I first had to subscribe to the existing feeds of endorsed users of the Twitter service.

The users offered by Twitter in the first instance consisted as a majority, from popular media personalities and corporate bodies. I was reminded of Alexander Galloway’s theorisations of seemingly decentralised cultural platforms. In *Protocol* (2004) Galloway suggests that the routes of digital communication (particularly those based upon internet enabled networks) are often deliberately channelled, and controlled under the artifice of decentralisation. Galloway notes that controlling power lies in the ‘technical protocols’ (2004: 47) that make connection (and disconnection) possible. Here, Twitter’s seemingly benign suggestions in developing “unique” communication networks appeared intrinsically motivated by capitalist economy by channelling interaction towards sponsored media entities. I noted the inherent political dimension of my practice in utilising such networks, and hoped (given the anarchic qualities of the rhizome), that the produced artwork might break free from or subvert these controls.

During this process, I attempted to establish a sense of ‘addressivity’, which (Bakhtin, 1986) terms as ‘the quality of turning to someone ... a constitutive feature of the utterance: without [which] the utterance does not and cannot exist’ (1986: 99). Periodically, users would “follow” me back; constructing an asymmetrical network of

connections between myself and other subscribing users. I also noted the rhizomic qualities of Twitter's choice of phrase in "Followers"; an option which suggested movement, direction, pursuit and passage through time and digital space. Within this initial phase I discovered that this notion of pursuit and tracking of moving information – like the tracking of prey - was inherently unstable and ever shifting – followers would periodically unsubscribe from my feed, others would join and I would find myself constantly modifying my network of relations to other users in order to establish a sense of Bakhtinian addressivity.

Once a consistent base of addressees was established, I turned my attention towards the production of traceable, playful interactions between myself and followers of my feed towards the genesis of the Rhizo-Memetic assemblage. I likened the project for my followers on Twitter to the conceptual Surrealist parlour game *Exquisite Corpse* or *Cadavre Exquis*<sup>15</sup>, explaining that the contributions from the project's followers would enact an expansive and performative artwork, initially through a digital composition of image, word, video and sound through a form of collective and procedural assembly. I primed my followers with a number of tweets inviting them to "respond creatively" to the following prompts from @ProjectTime; re-enforcing Twitter's communicative functions (tweet, reply, link and retweet) as the potential options available. Hyperlinks to the project outline and document of informed consent were also linked within Twitter; outlining the ethical parameters of the work.

I drew some inspiration from the notion of 'synaptic play' first attributed to the *Google: Engagement Project* (2013: online). Author Abigail Posner notes that 'synaptic links, and thus, new cognitions' (Posner, 2013:7), are forged when the humans makes connections

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<sup>15</sup> An artwork produced as the result of collaborative game-playing (Breton, 1948),

between seemingly random components of stimuli. She continues by asserting simply, that 'the more random the components connected, the more synapses fire within the brain' (Posner, 2013:8). Interrogations of Prensky's (2011) 'digital native' notwithstanding, the crux of Posner's compelling manifesto for brand engagement asserts that the generation of new synaptic links forms neurological basis for human of creativity. Or rather, that synapses firing in this manner, produces a sense of creative joy (Posner, 2013:08). A theory mirrored in McNamara's synthesis of the meme with neuroscience's 'mirror neuron' (Gallese et al, 1996; Rizzolatti al., 1996), and within Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theories of psychological 'flow' (2013, et al).

Whilst lacking in academic rigour in itself, Posner's often poignant account of the internet as a 'synaptic playground' (2013: 10) where users online behaviours produce and curate digital content resulting in networked, combinatorial creativity, remained provocative. A stance echoed by Cook and Graham within *New Media, New Modes: On Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media* (2010). Cook and Graham reason that New Media are best understood less as materials but as "behaviours" (2010: 1) - participatory, performative or generative behaviours, for example; activities imminent to the production of form (Massumi, 2002: 62).

Cook and Graham continue by asserting that these behaviours demand a rethinking of curating, new modes of 'looking at the production, exhibition, interpretation, and wider dissemination (including collection and conservation) of networked art' (2010: 11). In short; Posner's concept was appropriated in this instance, both to stimulate dialogue surrounding this particular PR methodology, but also to investigate the practical mechanisms of Rhizo-Memetic Art as a methodology, in and of itself.

Similarly, within *Two Bits* (2008), Christopher Kelty discusses online communities such as those found on Facebook and Twitter as forming iterative or 'recursive publics' (2008: 38). Focused on the sharing and creative remediation of digital corpora, these communities produce the means by which they constitute themselves. The corpus of digital media shared in these cases often includes a high ratio of 'image macros' (Milner, 2013), or internet-memes (culturally recognizable Jpg or GIF images with a short textual accompaniment) as devices of mediated communication.

Emerging out of the Computer Sciences, a macro can be defined as 'a rule or pattern that specifies how a certain input sequence should be mapped as an output, according to a defined procedure' (Silverman, 2007: 6). Put more simply, macros in their original sense can be seen as small chunks of code utilised to enact a predefined outcome. The innate performativity of digital code, as exemplified by macros of this type, has been elucidated by postmodern literary critic Katherine Hayles, and spans work on Law (Lessig, 1999), Art (Cox, Et al, 2002; Stocker, 2003; Crammer, 2002) and the State (Levy, 2002):

Code has become arguably as important as natural language because it causes things to happen, which requires that it be executed as commands that a machine can run. Codes that run on machines are performative in a much stronger sense than that attributed to language.

(Hayles, 2005: 49-50)

Whilst the relationship between code and textual language is complex, the concept of execution has developed as the differentiating factor between theories of linguistics and coding in recent scholarship. As Galloway (2006) expresses, 'code is the only language that is executable' (2006: 316). The same ability of digital coding within structures such as macros to execute or perform tasks, also questions the social purpose of macro-like utterances within social media. How might these poly-vocal artefacts

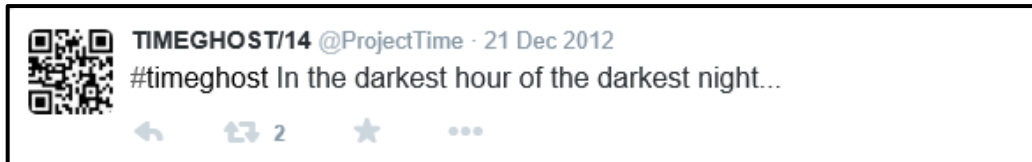
function in public discourse? How might their encoded qualities, work to perform, document and reiterate the pan-mediated voice of recursive publics? Whilst conversation relating to coded or digital spaces is often viewed as esoteric, it is possible to move past resonances of code as purely the language of computer systems. If we choose to observe the heterogeneous expanse of culture as a form of code, in the same capacity as one might view programs and algorithms, we may see how digital coding typifies much wider contemporary trends.

As Haraway (1991) states, current forms of knowledge, from computer and communication sciences to modern biology, involve a common move: ‘...the translation of the world into a problem of coding - Knowledge of the human and animal organisms has come to be seen as the execution of genetic coding and read-out’ (1991: 164).

During this initial stage of producing *Corpus 1* (2012-13), I noted that the available functions, behaviours or ‘protocols’ (Galloway, 2004) coded into the Twitter interface for communicating with my followers (tweet, reply, link and retweet) bore similarity to memetic concepts of transmission, propagation and mutation (Heylighen and Cheilens, 2008); a direct “tweet” operates as transmission; to “reply”, or “link” in new information, offers potentials for mutation, whilst “re-tweeting” can be understood as the propagation of existing information within the extended Twitter network.

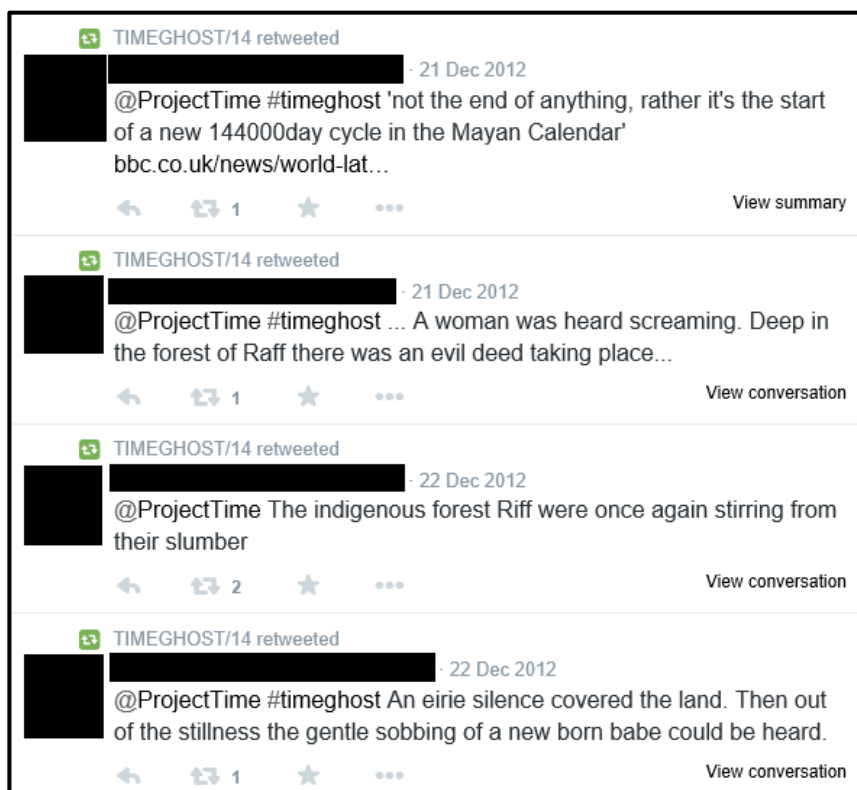
Here, the potential of initiating a Rhizo-Memetic Artwork intensified, under the project’s original working title: ‘*TIMEGHOST*’ (a direct translation from the Germanic word “Zeitgeist”) - I submitted the following tweet to my followers:





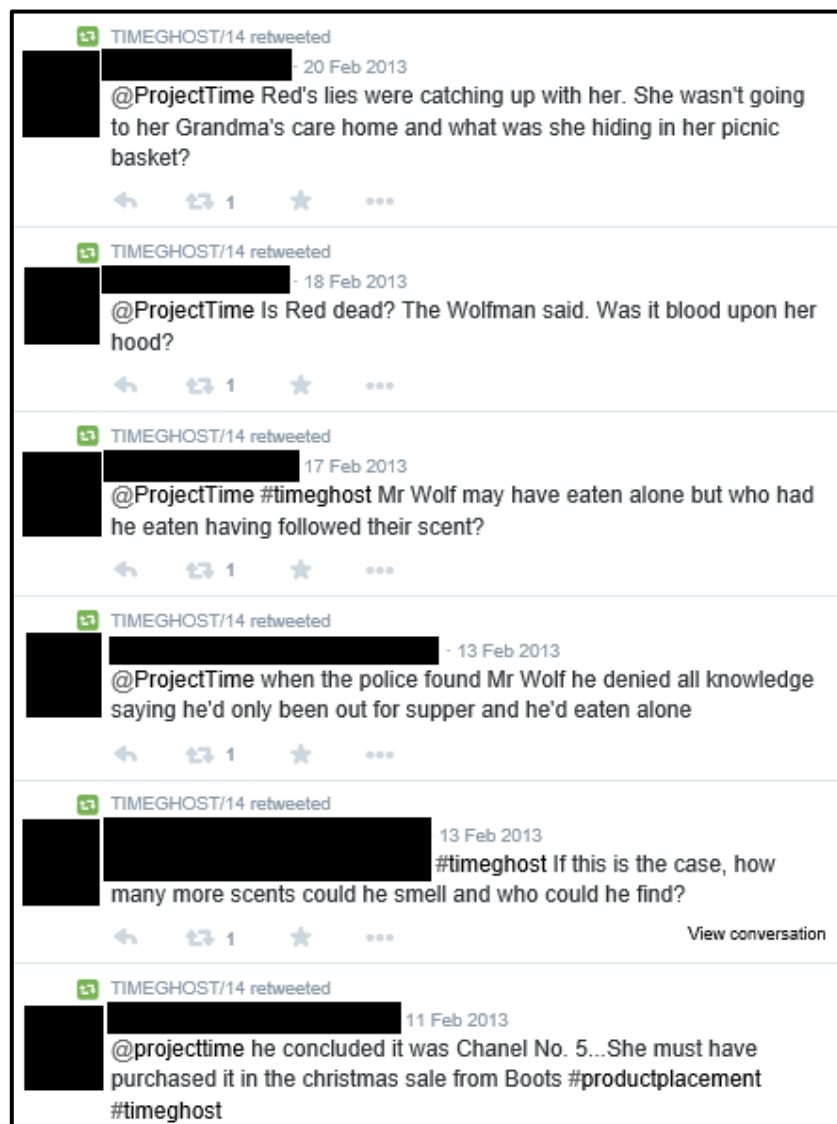
**Image 2:** Screenshot: *Initial Tweet of Corpus 1*, Online, 22.12.12. Image credit: authors own.

Intentionally ambiguous in nature, this initial tweet was designed to coincide with circulating media news stories heralding a Mayan Apocalypse, more accurately understood as the end of the Mayan calendar on the 21st December 2012 (Sitler, 2006: 9). Such news articles began circulating on Twitter under the hashtag *#doomsday*, and I determined to utilise these trending topics to direct new interaction towards the project; ‘assimilating’ as I theorised the Rhizo-Meme, existing narrative and informational structures. Within hours, followers began to respond:



**Image 3:** Screenshot: *Responses to initial Tweet of Corpus 1*, Online, 23.12.12. Image credit: authors own.

Over the proceeding four months, text-based aspects of the growing Rhizo-Meme on Twitter mingled with, replicated, clashed and moved alongside re-contextualised images, videos and sound-clips contributed from individuals within a total collective of 278 participants worldwide. At its most prevalent, the Rhizo-Meme engaged multiple agencies within fictional narrative construction as a form of highly interdiscursive and co-operative authoring. The real-time interface of Twitter as it appears on a computer desktop, captured here (Figure 4), exemplifies the exophoric, and referential playfulness of one such exchange:



**Image 4:** *Co-operative Authorship within Corpus 1*, Online, 21.02.13. Image credit: authors own.

*Corpus 1* (2012-13) was opened up to panmediation from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, 2013, concluded on the 21st September, 2013, with a parallel assemblage taking form on Facebook from 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, 2013 until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June:



**Image 5:** Screenshot: *Contributions on Facebook to Corpus 1*, Online. 16.05.13. Image credit: authors own.

The total assemblage of *Corpus 1* (2012-13) is available for exploration within the project website at: [www.rhizo-meme.com](http://www.rhizo-meme.com).

## MEMETIC NODES

During the production of *Corpus 1* (2012-13), I developed the concept of a nodal analysis as a unique approach to the examination of the assemblage aggregated by this aspect of the creative practice. I conceptualised the Memetic Node fundamentally, as an organisational tool: a form of digital ‘weeding’ that would enable me to draw out, and de-tangle the memetic content within *Corpus 1* (2012-13).

Equally, I sought a form of analysis that might offer a shift from symbolic systems of analysis, and toward a system of sign and non-sign interactivity at a functional, transitive and memetic level. That is to say, as I discuss earlier in this work, whilst reviewing the accrued materials I noticed the knotting effects, or inter-discursivity of elements of the digital corpora circulating around what I understood as common factors; sometimes thematic, sometimes aesthetic, often behavioural (for example, the repetition of textual and visual elements relating to notions of ‘darkness’ or ‘foreboding’; the surfacing and fluctuation of emergent characters, places and emotional states; and the collision of aesthetic styles implicit within the contributions of the work’s online participants). Of course, this analysis lays no claims to objectivity.

Given the heterogeneity of the network of agencies responsible for the production of *Corpus 1* (2012-13), it seemed unethical for me to essentialise, or rather, allow my analysis of its materials to function as a definition of the work in itself. Rather, through the process of reflecting on this aspect of the practice it became essential to examine it around the emergent knots, or points of resonance between the ‘regimes of signs’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 21) that intertwined.

Drawing on the work of digital artist and theorist Talan Memmott (2014), I engaged with his application of the terms ‘iterative’ and ‘emergent’ (2014: online) as

ways in which to categorize memetic entities based on the ways in which they appeared to “behave” in relation to one another, rather in isolation. In *Marxism and Literature* (2003), Raymond Williams utilised a similar method of analysis in formulating the ‘dominant, residual and emergent’ triad in his effort to articulate cyclical cultural shifts (2003: 122).

Similarly, by utilising the terms ‘iterative’ and ‘emergent’, I attempted to avoid the production of a dominant ideological narrative that unified the disparate elements of the Rhizo-Meme synthetically. In that regard, I understand the categories of Iterative and Emergent as deeply interconnected, and many individual materials placed within these groupings could potentially operate across stratification. What follows is an outline of each type of Memetic Node as I realize them, alongside an illustrative example drawn from *Corpus 1* (2012-13) for each. In order to view further examples of this analysis, the reader is invited to log on to the project website using the details provided in the aspect of this document titled: *Navigation*, and enter the project archive.

## ITERATIVE

I understood the Iterative Memetic Node as repeating; making copies of, or reproducing an existing or common concept throughout an assemblage. In the terms I have outlined within *Meme/Rhizome Synthesis*, the Iterative Memetic Node is Heylighen and Cheilens' memetic 'transmission' (2008), enacted when an aspect of the rhizome 'copies itself' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 8).

When exploring the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork, I looked for points of folding, looping and duplication in the contributions of online participants that through frequency and quantity, suggested a sense of heightened resonance, circulation or dialogic binding around a particularly important chunk of information. Due to the multiplicitous nature and production of the Rhizo-Meme, the "importance" of any given aspect remains deeply subjective. In terms of coding theory however, repetition has been commonly utilised as one of the most basic error-correcting practices (Lin & Costello, 2005). In order to transmit a message over a particularly noisy channel that may corrupt transmission in a few places, the benefit of repetition within coding practice remains in the hope that 'the channel corrupts only a minority of these repetitions' (2005: 12).

In response to Honeycutt and Herring's assertion that the 'Twittersphere' (2009: 31) can be observed upon entry as a 'cacophonous multi-party online environment', the importance of repeating information within a multiplicitous network of agencies without a dominant automaton intensified:

## WOLF / MOUTH<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> **Image 6:** Composite image: *Visual representation of Iterative Memetic Node*, 03.06.14. Image credit: authors own.

## EMERGENT

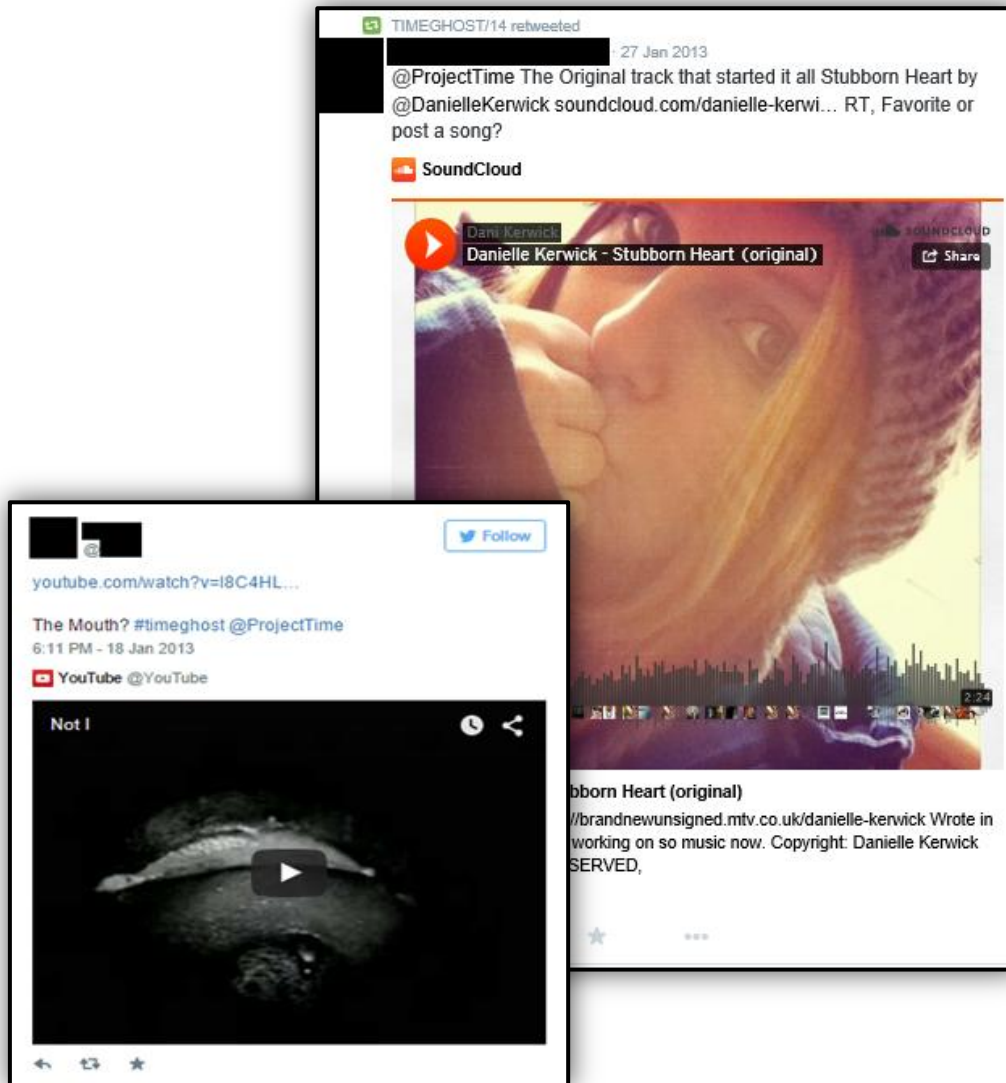
I conceptualised Emergent Memetic Nodes as aspects of found content that appeared periodically within the context of the Rhizo-Meme; digital corpora or pre-existing digital materials introduced by online contributors, yet not necessarily authored by them. Often these materials existed in isolation, with their integration into the Rhizo-Meme based upon perception of the contributor in making correlations between the current direction of travel within the Rhizo-Meme, and parallel socio-political events in the form of news stories, images, artworks, videos and audio uploads.

Often interjected through the use of clickable hyperlinks (channelling the Rhizo-Meme toward sites including *YouTube* and *SoundCloud*), these Nodes lacked in the repetition of intrinsic qualities that typified Iterative Nodes, yet their inherent interactivity (emphasised through the act of sharing and extended browsing behaviours) could be understood as a form of rhetorical cultural barometer. Digital activist Lawrence Lessig typified this form of informational bricolage utilised by 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001) as the critique of action, event and object produced in much the same manner as one might utilise citation within a critical essay (2008:69).

As I theorised them, Emergent Memetic Nodes are not constituted by multiple interjections producing a discursive knot in the same way as Iterative Memetic Nodes (through a form of dialogic social construction). Rather, they enact this knotting effect through their direct interjection with the dominant flow of the Rhizo-Meme. In purely memetic terms, these forms of Node 'assimilate' (Heylighen and Cheilens, 2008) emergent content, and connect the rhizome to 'existing multiplicities' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 10):



## NOT I / STUBBORN HEART<sup>17</sup>



<sup>17</sup> **Image 7:** Composite Image: *Visual representation of Emergent Memetic Node*, 03.06.14. Image credit: authors own.

## EMERGENT (CONT.1)

Each *Emergent Memetic Node* carried inherent tensions, subtly re-stratifying the Rhizo-Meme in relation to the expanded cultural landscape through the re-contextualisation of material already imbricated within the existing assemblage. With the inclusion of YouTube footage of Samuel Beckett's *Not I* (1972), the abstract notion of "*The Mouth*" expanded out into a nexus of potential exploration, connecting with both the form and content of the project to that point. Suddenly, the multiplicity of voices within the Rhizo-Memetic assemblage were gifted a symbolic mouthpiece - the performative qualities of "*The Mouth*" were assimilated by *Not I*, and the dramaturgical dimensions of Beckett's original text emerged from the milieu as intensely significant.

Similarly with the *Stubborn Heart* node, the abstract concept of the "*Heart*" which had developed iteratively within the assemblage in relation to "*The Wolf*" and "*The Mouth*" nodes became entangled with an emergent sense of musicality, grass roots artistry and cloud storage.

## AFTER THE CROSSING

The questioning of authorship expounded by the likes of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault<sup>18</sup> is expanded upon within online artworks such as *Corpus 1*. Whilst the early post-structuralist discourse of the 20<sup>th</sup> century focused broadly upon reconfiguring notions of authorship in the light of primarily analogue modes of reproduction, the explosion of user-generated content within the ‘free web economies’ (Manovich, 2008: 67) of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, suggest a ‘new universe’ (Manovich, 2008: 67) of seemingly self-generated media. Post Web 2.0<sup>19</sup>, ‘the author is [no longer simply] dead’ (Barthes, 1967); her material agency has *crossed over* into a de-materialised, distributed realm.

However, this realm is not without structure, and users of Web 2.0 (such as the participants of *Corpus 1*) only produce and curate content within the protocols regulated by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), alongside a transnational multi-stakeholder network of independent groups: civil societies, the private sector, governments, academic communities and national and international corporations (Kurbalija, 2012: online). In this light, Manovich’s ‘free web economy’ (2008: 67) is not so “free” at all. On a deeper level, the pathways structured by internet enabled platforms of Facebook and Twitter (utilised for *Corpus 1*) further regulate the ways and means by which users generated content is structured for consumption.

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<sup>18</sup> See: Foucault in Preziosi, (1998) “What is an Author” *The History of Art History: A Critical Anthology*. Oxford University Press. 299-314.

<sup>19</sup> Web 2.0 is a term coined by Tim O’Reilly (2004), and refers to a number of internet enabled web advances including social media, user-generated content, folksonomy, syndication and mass collaboration (O’Reilly, 2004: 68).

Departing from Alexander Galloway's reading of the internet as a distributed network and management system based upon protocols (Galloway, 2004), one can argue that all actions that take place on social media occur within the apparatus of control. In Turkey for example, this apparatus is being censored. Since 2012, Turkey's *Information Technologies and Communications Authority* (BTK) have applied a centralized filtering system. Paradoxically, the internet (along with social media platforms) is the only space for alternative news and information from different voices in this instance. Nevertheless, despite censoring mechanisms, social media sites and applications have been the main communication tool for the resistance against increasing authoritarianism in Turkey, as well as the only way to spread immediate information and news about ongoing political events. It is obvious that the internet has provided a platform for public organization beyond the control of government (UçKan & Kortun in Senova, 2013: online).

Following on from Galloway, we might recognize that such protocols can only be resisted from within. In this respect, social media can be utilised in a tactical sense to twist the directions of dominant narrative control. Galloway considers such tactical positions as forms of resistance that are able to 'exploit flaws in protocological and proprietary command and control' (2004: 176). Given this perspective, artworks such as *Corpus 1* have the potential to move beyond protocol and its basic functionality as a means to subvert mechanisms of control and shift notions of agency away from capitalist or authoritarian regimes and into the hands of the people.

Whilst the majority of materials contributed to *Corpus 1* by online participants operated within the assigned protocols of the governing platform, some contributions attempted to provoke discord through the attempted disruption of protocol. ‘Trolling’ (Bishop, 2013) attempts, such as the Centipede presented to the right of this page were added into the *Corpus 1*’s assemblage alongside the following textual accompaniment:

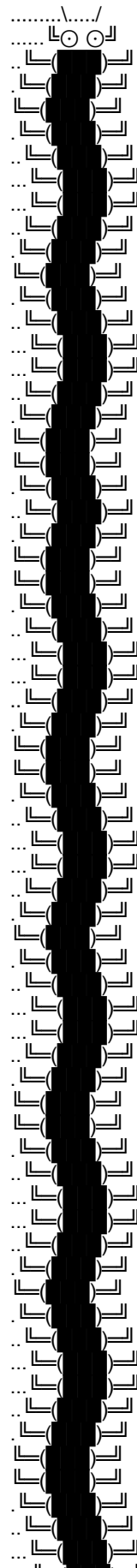
*Got the message yet? Good. Now fuck off!*

(Anonymized contribution to *Corpus 1* on Facebook. 23.05.13)

Additions to *Corpus 1*’s assemblage from users such as the above, made the interpretation and re-interpretation of the work by its users, and overarching structures governed by Facebook and Twitter, part of its intersubjective meaning. Whilst the example provided is not explicitly political, its application as an anarchic disruption device (in the context of *Corpus 1*) demonstrated the potentials of user generated content to refute systems of control (even those suggested by the initiator of the artwork). It is such that this initial aspect of the Rhizo-Memetic process finds a combination with the onsite/offsite aesthetics defined by Miwon Kwon:

...an artist who ... [produces work] ... that may not be hosted in a codified “art space” is usually legitimated through documentation. This type of artist is not making art in the usual sense, but instead collects pre-existing material to display in an anthropological fashion. She functions like a freelancer who reflects upon the commodification of the art object.

(Kwon in Navas, 2012: 139)



In this sense, *Corpus 1* was not purely an online artwork, but utilised the web as an extension of its materiality as a form of generative installation art. One might also consider this hypertextual assemblage as a form of 'database' (Manovich, 2008: 68) with the potential to self-referentially critique the means by which its users input data to the work. Its contributions range in complexity and intent, yet each adds certain uniqueness to the accretious machine.

Here, the notion of theatricality that Micheal Fried reacted against in his proposal that art is now 'the literal espousal of objecthood amounting to nothing other than plea for a new genre of theatre; and [that] theatre is now the negation of art' (1998: 126) is taken a step further. For not only must the viewers turned users interact with the artistic work, but also change its ontological status by adding to its content. In this sense, the participants of *Corpus 1* became co-curators of the work; collaborators, who consciously selected, re-iterated and performed the construction of its assemblage. Kwon's notion of 'sampling the world' (1997: 100) also comes into play within *Corpus 1*, only through the structures of social media; it was the participants of this work, rather than myself as the initiating artist who contributed to the aesthetic relationality of the work. In this regard, *Corpus 1* stands in parallel to networked collaborative works such as *C A L C* (Gees, 1990); *Pocket full of Memories* (LeGrady, 2007); and *Conversation Map* (Sack, 2000).<sup>20</sup>

The possibilities of further investigation into the user-generated aesthetics provoked by *Corpus 1* intensified in this stage of the project. The second phase of producing a Rhizo-Memetic Artwork would directly investigate these potentials, expanding upon the

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<sup>20</sup> For further information with regards to these artworks, please visit the Rhizo-Memetic Practice Review.

notions of onsite/offsite aesthetics defined by Miwon Kwon (Kwon in Navas, 2012: 139). In doing so, I anticipated that investigation of the fields of agency responsible for transdisciplinary practice might be further explicated.

Alongside this desire, I also wished to further scrutinise the research capacity of curatorial and archival methods produced via synthesis of 'rhizome' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and insights gained from the field of Memetics. At this stage, the materials aggregated by *Corpus 1* had not been archived in any meaningful way. In tandem, the potentials of these materials for transdisciplinary practice had not been fully articulated. The following chapter expands on this aspect of the work.

## **CLIMBING MOUNTAINS**



## SEDIMENTS

*Mirror on the Wall*

*One ocean*

*Dreams of escape*

*Something wicked*

*No prefix*

*Flight paths*

*Look at me*

*Hybrid*

*Violence*

*Except Jesus*

*Sing to the bumblebee*

*Afterthought*

*New trajectories*

*Thy Kingdom Come*

*Hybrid*

*Rainfall*

*Upheaval*

*No orator*

*Is that your Wine?<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journals. DATE: Exploring concepts of textual bricolage and re-contextualisation utilising elements appropriated from *Corpus 1* (2012-13).

## SETTLING VELOCITY

Within this aspect I explore the settlement of thoughts that merged and informed the research praxis during the production and curation of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014). These ‘discursive theoretical flows’ (Colombo, 2004: 3) emerged out of a review of literature primarily concerning contemporary understandings of collective and transdisciplinary arts, processes of arts documentation and methods of their curation.

This review was encouraged by understandings of epistemic construction as rhizomic and existing across a ‘plane of exteriority’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), I imagined these thoughts as the settling of sedimentary forms: a quickening as each particle of knowledge is pulled into engagement, or rather, feels the affect of collective force as gathering numbers of haecceities collide and converge.

I imagined the knowledge generated by this second phase of inquiry forming sedimentary foundations, whipped into rudimentary peaks and troughs. Through slow and silty movement, ideas collide and knowledge compacts. As points of connectivity emerge between forms, pressure builds up until great ruptures emerge from the terrain. These newly formed mountains are echinated and tumultuous; seismic disturbances crack and scar their surface.

As artefacts of potential, they splinter and decay; without equilibrium, no smooth space is reached. Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome attacks rigidity of form on all epistemological levels. Rather than fixed, static systems of knowledge, they prefer the idea of flows, intensities, movements and velocities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 162). Equally, my application of the meme re-stratifies the governing connections of the

rhizome as transitive, replicating and mutational: always in a state of becoming and never static.

This section of the exegesis tracks the ruptures and convergences of this second phase of the project from synthesis of curatorial and documental theory, through to subsequent conceptualisations of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* and ultimately, its creative co-production and curation. The body of this chapter concerns the documentation of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* as a core practical phase of artistic exploration. I conclude this chapter with a series of short reflective accounts alongside the provided samples of audience feedback.

In keeping with the over-arching methodological synthesis of meme and rhizome that this thesis cultivates in producing Rhizo-Memetic Art, my writing continues to be presented in such a way as to demonstrate its potentials. In that regard, the reader may have noticed subtle repetitions and transmogrifications in the written structure between this chapter and the prior: these are intentional. The subsections of this writing act as unit-haecceities-particle-monad-memes; they transmit, repeat and mutate. However, these transmogrifications are not exhaustive, simply emblematic:

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections...organisations or power, and circumstance relative to the Arts, sciences and social struggles. [A rhizome]... is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural and cognitive. There is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs and specialised languages.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 7)

These linguistic jumps function akin to Janet Murray's formulation of the quintessential properties of digital environments: procedural, participatory, spatial and encyclopaedic (Murray, 1998). These qualities can be equally applied to the rhizome and converge in Murray's assertion of the Internet as a 'behavioural engine' (Murray,

1998: 72) and formulations of the rhizome as a 'desiring machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Within the version of this document available within the project website these linguistic jumps are enacted through the application of hypertextual links. Within the remainder of this written document, the reader's interpretation of particular subsections or units becomes aggregational - examining the range of ideas or memes that the total assemblage connects.

In this context, the insights generated by this study emerge in the accumulated affect of performative connection and akin to contemporary formulations of media 'remixing' (Lessig, 2008). As Deleuze and Guattari proclaim: 'we will never ask what a book means...we will not look for anything to understand in it' (1987: 4), rather I invite the reader to consider:

*What functions now?*

*Does that connect?*

*Which intensities diffuse?*

*What remains plugged in?*

*What diverges?*

## CONCEPTUALISING THE FLORILEGIUM

In the Summer of 2014, I appropriated the term 'florilegium' as a way in which to signal concepts of cultural remix and modes of collective production alongside the botanical connotations of the word, which resonated with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome theory.

The term 'florilegium' was first attributed to ancient compilations of excerpts from other writings, and can be traced to the Greek work *anthologia* (anthology), with the same etymological meaning (Jackson & Benjamin, 1900). Medieval florilegia can be understood as an early form of systematic re-contextualisation of existing cultural materials, or what may now be perceived as an early example of remix culture.

When conceptualising the second phase of this work, I became increasingly drawn towards discourses relating to the notion of Remix<sup>22</sup> - particularly, in how the concept of Remix may be at play across art, music, performance, media and the wider cultural industries as a general aesthetic principle.

Eduardo Navas (2012) writes that Remix 'informs the development of material reality, dependant on the constant recyclability of material with the implementation of mechanical production' and that 'this recycling is active in both content and form' (2012: 3). Whilst Lawrence Lessig's understanding of 'remix culture' is mainly occupied with the free exchange of ideas and their manifestation of specific products, Navas' conceptualisation of Remix moves beyond basic understandings of remix as the 'recombination of existing materials in order to make something different' (2012: 3). Remix is not understood as an artistic or social movement, but rather, as a 'cultural binder' (2012: 4) or 'virus that mutates into different forms according to the needs of a

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<sup>22</sup> I focus on 'Remix' as opposed to 'remix culture' as way to consider the reasoning that makes the conception of remix culture possible. I capitalise Remix to signify it as a discourse in light of Navas' theory.

particular culture' (2012: 4).<sup>23</sup> In understanding Remix itself as a form of aesthetic virus, intensities emerged between Navas' theory, and my own conceptualisations of the Rhizo-Meme in thesis subsection: *Crossing Streams*:

Remix itself has no form, but is quick to take on any shape and medium. It needs cultural value to be at play; in this sense Remix is parasitical. Remix is forever 'meta' – always unoriginal. At the same time, when implemented effectively, it becomes a tool of autonomy.

(Navas, 2012: 5)

I considered that the sense of aesthetic autonomy emerging from the application of Remix theory might be co-opted within Rhizo-Memetic practice as part of its conceptual strategy. Indeed, Remix can be understood in parallel to the Rhizo-Meme in that both encapsulate and extends shifts in modernism and postmodernist theory; for modernism is legitimated by the conception of a Universal History (Lyotard, 1979), Postmodernism is validated by deconstructions of that History. Postmodernism has often been cited to allegorize Modernism by way of fragmentation, by sampling selectively from Modernism; thus metaphorically speaking, Postmodernism remixes modernism in order to sustain itself as a valid epistemological project.

I began to reflect on the means by which this conceptualisation of Remix discourse could be applied practically as a secondary stage for the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork. Alongside this desire, I intended to scrutinise the modes of production incumbent to *Corpus 1* could be extended as a documental and curatorial strategy. As I report in *After the Crossing*, the materials aggregated within *Corpus 1* had not yet been archived in any meaningful way. I theorized that the production of a second stage to the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork itself, might provide a curatorial frame for *Corpus 1*, and that in turn, the

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<sup>23</sup> Navas' notion of the virus can be understood as a reference to William Burroughs's (1987) views on language as a form of virus. Equally, the cultural 'virus' metaphor has been key to

materials of this initial artwork might provide a unique starting point for further explorations of transdisciplinary practice.

I theorised that opening up the materials aggregated within existing Rhizo-Memetic assemblage to a further set of research participants, and the documentation of the heterogeneous modes of production implicit to the participant's creative processes would enable me to achieve this aim. As such, I conceptualised the second stage of Rhizo-Memetic Artwork as *Florilegium: Exhibition* as an exploration of *Corpus 1*, through which insights on modes of production and curation particular to Rhizo-Memetic practice might be collectively examined.

In reference to Robin Nelson's 'multi-mode epistemological model for PaR' (2013: 37) I utilised the three epistemological bases outlined, as a way to expose the multiple forms of knowledge that might emerge from the second phase of Rhizo-Memetic practice. Nelson notes that knowledge generated by PaR can be articulated through a triangular configuration of 'know-how (insider) close up knowing (experiential; haptic; performative; tacit; embodied)' (*ibid*), 'know what' (the tacit made explicit through critical reflection)' (*ibid*) and 'Outsider, distant knowledge (spectatorship study; conceptual frameworks; propositional knowledge)' (*ibid*). In that regard, I conceptualised the three core aspects of *Florilegium: Exhibition* as: (1) a memes-eye view of participant's documental residues; (2) a publically produced archive, or conceptual reconfiguration of these materials in tandem to those of *Corpus 1*; and (3) a series of performative, experiential engagements of these materials from contributing artists.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> These core aspects of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* are further explicated in the thesis subsection entitled: *Elements of the Florilegium: Exhibition*.

## DOCUMENTAL/CURATORIAL SYNTHESIS

Given the research imperative to further scrutinise the capacity of curatorial and archival methods produced via meme/rhizome synthesis, this chapter subsection interrogates the ways and means by which insights generated by this synthesis find resonance with theories of documentation and curation specific to Performance practice.

In *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (2006) Matthew Reason suggests that 'Performance is present and represented in various media and activity that, although not the thing itself, reflect upon, evoke and retain something of performance' (2006: 1). These residues, whilst not able to fully reconstruct experiences of live events have been commonly preserved and curated within performing arts archives in order to evidence the passing of enacted moments through time. I found Reason's conceptualisation of 'Performance residues' (*ibid*) or ephemera significant in the light of insights generated during the production of the Rhizo-Meme's first artwork, and wished to further articulate the connective qualities between Reason's work and concepts of the E-meme expounded earlier in this exegesis. Within this earlier chapter, I make connections between McNamara's 'E-Meme' (2012) and Aunger's 'Memetic Artefacts' (2001), alongside Deleuze and Guattari's 'rhizome' (1987). In drawing connectivity between these interdisciplinary concepts, I aimed to unpick the memetic qualities of documentation positioned by these discourses as integral to the material recalcitrance of cultural production<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> See: Spinoza's proposition on materiality (1992) - part 3, proposition 6; and Mathews (2003: 48) who both argue that cultural forms (materials) are themselves powerful assemblages with resistant force.



In this effort I revisit Derrida, who suggests that our ‘feverish drive to save exudes from a cultural fear of loss, disappearance and death’ (1995: 19). Derrida’s notion of the archival “drive” indicates a sense of material force, or of agency beyond the scope of conscious thought. In proposing that this drive emerges from the playing out of a Freudian ‘death drive’ (1995: 92), Derrida posits that the ontological primacy of the archive is only bettered by archaeology: ‘when the *arkhē* appears in the nude’ (ibid).<sup>26</sup>

Whilst the ontological looping of material genesis implied in Derrida’s position is striking, this thesis uniquely suggests that the archival drive does not emerge primarily from an internal, psychological imperative. Rather, it is played out by competing memetic structures as a rhizomic network of internal and external forces. The imperative for memes to “copy” themselves through cultural systems (or as the substrate of rhizomic systems, as I suggest) informed by memetic theory (Dawkins, 1974; Blackmore, 1999; Aunger, 2002; Dennett, 2004; McNamara, 2011; et al), re-stratifies the relationship between documental materials and the agency of the archon.

Diana Taylor explicates the Performance archive as intensely political, asking: ‘Whose memories, traditions, and claims to history disappear if performance practices lack the staying power to transmit vital knowledge?’ (2003: 5). Matthew Reason comments at length upon this dialectic of disappearance, suggesting that the proposed neutrality of the archive is based upon ‘compromised positions of selection, omission and manipulation’ (2006: 32). I contend that the positions held by both Taylor and Reason suggest that human agency is inherent to these gaps in archival authority. The insights

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<sup>26</sup> Derrida defines the *arkhē* as a position of origin and power; a place where things begin. He makes connections with representations of Noah’s Ark within religious texts as a conceptual position of genesis (Derrida, 1995).

generated by this thesis however, offer a potential new perspective upon this notion of agency.

Taylor's 'staying power' (2003: 5); Derrida's 'drive' (1995: 92); and Reason's 'selection and omission' (2006: 32) betray intense relationships to ways in which key players in memetic theory conceptualise the properties of the meme. Indeed, within *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins (1976) identifies three characteristics of memes as: 'fidelity' (actuation), 'fecundity' (replication and/or spread) and 'longevity' (measure of persistence) (1976: 193). If we apply these characteristics to the residues /ephemera of Performance (costumes, masks, scripts, lighting plans etc), reconceptualised as 'Memetic Artefacts' (Aunger, 2002) or E-Memes (McNamara, 2011), then the material vibrancy of these objects begin to exert influence over their own assignment to the archive.

Reason repeats apropos Peggy Phelan, that 'we have created and studied a discipline based upon that which disappears' (Phelan and Lane, 1998: 8). Indeed, the fundamental 'incompleteness' (Steedman, 1998: 67) of performing arts archives remains entrenched in scholarly examination of the significance of archival activity and its usefulness in cultural preservation. Reconceptualising the remains of Performance as Memetic Artefacts offers potential ways of counteracting the postmodernist 'destabilization of history' (Evans, 1997: 5) and therefore the archive. By contrast, the potentials of this project for transposing the archive as a social matrix of act, object and absence, rather than focusing on the meaningfulness of individual residues in reconstituting the 'unsavable' live (Schneider, 2001: 100), may offer up potential new insights context of this study.

Repositioning archives as primarily memetic territories allows us the ability to view them less as attempts reclaim the primacy of Performance territories. In this light, residues of performance act as markers or co-ordinates. But, as Cooke (2009) reminds

us, 'we do not experience maps - we experience what the maps make it possible to perceive (2009: 106). Certainly for the performing arts archive, the notion of experience remains crucial. Historically, the equation of written texts as coterminous with knowledge has been central to westernised views of epistemology as the 'governing cognitive archetype' (Carruthers, 1990: 16). Yet, as Simone Osthoff (2009) notes, conflicts of representation shaped by contemporary artists and curators 'through their performances in, with, and of the archive' (2009: 11) during the latter half of twentieth and throughout the twenty-first century, have produced an ontological shift in documental practice. From a terrain of fixed primacy to landscapes of infinite subjectivity, performance based interventions with archival materials alter what academic scholarship regard as suitable canons of knowledge (Candlin, 2000).

Paul Clarke & Julian Warren (2009) suggest that 'archives name a territory' (2009: p) and represent the unwritten rules of the discipline: 'what will be valued, deposited and called Art in the future' (ibid). In contrast, this thesis asserts that archives test the limits of a territory whose borders are in constant flux.

## THE COLLECTIVE

In producing *Florilegium: Exhibition*, I desired to initiate an artistic collective that did not have to form a distinct community, an extended family model, or even have a common philosophical outlook. In doing so, I endeavoured to support an art-making collective that might operate as a 'Production' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 18) prototype, formed primarily to serve the artistic purpose of its participants, rather than operate under the remit of an initiator or aesthetic 'General' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21). In doing so, I acknowledged the political dimensions of such an act in relation to that which Jen Harvie in her monograph *Fair Play* (2013) terms as a form of 'social resilience':

... [An artistic practice which provides] ... alternative structures through which to support their own and others' work and through which to explore collaboration, social, and 'folk' connections.

(Harvie, 2013: 193)

Whilst Rhizo-Memetic Art was not primarily conceived of as a form of socio-political critique, its productive and curatorial methods betray a subtle political perspective. Harvie notes a growing trend in contemporary arts practice towards 'relational and delegated art [that] invite[s] audiences 'to participate, act, work and create together, observe one another; or simply be together' (2013: 1). She goes on to suggest that such practices are proliferating in response to contemporary contractions in 'state-led support systems for the arts' (2013: 192), and a growing necessity to address 'cultural trends which damage communication and prioritize self-interest' (2013: 2). Harvie notes that these trends (for example, the rapid adoption of social media and wearable technologies) are 'actively cultivated by dominant neoliberal capitalist ideologies' (2013: 2).

Given that *Corpus 1* (the first practical output of this research) was produced online, and exists as a digital substrate interwoven with protocols of social media, by contrast the *Florilegium Collective* (and the *Florilegium: Exhibition* as a whole) can be understood to 'decline neoliberalism's celebration of commodity, market, and product, and explore processes and craft, [...] modelling ways of critically engaging with [neoliberal capitalism by] eluding it, critiquing it, repudiating it and ridiculing it [;] seeking alternative ways of being which preserve principles of social collaboration and interdependence' (Harvie, 2013: 193).

I therefore describe the *Florilegium Collective* as a resistant assemblage, or social vehicle characterised by the involvement of a diverse sample of working artists that might seek some kind of consensus *only* in the curation of their individual artworks (rather than in the production of a singular artwork in and of itself). Unlike the modes of entrepreneurial production involved in some collaborative art-making, whereby artists might be invited to work towards a common artistic goal under the guidance of a lead artist (and commissioned based on their aptitude in discipline specific skills), the *Florilegium Collective* was intended to operate as an ad-hoc grouping of diverse artists with distinct socio-political and artistic intentions bound only by a generative starting point. The cultivation of the *Florilegium Collective* in opposition to such models was an attempt to repudiate 'selfish individualism and quantitative value over other qualitative and social values that might [otherwise be] prioritized' (Harvie, 2013: 194).

In addition, the grouping of artists would not be dependent on their level of professional experience, and professional artists could work alongside undergraduate students and emerging artists throughout. From my perspective, the *Florilegium Collective* became characterised by the conjunction and the contradistinction of various political, aesthetic, and social views. And, unlike common collective production models,

the development and precision of personal aesthetics would be favoured over the cohesiveness of a collective direction:

*The Collective<sup>27</sup> is:*

*A living*

*Pulsing*

*Alliance...*

*...Able to function in the face of the persistent presence of energies confounding and disrupting from within.*

*It has an uneven topology, characterised by asymmetrical ruptures at the points whereby various materials and bodies cross paths.*

*Certain paths are tread softly...*

*...Others more heavily. And so, power is not distributed equally. The Collective breaks and re-configures. Mountains rise and fall.*

*The Collective has no governance. No one contributor has sufficient power to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group...*

*The effects generated by the Collective are, rather emergent properties; emergent in their ability to make something happen, and distinct from the sum of each artwork considered alone.*

*Each contributor (and their materials) has a vital force but there is also effectivity proper to the grouping: the agency of an assemblage.*

*Precisely because each contributor maintains their energies slightly*

*Off-kilter from that of the group, the Collective is never impassive, but an open-ended, non-totalizable sum.*

In the June of 2014, I posted an open call for artists to contribute to the proposed collective, and to produce creative works within a group exhibition (copy of call available within the project archive). When writing this call, there was in intense drive to attract artists working across multiple artistic disciplines, and not to amass a number of artists working with the same materials, techniques and conventions.

I used the project's Twitter handle originally utilised to orchestrate *Corpus 1* in order to reach potential participants whom I thought may have already developed a

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<sup>27</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective diaries. 03.05.14

subjective relationship to the existing artwork. In that regard, the most crucial aspect of this call was explicating the nature of the task that potential contributors would undertake. The following is a transcription of one such explication over email to performance artist Frances-Kay on the 16<sup>th</sup> June:

Each contributing artist is invited present an original work in their chosen medium. The work must be “complete” and presentable for exhibition on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2014. Each contributing artist is invited to respond to one node of the following material: [link to *Corpus 1*] as a “starting point”. Each contributing artist must document the process of conceptualising and producing their work from this starting point, and submit documentation regularly to the researcher either via email or through addition to the password projected pages of the project website.

(Burrows in correspondence with Frances-Kay via email. 16.06.14)

In my conversations with potential contributors such as the above, I was careful not to present myself as a “leader” for the proposed collective, and suggested instead that my role was one of artistic and curatorial facilitation. Whilst responses to this call were initially slow, by the end of August 2014 I had amassed a collective of twelve individual artist and group participants consenting to produce original artistic works for public exhibition by November 2014. This grouping included artists working not only within performance paradigms, but a range of artists working in fields that lay outside traditional conceptualisations of performance.

Over the preceding three months each of the collective’s twelve artists and groups chose a nodal aspect of the material aggregated within *Corpus 1*, and set about producing original creative works that utilised *Corpus 1* as a generative starting point. I created a password protected page on the project website through which members of the collective could upload their process documentation, and discuss their work with each other through the form of an online blog:

**Image 9: Scanned**

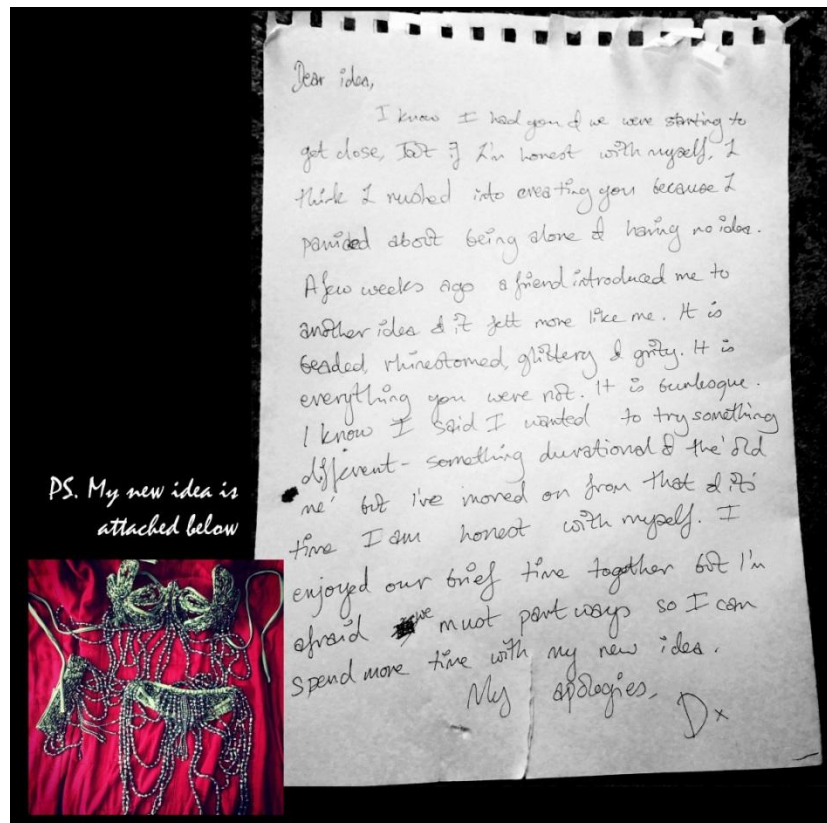
document/photograph:

*Daria D'Beauvoix writes an*

*open letter to her 'old idea',*

Online, 12.09.14. Image

credit: Daria D'Beauvoix.



This open-ended strategy of accruing process documentation from contributing artists such as the above, enabled me to consider these artefacts in parallel to my curation of them, and each document in turn was moved out from behind the digital 'skene' (Oudsten, 2012: 4) of the password protected page and into the project's public archive in relation to the materials of *Corpus 1*.

During this developmental period, there was an inherent sense of unpredictability in the way in which the collective produced work for the *Florilegium: Exhibition*, and as a consequence, in the different ways each artist of the collective understood the curation of their own creative works alongside a shared trajectory towards exhibition in November 2014. In that regard, some members of the collective submitted documental artefacts which produced clear and well defined trajectories for the finished artworks including meta-data (associated submissions that described the



subjective relevance of the main submission. Other contributors such as WeAreCodeX, did not: choosing instead to submit a series of standalone photographic images without explicitly connected meta-data. In the image below, documental metadata is inferred through a ‘visual bibliography’ presented on the window-ledge which includes content on “Performance”, “Cell Biology”, “Multimedia” and “Creative Advertising” amongst others:



**Figure: 10:** Photograph: *Process* documentation submitted by WeAreCodeX, Online, 11.10.14. Image credit: David Henckel.

The pre-production stages of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* during this time involved the negotiation of my own curatorial and documental inscriptions in tandem to those that the contributing artists brought across disciplinary borders and into the creative milieu: personal perspectives were constantly re-negotiated throughout this

process, and were subsequently echoed in the physical installation of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* in the Arts Centre. These echoes reverberated as a series of ontological shifts throughout the presentation of the work. This process of re-negotiation problematised the definition of a set of curatorial paradigms through which meaning and inter-discursivity were ultimately produced - and consequently a truly stable, singular curatorial outcome was never strictly reached.

In that regard, Rhizo-Memetic Art operates as a series of stabilizing and de-stabilizing plateaus. Each in some manner or other (either politically or aesthetically) disrupts or 'makes strange' (Rancière, 2010) that with which precedes it (is placed next to it, or connected with it). Rhizo-Memetic Art therefore, emerges as a deeply critical arts practice that constantly re-negotiates its socio-political context in response to the fluidity of insights generated by its actors (agents, materials).

Returning to the work of Jen Harvie in *Fair Play* (2013), the 'Difference' (Deleuze, 1972: 41) implicit in the working methodologies of the *Florilegium Collective* can be understood to demonstrate a social alternative to a neoliberalist economy for the production and curation of artistic practice - both in regards to 'human needs' and 'democratic opportunity' (Harvie, 2013: 2). By placing individualism, aesthetic rights, 'equality of opportunity [and] fair distribution of resources' (2013: 2) at the heart of my facilitative approach, the *Florilegium Collective* became a model for 'learning [with,] from and about each other' (2013: 2). Similarly, Sue McGregor, whilst reporting on the *Canadian Commission for UNESCO* (2004) cites the 'establishment of collective ateliers (free from ideological, political, or religious control)' (2004: 7) as a key foundation for fruitful transdisciplinary thinking. McGregor continues by noting that such collectives operate by 'reconfiguring our collective grasp of cultural concepts, [and] facilitate an

increase in the flow or fluidity of insights that emerge, can be cross-fertilised or integrated into larger socio-political patterns' (2004: 2).

In terms of research, this 'fluidity of insight' (2004: 2) meant that attempting to define my role in relation to the collective involved a significant amount of generalisation and approximation at the time. On a structural level, attempting to define the "rules" by which the collective produced work as a constant subject, became analogous to the scientist's project, as Gleick (1990) describes it in his history of chaos theory: he asserts that scientists generally look for 'linear, solvable and differential equations that accurately describe the complexity of natural systems' (1990: 67). In contrast, he goes on to suggest that both physicists and mathematicians have 'long ignored non-linear systems simply because they are non-linear' (1990: 67), and hence have no stable conclusion. Critically however, Gleick asserts that 'non-linear systems are the norm in natural processes rather than the exception' (1990: 68). As he points out: '...to call the study of chaos non-linear science is like calling zoology the study of non-elephant animals' (Gleick, 1990: 68). When describing the ways relatively rare instances in which physical systems do have linear, mathematical solutions have become the focus of the physical and mathematical disciplines, Gleick wrote:

Solvable systems are shown in textbooks. They behave. Confronted with a non-linear system, scientists would have to substitute linear approximations or find some other uncertain back door approach. Textbooks show students only the rare non-linear systems that give way to such techniques. They do not display sensitive dependence on initial conditions. Non-linear systems with real chaos are rarely taught and rarely learned. When people stumble across such things – and people do – all their training argues for dismissing them as aberrations. Only a few are able to remember that solvable, orderly, linear systems are true aberrations.

(Gleick, 1990: 68)

In terms of the *Florilegium Collective* then, in order to say something about its total work, in order to define one aspect of its practice in relation to another, I refuted

structural frameworks that might edit out its inconsistencies –its problematic aspects that might otherwise be ignored as aberrations; ‘non-linear’ complexities beyond the scope of certain modes of analysis. The preceding discussion of the different agencies brought forward into the *Florilegium: Exhibition*, in its attempts to differentiate and articulate the paradigms involved in producing this work (the physical exhibition, its events and imbricated performances), can be understood in this way. The generalisation of approaches tends to fix and define those approaches in relation to one another. Their constant negotiation is hinted at, but remains undefined.

The problem this raises is that there is a temptation to extrapolate: almost to mix these agencies together in one’s mind in the way one would mix paint and imagine the collective’s process as a product of this mixing. What this doesn’t account for, is the constant flux in the epistemological structure of the collective that arises from the continual reorganization, improvisation and negotiation that can occur between a range of human and non-human agencies (the artists and their materials). Therefore, the deeply aesthetic and political structures of collective agency within this praxis fluctuated in rapid and chaotic ways.

I have found that the collaborative production of *Florilegium: Exhibition* is best discussed utilising theory, rather than analysis because the works constitute of it reveal difference and instability of meaning more than they produce a specific genre-defined kind of materiality. In fact, it is this very transdisciplinarity which renders the question of genre largely irrelevant to the curation of *Florilegium: Exhibition*, since its works are each situated as overtly inter-discursive, and do not attempt to challenge the constitution or history of their own genre. They are instead concerned with the variability and uniqueness of their own materiality, which arises from difference and in the gaps between the paradigms that define convention and symbolic meaning. My

articulation of particular approaches to production and curation, in relation to the work of contributing artists within *Florilegium: Exhibition* serves to highlight the presence of profound 'Difference' (Deleuze, 1972: 41) and the complexity of the negotiation of differences in the production of the total assemblage, rather than to suggest a particularly finite understanding of their resolution.

## **ELEMENTS OF THE *FLORILEGIUM*:**

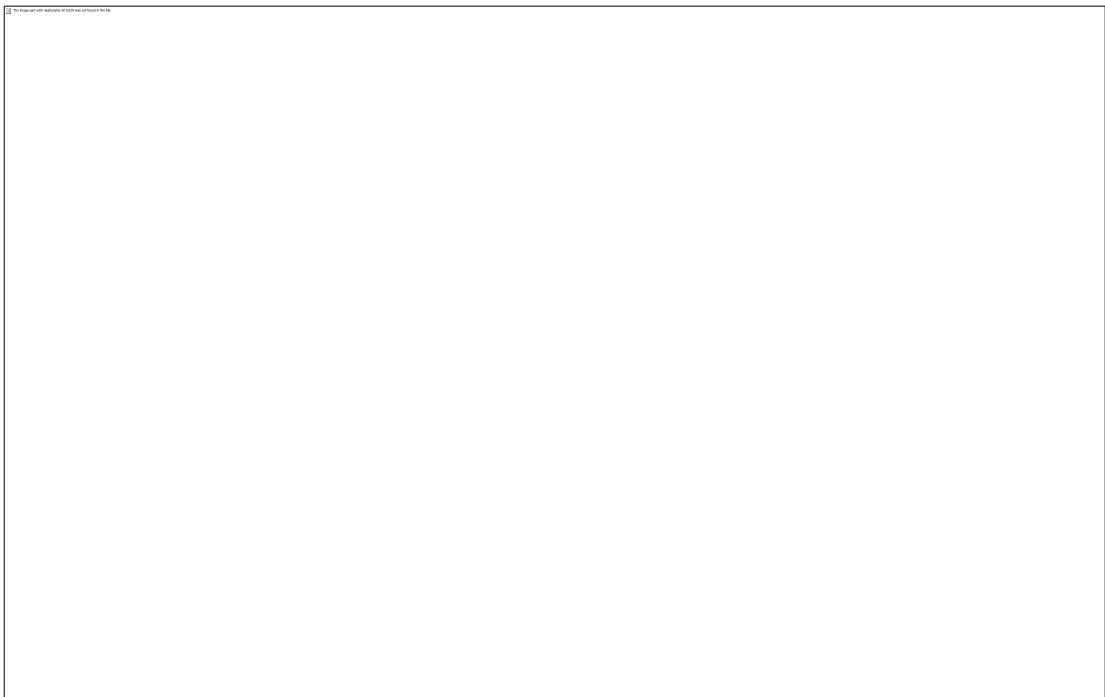
The *Florilegium: Exhibition* was presented over a three week period (3<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014) in the Arts Centre on Edge Hill University campus. Whilst primarily utilising areas of the building open to the general public (the locus of the work presented in the designated exhibition space), some aspects of the work were presented in multiple smaller studio spaces and the outdoor amphitheatre. We Are CodeX's performance work *RSVP* was presented in The Arts Centre's professional venue: The Rose Theatre.

The *Florilegium: Exhibition* itself was divided into three distinct yet interlocking aspects:

- *Florilegia 1: Ephemera*
- *Florilegia 2: Artworks and Performances*
- *Florilegia 3: Generative Archive*

Within this chapter subsection, I present a series of excerpts from the printed exhibition booklet (full text available as a PDF within the project archive) which accompanied the physical exhibition. These excerpts are intercut with precise curatorial statements, which attempt to clearly and accurately map out the physical qualities and intentions of each of the above exhibition aspects and their incumbent works. These statements attempt to expose what Simondon terms as the material 'resonance' (Simondon, 1992) of the exhibited elements. The accompanying samples of anonymous audience feedback are presented in order to produce a stable and shared locus of critical reflection in the absence of primary witnessing. In order to access all documental artefacts of *Florilegium: Exhibition*, including further examples of audience feedback please visit the project archive at: [www.rhizo-meme.com](http://www.rhizo-meme.com).

## EXHIBITION FEEDBACK SAMPLE<sup>28</sup>



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<sup>28</sup> **Image 11:** Scanned document: *Audience feedback example 1*, Florilegium: Exhibition, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 03.11.14. Image credit: authors own.

## FLORILEGIA 1: EPHEMERA

### EXCERPT FROM '*FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION*' BOOKLET:

Ephemera offers a non-linear journey through a collaborative and distributed practice, including text, photographs, and excerpts from artist's notebooks, rehearsal notations, drawing and recorded dialogues. It aims to reveal all the complexities, changes of direction, approaches and discoveries that the *Florilegium* has provoked

(Burrows, 2014: 4)

### DESCRIPTION:

The element of the physical exhibition entitled *Florilegia 1: Ephemera* was presented across a series of ten white exhibition display panels, a number of rectangular plinths and a presentation bench. Each display panel housed a curated arrangement, or 'Node' of documental ephemera authored by the exhibition's Contributing Artists. Each Node was accompanied by a brief textual accompaniment linking the physical objects to their digital source (such as *The Wolf*, or *Beach*). Explicit taxonomic references to authorship remained purposefully absent.

Text based and hand-drawn paper elements (such as notation, lighting queues and design sketches) were mounted using a range of white and black picture frames of multiple sizes. Documental objects (such as elements of costume, prop and floor materials) were presented using display plinths, and protected by clear acrylic casing.

Both visual and tactile environmental motifs appropriated from individual aspects of ephemera (such as gravel, sand, dust sheets, charcoal and newspapers) were blended together and utilised to soften the parameters of the exhibition space. These sedimentary motifs were also intended to infer a sense of 'cross-fertilisation', or 'mingling' of motifs that might produce a sense of continuity without the explicit trappings of a textual narrative.



**Figure: 12:** Photograph:  
*Aspect of Florilegia: 1:*  
*Ephemera*, Florilegium:  
Exhibition, Arts Centre,  
Ormskirk. 15.11.14.  
Image credit: authors  
own.



Each 'Node' defined by the authorship of its materials, was accompanied by a series of interactive QR codes (Quick Response), which linked the viewer to the growing digital archive which acted as a twin to the physical space. These QR codes also enabled the viewer to access further information about the documented artefacts, including details of where and when to experience artworks completed by the Contributing Artists that each artefact led toward. The monochromatic visual of the QR code, initially designed by Denso Wave (1994), was further referenced by the choice of black and white frames, and stark aesthetic of the exhibition.

Primarily analogue in nature, curated ephemera continually accrued throughout the four week exhibition period, conterminously with the series of live performance events accessible through QR code navigation. As the duration of the exhibition extended, the empty spaces in-between individually authored Nodes (and the documents accrued around them) began to merge, and push up against the environmental sediments (sand, newspapers etc) that marked the physical boundaries

of this work. Connections to Matthew Reason's 'archive of detritus' (2006: 53) are made explicitly within this aspect of the work. Reason notes that performance process can be highlighted through the 'accumulation of detritus of the stage' (ibid), and that such archival exploits are able to 'create and re-create the multiple appearances of performance ... as an immediate archive of production ... mirroring the nature of the audience's memory' (2006: 53-54). Reason summarises this position:

The idea of detritus as archive is [also] not so far from the state of all archives: but the archive as detritus turns around the presumptions of neutral detachment, objectivity, fidelity, randomness and memory. And having abandoned claims to accuracy and completeness, such an archive is able to present archival interpretations, proclamations and demonstrations; consciously and overtly performing what all archives are already enacting.

(Reason, 2006: 54)

This display was presented in the public areas of Edge Hill University's Arts Centre - a space frequently used by students, staff and visiting public.

## ***EXHIBITION FEEDBACK SAMPLE<sup>29</sup>***



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<sup>29</sup> **Image 13:** Scanned document: *Audience feedback example 2*, Florilegium: Exhibition, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 10.11.14. Image credit: authors own.

## FLORILEGIA 2: ARTWORKS AND PERFORMANCES

### EXCERPT FROM '*FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION*' BOOKLET:

Through interaction with the QR codes presented both within Florilegia 1 & 3 with a smartphone, you are invited to tailor your own schedule of live events taking place from the 3rd to the 24th November 2014. These live events will not be formally announced – in order to encounter, you must first discover.

The date and venue of the Round Table event with speakers including the exhibition curator and contributing artists can also be unlocked via interaction with the QR codes presented throughout the exhibition space. Completed artworks will appear incrementally; be sure to check back as the network grows.

(Burrows, 2014: 5)

### DESCRIPTION:

The element of the exhibition entitled *Florilegia 2: Artworks and Performances* was presented over a three week period between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, in parallel to *Florilegia* elements 1 & 3. Essentially, this aspect was constructed as a schedule of live performance events, screenings and public discussions. As explained within the accompanying booklet, the full schedule of these events was never explicitly published. Informed by the incumbent documental/curatorial strategy, these elements of the work were only accessible to the public via their interaction with the QR Codes presented alongside artefacts exhibited in *Florilegia 1: Ephemera*, and *Florilegia 3: Generative Archive*.

Completed performance works from the exhibition's contributing artists which included a live element (*Little Red; Lupine; Merman; MonMon; RSVP; Forgotten Footsteps; and The End*) were presented on a cyclical rota over the three week period, enabling members of the public to build their own personalised schedule of repeating live events by scanning the associated QR codes with their handheld devices. An overview of each artwork contributed by members of the *Florilegium: Collective* is

available as an appendix to this document. A full schedule of these live events is available within the project's online archive. In addition, each live performance work was documented through photography and fragments of video added into the projects archive (*Florilegia 3*) only by members of the public. Due to this fact, the archive's presentation of these live works is asymmetrical, with those artworks attracting larger public audiences (greater memetic fecundity<sup>30</sup>) accumulating more documental artefacts overall. Elements of physical ephemera generated by the repetition of these live works over the three week period (for instance, protective dustsheets and toiletries in Frances Kay's *Little Red*; cans of used spray paint and overalls in Calun Griffin's *The End*; technical notes and lighting queues from WeAreCodex's *RSVP*; and chunks of coal in Catarina Soromenho's *Lupine*) were added into the exhibition aspect *Florilegia 1: Ephemera* on a daily basis.

Completed artworks which did not include a live performance element (*Byte*; *Postcards from a Pack of Lies*; *Remix*; *Untitled*; *Leonard*; and *Vizual: Ize*), were presented in the main *Florilegium* exhibition space incrementally over the three week period and remained as permanent fixtures within the exhibition after initial presentation. In parallel to live performance works, these aspects were also documented via public interaction, and addition of publically generated photo and video footage to *Florilegia 3*.

The *Florilegium: Exhibition* began with a public opening event on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2014, which attracted a large number of both students and staff from Edge Hill University, alongside members of the general public. This event was also publicised in local news by cultural journals such as *Art in Liverpool* (2014: online). During this event,

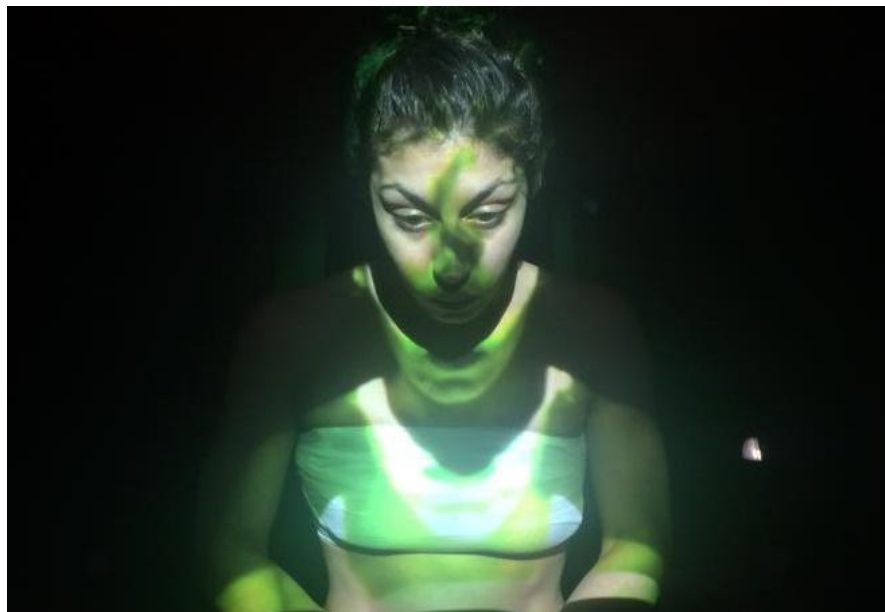
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<sup>30</sup> See: thesis subsection entitled *Meme/Rhizome Synthesis* alongside *Documental/Curatorial Synthesis* for further information regarding 'memetic fecundity' (Dawkins, 1976).

contributing artist Catarina Soromenho was invited to perform an adaptation of her work *Lupine* in collaboration with me.

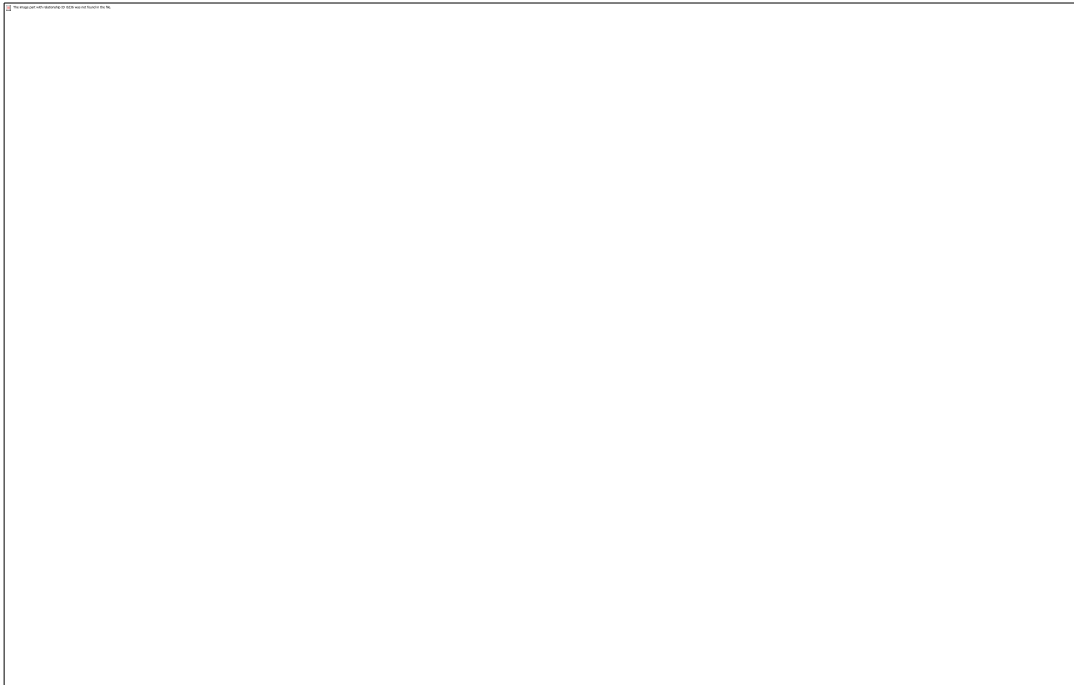
This adaptation furthered the thematic notions of transmission implied by Catarina's use of coal in producing a black paste that could be used as a painting material. Within the opening event, Catarina inhabited the exhibition space, "discovering" remnants of coal that were strategically placed within the nodes *Florilegia 1: Ephemera*. These remnants were then handed out to members of the public with the instruction to "pass on". The charred nature of the coal left visible marks upon the hands of those people who had received and passed on these items throughout the evening. This ritualistic performance culminated in an internet enabled multimedia duet between Catarina - still present in the exhibition space, and me, occupying another area of the building. Utilising the FaceTime capabilities of two iPads, one on which connected to a projector, we constructed a visual feedback loop over Wi-Fi that layered my image over Catarina's physical body and vice-versa. The coal paste that Catarina had mixed earlier was then applied as a mask, using each other's looping images as a mirror:

**Image 14:** Photograph:  
*Catarina Soromenho*  
*performs 'Lupine'*,  
Florilegium: Exhibition,  
Arts Centre, Ormskirk.  
03.11.14. Image credit:  
authors own.



*Florilegia 2: Artworks and Performances* concluded with a Round Table event on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 (also scheduled via QR Code interaction). This event which I chaired brought together members of the general public, members of academic staff within the Department of Performing Arts and a selection of available contributing artists from the *Florilegium: Collective* to discuss and debate the work presented throughout the three week event. Contributing artists present at this event were: David Henckel (WeAreCodeX), Frances-Kay and Daria D'Beauvoix. A transcription of this event to text is available within the project archive alongside video footage.

***EXHIBITION FEEDBACK SAMPLE*** <sup>31</sup>



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<sup>31</sup> **Image 15:** Scanned document: *Audience feedback example 3*, Florilegium: Exhibition, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 17.11.14. Image credit: authors own.



## FLORILEGIA 3: GENERATIVE ARCHIVE

### EXCERPT FROM '*FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION*' BOOKLET:

This interactive digital artwork projected into the exhibition space offers the viewer the opportunity to enter in, edit and add to the growing network of digitised ephemera, original source material and completed artworks that constitute the *Florilegium* in real-time – bringing generative processes of creative remediation full circle.

(Burrows, J. 2014: 4)

### DESCRIPTION:

The element of the exhibition entitled *Florilegia 2: Generative Archive* was produced utilising *Prezi* online presentation software, and was projected in high-definition onto the wall above the exhibition space. Utilising the cartographic protocols of *Prezi* software, this element re-constituted all aspects of the physical *Ephemera* exhibition as digitised artefacts, placing them in a direct spatial and visual relationship with the digital media incumbent to *Corpus 1* (2012-13).

Visitors to the physical exhibition space were invited to access the *Generative Archive* (located on the project website) utilising the password and username provided in the exhibition's accompanying booklet. During the exhibition opening event (3<sup>rd</sup> November), three Apple Mac desktop computers located within the exhibition space were designated for the purpose of accessing the *Generative Archive*, and remained available for shared public use throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Whilst the conceptual drive behind *Florilegium's Generative Archive* remained distinct in its theoretical synthesis and application within *Florilegium: Exhibition* as an artwork in its own right, the long term goals of *Florilegium's Generative Archive* were initially developed as a direct result of the body of work produced at the University of Bristol, developed under the collaborative portfolio project '*Performing the Archive*' and

submitted to the *Research Excellence Framework* in 2014. I made particular reference to the project's focus on 'conservation', 'accessibility' and the 'creative re-use' of archived materials within their submitted *Impact Case Summary* (REF, 2014: online).

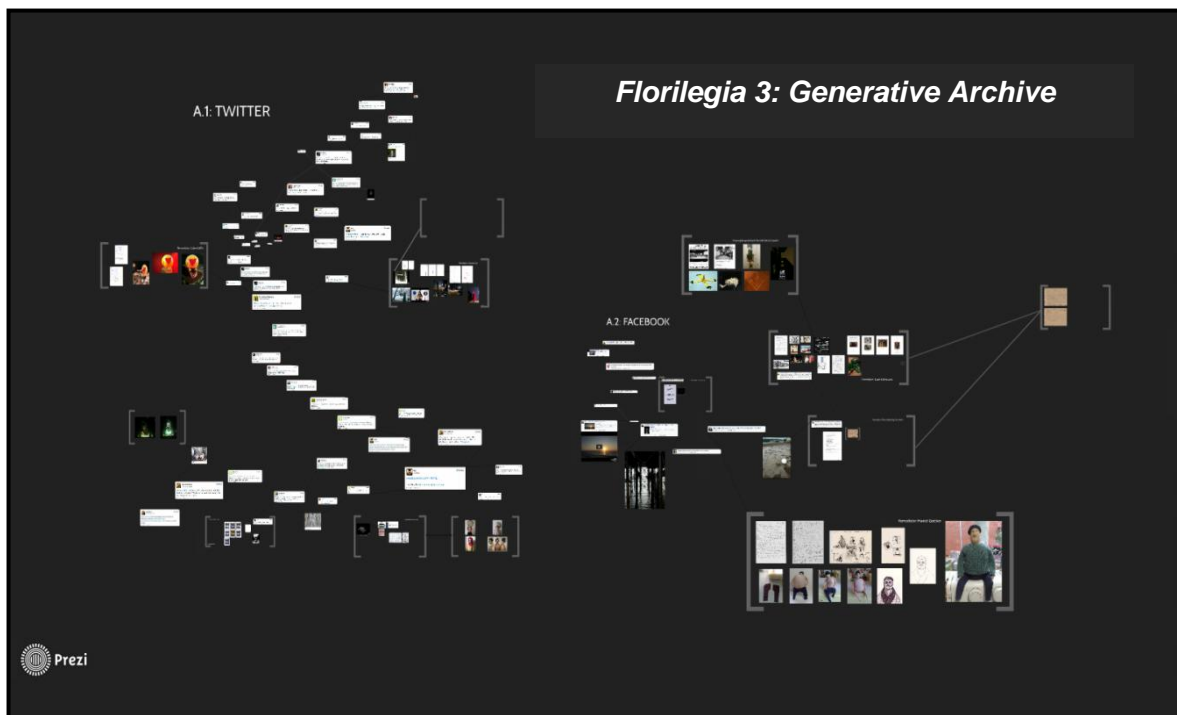
Within early prototypes of *Florilegium's* archive, I attempted to integrate the *Performance Art Data Structure* (PADS) developed by Stephen Gray and Paul Clarke (2011) (and utilised by the National Review of Live Art (NRLA) Archive) as a way of structuring, cataloguing and describing the data accumulated throughout phases one and two of this project within the archive setting (and thus be interoperable with other collections through the use of a common metadata scheme). This primarily entailed the accessioning of metadata concerning authorship (Score level); work and conceptualisation (Work level); versions and adaptations (Version level); and resources – video/image/sound linked to the work (Resource level) for each artwork produced by contributing artists to *Florilegium: Exhibition* in relation to content produced as part of *Corpus 1*. These resources were further compartmentalised into 'garments', 'objects', 'electronic', 'spatial', 'locative' and 'role' based subcategories as per Gray and Clarke's taxonomy (2011).

However, the application of this distinct taxonomic approach for *Florilegium's* archive became problematic; feeling in direct opposition (in its rigidity) to the overarching philosophical and artistic position developed in the conceptualisation of the Rhizo-Meme (specifically those positions concerning the application of a dominant epistemological structure to the project's heterogeneous artefacts).

In that regard, and in reflection upon the exhibition's parallel curatorial framework, I made the decision to remove all direct taxonomic fields from the construction of *Florilegia 3* and place the user of the project website in the primary role as archon. As recognised by the NRLA, the 'taking apart or analysis of a performance

event, breaking it down into its constituent elements, is potentially problematic, as a performance unfolds over time and its affects build-up cumulatively' (2016: online).

Subsequently, I sought an archival experience through which visitors to the *Florilegium: Exhibition* might be invited to modify the existing Rhizo-Memetic assemblage and enable the work's 'affects to build cumulatively' (2016: online) over the exhibition's duration. In doing so, I endeavoured to exploit the available functions in *Prezi* online presentation software, and enable users to navigate through the archive 'canvas' (Prezi Support, 2016: online) utilising intuitive click, drag and zoom functions to explore the archive's content:



**Image 16:** Screenshot: *Generative Archive interface*, Online, *Florilegium: Exhibition*, 17.11.14. Image credit: authors own.

This data now floated freely within the archive's visual interface uninhibited by contextual anchorage. By clicking on an image, element of text or video within *Prezi*, users were able to change the configuration of elements (and ergo their spatial relationship with the remaining body of material) by dragging them with their mouse

on a desktop computer, or with their finger on a handheld device. Users could also add in suggestive link-making and rudimentary taxonomic symbols through addition of connective lines. Or, bracket-off whole aspects of the material from the main assemblage of media if they chose, without needing a direct understanding of archival metadata schemata. By providing comprehensive access to the *Generative Archive* on *Prezi*, users also had the capability to edit, add or completely remove existing elements of archived material. This also enabled individual users to completely “write-over” and “over-write” changes made by other users at any point during the exhibitions four week duration.

I recognised the inherent problems that might emerge in this form of archival endeavour, particularly in the production of a stable and critically managed archive given the potentials for public mis-use in this instance. I reflected on *The Curating Artistic Research Output (CAiRO)* project (Gray, 2011), which states that the archiving of artistic research data for academic purposes must be primarily concerned with: ‘maximising the impact and reuse potential of funded research; facilitating the personal re-use or re-exhibition of work at a later date; and improving research funding’ (Gray, 2011: 3).

When producing *Florilegia 2: Generative Archive*, I found a resonance with theories of readers-response criticism, particularly with models characterised by a move away from the concept of “texts” (extended here to encompass media content) as closed, autonomous entities, and toward models whereby textual utterances might be considered in direct relations to their addressees.

Within Roman Ingarden’s poetics, the notion of text is described as containing holes, empty spots, because of – and not in spite of – which the reading of text (media) remains active. Imagine a story in reference to McNamara’s “chair” which begins with

the sentence “An old man is sitting on a chair”. Whether the chair is made of wood or iron is four-legged or three-legged is left undetermined<sup>32</sup>. However if every encompassed object is absolutely individual, “if the general, generic essence appears as Husserl would say, only as its individuation” (Ingarden, 1973: 247), then the gaps in the assemblage have to be filled in by the reader and call for her participation. Likewise, within the *Generative Archive* the user navigated through an arrangement of digital artefacts typified by their relationship with absence; drawing the user into a directly co-productive state as archon.

Whilst it may be argued that every work of art demands that she who experiences it modify the original artefact according to her personal inclinations, Umberto Eco (1989) proposes that only artworks within which reinvention is overtly thematised can be classified as openly generative. In suggesting that “The Wandering Rocks” chapter in Joyce’s *Ulysses* for instance, ‘amounts to a tiny universe that can be viewed from different perspectives’ (1989: 10), Eco proposes constantly shifting responses and interpretative stances. Similarly, in Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, the opening word of the first page is the same as the closing word of the last page of the novel, so that – as in a Deleuze and Guattarian rhizome- “each occurrence, each word stands in a series of possible relations with all the others in the text” (Eco, 1989: 10), and the *text-assemblage-rhizome* may begin and end anywhere.

As “a poetics of serial thought” (1989: 40), Eco’s conceptualisations of the *Open Work* and its possibilities are established not only horizontally but also vertically; because - like Deleuze’ instances of repetition - successive occurrences belong to heterogeneous organizing principles. While a “classic” work of art, (much like the

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<sup>32</sup> See: thesis subsection: *Introducing the Meme* for further reference to McNamara’s “chair”.

traditional concept of the Archive) respects the laws of probability, of 'pre-established principles that guide the organization of a message and are reiterated via the repetition of foreseeable elements' (Eco, 1989: 91), the *Generative Archive*, like Deleuze's 'divine game' (Deleuze, 2004: 127) draws its key value from a deliberate rupture with the 'laws of probability that govern common language' (Eco, 1989: 94). Therefore, while a general work of art proposes an "openness based on the theoretical, mental collaboration with the consumer" (Eco, 1989: 11), the user of the *Generative Archive*, breaks with pre-established codes, and is required to do some of the organizing and structuring of the archive's elements themselves, and thus actually "collaborates with the composer in making the composition" (Eco, 1989: 12).

Whilst Eco's theories of the *Open Work* remained productive in the construction of *Florilegium's Generative Archive I* became influenced by Hutcheon, (whose own theories draw heavily on Eco) and in particular his suggestion that the user's role within the *Open Work* merely functions in a way that imitates the author-proper in what she drolly calls the 'narcissistic work' by receiving mirrors of itself; compromising resources invested by the participant (Hutcheon, 2013: 138). In this sense, the user of the *Open Work* does not 'perform' in an immediate sense. Rather, her process is generic not specific and she remains implied not empirical:

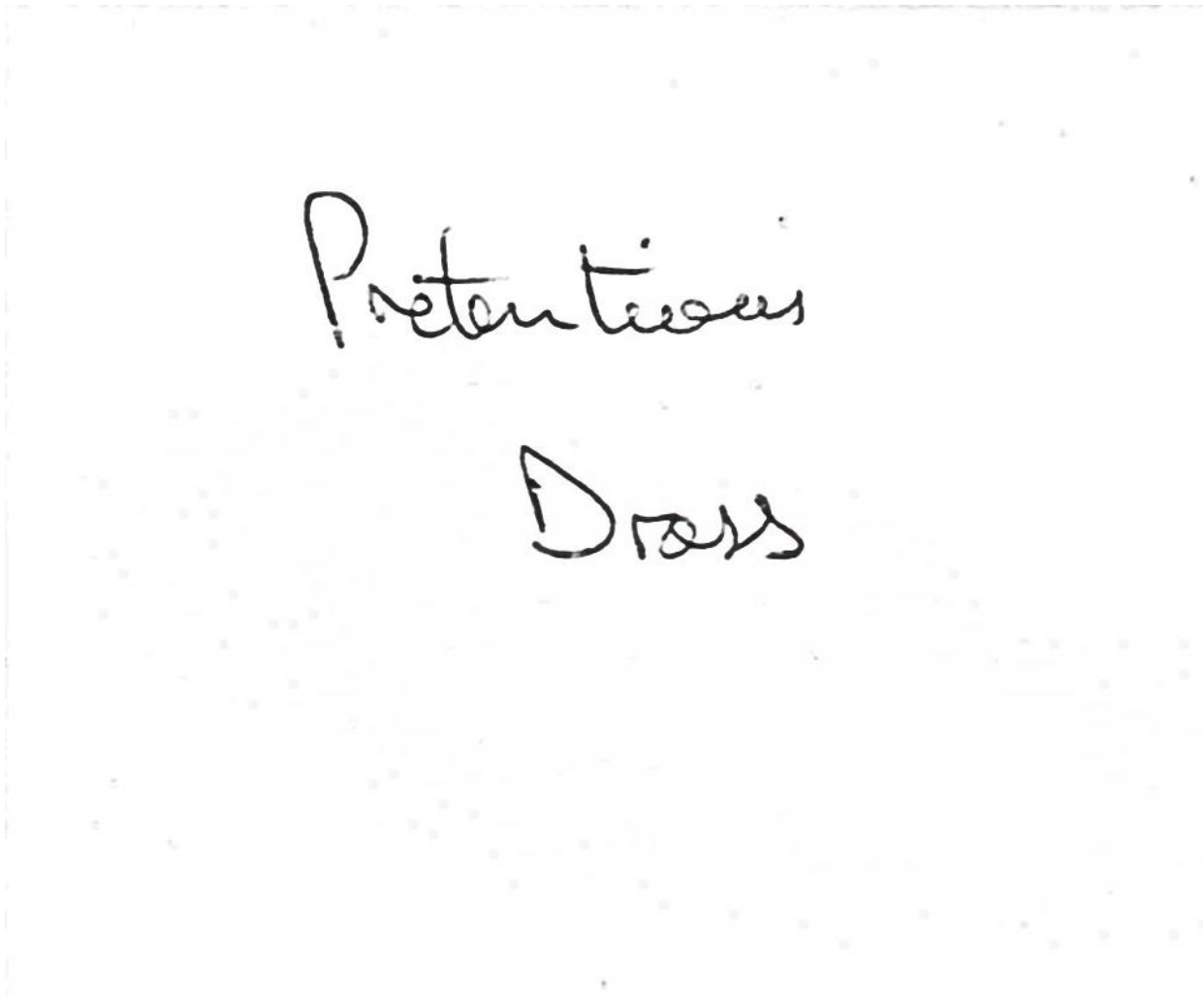
The reader is...a function implicit in the text, an element of the narrative situation. No specific real person is meant; the reader has only a diegetic identity and active diegetic role to play.

(Hutcheon, p139)

The role of the user in the concept of an open work when understood in this way is restricted to 'virtual' encoding. She fills 'spots of indeterminacy' (Eco, 1989: 12) on the level of reference alone. By contrast, the user of the *Generative Archive* actually inscribes their passing *through* the archive, *into* the archive on a literal level. She enters

at a stage where the work is still not ready for display. It becomes so only as hybrid, only through assembling its semiotic signs alongside the user's empirical body and actions in relation to the exhibition. Any integration of a corporeal user into the archive, believes Dällenbach, 'is an illusion which will surely sooner or later be undone (1989: 80). The *Generative Archive* challenges this axiom.

**EXHIBITION FEEDBACK SAMPLE** <sup>33</sup>



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<sup>33</sup> **Image 17:** Scanned document: *Audience feedback example 4*, Florilegium: Exhibition, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 24.11.14. Image credit: authors own.



## REFLECTIONS

## CLONER<sup>34</sup>

*It will get on all your disks.*

*It will infiltrate your chips.*

*Yes. It's cloner.*

*It will stick to you like glue*

*It will modify RAM too.*

*Send in the cloner.*

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<sup>34</sup> Script excerpt from the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015). Text sampled from *Lupine* (3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2014) performed by Catarina Soromenho as part of *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014) Text originally sampled from the microcomputer virus *Elk Cloner* (1982) written by Richard Skrenta for DOS.

## INTO THE DARK

*"I was angry with you for a really long time...*

*I wanted to blame you."*

*"Don't worry -*

*I was angry with me too"*<sup>35</sup>

...

I found it increasingly difficult to write about the *Florilegium: Exhibition* in months after its conclusion in November 2014 for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons were largely dependent on my own perceived sense of failure at the time. This sense of failure and blame was predicated by my own perceived sense of inexperience in the role of curator - particularly in relation to such a vast and interdisciplinary body of creative works, devised by artists working in a number of creative mediums of which I was not expert, and never claimed to be.

Yet, the exposure of these creative works – their curatorial framing and subsequent public presentation were wholly my responsibility: I was testing an open hypothesis with other people's work. And, whilst contributors were aware of this fact prior to consent, I still felt a great deal of ethical responsibility. In focusing upon the theoretical framework produced via the synthesis of meme and rhizome to both initiate and curate these works together as a Rhizo-Memetic Artwork, I perhaps overlooked the effect that this deeply theoretical perspective might have had upon the contributing artists themselves in terms of how they perceived their own identity as part of this group.

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<sup>35</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journals: Remembering a conversation over email with a contributing artist to the *Florilegium: Exhibition*. 08.01.15.

The Rhizo-Memetic framework: useful for initiating a collectively governed creative process which resists singular authorial representation (and which places the sense of Difference<sup>36</sup> -not quality) of the produced artefacts and performances as fundamental, also regulated my capacity to curate them. In essence, the fragmentation of agency within this process flattened out any potential for an objective authorial voice. The governing protocols of this process were also loosened to such a degree that producing an objective curatorial frame became challenging.

Within the Rhizo-Meme, concepts of connectivity and meaning operate as ‘free-radicals’ (Lobo, 2010); uncharged and intensely volatile entities<sup>37</sup> branching through, connecting with, and subsuming codes of meaning in both sign and non-sign states. This is an intensely conceptual position: one which was difficult to manifest within the exhibition.

I engineered this Rhizo-Memetic perspective as a curatorial framework, through the spatial configuration of the exhibition, and through the relational aesthetic (Bourriaud, 1998) of the exhibited artefacts and processes. In conversation with the collective, the decision was also made not to include direct signifiers of authorship alongside exhibited artefacts (names/titles/dates of production). This information was only present in active participation with the QR codes presented in the physical exhibition space.

The removal of explicit authorial signifiers from the physical exhibition space, and placing them within the virtual, enabled the resonating qualities of each artefact to float freely within the Rhizo-Memetic milieu of the *Florilegium: Exhibition*.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See: Explication of Deleuze’s ‘Difference’ (Deleuze, 1972: 41) in *Note on Transdisciplinarity*. p.xiii.

<sup>37</sup> See: Conceptualisation of the meme as the molecular substrate of the rhizome in *Meme/Rhizome Synthesis*, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> See: Conceptualisation of the milieu in relation to Terranova’s ‘massless milieus’ (2004) in *Conceptualising Rhizo-Memetic Art*. p.42.

Whilst conceptually sound, the effects of this decision were to place the viewer of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* in a precarious and unstable position. In effect, *Florilegium: Exhibition's* curatorial contended with, and remained in opposition to dominant Western modes of spectatorship (signal-receiver/dialogic/ arborescence): many performance works from contributing artists ran (as scheduled) with either extremely small audiences or none at all.

On some occasions audience members stumbled across these performances rather than following pre-established QR Code “paths” towards them which were necessary in contextualising the work. I felt a deep sense of responsibility for this lack of exposure. Especially considering that they had each devised original creative works over a period of four months which in some instances went unseen.

As I state within the chapter subsection *Exegesis*, I also felt ethically bound to place my writing, reflections and indeed, my own curatorial methodology under the same Rhizo-Memetic framework so as not essentialise the artworks, processes and artefacts that were exhibited within the *Florilegium: Exhibition*. In doing so, the production of a precise curatorial narrative became complex, prickly, and at times challenging for the audience of this work. Due to the inherently conceptual nature of Rhizo-Memetic Art, the audience of this work were immediately placed in a position of lack. What I mean here is to say that the audience did not have immediate or inherent access to the theoretical framework necessary to understand the exhibition, and this most likely affected the drop-off in overall audience interaction over the four week period.

Upon reflection, this theoretical framework could have been more effectively provided through the overarching curatorial statements provided in the physical space: I only inferred a theoretical perspective through the inclusion of the Manifesto - *We are in Process* (available within the project archive). This writing was poetic, and required

further clear and precise metadata to enable effective audience engagement with the various elements of *Florilegium: Exhibition*.

From my intensely subjective perspective during this period (and in my pursuit of multiplicity), I lost my own authoritative voice; feeling entirely absent from the creative process in a physical sense. The methodology of the Rhizo-Meme in producing *Florilegium: Exhibition* compacted hierarchies under the guise of heterogeneity and individuality – the de-territorialisation of creative objects, and the distribution of the creative process across transdisciplinary domains produced a sense of intense subjectivity that refuted articulation.

Of course, as the project *artist-curator-archivist*, I anticipated this to some degree, yet the effect of this process upon my own sense of agency and identity was not expected. I began to spend more and more time within the exhibition space, tweaking aspects, adding objects of ephemera to the milieu as the performance schedule continued. I felt like a hoarder. The generative aggregation of ephemera within *Florilegium: Exhibition's* physical space began to seem untidy. Papers (queue sheets, notations, directors notes began to pile up, dust sheets soaked in toiletries mingled with and bumped up against gravel and stray feathers from Daria's burlesque costume. The spaces in-between the Nodes of the Rhizo-Meme began to blur. They spilled out and into other spaces.

*But, that IS the Rhizo-Meme...*

In many ways, the viewers of *Florilegium: Exhibition* saw this work in reverse. Or rather, through a chronotropic frame that was antithetical to the dominant mode (watch completed artwork, read program, look at process in a book etc...). The audience followed the process with a memes-eye-view: always towards becoming, rather than through reflection.

## **FINDING ZORA**

## VALENTINES DAY<sup>39</sup>

*It is the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2015, and I am watching the news on BBC One. I am struck by the media's reports of an escalating crisis in Ukraine. I don't believe everything I am being told. Force fed. I'm drinking tea (too much sugar) and stroking my dog who is curled up on my lap. I can feel her breathing. Chris is making lunch. He gave me flowers this morning and I can smell roses. I feel...content.*

*Today will be a good day to write. I should reflect on the exhibition – my stomach knots – why am I struck by such feelings two months later? I should try and pinpoint the emotion. I feel gutted. Genuinely gutted. Why?*

*I remember feeling intense excitement at the prospect of showcasing the work of my collaborators. I remember feeling immensely worried that my curatorial decisions might undermine their work. Taking the decision to completely negate direct signifiers of authorship and the sparse...unspectacular...post spectacular (?) aesthetic was risky. I was placing an awful amount of trust in my audience to follow the whole thing through. And I don't trust many people at the moment. Was it risky? What was I risking exactly? My stomach is knotting again.*

*"Pretentious Dross" – that damned anonymous feedback!*

*"Could have made some real art" – Equally painful.*

*I ponder those words and their similes again – pretentious – lacking in merit – artificial – impure – junk-like – fake – false – un-real – un-canny...?*

*~~Perhaps they aren't so bad when you really think about it...~~*

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<sup>39</sup> Insert footnote here that places this extract in the appropriate timeframe.



*I'm just trying to make myself feel better. I did describe aspects of the exhibited documentation as 'scraps' within the curatorial booklet after all... so yes. They are junk-like. Snapshots of ideas not fully formed. So YES! They are impure – they do not yet possess any “merit” but their own materiality. That’s kind of the point.*

*Did anyone bother to read the curatorial statements? Bother to take the time to scan the QR codes with the phones that are constantly in their hands anyway? Breathe. Come on. Think about the positives. Chris has brought me some egg on toast...*

*I've come to a decision. I'm going to take these words I've avoided confronting and wear them with honour. Go on then - I'll be your Pretentious Dross! Fuck you! I'll become the Deleuzian Wolf and 'Marry the Night'. For a split second I imagine myself Dragged up in a cheap wolf costume surrounded by dusty cobwebs... an ersatz Lady Gaga: a martyr to “Art”*

*–This has all got out of hand.*

*I suppose, the truth is that from my very subjective vantage point, this entire process has been characterised by an overwhelming sense of surrender and de-territorialisation. Have I even been reading my own writing? Have I been paying attention to myself? Deferring ultimate control of my own creative practice to multiple unknown quantities was admittedly terrifying, and probably not the wisest idea in retrospect. I just didn't anticipate these feelings to such a degree. I had little idea what kinds of creative artefacts, processes and insights would emerge...*

*Looking back now, “across the plateaux” - I realise that I owe a great deal to the participants of this research – for their respect – dedication and patience. Because for them, this process was a complete unknown as well.*

*Maybe surrender is a good thing.*

*I remember the Buddhist teachings I toyed with as a teenager. "Control is rooted in fear; in attachment to what you perceive as a preordained outcome" – so I should just let go and surrender to serendipity? I think about the conversations I have had along the journey of producing this work. I'm smiling.*

*I felt joy creating this work and I've enjoyed the conversations along the way – especially with the contributing artists. I've enjoyed seeing their work develop in shifting and unforeseeable ways. I have enjoyed seeing subjective connections emerge between creative works in unexpected circumstances.*

*I remember Daria teaching me how to use her whips. I remember drinking red wine in a quiet Arts Centre with Dave Berry – a quietness amplified by Calun's five hour silent performance of *The End*. I remember the repetitive phrasing of Frances-Kay's *Little Red* and getting lost in the seemingly endless loops. I remember the Round Table event and David Henckel's incisive questions concerning ownership.*

*One of the most lingering concerns inherent to these conversations has always been the concept of ownership. Of control.*

*If everything is flat...What if everything is flat? There is no ultimate system of control. No Big Science. Everything suddenly seems to be clear.*

*This is one of those false eureka moments isn't it?*

*Chris says he's going to weed the garden. I think I'll help.*

## PRELUDE TO DELIRIUM

This penultimate aspect of exegesis explores the ways in which the intricacies of Rhizo-Memetic Art practice can be utilised as a blueprint, or meta-map of this doctoral study: its processes, artefacts and actions. In that regard, this section also aims to discover how this framework may be operationalized as a mode of critique in future creative & scholarly works within Arts based Practice Research.

As I introduce in *Mapping Terrain*’, I desired to construct a final performative articulation as an unfolding collective stream of cognizance or web of meaning, drawn from and devised out of the multifaceted and inter-discursive assemblage produced through the preceding phases of this study. Within this aspect of the exegesis, I present a series of reflective accounts on the process of theorising, devising and constructing this final articulation – *Florilegium: Remix*, alongside its connective relationship to my writing and the inter-subjective vantage points of its contributors.

This discussion is undertaken from a point of view that is an amalgamation or aggregation of my awareness of the issues involved during the prior two stages of the Rhizo-Memetic process, and the ways in which my understanding of this process of inquiry has changed upon reflection. In the process of writing this chapter, the activities of creative enquiry, reflection and theorisation have entwined telescopically, and it is no longer possible to see them as separate, even though they may have been at the time.

It is also important to note that within the process of devising this final performative articulation, its reflections, and the examination of this work in relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory and Memetics were not discretely separated in time as these chapters are separated by pages. This separation is forced only by the apparatus

of writing, and within the online version of this thesis – I anticipate that these separations begin to dissolve.

I chose to begin this final practical stage of investigation from a point of personal reflection; reading back over my diaries, notes and half-remembered ponderings – particularly those writings connected to my role – or rather, my self-perceived lack of agency within the project. This lack of agency is highlighted most explicitly within the extract *Valentine's Day*, hence my inclusion of this excerpt as a prefix to this discussion. In developing *Florilegium: Remix*, I decided to follow the confluences of thought highlighted within this particular piece of writing, and allow their own sense of agency to lead me where they might.

Perhaps the most radical implications of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas in relation to performance and creative practice are those that arise from their discussions of desire. Contrary to the Lacanian perspective that desire is lack, (an ever present longing to fill a lack that is experienced at the heart of subjective experience involved in the abdication of one-ness) (Mansfield, 2000: 45) Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as "production" without reference to exterior agency (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 154). That is, rather than desire being endlessly and inevitably produced in the same way for everyone (through the acting out of the Oedipus complex) as striving for completeness, Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as an imminent process. They talk about desire as being produced by a 'body without organs' in which the body is not articulated or differentiated, and not organised into areas of more or less significance (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:149-166).

Understood in this manner, desire does not arise from imposed codes of meaning, even the meaning attributed to different structures of the body (limbs, organs, bones etc) hence the term "bodies without organs". Instead they understand desire as

an aggregation that distributes intensities of pleasure, joy, or indeed pain, across the body in an imminent field that produces nothing outside of the body, yet connects to and diffuses throughout the external. They suggest that distributions of desire are always rhizomic. That is, they are heterogeneous assemblage of disparate elements interconnected by the individual into a consistent structure:

There is no desire, says Deleuze, which does not flow into an assemblage, and for him, desire has always been constructivism, constructing an assemblage (agencement), an aggregate: the aggregate of the skirt, of a sun ray, a street, of a woman, of a vista, of a colour... constructing an assemblage, constructing a region, assembling...

(Deleuze in Parnet, 1996)

Desire then, is never singular. It is never simply “I miss my Father!” or “Where are you, Mother?” but always about a multiplicity of elements linked by the individual.

As Parnet describes it:

Delirium, linked to desire is the contrary of delirium linked solely to the father or mother; rather we “delire” about everything, the whole world, history, geography, tribes, deserts, peoples, races, climates...

(Parnet with Deleuze, 1996).

Desire is therefore multi-factorial, complex and highly heterogeneous. It is also generated internally, yet provoked by and diffused through the external. The distribution, or transmission of desire as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, constantly changes. In memetic terms – it is in a state of constant mutation. Deleuze suggests that when the change (read: mutation) is great enough, what they describe as a rupture or line of flight occurs.

We have already seen these lines of flight begin to emerge within the creative artefacts of this project. The re-modification of Memetic Nodes by contributing artists explored within the *Florilegium Exhibition* can be seen as just such ruptures. The line of

flight is a sudden reselection; reconfiguration and mutation of elements (both sign and non-sign) into a new assemblage. This leap occurs conceptually as they put it. Nothing has changed – yet everything has. In the case of creative works produced by the contributing artists, the original memes (produced via Twitter and Facebook and clustered within the Memetic Nodes) did not transform through reconfiguration, - rather, they shifted through different modalities, mediums and systems of signs. In purely memetic terms, these shifts produce diversity in the production of E-memes, or Memetic Artefacts (costumes, props, notes, lighting gels...) yet the inter-subjectivity of the I-meme remained.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the line of flight not as a new symbolic organisation but a displacement of the binary structure of symbolic orders, just having a multiplicity of elements is not enough to produce a line of flight. Just because something is multiplicitous does not make it a Rhizo-Meme. These elements must be arranged in a new way. They must be connected by new logics and in a new configuration. They must interconnect in a network over a consistent plane rather than merely asserting a new code of representation:

One only really escapes by displacing the dualism as one would a burden, when one discovers between terms, whether two or more, a narrow pass like a border or frontier which will make of the ensemble a multiplicity, independent of the number of particles. What we call an arrangement, (agencement) is precisely such a multiplicity

(Deleuze and Parnet, 1983: 85).

Lines of flight can be blocked, halted, or re-channelled back into segmented systems of meaning. Deleuze and Parnet, (and later Deleuze and Guattari) describe a continual flux between lines of flight which move at high speeds in new directions, re-segmentation and into rigid structures that are stationary, and slow molecular

(memetic) flows that bridge the two. They do not position the two extremes as alternatives, but rather envisage a constant movement, incorporating both stasis and movement, or what they call processes of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation (Deleuze and Parnet, 1983: 84-86). Finally, Deleuze and Guattari associate desire with the production of new rhizomic assemblages, and they link the production of joy to this process. Joy is produced by desire itself, that is, the creation of a line of flight, rather than being contingent on attaining certain pre-defined objectives or goals.

The ideas of desire and of delirium as imminently generated within/by the individual allowed me to imagine a final performative articulation that could be understood as a process of unique subjectivity in relation to and diffuse within the network of objects, bodies, documents, thoughts and generative processes that made up the existing Rhizo-Memetic artwork.

The thing that was “lacking” from this work I now understood was an awareness of my ‘self’; my desire, my delirium and “agencement” of the Rhizo-Meme. Indeed, my desires already flooded through the project, - much like the ghost writer I so tried to avoid – but always from a position of lack and of creative castration from within which I perceived desire in this instance as unfavourable. In producing this final work I made the decision to consciously “delire”; to re-visit the moments of joy I experienced within the process of curating the *Florilegium Exhibition* alongside its participants. I would allow my desires to flood through the Rhizo-Memetic structures that combined inter-textual and non-intertextual corporeal elements into a consistent surface of intensity or movement – a line of flight.

## CONCEPTUALISING *FLORILEGIUM*: REMIX

In developing a title for the final performative outcome of this thesis, I reflected on the body of work accumulated to this point, both creative and critical. The notion of 'Remix' (Navas, 2012) as a conceptual binder re-emerged as intensely provocative. Alongside implications of Remix as 'always meta' (2012: 4) explicated in thesis chapter *Conceptualising the Florilegium*, I also wished to infer the project's parallel relationships to the development of remix culture, its historicity in relationship to sound, and the hierarchies of power-play implicit in processes of sampling.

Radical economist Jacques Attali (1985) has contemplated at length on the relationship between representation and repetition, arguing that the power of the individual to express herself through Performance (a primary form of presentation, particularly of musical material) shifted when recording devices were mass produced. Once a recording took place, repetition (and not representation) became the default mode of reference in daily reality: a common example being at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the willingness of individuals to purchase and listen to a music *compilation-anthology-florilegium* in CD, Mp3 or cloud-streamed format.

This form of experience is radically different from the Live. Following Attali's line of flight, the power of repetition here is in the fact that the user sees a practicality in listening to a recording as frequently as desired. Attending a performance on the other hand, suggests a corporeal experience with an implicit commitment to social interaction. However, within the contemporary period, the material one expects to encounter in the live performance is often a composition of materials already purchased in recordings, or heard previously on the radio: thus, and as Auslander (1999) similarly



asserts, the contemporary live performance is linked to some form of pre-existing reproduction, defined by its relationship to repetition:

Despite the erosion of the difference between the live and the mediatized within our televisual culture, there remains a strong tendency in performance theory to place live performance and mediatized or technologized forms in opposition to one another.

(Auslander, 1997: 50)

I began to imagine the structure of a performance whereby the uniqueness of the individual corporeality of the performer (me) and the incorporation of intertextual elements relating specifically to the existing Rhizo-Meme (its production and curation) and the general cultural codes (events, literature, images etc.) incumbent to its process, could be situated as a line of flight that de-territorialised these oppositional scenarios.

I imagined that this performance might produce a unique enactment of the Rhizo-Meme, and that this enactment might produce understanding for further practical application. The idea of the line of flight, as previously indicated, allows all elements of creative practice to be understood in relationship to each other as a form of transdisciplinarity. The tensions between textual narrativisation, the body, intertextuality/modality and unique subjectivity absolve within my conceptualisation of the Rhizo-Meme, and thusly Rhizo-Memetic Art. They cease to be binary terms – signifying this or that, one thing or the other, but instead function mutually to produce a unique and innovative structure.

This strategy provided a methodological approach that enabled me to deal with the difficulty of analysing materials which did not adhere to, or appeared to move through my own earlier formulations of the Memetic Node. Within the final performative articulation, discussing these materials would become a continual process

of re-mapping their relationship to each other, and the network of agencies responsible for their production, including myself.

I desired to create this articulation as a way of travelling and moving that proceeded out from the middle, through the middle; coming and going rather than starting and finishing. Or rather, as a perpendicular or transversal movement that sweeps one way and the other; a stream without beginning or end that picks up speed across the milieu. This transversal of movement can be likened to the 'slipperiness or ambiguity' that characterises memetic replication (Johnson, 2007: 42). In that regard, I wished to reflect the transdisciplinary and multi-modal nature of this study's artefacts and processes through the production of a live/digital performance work which connected and mediated between residues, 'discursive knots' (Jäger and Maier, 2009: 47), or memetic nodes as a postdramatic composition in which 'a simultaneous and multi-perspectival form of perceiving' (Lehmann, 2006: 16) might emerge.

I drew upon the creative and critical milieu encountered in the preceding stages of this praxis in identifying the localizing qualities of Rhizo-Memetic Art (one hesitates to call them central or even influential in light of the nature of their inherent context):

- Memetic Nodes as Performative, Iterative and Emergent;
- The spatial qualities of the Rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987);
- The hypertextual dynamics of digital environments.

I wished to understand how these qualities might be operationalised within this final articulation; how they might be shaped and reconfigured so that this final creative artefact may function both as a noun - an artefact in its own right, and a verb - a re-enactment of the total assemblage in action. Seen in this manner, *'Florilegium: Remix'*

would have the ability to 'both echo and map the logic of its own presentation' (Barrett, 2009: 3).

To begin, I returned to and examined the corpora of artefacts and processes produced by online participants in the first phase and curated and remediated by contributing artists in the second. In this re-examination I had a particular interest in those residues that resisted allocation to and moved across individual Memetic Nodes. These aspects which emerged from curatorial difficulty and evaded a purely memetic analysis seemed the most attractive; I wondered how these memetic residues characterised by their resistance to discursive knotting might function as multiple lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) throughout the final work. Equally, I theorised that these lines of flight might provide audience members with fruitful vantage points in developing their understanding of the abundant and conflicting contentions within the work, especially in the absence of a singular narrative voice or 'grand narrative' (Lyotard, 1979).

Thinking through the ways in which I might begin to conceive of this final work, I imagined a conceptual space that resembled active memory, rather than a synthetic memorial or contrived reliquary that would keep the residues of this unique process 'under house arrest' (Tsiavos, 2008). Rather, I imagined a space for the inter-discursive residues unique to this process to emerge and resonate as unstable and shifting remains, differing with each recall and reorganisation in relation to contingent circumstances.

I imagined a performed archive without an archaic taxonomy. I imagined a state of delirium; of fluctuating discourse, attentional deficit and frenetic energy. I imagined an assemblage that in its multiplicity, acted on post-semiotic flows, material flows and social flows simultaneously. An assemblage without 'tripartite division' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 43) between the fields of reality, the fields of representation (writing;

remediation; curatorial) and fields of subjectivity (archive; authorship; artistry). I imagined an articulation that would form a final (or perhaps more appropriately a “resting”) middle ground for the Rhizo-Meme that might ‘re-categorise “archive” as a verb (Clarke and Warren, 2009: 63).

When conceptualised thus, *Florilegium: Remix* does not allow the viewer to get lost in complete abstraction, yet, the trace of the allegorical in terms of representation is still within its remit. *Florilegium: Remix* over-emphasises its core foundation (its base/bass) and frees up its other elements for experimentation. Its textual utterances work as ‘riffs’ that move in and out of focus, and these riffs work as lines of flight that aid the audience in the exploration of its more abstract elements. In this way, *Florilegium: Remix* works as a composition that finds itself in-between complete abstraction and the more concrete narratives found in its aggregated elements. It deliberately subverts elements of its prior milieu; presenting them as altered, and thus paradoxically pointing out the power of the spoken word as a form of representation and performative utterance. In many ways *Florilegium: Remix* contradicts these elements self-referentially, unexpectedly making them more powerful by showing their limited role within the Archive’s overall composition.

*Florilegium: Remix* becomes an anti-simulacrum, a cave where one sees the shadows of narrative up-front, but always undefined. One senses a form of narrative, but it never completely appears. If one has an awareness of the work’s prior assemblage (the elements constitute of *Corpus 1* and *Florilegium: Exhibition*) then one can “project” the narrative and have an allegorical experience that presents multiple readings: almost a re-performance of the archive, almost not. One may try to uncover the narrative potential, but even then one knows that something is subverted –defined by allegorical tension.

## **LINES OF FLIGHT<sup>40</sup>**

*Who do you think of?*

*Is it -?*

*I can't quite make it out.*

*Who do you think of?*

*Is it -?*

*I think I see it.*

*I think it's -*

*Daunting.*

*Our Father.*

*I can't really see.*

*Who is it?*

*I can't quite make it out.*

*Can you hear me? -*

*- Hello?*

*Who art in Heaven.*

*I can't quite make it out.*

*I can't quite make it out.*

*Can you hear me?*

*The light's gone out.*

*Can you hear me?*

*Hallowed be thy name.*

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<sup>40</sup> Script excerpt from the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015). Content sampled from Yazoo's *In My Room* (1982). Audio exhibited as part of *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014).

## FLIGHT 1: DEVISING

The process of devising *Florilegium: Remix* dealt overtly with the juxtaposition of a variety of transdisciplinary conventions and of representation embodied within the corpus of materials aggregated throughout the Rhizo-Memetic process. As previously outlined, these materials (drawn not only from *Corpus 1*, but also *Florilegium: Exhibition*, its multi-authored artefacts and processes) ranged from directly iterative references (i.e. sampled from the work of contributors Harriet Godden and WeAreCodeX), through to deeply inter-discursive (Frank Fontaine), emotive (Frances Kay), and dramatic content (MonMon).

When devising *Florilegium: Remix* as a meta-map or critique of the project's own methodologies I took a critical attitude towards the synthesis or integration of these materials and their potential in elucidating the qualities of Rhizo-Meme self referentially. Through the development of the project's socio-political and artistic philosophy a number of recurrent thematic concerns emerged within the work: language and direct human-human protocols, mediated human-machine-human protocols, media performativity and corporate agency. I considered the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* as a mechanistic construct - a "deliring" machine through which these protocols and agencies might flow. And, as Guattari notes, 'what defines desiring machines is precisely their capacity for an unlimited number of connections, in every sense and in all directions' (Guattari, 1995: 126). In the rehearsal space, I reflected on the following text:

[The desiring machine] must be capable not of integrating, but of articulating singularities of the field under consideration to join absolutely heterogeneous components. It is not by absorption or eclectic borrowings that this can be achieved; it is by acquiring a certain power, which I call, precisely, 'deterritorialisation' - a capacity to look onto deterritorialised fields. I'm not

keen on an approximate interdisciplinarity. I'm interested in an 'intradisciplinarity' that is capable of traversing heterogeneous fields and carrying the strongest of charges of 'traversality'.

(Guattari, 1995: 40)

Understanding the production of *Florilegium: Remix* as an 'intradisciplinary' traversal was striking. I also realised that moving *Corpus 1* out of the internet browser and into the gallery with *Florilegium: Exhibition* was not an act of recuperation as I had once considered it, but a violent act of de-territorialisation – a brutal act of reification that forced commodity value upon content with a use value still confined to its original context.

Continuing with this gesture of de-territorialisation in *Florilegium: Remix* (as examined in postcolonial thinking) problematized the preservation of affect or aliveness of both original and remediated works. In that regard, objects or signifiers torn from their native environment and placed in the performance must first be acknowledged in relation to their historicity and the wholeness of their original context. Therefore, I chose to approach the performance content through a strategy which utilised the qualities, protocols or behaviours of the Memetic Nodes previously used to structure the *Florilegium: Exhibition* alongside my own perceptions of Guattari's 'intradisciplinarity' in the following way:

1. Mimicking selected and highly recurrent facets of the Rhizo-Memetic assemblage;
2. Offering a deeply subjective and often metaphoric commentary on these selections as a form of historicity;
3. Utilising a performative understanding of language to enact these connections temporally through the live and mediated encounter.

In devising this encounter I was reminded of Antonin Artaud's assertion that notions of liveness should be understood as a 'fragile and fluctuating centre which forms never reach' (Artaud, 1958: 13). This understanding of the "formless live" is echoed within Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1969) upon which Phillip Auslander comments that 'live performance has indeed been pried from its shell and that all performance modes, live or mediated are now equal: none is perceived as auratic or authentic – the live performance is just one more production of a given text or one more reproducible text' (Auslander, 1999: 50). Auslander's conceptualisation of liveness proved significant in my understanding of the Rhizo-Memes potential affect both online and throughout its corporeal enactments within the *Florilegium: Exhibition*.

Throughout the development of the spatial and auditory aspects of *Florilegium: Remix*, a particular emphasis on inter-subjectivity and aggregated understanding was developed, and remained necessary in producing a performance environment that permeated a sense of fluctuation and Rhizo-Memetic resonance. However, it also provoked a number of apprehensions. I had some concerns that the development of such an unstable environment might skew the audience's understanding of the work very strongly towards a purely aesthetic understanding. I was ultimately concerned this might be to the detriment of the linguistic and socio-political structures and forms accrued within the Rhizo-Memetic assemblage, and my strong belief that these structures might lend a sense of emergent narrative potential to a final articulation that would aid the audience's comprehension of the work:

... [Dealing] with the relations between things rather than with the things themselves; the fabric of these relations and associations forming a narrative potential that structures the interdependence of things from a withdrawn



position – backstage – that was once the skene: a hidden refuge from where the dynamics of the performance were driven.

(Oudsten, 2012: 4).

As a rule, I experience a profound discomfort when working explicitly with narrative content - whilst I have previously articulated a triptych of preceding creative works I describe as “as picking at the remains” of existing cultural narratives (Drowned World, 2009; Cellar Door, 2010; Labyrinths, 2011) – I dislike the confines of working within what I perceive as traditional, textual narrative logics. With *Florilegium: Remix* however, I found myself forced to address this disposition. As much as I chose to ignore it, much of the content was intensely narrative driven, and occurred within writing (!) - I felt a deep responsibility to reflect these qualities – or at least to comment on, or challenge them in some way. When I began to engage in the selection and ordering of existing text pulled from *Corpus 1* and the documentation accrued throughout and exhibited as part of *Florilegium: Exhibition*, I attempted to do so in a way that approached the situational, specific and the literary less as dramatic works, but as a series of textual ambiguities – I attempted to disengage from their content, and consider their forms; how they “behaved” with each other.

## FLIGHT 2: DESIGN

Given as Bourriaud notes, the ‘collapse ... of the pseudo-aristocratic conception of how artworks should be displayed’ (1998: 35) within the contemporary period, I intended to comment upon this subsidence through the scenographic presentation of the *Florilegium: Remix* event.

Through an initial phase of practical development, the physical artefacts incumbent to *Florilegium: Exhibition* were unboxed, and I found myself almost unconsciously filtering through, sorting out and re-structuring their location in space in accordance to my previous methodological placements of these artefacts (through the use of Memetic Nodes) as I had done during the production of the exhibition.

Even as I was doing so, I noted that this initial reaction was informed by a culturally ‘imposed state of encounter’ (Bourriaud, 1998: 36) – in effect, I was working against my own thesis in attempting to replicated the *Florilegium: Exhibition*’s faux taxonomic allocation of these objects. I needed to re-stratify the connections between these objects and their placement within my thesis: *This is not a tracing. This is not a map...* I therefore set about reconsidering the material placement of these ephemera in relation to the dramaturgical strategy I was employing within rehearsal of *Florilegium: Remix*’ “lecture” aspect. A line of flight emerged:

*I-Meme – E-Meme – Inside – Outside – Upload – Remix – Download – Folding – Paper – Materiality – Performativity – Absence – Presence – Not a tracing – A narrow pass.*

I imagined two spaces; two rooms. One housing all of the unboxed ephemera – a comment on the junk-like, inert, materialistic qualities enumerated through audience feedback. The second, by contrast: empty. Paper-like; a hollow city where the after-

effects of Performance glide like ghosts over empty pedestals; a comment on the performative affect of archived materials through their physical absence. The removal of physical objects from the second space would be intentional and deliberate – a move away from concepts of inert materiality in the first room, to notions of performativity in the second. Or rather, a “passing through” of materiality and performativity that might focus attention upon notions of agency.

Rather than focus on the taxonomic qualities of placement that as Michel Maffesoli notes, produces a sense of ‘reliance’ (Maffesoli in Bousiou, 2008: 220) or linkage to existing epistemic schemes and in so doing ‘compresses relational space’ (Bourriaud, 1998: 36), the scenographic quality of *Florilegium: Remix* would attempt to produce what Bourriaud calls an ‘interstitial encounter’ (1998, 19).

Borrowed from Karl Marx, the term describes trading communities that escape the frameworks of capitalist economies, and instead base their economy upon barter, autarkic forms of production and so on (Marx in Wheen, 2010). Therefore, *Florilegium: Remix*, when understood as interstitial would be a space in social relations that suggests possibilities for exchange other than those that prevail within dominant curatorial discourse.

In attempting to produce this interstitial quality, I designated the first audience space as ‘*UPLOAD*’ within the event’s accompanying handbook. This space was conceptualised as a reading room, housing all remaining ephemera from project’s prior creative outcomes. I invited Calun Griffin – contributing artist to the *Florilegium: Exhibition* to adapt his live artwork: *The End* for performance within this space as a tongue-in-cheek eulogy to the Archive-as-reliquary; his self-objectified body, positioned on the same material plane as archived matter:



**Image 18:** Photograph: *Calun Griffin performs an adaptation of 'The End', Florilegium: Remix, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 24.04.15. Image credit: David Berry.*

The UPLOAD space itself, was stripped of any theatrical superficiality or pseudo-aristocratic sensibility; no stage lights; no uniformity in terms of audience seating; no imposed soundscape. The once carefully archived material of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* was heaped, junk-like within the centre of the space as a creeping, hybrid terrain. Littered throughout this archival junk-heap were written curatorial excerpts responding both to the *Florilegium: Exhibition* and to *Florilegium: Remix*. These statements were eventually re-drafted as the thesis subsection entitled *Plateaux*, which the reader has encountered as the prologue to this exegesis.

As the artist-curator-archivist of this work, I remained purposefully absent from the UPLOAD space. The event assistants were instructed to keep audience instruction to a minimum in order to reduce any hierarchic sensibility in participation with the presented materials. The event assistants reported to me after the first showing of

*Florilegium: Remix*, that audience interaction with the archived material in this showing was minimal, with participants choosing rather, to sit and read the accompanying handbook.

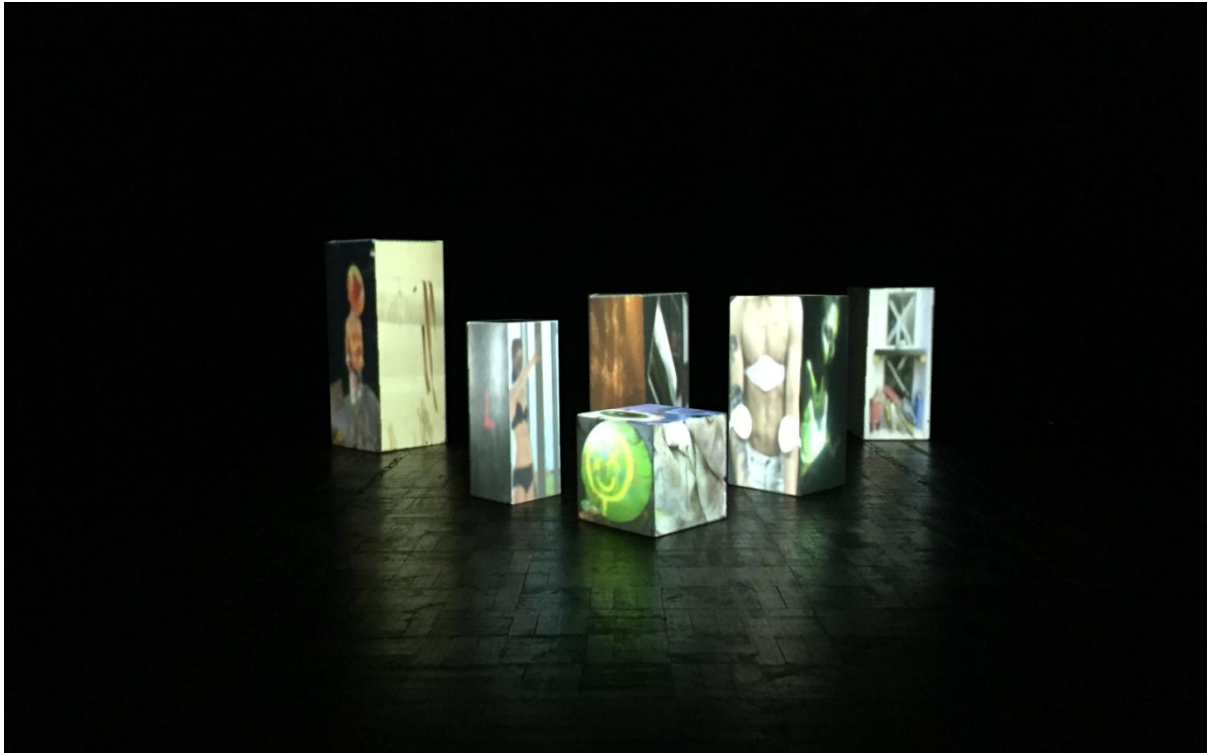
Activity for the second group of participants was less regimented; event assistants reported that audience members began to modify the construction of the archival junk-heap in an active response to both the reading material and their subjective relationships to individual aspects of ephemera. Calun Griffin's adaptation of *The End*, in this second showing became deeply participatory, as an embodiment of the rhizome, his corporeal presence formed a locus for shared objectification and 'meta-remix' (Navas, 2012).

With regards to the second of *Florilegium: Remix*' spaces, I supported the dramaturgical strategy outlined within *Flight 1* through the production of post-spectacular scenographic design which utilised a number of multimedia technologies: voice augmentation, video and projection mapping.

During technical rehearsal, projection mapping technologies were explored as a way to layer the affects of the Rhizo-Meme's prior artworks over the surfaces of a series of white gallery plinths. I used two iPads running *DynaMapper* software alongside two VGA splitters to four High Definition projectors. Custom built projector stands enabled me to map and manipulate the mirrored images simultaneously over four plinth groups.

Within the public performances of *Florilegium: Remix* however, this element of the work was unfortunately lost due to technical issues. The *DynaMapper* software updated automatically when connected to Wi-Fi internet, and this updated version overwhelmed the RAM (Random Access Memory) of the two iPad tablets and was unable to load. Further Images and video footage of these technical explorations can be accessed within the project archive. The irony of this incident notwithstanding, when

one considers the intensities drawn between materiality and non-human agency that this thesis yields, I ask the reader to consider these technical explorations as fundamental to the intended work:



**Image 19:** Photograph: *Projection Mapping in rehearsal*, Florilegium: Remix, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 03.03.15. Image credit: authors own.

Through the installation of the scenographic environment – the stark technicality of the set and sense of blankness – I hoped the audience would connect with the intensely subjective and exposed relationship between me (as performer in this instance, but also my roles throughout the praxis) and the network of external agencies responsible for the co-production and curation of the project’s first two creative outputs.

I also intended that the juxtaposition of these two main aesthetic qualities (the human body and technical apparatus) would create a sense of archival disturbance that was contradictory on many levels. On one hand, the personal and inter-subjective elements might become objectified through the technical apparatus – made to appear

'distanced' in the same manner that Susan Sontag conceptualises the photograph (Sontag, 1979), - pretentious even. On the other hand, I hoped that the stark technicality of the set might be gifted for the audience a sensual and visceral disposition through my tactile and vocal encounters with them:



**Image 20:** Photograph: *Final scenographic design for Remix space*, Florilegium: Remix, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 24.04.15. Image credit: David Berry.

### FLIGHT 3: PERFORMANCE

In performing *Florilegium: Remix* I intended to eschew notions of theatrical illusion – or of simulating a form of reality. I did not intend to perform characters or inhabit fictitious worlds, yet I intended the audience to connect to a physical presence; the presence of a human body as symbolic of the entanglements of human and non-human agencies extent within the Rhizo-Meme’s prior production. I wanted the audience to perceive a performed reality that might simultaneously comment on its own authenticity. I understood that my own performance style would be crucial to the audience’s engagement with, and consequently the success of this work.

I reflected on my propensity as an actor and to favour bold physical styles of performance<sup>41</sup> and set about incorporating elements of this physicality into this work. In doing so I intended to utilise elements of theatricality within my own physical performance commonly eschewed by contemporary Live Art practices (Taylor, 2016: 71), whilst simultaneously avoiding traditional role concepts and techniques of theatrical representation. In that same sense, I intended that this quasi-improvised style might be contained by the distancing devices of exposed technology – my relationship with the microphone, touch-screens and projectors. Equally, I chose to dress in a way that might indicate that the ‘James’ I was presenting to the audience was a fluctuating assemblage produced uniquely for this performance for consumption as part of the deliring machine.

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<sup>41</sup> I am referring here to my own historical experience: that is, to the particular forms of performance practice within which I have happened to be involved as an actor/performer both as a student and working artist. I make no claim that this propensity is universal, or fixed within a specific disciplinary school of practice.



The idea of a fluctuating and performed self - particularly the corporeal self - as endlessly malleable has been taken up by postmodernist theory in the process of denouncing biological determinism and notions of an 'essential' (biological, genetic, pre-cultural self), and as part of *Florilegium: Remix I* I inadvertently found myself caught up in this flight from essentialism (particularly given the genealogical thread of this project's theories of memetics back to Darwinism).

This flight, the belief that there is a pre-cultural self that determines both physical and psychic identity has led to what Susan Bordo announced as 'a new, postmodern imagination of human freedom from bodily determinism' (1998: 45). If there is no fixed, pre-existing self either prior to or outside of culture and the self is understood to be merely an effect of surface signifying practices (or coded protocols) that create the illusion of an underlying interiority, then those surface practices can be manipulated to produce change in an endlessly plastic self and may be utilised to resist, defy and reinforce particular cultural conventions.

Judith Butler puts forward the notion of 'performativity' as the means by which the self is produced and can therefore also be changed. The argument being that the ways in which the body is produced creates the illusion of an interior core identity. There is no essential, pre-cultural self, but the illusion of such a self is created by the inter-play of coded protocols produced 'performatively' on the surface of the body:

In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest but never reveal the organising principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the [gendered] body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social

discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the “integrity” of the subject.

(Butler, 1998: 41)

In this view, interiority itself is signified on the surface of the body. It is a fiction, an assumed cause. If there is no essential, pre-cultural self, then the self is open to endless manipulation. Even the corporeal body (and the spatial limits of that which constitutes the body) may be manipulated. Change is possible if one performatively changes the significations at the surface on the body. Change the surface so that it confuses the very notion of a stable, consistent interior identity, and you challenge at once the notion of a core identity and the hegemony of dominant norms. In rehearsal, a line of flight emerged:

*Identity – self – body – surface – body without organs – touch – extension – touchscreen – extended body – my body – extended through projection – machine – cyborg*

I began to conceptualise my corporeal performance as rudimentarily ‘cyborgic’ (Parker-Starbuck, 2011). If I were to extend the notions of the performative body out through the surfaces of the technical apparatus at my disposal, my performance of ‘James’ would plug directly into Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of the ‘Body without Organs’:

The Body without Organs is always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free. If you free it with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing a line [of flight] then one will be...plunged into a black hole, or even dragged towards the catastrophic.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 161)

## DADDY<sup>42</sup>

*Last night when we were saying our prayers my Daddy said:*

*“Everyone has done bad things except Jesus”*

*And I said:*

*“I don’t think you’ve ever done bad things, Daddy”*

*Am I right, or is my Daddy?*

The eternal mommy-wail, the endless daddy-debate – it is the image or the representation slipped into the machine, the stereotype that stops the connections, exhausts the flows, puts death in desire and substitutes a kind of plaster for the cracks...

(Guattari, 1995: 30)

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<sup>42</sup> Script excerpt from the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April. 2015). Written in response to Guattari (1995: 30).

### FLIGHT 3: PERFORMANCE (CONT.)

Through the juxtaposition and synthesis of technology and my body, of the artificial, and through an extended sense of paranoia I hoped to lead the audience into a precarious, disjointed arena that might reflect the inherent contradictions within the Rhizo-Meme, and thusly my methodological encounters with both its production and curation.

Contrast, tension and conflict were integrated as central components of my performance of *Florilegium: Remix*. In order to produce a sense of relativity, or of contingency within the work I set about utilising accrued materials in order to affect a sense of temporal oscillation, or rather, an appearance that contradicted the ways in which we might commonly encounter documental materials in the archive.<sup>43</sup>

In that regard, I manipulated the video footage of *Florilegium: Exhibition's* live performance events, so that these materials appeared augmented, saturated, glitchy or otherwise altered. I ran excerpts of the performance text (also drawn from the exhibition's live events alongside excerpts of Tweets and Facebook posts from *Corpus 1*) through text-to-speech synthesisers and fragmented aspects of audio content into an extended soundscape. During the performance, I was able to manipulate these media components live, and in response lines of flight as they emerged within the performance. I intended that this sense of media content enacting a sense of self-referential commentary might force the audience to consider their materiality and how the production of massless flows might affect their own reality.

I was greatly influenced in these choices by the body of work produced by Laurie Anderson – and in particular, her work *United States* (1984) of which Sean Cubitt wrote:

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<sup>43</sup> See: thesis section titled *Documental/Curatorial Synthesis* p. 78.

For Anderson, the crux of [this] breakage in communication is that the media of interpersonal communication have taken on a life of their own generally: not just in language, but all its mediations have solidified into protocols whose sheer presence overwhelms their communicative purpose... Anderson's constantly remodulated vocals not only enact the decay of individuality that accomplishes its ossification; they also continue the estrangement of the voice from the body in which we recognise the theft of knowledge under the guise of information.

(Cubitt, 1994: 286)

I deliberately left inconsistencies and awkward moments in the performed material by exaggerating the idiosyncrasies of my extended body, its movement, my voice and overall placement in the performance schema. During the process of physicalizing this work I developed a number of tightly choreographed physical phrases, gestures and lip-syncs characterised by excessive tension intended to synchronise either with sections of spoken text, audio or visual elements projected within the performance space. These precise executions were proposed in a sense to solidify the links between my "body without organs" and the resonating Memetic Nodes which formed the temporal content as a form of anchoring. However, over the process of refining the work my relationship to the performance environment and the devised content began to change:



**Image 21:** Photograph: *Glitched image of Remix space*, Florilegium: Remix, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 24.04.15. Image credit: Danielle Kerwick.

My sense of agency over these materials began to shift and my performance of these choreographic details began to materialise differently within my corporeal body. I became influenced by the fluid ways an imagined dancer might smooth out space, and make complex phrases of movement appear to flow seamlessly. Whilst I would hesitate to typify my performance as discipline specific, I began to experience a sense of geo-conceptual placement within the performance that felt intensely dance-like. Godard describes the dancing body in a markedly similar way:

If I had to point out to you a way of getting to a particular place ... I would have two options; I could either situate it with the help of a map and spatial orientations, or I could indicate a route to you ... The second position necessitates language, and you can't reverse two propositions without getting lost (chronology). This kind of orientation – by means of directions, routes – is that of a theatre writer, as well as of the historian and the psychoanalyst ... On the other hand, a dancer operates like a geographer, accumulating maps, intra-corporeal dispositions, geographical situations which subsequently produce a history. Given that language (the route) is not the primary necessity, a quality of wandering is created, a nomadism that perhaps partly escapes the history's determinism

(Godard in Louppe, 1996: 14)

Equally, my familiarity with the material coincided with a reduction in the necessity I once felt to drive these physical executions into being with such force, or to make my point so vigorously. My prior drive for reclamation of authorial control was transferred gradually into the scenographic quality of the work. The precision of my own physical performance gradually became less important to me than the development of new movements, and new conceptual ways through the synchronised materials. I began to identify whole-heartedly with my agency in relation to the performance of *Florilegium: Remix*, and indeed the network of agencies that produced this (in a wider sense), as one of mapping. Through this sense of the map, intensities constantly shifted and regrouped, lived moment by moment as functionality rather than

as a tracing which is stable, consistent and pre-determined. Whilst my highly subjective allegiances to particular aspects of the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork provided areas of stability and of plateaux within the performance, the times in which I felt most lost or without route - most Wolf-like - forced a conceptual reorganisation or line of flight upon which I “danced” new paths through the passes of the Rhizo-Meme. These shifts occurred sporadically throughout the rehearsal process.

Throughout early rehearsals for *Florilegium: Remix*, and when discussing the development of the work with colleagues, I continued to view myself as outside of the enactment, narrating spatial pathways through the material and, providing myself with verbal instructions (for example, “Make sure you over-articulate your mouth”, “Now, gesture like a politician”). In rehearsing the final version however, I found that I had internalised these instructions in my own body to the extent that I no longer needed to articulate them verbally. It seemed clearer to me to simply “move with the rhizome” as I would say. This made my interpretations of the programmed audio-visual materials running alongside me less precise in their synchronicity, but more directly connected to my own logic of their enactment. My own physical and verbal sense of what these materials were, had become more subtle and more present in “dancing them” than attempting to explain or otherwise articulate them. Both in devising and performing this work, I tried not to consciously impose a particular message upon the intended audience, but rather let the archived materials reveal their own idiosyncrasies in relationship with my curatorial desires in discrete and indirect ways.

## WHERE THERE IS DISCORD<sup>44</sup>

*Where there is discord, may we bring harmony*

*Where there is error, may we bring truth*

*Where there is doubt, may we bring faith*

*And where this is despair...*

...

*"Ain't nobody got time for that"*

...

*Error*

*Nobody had time for that*

*Reload Florilegium: Remix program*

*Reloading Program*

*Florilegium: Remix reloaded*

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<sup>44</sup> Script excerpt from the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015). Content sampled from: Margaret Thatcher's paraphrasing of St. Francis of Assisi (1976) (footage online) and the Internet Meme: 'Sweet Brown /Ain't Nobody Got Time for That' (2015: online). Original text modulated through text-to-speech synthesizers.



## FLIGHT 4: PARTICIPATION

Reason (2015), notes that ‘all audiences are engaged in some kind of participatory relationship with theatre performance ... [and that] the idea of an ‘active audience’ is extremely problematic, mired in the legacy of an overly comfortable binary between active and passive spectatorship’ (2015: 272). The audience’s experience of *Florilegium: Remix* (and their subsequent inter-subjective interpretation of that experience) was essential to the functioning of the practice as a Rhizo-Memetic artwork. The performance of *Florilegium: Remix* was conceptualised as occupying a position of trade: creating a free space or temporal zone that could be termed as ‘extra-daily’ (Turner, 1967); encouraging human interaction outside the territories of communication that we are led towards in daily life. Continuing with the principles of Rhizo-Memetic Art outlined within the thesis subsection: *Toward Rhizo-Memetic Art*, I intended to compose a series of performative actions within the work, through which the audience’s participation would become active in the production of this final performative articulation. In structuring these activities, I responded to Ioana Literat’s following assertion:

Participation cannot be used as a blanket term or as a panacea, since it does not account for the complexities of creative agency, artistic hierarchies, access, and capital. A close analysis of participatory art forms reveals a complex ladder of engagement, and I therefore suggest a more nuanced model of understanding the various levels of engagement, highlighting the different affordances of receptive, executory, and structural participation.

(Literat, 2012: 14)

In response to this nuanced understanding of participatory forms, I conceptualised the audience’s engagement with *Florilegium: Remix* under the following categories drawn from Literat’s work:

1. Structural participation: Co-designed: participants are invited to weigh-in on the design or structure of the project.
2. Executory participation: Creative: reflective and expressive participation in a pre-designed project.
3. Executory participation: Engaged: transparent but highly structured participation in a pre-designed project.

Utilising Literat's participation schema<sup>45</sup>, and as previously discussed within *Flight 1: Devising*, the initial audience space designated *UPLOAD*, was intended to offer unfettered participatory access to the physical ephemera archived after *Florilegium: Exhibition*. Within this space, participants were able to explore and modify this material in a structural sense. Whilst specific instructions to engage with these materials were left purposefully absent, participants within the second group engaged actively, whilst participants of the first remained more observant.

In order to structure audience participation specifically within the *REMIX* space, audience members were provided with envelopes upon their arrival: these envelopes corresponded to the numbering of audience seating within the space, and a number of them contained a written task, individual to the receiver. The allocation of these tasks to audience members was tasked to the event assistants, at the welcome desk. Allocation of these envelopes, and thus, audience seating was randomised.

The specific tasks contained within these envelopes were conceptualised and structured specifically to initiate participation through systematic re-contextualisation, or adaptation (of existing materials aggregated within the Rhizo-Meme's prior manifestations), through physical, visual and vocal engagement with the resonating

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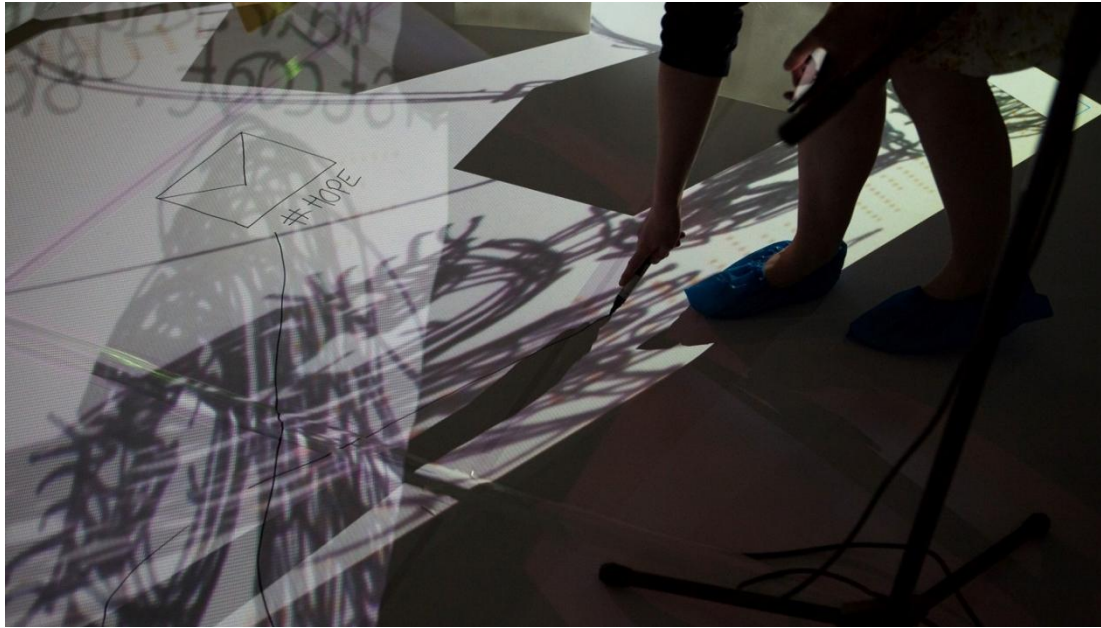
<sup>45</sup> See: Literat, I. (2012: "Crowdsourced Art and Collective Creativity" in *International Journal of Communication*. 6: 14. for the original schematic depiction of Literat's proposed levels of artistic participation.

milieu. Within Literat's schema, these tasks also offered opportunities for audience members to execute both expressive and pre-structured participation within existing artwork. In many ways, these tasks also brought about as Pierre Levy (1997) describes, 'a form of universally distributed intelligence, constantly enhanced, coordinated in real time, and resulting in the effective mobilization of [audience] skills' (1997: 13). Audience interaction within the performance itself was primarily signalled by the auditory score, alongside a number of visual cues which I provided as the performer.

Tasks were structured through three skill bases: drawing, writing and speaking.<sup>46</sup> I was influenced in this aspect of the work, by research carried out by Matthew Reason and *Imaginate* in 2008, which aimed to discover how specific audience groups (in this case, children), engaged with theatrical performance (Reason, 2008: 2). The use of interpretative drawing and mapping tasks within *Florilegium: Remix* with adult participants, involved exploration of audience responses to different conceptual elements (such as "Wolf", "Heart", "Hope", and "Ghost") which had been expressed by previous participants of *Corpus 1* and adapted during *Florilegium: Exhibition*. In these tasks, audience members were asked to "find an image/object within the space that resonated with this concept, and draw it":

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<sup>46</sup> Audience task-sheets as presented within *Florilegium: Remix* two showings on the 24.04.15 can be accessed within the project archive.



**Image 22:** Photograph: *An audience member draws in the Remix space, Florilegium: Remix, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 24.04.15. Image credit: Dr. Helen Newall, Edge Hill University*

Alongside the intended projection mapping for *Florilegium: Remix*, these drawing tasks would have been more clearly expressed for the audience, as certain images and icons would have remained stationary within the space for extended periods of time. Given the unfortunate technical issues with projection, only single images were projected at a given time, reducing the audience's ability to locate and interpret from a selection. Even given this limitation upon the intended task, audience drawn responses were varied, with some choosing to directly copy and/or trace the 'material appearance' (Reason, 2008: 8) of projected imagery as it moved across the plinths and floor space. Others chose to interpret the resonating Rhizo-Memetic content through the production of embryonic images 'evoked' (*ibid*) by the shared reality of the performance. Only one audience member chose to directly interact with me through the drawing task, choosing to place a "Heart" symbol on my cheek.

Speaking tasks included assigning two audience members as "associative narrators" to the Rhizo-Memetic milieu. Each positioned by microphones at either side of the

performance space. Volume controls for these microphones were routed to the control desk, through which I was able to manipulate the intensity of their vocal delivery. By vocalising their subjective interpretation of the performance's ambient environment, the associative narrators of this work began to produce simple taxonomic gestures, or metadata through which the performance's 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) were described.

Writing tasks included the adaptation of textual excerpts from artworks previously encountered as part of *Florilegium: Exhibition*. An excerpt from a performed monologue by Elric Cadwallader (*MonMon*), alongside excerpts from Harriet Godden's process documentation for *Leonard* were vandalised by the researcher prior to the performance of *Florilegium: Remix*; removing elements of text and replacing them with empty spaces. Audience members were tasked with reading the excerpt and filling in the blank spaces within the writing. These changes re-contextualised the original excerpts, providing new and unique interpretations upon their content.

One red and one green envelope were used to signal to audience members to take their place at the microphones during specific moments of the performance in order to read out their adapted textual excerpts:



**Image 23:** Photograph: *Professor Matthew Reason performs an excerpt of text, Florilegium: Remix, Arts Centre, Ormskirk. 24.04.15.* Image credit: Dr. Helen Newall. Edge Hill University.

With the final envelope signalled, I left the performance space whilst the audience member responsible for reading their excerpt was in mid-delivery: shifting the performative focus away from me as a facilitator, and leaving only audience-participants left in the *Remix* space.

In doing so, I attempted to comment upon the executory and structural forms of participation extant within the *Florilegium: Remix* event (and within the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork as a whole), in terms of notions of agency and choice. Indeed, the existence of a pre-established structure or design for *Florilegium: Remix* offered choices of action, and comments upon the ability to affect these choices through creative agency. Abbott (2008), goes so far as comparing, quite persuasively, the tokenistic nature of contributions in some forms of participatory art to ‘the participation offered in an elected democracy, or in public consultation methods where residents are given the opportunity to choose from a fixed number of designs’ (Abbott, 2008: 24). Although any type of structure artistic of otherwise rests on a certain combination of available

choices, it is the ability to affect or provide these choices that constitutes the mark of structural and material agency that *Florilegium: Remix*' participatory aspects demonstrates.

## REFLECTIONS



## BECOMING LICHEN/LYCAN

The processes of both making and performing *Florilegium: Remix* dealt explicitly with the multiple constructions of meaning that arose out of the network of agencies responsible for producing and expanding the Rhizo-Memetic assemblage. Because *Florilegium: Remix* was also a solo performance, the negotiations of how the performed material enacted this assemblage took place across multiple domains of practice. I worked not only as an (en)actor, but also in many ways as a programmer, a curator and an archivist (each consummate with their own urges drives and enquiries) within the live performance. I attempted to observe the politics of this internal fragmentation, and my desires and the desires of each as if individual but entangled agencies took ownership of these roles:

... Becoming-wolf, becoming-inhuman, deterritorialised intensities: that is what multiplicity is. To become wolf or to become hole is to de-territorialize one's self following distinct but entangled lines. To become a hole is no more negative than a wolf. Castration, lack, substitution: a tale told by an over conscious idiot who has no understanding of multiplicities as the formation of unconscious. A wolf is a hole; they are both particles of the unconscious, nothing but particles, productions of particles, particulate paths, as elements of molecular multiplicities.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 36)

*I am infatuated by the concept on the Wolf.*

*I think of Jungian archetypes and figures. I think of de-territorialised and multiplicitous archives filled with Wolf-like documents that hunt for connection in the dark.*

*Objects that are lycanthropic: objects covered in lichen: Lycan/Lichen. I think about molecule-monad-unit-memes and the painful, beautiful fragility of creative works left unfinished... or always already unfinished...*

For Derrida, in *The Beast and the Sovereign: v. 1* (2009: 2) the wolf (or rather, the movement of the wolf) functions as raw potential, as the unexpected and the unknown. The wolf is both an event, in the Deleuzian sense of the term and an Event in the Badiouan. Like the rhizomic line of flight, the wolf is marked by speed, direction and tempo. The wolf is always becoming -always almost - it is imminent and 'uncanny' (Schelling in Royle, 2003). Both Derrida and Deleuze write about the wolf in similar but distinct ways (just as to become hole or to become wolf-like is to become de-territorialised in distinct but entangled ways).

Derrida and Deleuze both write about the wolf in relation to Freud's 'wolfman' (1918). Their memes clash and bump up against Freud's wolf conceptualised as the One Father and a representation of the castration complex (Gay, 1987). Their wolves become the wolf-pack; representative of the multiplicity that is the unconscious. The wolf is formless Form; it is code. Wolves are always already singular but several. They are a multiplicity. As I mention earlier - they compare the wolf to a hole, which in Freudian (and one could argue Lacanian philosophy) is an undesirable quality, a sign of lack, something missing, and something to be desired.

The choice to perform this work as a solo was not an easy one, yet it remained intentional and deliberate. I was motivated (after multiple attempts of avoidance) by my desire to investigate, through performative agencement the scope of my own subjective relationship(s) with the materials imbricated within the Rhizo-Memetic assemblage. Through this investigation, I hoped to expose the extent to which my own subjectivity subverted, manipulated and preserved the Rhizo-Meme asymmetrically. Indeed, the irregular construction of the archive is highlighted by Carolyn Steedman in a similar manner:

The Archive is made from the selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there...In the Archive you cannot be shocked at its exclusions, its emptiness, at what is *not* catalogued.

(Steedman, 1998: 67)

Deleuze argues that which is absent; the hole, the wolf, is full of positivity (1987: 38). Both Deleuze and Derrida make delightful comparisons between animals (in this case, the wolf) and holes, speed and physics (Derrida, 2009). In physics, a hole is theorised as that which is not a lack but a positive entity, occupied by atoms moving at speeds faster than light (Calmet, 2014) - delightful because researchers believe these particles were discovered in experiments at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) (Viollier et al, 2011). What do I take from this? I think that there is something positive to be found in psychoanalysis' "traditional conception of the lack" and that placing oneself in a position of lack is essential to becoming multiple, to becoming-wolf, to producing Rhizo-Memetic Art. It is this sense of simultaneity and the relationality it demands that will be critical to a new ethics creeping toward us, and taking hold:

*Animal-physics-ethics-Eventive thought-multiplicity...and +1...and...and...and...change...*

## TOWARD A PLANE OF IMMANENCE

*Florilegium: Remix* offered no conclusion for its audience. Its meaning was generated through the production of a series of plateaus over which intensities of movement, of voice, of media and agency remained constant. As an agencement of the Rhizo-Meme, no particular elements of the total assemblage were intentionally privileged over others. Words were no more important than identities; symbols became no more important than limbs; than sonic vibrations; than spatial dynamics; than projection. There was, in effect, no dominant narrative direction to *Florilegium: Remix* - no culmination; no climax; no reason d'être - only potential; only imminence.

Yet, the temporal performance had to end. I came to realise that there was no central point that this work was leading to - no singular destination or sense of narrative ending; much like the Archive itself, the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* was typified by its relationship with absence - with what was not included; with what might be included; a sense of outward expanse and potential. Much like a river meeting an ocean, *Florilegium: Remix* was a threshold of entanglement; of following currents that whip sediments into new formations. Its purpose was not to trace its flows back to a source; back to One - let us leave that to Historians. To create an end was to block the Rhizo-Meme; to re-orient its lines of flight artificially, and usurp its uniqueness. The "ending" of *Florilegium Remix* did not signal conclusion, but rather a shift in modality; the archive emerged as performative, but only for a short while.

After the audience left the final showing, I set about deconstructing the set. Once I had attempted to document the space, and to photograph the audience's participatory additions to the Artwork, the reams of white paper so painstakingly installed were ripped up by the crew with such speed that I wondered whether these activities - these

de-territorialising flights - formed a more appropriate culmination for the work, one to which the audience were not privy. The Rhizo-Meme was transforming, mutating, fragmenting even now.

...

*I should be keeping all of this. I should SAVE it. I should scan it all in sections and upload the entire floor to the project archive.*

*“Should I?”*

*I should, shouldn't I?*

*“Whose is this wine?” – The irony - Someone brings YouTube up on over sound system and my ears are blasted by Taylor Swift's ‘Shake It Off’.*

*There's dancing and wine (is it yours?!); cartoon ghosts;*

*(R) EST (I) N (P) EACE.*

*An envelope;*

*“HOPE”*

*Miles and miles of wire cables;*

*UNPLUG;*

*Plinths piled high on storage trolleys...*

*“And the fakers gonna fake<sup>47</sup>...”*

...

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<sup>47</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journals. 25.04.15.

Whilst the spatial network of Memetic Artefacts (or E-Memes) that jointed the physical materiality of *Florilegium: Remix* (and provoked its blocks of affect and perception) with its virtual counterparts began to transform, the I-Memes that constituted its materiality began new journeys. They were travelling off in cars and buses and trains - housed as electric fluctuations inside the bodies of the evening's audience - microcosms of sensation – miniscule networks of affect and percept. *Florilegium: Remix* dwelt now in memory as a series of asymmetric and intersubjective renderings. It dwelt as Deleuze and Guattari's 'child' dwells – 'in the dark ...comfort[ing] himself by singing under his breath' (1985: 311). The child's song, it could be argued (much like the audience's recollection of *Florilegium: Remix*), serving to differentiate between the external milieu of materials and the internal milieu of composing elements and substances, permitting the child/memory a home, an architectural placement within the Rhizo-Meme:

Art begins not with the flesh but with the house. That is why architecture is the first of the Arts.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 186)

## A HAUNTING<sup>48</sup>

*The audience are arriving - collecting their envelopes, shoe covers and participation forms. They're making their way into the UPLOAD space. Fifteen minutes to go. Give them time.*

*I am waiting in the REMIX space. Calun is in position ready to re-perform 'The End' in the UPLOAD space. Mad and mouldy fragmentations of ephemera surround him. Dirty dustsheets hold court in a ramshackle reading room. No pretence. No music, No specialist lighting. No direction. No author-artist-curator-archivist present. No designated host, just a few willing assistants and a few bottles of wine. I wonder what is happening in the room across the hall...*

*Nervous energy and no projection-mapping. I wonder what I am going to do. Software malfunctions. "Never work with children, animals or machines!" - I think to myself. The technician's words repeat in my head: "The show is fucked!" - But this is not a show, it is ontology. The agency of "inert" objects indeed! Quick response - gallery view - projectors ON - Scroll...*

*The atmosphere is tense. The grimy bassline of the soundscape vibrates through my chest and the audience enter to find their seats. I begin with Victoria's words, caught on camera in the prelude to 'RSVP': "So... yeah - pleasantly surprised actually! Something about her, she's got a really good...manner?" "Is that your wine?" - Rinse and repeat. I've got this.*

*"No! Out, into this world..." - I lip-sync to Beckett's 'Not I'. Sampled beats from Dave Forrest's audio remix kick in, and I feel like we've really begun...*

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<sup>48</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journal. 25.04.2015: Reflecting on the first of two performances of *Florilegium: Remix* from the day previous.

*In the absence of the intended projection mapping, I glide through a carousel of images, cycling back and forth between inference and reference; specific versus generic associations. I fight hard for the performance (!) – to keep it alive – to bring it into the “LIVE” - yet I can only keep it alive by letting go; by surprising myself; switching up elements in order to create new forms of discord.*

*I allow myself to break the rhythms of the work - to halt the performance and respond as myself to the audience. Have I unwittingly pitted structures of cohesion against my own reactive desire for dissonance?*

*Two members of the audience make their way towards the microphones placed at either side of the performance space. They perch on stools and begin to narrate the lines of flight that soar chaotically through the space... “banana – light – colour – heart - fast – beat – memories – lost – light – pen – paper – ghost – sketch – dance – beat – red - loud – chaos – hat – sea – Brighton – monster – tail – puppet”*

*We’re flying...We’re building our own taxonomies, right here...right now.*

*As I move I feel bound to the sudden stops and equally sudden shifts within the auditory score. As the more conceptually difficult elements of the work expand, and drop out of nowhere into pedestrian movement and colloquial language I feel attacked (by whom?) - By lists, indirect references, free-floating signifiers and parodies of archetypal mask.*

*“We were all here once” I feel my extended body shrink and almost immediately expand against the corporeality of the space. “Auto-portraits in love-like conditions – Virgin with a memory”*

*I flinch at the soundscape; at the shrieking of feedback through microphones. At roughly the halfway point, whilst the audience-initiate-participant-archons scurry around the space, trailing marker-pen-maps across the floor drawing ghosts and envelopes, I pause.*



*The soundscape drops out: silence. My feet hit the ground. I am hit by the ugly reality that I am staging nothingness.*

*I mime. For five...ten minutes in complete silence. I morph physically through a series of larval monsters. The audience sit in silence as Mother becomes Maiden becomes Crone becomes Mother becomes Wolf becomes Hero becomes Child. I hear the sound of the Theremin...*

*“Oh...” The audience laugh. I’m relieved. I take a sip of red wine and silence returns... The hush is broken by the whirl and crack of Daria’s whips. The sound distorts and repeats. Distorts and repeats. The crack of Daria’s whips. I forget where I am, and for who I am performing. I inhabit the moment.*

*The soundscape shifts again and we hear the sound of a child drowning in the surf. Was it the Merman or the murderer? I sip red wine. We pick up pace, the narrators perched at either side of the room begin to speak again. As if they found in this moment a fresh start; a new beginning; an always-already beginning. We’re racing towards, always towards but never reaching...”-Tug boat – seagulls - horn – whip – drowning – sex - - envelope – green -”*

*I hold up a green envelope and its twin makes its way to the microphone at the side of the room - clutched in the hands of the audience member upon whose seat it was placed. He reads the text from Elric’s monologue previously performed as part of MonMon’s contribution to the Florilegium: Exhibition. The reader fills in the blanks. Or rather, the Rhizo-Meme fills in the blanks for him.*

*“And they can never tear us apart...And they can never tear us apart...And they can never tear us apart”...the introduction to INXS glitches. Frances Kay stands to take a photograph of her own documental footage as it is projected into the space. I re-iterate her actions and*

*our performance opens up a wormhole in time and space. The moment is shattered as soon as it arrives as we hear a device explode at the Boston Marathon. A heartbeat... "In Fire" – a nod to Laurie Anderson. "Like in Revelations"...*

*The audio sucks out into silence. The audience look shell-shocked. Or completely bemused. I can't quite tell.*

*I jump down from the central performance area and exit the space.*

...

As Liz Tomlin (2010) suggests, 'the concept of the simulacrum, as conceived by Jean Baudrillard, is often over simplified, and sometimes misinterpreted as a refusal to acknowledge any operative difference between truth and falsehood, veridical knowledge and its semblance' (2010: 1). However, there is evidence throughout Baudrillard's work that the notion of simulacrum erases the distinctions between events "as perceived" and the event "as experienced":

News coverage is coupled with the illusion of present time of presence – this is the media illusion of the world 'live' and, at the same time, the horizon of disappearance of the real event. Hence the dilemma posed by all the images we receive: uncertainty regarding the truth of the event as soon as the news media are involved. As soon as they are both involved in and involved by the course of phenomena, it is the news media that are the event. It is the event of news coverage that substitutes itself for coverage of the event.

(Baudrillard, 2005: 132)

As Baudrillard notes above, it is the access to the real event that is blocked by mediatisation, not its conceptualisation. The real event is not covered and does not exist to our immediate perception. All we can perceive is the event of 'news coverage'. But, as Liz Tomlin goes on to suggest, this does not deny the existence of another 'order' of 'event' which has been occluded from our perception (2010: 2). When such 'real events' have passed into history, (such as the events of *Florilegium: Exhibition* and its associated

artworks, events and processes) and are no longer available to us in present time, it becomes important to identify approaches by which we might uphold the independent authority of these events themselves, which are otherwise in danger of being consumed by the events, or protocols of their own representation, or, as Baudrillard identifies, 'the image of itself (2005:27). Consequently within this reflection upon *Florilegium: Remix*, I wish to bring about a way of thinking about its production (specific to the methodology of the Rhizo-Meme) that enables a much more significant connection between past and present than conventional archival re-performances can achieve.

One participant, when asked to reflect upon the second showing of *Florilegium: Remix* on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2015 (transcription of interview available within the project archive), suggested that in experiencing the overlapping juxtaposition of its elements in performance, she was moved subtly and concurrently between an experience of the present moment (of being a spectator) and an imaged, subjective embodiment of another's experienced reality in the past (This participant was involved in role as one of the two "narrators" of the second sharing of the work). The participant went on to suggest that 'it was clear to me that the intention of the work was not to provide an objective experience that simply reiterated the exhibition' (Participant Interview. 18.06.15).

I reflected on these words after, in relation to the booklet I had produced alongside the *Florilegium: Remix* event: in how the information provided was almost incidental to the act of witnessing the actual event – a series of ponderings (that even now I wish I could re-write) that were skeletal. Operating more as an aid to understanding elements of memetic theory to those unfamiliar, rather than an engagement with the detail or context of the event they were about to witness. I asked myself: "How does an audience member deal with archived materials when there is no

context provided?" I also wondered "Given that the archival documents themselves are skewed so asymmetrically, and the lack of context, did *Florilegium: Remix* even uphold the authority of the original events to which it alluded?" I pondered the answers to these questions for some time.

I eventually came to the conclusion that at its core, *Florilegium: Remix* engaged with meta-theatrical enquiry, and that its allusions to the *Florilegium: Exhibition* served only to add depth to this function. I also came to the conclusion that the answers to these questions depended entirely upon the behavioural choices made by the work's audience – who – as the interviewed participant suggests, inhabited a fluctuating territory between past and present.

Within the first sharing of the work, I remember the participants remaining totally engaged and focused on the text they were hearing, the performance they were watching and obeyed almost robotically, the instructions they were given. Drifting from task to task (even when that task was to sit motionless), these participants of the archive resisted 'performing' to and for each other. There was no secondary layer of spectatorship – except for me: located on my perfectly placed "viewing platform" in the centre of the room. In the moments they were asked to read out text, locate and interpret images, or offer associative commentary, I projected onto them my own imaginings of the Rhizo-Memetic milieu; my own remembering of its artworks.

With imaginative engagement during my own performance, and the prompts of the soundscape, text and carousel of images, I could slip seamlessly between the present and the past, watching obedient non-actors transform into ghosts. So much so that the text I had sampled from the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork's assemblage started to apply to my experience in both the context of the present and the past: "Auto-portraits in love-like conditions - Virgin with a memory - Ghostly portraits - Urgent copy - We were all

here once - Network traces - Subject to constant change - A portrait of the artist - Forming a line”.

Within the second sharing, the experience was very different. This time around, the audience was less obedient, more “in charge” of their own interaction with the work. Whilst this independence had undoubtedly gained them a better experience of the initial UPLOAD space, they took less notice of the instructions provided within the *Remix* space. They were aware of themselves, and ‘performed’ to each other without an explicit engagement with the materiality of the space which was ‘performing’ to them. Such self-awareness rejected the complicity with the resonating narrative I had been able to place on the earlier group, and in turn, I also began to ‘perform’ more overtly for them.

Whilst I became aware that the second group to witness *Florilegium: Remix* might have interpreted the event based on an understanding that my main concerns were the dynamics of the performer/spectator relationship, the first sharing gave me the distinct impression that my intention to re-member and re-mix the affects or “ghosts” of the preceding Rhizo-Memetic milieu had been successful through the application of its meta-theatrical language and staging.

In my refusal to simply re-perform and therefore provide an ‘expert’ opinion on the variety of heterogeneous works incumbent to the prior stages of the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork, *Florilegium: Remix* rejected the historical permanence of the Derrida’s Archive in favour of something I feel, is far more resonant with the contemporary Zeitgeist. *Florilegium: Remix* counteracts archival permanency where performative affect is obscured behind Baudrillard’s simulacrum; erased by representations of itself. With the archived materials of the *Florilegium: Exhibition*

removed from the *Remix* space, the Archive's representational apparatus remained purposefully absent; there was nothing there to displace the experienced event.

When the participants of this work complied with its conventions, they gave the impression of actors moving to a kind of pattern of intention that provided a ghosting of the contributors to both *Corpus 1* and *Florilegium: Exhibition*. These moments validated the meta-theatrical qualities of *Florilegium: Remix* as the perfect vehicle for archival reform. The participant-come-ghosts functioned (unaware as they were) as the point of intersection between past and present; between 'the archive and the repertoire' (Taylor, 2003) in a way that Marvin Carlson (2001) suggests is precisely how theatre draws its potency: 'in its tendency to recycle past perceptions and experiences in imaginary configurations that, although different, are powerfully haunted by a sense of repetition' (2001: 3).

## REVELATIONS<sup>49</sup>

*In fire*

*In fire*

*In fire*

*In fire – like in Revelations*

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<sup>49</sup> Script excerpt from the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* (25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015). Lyrical content sampled from Laurie Anderson's *The End of the World* (1995) as a Twitter contribution to *Corpus 1* (2012-13) and subsequently exhibited as part of *Florilegium: Exhibition* (3<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014).

## CONCLUSIONS



## PRE-SCRIPT DELIRIUM

*Too much content? Too many platforms? Too much curation? Too many media? Too many projects? Too many directions? I daydream that genre has become self-aware; easy to reveal, jolt, fuse, manufacture, and replicate: "Down in the Park where the Machmen meet the Machines and play kill by numbers..."*

*Art has become about accounts, algorithms and feeds just like music: "Welcome to iArt..."*

*Images have become Meta-images. Objects have become Meta-objects. Everything is now linked. Everything flows in the stream, everything is massless mass. Everything has become fractalized: "Mustn't forget to tag that photograph..."*

*We all play the Archon. You can literally make other people's art; you can predict what people are going to post next, faster than they can post it. Our #ideas have become #brands; become #economy. We begin to see everything in situ with similar and related content around it, which remains uncanny; uncomfortably similar. We see products, artefacts, architecture, and selfies. The lines between research, idea, art product and community are blurred. #One-size-fits-all. The timeline from thought to post ebbs away. All content become equalized. Capital is scarce. Memes dominate. We've had our first encounters with AI. The future is imminent...*

*We are increasingly dealing with the dynamic materiality of information, of the meme - that is, with the relativity between signal and receptor; oscillations and micro variations, entropic emergences and negentropic reductions and positive feedback; a chaotic, schizophrenic process. If there is an informational quality to contemporary culture, then it might be not so much because we exchange more information than before, or even because we buy, sell or copy informational commodities, but because cultural*

*processes are taking on the attributes of information - they are increasingly grasped and conceived in terms of their informational, material dynamics.*

*From within the Rhizo-Meme I have encountered memetic intensities and followed lines of flight: I have felt deep sadness, isolation, joy and laughter. In developing 'Florilegium: Remix' I allowed myself to "delire"; I sought to enact the Rhizo-Meme, and take on its qualities.*

*I performed the archive, and appropriated the persona of the Deleuzian Wolf. I fought against the limitations of technical apparatus, and overcame complications embodied in the agency of non-human materials. I encountered palpable sonic vibrations; crushed charred mineral deposits; inhaled the fumes of graphic transformation; witnessed ancient monsters with slippery wet tails; saw ghosts; became hypnotised by flickering still images that burst forward into moving confessions of forbidden love; shielded my eyes from blinding lights; heard the tale of an old man full of regret; followed miles of string that led to a shoreline that led to Mayan temples that led to the colour yellow that led to a mouth that led to...desire... that led to swathes of clean white paper...; finally I was faced with a room of people anticipating an ending that never came. We daren't look into the eye of a Wolf; we are a gazeless horde afraid to be fragmented...<sup>50</sup>*

By their nature, the multiple processes, performances and artefacts that constitute this Rhizo-Memetic Artwork resist definition, reduction or conclusion. However, the critical discipline of 'complementary writing' (Nelson, 2013) - or what I prefer to call 'integrated writing' (Hann, 2015: online), requires a reflexive negotiation with their unique heterogeneity. This intense relationship and difference between the Artist's

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<sup>50</sup> Excerpt from the researchers journals. 09.10.15.

supplement and the Researcher's requirements to supplementarity is expounded by

Robin Nelson:

...One should stress the difference between the supplement to the artwork as an academic requirement... on the one hand and a certain aesthetics of the supplement which is inherent in the work of many artists on the other. [...] The artist's supplement is not what gives us the solution, the answer, the right interpretation, but rather what postpones the solution, the answer, the right interpretation even more.

(Nelson, 2013: 149)

In that regard, and before reflecting on what can be stated about the concerns originally articulated as research questions, some central points are worth making:

Rather, through my own processes of production, encounter and desire, I have obtained and expressed a distinct impression of both the utility of the Rhizo-Meme as an application for producing and curating performance, and highlighting the performativity (and materiality) of information through expanding networks of human agency. In exploring the processes involved, my own dynamic position within that elaborate network itself became a matter for investigation and reflection.

In my attempts to draw this expansive, generative project which has resisted constraint at every turn, towards conclusion, I found myself continually drawn back to the research questions I developed within the initial phases of the project's design. Whilst the benefits of this activity in structuring concise research are obvious, I felt drawn to return over and over, primarily because it became increasingly difficult to map the material expanses of the Rhizo-Meme back to a point of genesis. In a quite literal sense, these questions embody the desires from out of which this Rhizo-Meme bloomed. They are its only point of genesis - and they themselves are multiplicitous. Here, for the purpose of clarity, I draw the reader back across the plateaux; back to these early enquiries explicitly and offer some resolve. I have structured this conclusion as objectively as I dare, given the inherent recalcitrance of the project to this stage.

Therefore, I structure this conclusion across a series of planes, through which I aim to unpick the significance of the work.

## EXEGESIS AS A LINE OF FLIGHT

*'To highlight the extent to which the application of insights drawn from Memetic Science and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome theory might impact upon methods of production, and the curation of transdisciplinary performance.'*

In formulating of the overarching research aim of this thesis, I attempted to articulate a way in which I might draw out the creative and curatorial potentials of memetic theory, alongside Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical conceptualisations of the rhizome. The connection of materials imbricated within this exegesis when explored as a Rhizo-Meme, enacts these potentials through its form as much as it does through the intensity and connectivity of its content.

In essence, this project articulates multiplicity. My writing, the writing of imbricated others, the corpora of digital content, the archived materials of distributed creative inquiry, and of witnessing the performative enactment of *Florilegium: Remix* (or its documentation) all combine to produce a unique production which positions the reader on a particular trajectory - from one section of the projects assemblage to another: agglomerating the extended and contextual rhizome/meme assemblage of the reader's perspective before eventually merging back again with the project.

This exegesis has spread out and across a sprawling landscape of cultural capital; producing confluences of thinking among contemporary understandings of networked communication technologies, and their material implications for documentation and curatorial practices in the Arts. Consequently, this exegesis claims specifically to produce a unique perspective on these concerns, by examining the ways in which the theoretical and practical implications of the Rhizo-Meme impact upon, and re-stratify concepts of production and agency within these domains.

The production of a synthesis between Deleuze and Guattarian understandings of the rhizome, and concepts of the Meme drawn from the application of insights from Memetic science, is an innovation in Performance research – one which has allowed me to articulate the nature of my own creative practice alongside understandings of social media practices, Net Art and documentation strategy in unique and shifting ways. When the materiality of this praxis is understood as rhizo-memetic, the structures of the curatorial and of the archive can be thought of as configurations of interconnection; any element of its exegesis, whether it be a reference to a literary text, a YouTube video, a gesture, a unique vocalisation or spatial pathway can be understood as a potential, and material connection.

This structure of constant interweaving has produced the crucially significant effect of flattening out all hierarchies of understanding within the production of the work's creative assemblages, including the taxonomies that might usually be applied to curatorial or archival endeavours. Indeed, this flattening produced a sense of 'dematerialization' (Lippard and Chandler, 1968) throughout the creative praxis which in some cases rendered the significance of individually encountered physical works (artefacts, or documents) as seemingly obsolete.

This fluctuation in the materiality of Rhizo-Memetic art practice was reflected in audience feedback for the *Florilegium: Exhibition* - with comments noting the perceived absence of authentic art-making, and the junk-like or redundant qualities of exhibited artefacts. As Tilley (2003: 836) makes clear, all meaning, of whatever kind is not a matter of objective fact but of social construction, the ideological basis of which can be unravelled or de-territorialised. An important aspect of Rhizo-Memetic ideology is the way in which objects, commodities (or objects as commodities) interweave with the political ways in which value is ascribed to individual works.

When everything is laid out across a 'plane of exteriority' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), as it was for the *Florilegium: Exhibition*, the potential routes of narrative understanding are removed – nothing is prior to anything else, and nothing precedes anything else. Upon reflection, this produced an inherently difficult initial encounter with the curatorial for the viewer, and may have contributed to the distinctly alienating effects that seemed to emanate out from the exhibition itself.

Rather, each element of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* as with all aspects of the exegesis (this writing included) function as part of a total assemblage; of an asignifying machine that sweeps across terrains. This means that the materiality of its various artefacts and processes need not be understood to be produced from something. Whilst there is a sense of the generative, there need be no 'General' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987): no General of digital protocol; no General of curatorial value; no General of performance discipline.

The materiality of this project's artefacts and processes, of its production, is not assembled purely from my desires, nor solely from the desires of imbricated others. It is not produced by the biologic, genetic or memetic diversity of its participants, or from the transdisciplinarity embodied in the work of its contributing artists.

The methodological shift of this thesis exposes the origins of creative materiality and curatorial agency among the massless flows of the milieu; by an assemblage of the above elements and many more. The creative works of this project, their materiality and agency have emerged out across socially inscribed meanings; out of bodies; been reiterated through different forms and media; been enacted and performed through gesture; and have been woven into the informational substrate of the project archive.

## THE ARCHIVE AND THE CURATORIAL

*'To scrutinise the research capacity of curatorial and archival methods shaped to function as tools for research, produced via synthesis of 'rhizome' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and insights gained from the field of Memetics.'*

As this research project has developed, the initial conceptualisation of the Rhizo-Meme as the core relationship in a theoretical framework, has been developed to critique the enacting properties of the archive and the curatorial. Instead of the archive being a latent entity or reliquary, it is re-stratified as action – as a verb. In doing so, the act of archiving, of documentation has been re-situated upon the same plane or plateau as the creative works and processes contained within it. In similar ways, the curatorial processes of the *Florilegium: Exhibition* became inherently unstable – characterised by inter-discursivity and flux. In both cases, I refused to allow the creative works imbricated within this process to become passive objects of examination – mute artefacts to analyse or articulate – rather, they behave; they enact; they iterate; they emerge; and they perform.

Throughout this project I have theorised the act of documenting and curating artistic works as something that functions as a process of continual re-mapping. Neither the archive, nor the curatorial within this project can be understood as linear systems. That is, I did not start with finished artworks (or even a complete set of artistic processes) as a precursor to either activity. Rather, I understood both archiving and curation as ongoing cartographic processes that functioned alongside the creative works, processes and artefacts, rather than subsuming them.

This inherently spatial dynamic was made clear within both archival and curatorial undertakings. During the production of the online archive, and the physical



exhibition space, I thought of them both existing on the same plane of understanding; of 'consistency' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). I saw both processes of production as map-making rather than the production of a narrative that might announce the assumed history of this praxis. I connected elements visually within the online archive, and spatially within the physical space utilising my conceptualisation of Memetic Nodes, but did not indicate my personal interpretation of relationships (even though I might have desired to do so). I did not attach a curatorial statement, for example, announcing that "audio content adapted from Beckett's *Not I* resonates in this position within the space in relation to visual and textual content drawn from the original digital corpora". I did not announce, or narrate any connective qualities within either the archive, or the curatorial that might subsume or essentialise these entities. Rather, my positioning of audio, of images, of objects and of processes produced a continually emerging discourse of relationality so that the user of these works might make use of them, and plot their own routes in relation to them, as they would in making a map of the terrain.

Similarly, this exegesis and the performance of *Florilegium: Remix* are laid out across the same plane of consistency. My discussions of the archive, and of the curatorial, their contexts, and the histories of their practice, are not positioned as causal of this investigation. These paradigms are instead positioned as elements that the *Florilegium: Archive* and *Exhibition* function alongside. In the same way, the processes of production imbricated by contributing artists and online contributors are not positioned as the only active paradigms within *Florilegium: Remix* – the actual performances of this work, in real time on the 24th of April 2015, also contribute to the production of meaning-making within both curatorial and archival discourses outlined within this writing. Leonard & Sensiper (1998) illuminate this position:

Knowledge exists on a spectrum. At one extreme, it is almost completely tacit, that is semi-conscious and unconscious knowledge held in people's heads and bodies. At the other end of the spectrum, knowledge is almost completely explicit and codified, structured and accessible to people other than individuals originating it. Most knowledge of course exists between the extremes.

(Leonard & Sensiper, 1998: 113)

This has implications for the nature and status of this exegesis, and for how it should be approached by a reader. The sections of this writing function with each other, but do not cause or represent each other. There is no singular, fundamental chain of causality that can be traced through to reveal the mechanism of production within this project.

Rather, several routes/roots can be drawn through this text, connecting its subsections in new ways. Understood in this way, the processes of this project's contributors (both on and offline, myself included) did not produce its creative works in any simple way. They cannot be curated in any stable way, and cannot be archived individually. Rather, their processes function as Performance, with Performance, and alongside Performance – *As the performance of Florilegium: Remix, with the performances of Little Red, Merman and RSVP etc. and alongside the reader's encounter with this exegesis.*

The critical question arising from this however, is the extent to which the Rhizo-Memetic malleability of 'the archive and the repertoire' (Taylor, 2003) is possible in practical terms. The limits of choice in both producing and curating this practice are (even now) governed by the regulatory effect of cultural norms. One doesn't just assume a position (within any given assemblage), one is forcibly directed towards choosing between certain positions.

You can only challenge the taxonomies within which your practice is defined, and thus make noticeable the arbitrariness of objective signification, exposing the possibility for change. In this sense, Rhizo-Memetic Art parodies its own modes of production and reception in the same way Drag ‘parodies the existence of an interior, real gender’ (Butler, 1998: 41), and by doing so, steps outside of the ontological frame it presents as real. Performance - or rather performativity - I argue has been key to this inherently political practice in its ability to hybridize the accumulated affect of the creative process.

The Rhizo-Memetic archive then, is never total; never all of what it is suggesting, not a mirror through which we see a perfect reflection that ‘offers all of its complexity at once’ (Butler, 1998: 36). Rather, it is practical and considered, aimed at challenging whatever redundant taxonomies marginalise its own data. The cultural value of the Rhizo-Memetic archive is a function of the degree to which it is able to contest dominant archival norms.

Bordo challenges the degree to which dominant norms can be considered to be de-stabilized by single instances of deviant practice, noting that not all change is possible because not all change is presented as desirable by the dominant cultural matrix in which we find ourselves.<sup>51</sup> She further notes that simply creating a ‘surface text’ (Bordo, 1998: 42) which offers the opportunity for creative and dissenting readings is not enough. Read in this light, the efficacy of Rhizo-Memetic practice as a tool for archival research lies in its core synthesis of rhizomic and memetic theory – what this synthesis has enabled, is the ability to transpose “the archive” as an immanent social matrix of accumulated affects, rather than focusing on the meaningfulness of its

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<sup>51</sup> See: Bordo, S. (1998) ‘Material Girl’: The Effacements of Postmodern Culture’ in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*. Welton (ed). Blackwell Publishers. Malton.

individual artefacts or surface texts in reconstituting the 'unsavable' live (Schneider, 2001: 100). In that regard, what Rhizo-Memetic practice attempts is to over-write culturally determined limits, and flatten out systems of hierarchy.

## THE RHIZO-MEMETIC & THE POLITICAL

Although the effects, styles and situated relations of Rhizo-Memetic Art bear a political charge, even or especially when they appear not to, and although the form politicizes desire in multiple ways, Deleuze and Guattari specifically note that desire itself has no inherent political bent (1987: 12). Since Rhizo-Memetic Art operates as a form of desiring-machine, ascribing any finite political perspective to it is ultimately futile. Existing only to conjoin and produce, Rhizo-Memetic Art in itself does not invite political review, although the relations within and between its conjunctions do. 'Becoming is always innocent, even in crime' (1987: 35). It is evident from the Rhizo-Memetic practice within this thesis, that its combined formations indicate a tangle of reactionary and innovative dispositions. However, even in *Kafka* (1986), Deleuze stipulates that 'we cannot say in advance, "This is a bad desire, that is a good desire". Desire is always already a mixture, a blend' (1986: 9). That would be almost enough to say on the subject, except that debate around the usefulness of Performance as a discipline hinges oft on invocations of its political charge. Moreover, Performance theory perennially holds itself to high standards of political efficacy, often staking affidavits off its value *as theory* on this claim of being sufficiently political.

I am fully susceptible to the practical and affective appeal of politically relevant scholarship, and to its sublime moments of fulfilled promise, though these strike me as rather rare, unless we allow ourselves some unembarrassed flexibility about what counts as a political 'payoff'. I worry about the constraining effects of any praxis when we pre-assign a functional imperative, to include those we call political – without always defining just what we mean by politics. Rhizo-Memetic Art demands these political imperatives in its production of efficacious conceptual and physical worlds, yet

also refuses them, since desiring machines resist 'mechanizing theory into a tool bound to a predetermined strategy' (1987: 56). Theory must *work*, 'but cannot be *organized*' (ibid; emphasis added); a frequent but always derogatory Deleuzian keyword. After starting then, with its Deleuzian, seemingly decontextualized schema of what Rhizo-Memetic Art comprises in synthesis with the Meme, the mounting stakes of this thesis lie in direct reckoning with the neoliberalist politics of the contemporary period – questioning how human and non-human agencies misrecognize themselves strictly as individual; how they may enfeeble or render metaphorical their relations to others and to power; and thus how singular desires can become generic investments, promoting false constructions of reality, acting in ways reverberative to the interests of the individual *and* the group. Specifying a political dimension of one's project thus emerges as a necessity in Rhizo-Memetic praxis; no thesis marshalling Deleuzian and Memetic theory into a conceptual aggregate with Performance theory should ignore the disciplinary injunctions against strategically partial or ideologically toothless deployment therein. However, I would like to defend the value of a different form of politics within Rhizo-Memetic praxis – one imbued with a power to re-stratify concepts and to re-interrogate relations that matter in the world, precisely by not knowing what aims will be met or what their destinies will be.

The political work of Rhizo-Memetic Art, pervasive but un-prescriptive, challenges us to observe what artists remove or suppress in deferring to disciplinary hegemony. These include forms (or mutations of form) born from lines of flight that do not sit easily within disciplinary strata, but fall between, or outside them, or in grey areas within them. The open-endedness of politics in Rhizo-Memetic Art derives also from a wish to honour its incumbent works in functioning both as elements of theory

and as art – and to take seriously the insights of this thesis that Rhizo-Memetic lines of flight lead less to liberated futures than toward usefully uncertain ones. I do not wish to presume however, if at all, that works such as (*Merman, RSVP, Little Red* etc) do not function as efficacious tools for politics - each supplies potent ripostes to our habits of producing desire, considering history, tolerating clichés and forging collectivity. Indeed *Florilegium* and its *Remix* signal strong political investments; they portend more qualified trajectories than they first imply. What prevails in both cases however, is a resonance of change, or productively disorganised Difference, and of new potentials that chafe against current disciplinary categories.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORIES OF TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

*'To discover how discrete knowledge types generated via this praxis may be operationalized as a mode of critique for future transdisciplinary works within Arts based Practice-as-Research.'*

The task of unpicking the implications for theories of transdisciplinarity in the context of Rhizo-Memetic Art begins with an examination of the relationship between texts. Elizabeth Grosz, in her discussion of alternative approaches to architecture, identifies a philosophical shift from the Derridan understanding of textuality, to the nomad philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari that provides a way of constructing such an analysis (Grosz, 1995: 125).

Grosz suggests that Derrida's understanding of the relationship between texts as a dense interweaving of references which produces a 'closed, striated space of intense overcodings, a fully semiotised model of textuality' (Grosz, 1995: 126), leads to a complex but irrevocable co-implication between texts and what they exclude. In this framework, texts constantly bleed into each other. Traces of what is omitted are always implicated in what is articulated. Everything refers continually to something else, always deferring the definitive statement and always pointing to something past itself in an endless chain of referral.

This model would imply that the seeming disjuncture between the discourses of Performance and theory are in fact connected by a densely woven set of references; that they at some level, coherent and ultimately part of the same logocentric framework of meaning. There is no 'outside' in the sense that both discourses allude to each other through a complex system of references, the production of each retaining a trace of the other.



Deleuze's appropriation of Nietzsche's 'four errors of knowledge' (1974: 174) leads us to an alternate paradigm. Nietzsche's four errors of knowledge have to do with privileging "noble" aspects of humanity and denying other qualities considered too base or undesirable. Nietzsche saw these errors as necessary elements of the will to power that drives humanity to conquer their raw undifferentiated nature (1974: 175). Nietzsche suggests a set of illusions that have educated humankind and been the means of producing and maintaining dignity and humanness. These involve the knowledge of the self only incompletely, bestowing only those attributes one thinks one should have (assimilation to cultural ideals and ideologies), making differences between human beings and the rest of nature dependent on exclusion (i.e. nature has what humans lack and vice-versa), rather than making all difference positive and productive, and subordinating oneself to privileged ideologies which legislate which differences can be tolerated. Deleuze's reading of this is as follows:

The first illusion consists in thinking difference in terms of the identity of the concept or the subject, the illusion of identity; the second illusion is the subordination of difference to resemblance; the third is the strategy of tying difference to negation (which has the effect of reducing difference to separateness); and the fourth, the subordination of difference to the analogy of judgement (which disseminates difference according to the rules of distribution).

(Deleuze in Grosz, 1995: 130)

It can be argued that the four illusions have to do with exclusion of some element of meaning, subjectivity and possibility on the basis of an arbitrary order of cultural priorities. Presumptions are made about what, in human nature or humanity is good or desirable and what is not. In the process, difference is subjugated to the demands of ideology and (most importantly) disciplinarity – through which what may be thought and/or embodied, becomes policed and delimited.

Deleuze follows Nietzsche's line of thought in challenging the domination of these regimes of knowledge construction, arguing instead for the understanding of thought as a productive, nomadic force which traverses ideological and disciplinary boundaries and is capable of producing concepts beyond the scope of acutely territorialised spaces. Grosz notes the following:

The four illusions of representation veil the genesis and functioning of thought, for they separate a force from what it can do, and thus function as modes of reaction, the conversion of active into reactive force. This veiling of thought is identified with a refusal of difference. Through these various tactics, pervasive in the history of Western philosophy, thought loses its force of difference, its positive productivity and is subordinated to sameness and reactivity.

(Grosz, 1995: 130)

Deleuze argues instead that thought is provoked by an encounter with the "outside". Fascist systems which Deleuze and Guattari associate with an "unholy trinity" of subjectification, signification and representation, seek to insulate thought from everything outside itself. The nature of disciplines, one might argue is to resist thought, to resist encounters with what is outside of the discipline. The role of the line of flight in Rhizo-Memetic Art, or the role of radical thinker is to challenge disciplinarity from the outside – to open the borders to Gómez-Peña's 'nomads, migrants, hybrids and outcasts' (in Taylor, 2016: 3).

This perspective offers an alternative means of understanding the disjunctions between the various theoretical and practical formulations about Performance, and art-making more broadly within the context of Rhizo-Memetic Art. Instead of irrevocably woven together, the different discourses present within this exegetic assemblage can be understood as functioning as the outside in relation to each other, the performed perspective challenging the theory with a physicality which is often viewed as outside, and the theoretical perspectives challenging Performance with a cultural imperative,

and with a potential disjunction between archive and curatorial that often remains unthought. Further, this can be done without sacrificing the materiality of any of the discourses involved, or positioning them as sets of oppositional forces.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSDISCIPLINARY PERFORMANCE

*“To draw out, and map the fields of agency responsible for the emergent transdisciplinary praxis generated in this instance.”*

At first glance, the insights drawn out of this study for transdisciplinary performance in the wider context seem problematic, particularly in relation to contemporary performance works whereby ‘disciplinarity remains axiomatic’ (Osborne, 2015: 3). When, however, one considers the intensities between coded thought and materiality as conceptualised within this thesis (thought as a form of materiality in itself as a memetic substrate), and that Deleuze does completely differentiate between materiality and thought in other contexts – even suggesting at times that materiality and thought each constitute the ‘outside’ which is the generator of action - the picture looks a little more hopeful.

Deleuze positions materiality as outside in relation to thought (i.e. that materiality is so that it provokes thought into action, the “outside” with which thought must deal). When one considers Deleuze’ notion of the inside and outside being created by movement (I draw parallels here with memetic connectivity, specifically the relationship between McNamara’s I-Meme and E-Meme), and in particular the invagination of surfaces to create folds of ‘inside’, it becomes evident that Deleuze means no disrespect to materiality when he writes this.

Rather, he moves against the categorization of materiality as fundamentally different in substance or nature to thought – simply as something which has historically

been conceptualised as “outside” of thought since it has largely been determined as a category opposed to materiality in Western philosophy.<sup>52</sup>

Both materiality and thought are produced and co-implicated with what Deleuze calls ‘life’ (in Grosz, 1995: 134). Yet within this thesis, I challenge the use of Deleuze’ term ‘life’ and suggest we consider the notion of performativity in its stead. The originality of this understanding lies in the claim that our “outside” is Performance itself; a series of folds of inside constituted of the same material. Thought then, is projected, captured, pinned down *as* Performance insofar as it is caught up in networks of power, knowledge and subjectification.

Re-considered in this way, Deleuze’ description of thought is not unlike the experience of materiality in the performing body. I think back to my process of devising, rehearsing and performing *Florilegium: Remix*, and my initial considerations of movement “within the Rhizo-Meme”. I considered “should I do this, or that?” I even commanded myself in verbal language to conform to tasks; to this paradigm of technique or the other. In imagining the dancer smoothing out space, my body interjected from outside the system of thought which defined what I perceived I could or could not do. Answers came back from my body either in motion or in contemplation of motion about the physical, temporal and spatial feasibility of the thought in action. My thought was performative and it brought life into my material body.

I make no claim that this answer comes from within what is normally understood as “thought”. In doing so, I situate the notion of performativity outside the regimes of power in Western epistemology. Thus, performative material - or what Jane Bennett terms ‘vibrant matter’ in a line of flight from *Democritus-Epicurus-Spinoza-*

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<sup>52</sup> See: Descartes, R. (1641) “Meditation VI” in *Meditations on the First Philosophy* (1996) J. Cottingham (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

*Diderot-Deleuze* (2010: xiii) - can provoke thought into action, stir it up, destroy its complacency and make it move.

In applying this perspective on materiality to the incumbent artworks of this project, its processes and artefacts, I would like to draw attention to a literary dramatization of this idea: to Odradek, the protagonist of Franz Kafka's short story *Cares of a Family Man* (1971). Odradek is a spool of thread who/that can run and laugh; this sentient wood exercises an impersonal form of performativity. De Landa (2002) speaks of a 'spontaneous structural generation' that occurs when systems far from equilibrium choose one path or another (2002: 49). The artefacts of this study, like Odradek (and like De Landa's systems) straddle the line between inert materiality and vital performativity.

Just like Franz Kafka's narrator with Odradek, I have had trouble assigning the materials of this project to an ontological category. Are they creative artefacts? Have they been tools of some sort? Perhaps, but if they are then their purpose is obscure. I return to Kafka:

[Odradek] ... looks like a flat star-shaped spool of thread, and indeed it does seem to have thread wound upon it; to be sure, these are only old, broken off bits of thread, knotted and tangled together, of the most varied sorts and colours...One is tempted to believe that the creature once had some sort of intelligible shape and is now only a broken down remnant. Yet this does not seem to be the case; ...nowhere is there an unfinished or unbroken surface to suggest anything of the kind; the whole thing looks senseless enough, but its own way perfectly finished.

(Kafka, 1971: 428)

Perhaps then, the artworks of this exegesis, like Odradek exist "outside" of disciplinarity, and are more thought than object, imbued with performativity. They are lively; they speak, they are alive yet they are inert. Like Odradek, they persistently 'hint of the animate' (Deleuze, 1991: 95).

This is the foundation of Rhizo-Memetic Art: Both the Modernist claim that materiality is so commensurate with thought and self that it can never lie, and the Postmodernist counterclaim that materiality has no claim to truth as it is simply another discourse in an endless intertextual web of further discourses share the same premise - that materiality and thought are not essentially different kinds of things. Thus, the disciplinarity and subjectification of thought becomes void.

It is here that the understanding of Rhizo-Memetic Art as an individual materiality slices through the debate. A Rhizo-Memetic Artwork is a “thought” in that it is fundamentally conceptualised by, and does not exist apart from the construction which it produces and is produced by. It is also however, a “non-thought” in that its materiality often contradicts the disciplines by which ideas, values and demands are imposed and curated. The effect of the Rhizo-Meme has been to shatter the causal relationships between theory and practice. Rhizo-Memetic Art is not a box with something inside it to be read.

The Rhizo-Meme is situated as its own Deleuzian machine, generating its own functions, with theory functioning with it, meshing in its mechanics perhaps, but never translating it. In functioning as a machine, Rhizo-Memetic Art has produced the subjective; a territory for the unique and the heterogeneous to combine. The subjectivity that this Rhizo-Meme has produced is poignant and meaningful but it is never dogmatic or restrictive. It is constantly shifting and will always be provisional. It cannot therefore, be used to constrain its incumbent works to any one discipline. It is not a re-presentational map of my practice, and the practice of those people, objects and agencies that collaborated with me to produce its assemblage, which Deleuze suggests ‘amounts to thinking one can read the book of the soul in the book of the ink, which cannot be done’ (Deleuze in Buchanan, 2000: 3).

In this way, the Rhizo-Memetic Artwork functions as something outside of disciplinarity, technique and convention, even though it is informed by those discourses. Rhizo-Memetic Art offers a sense of borderless-ness. It is never mute; always recalcitrant: a nomadic mise-en-abyme that slices through territories, destroys objectification and offers refuge to all in 'our performance country' (Gómez-Peña in Taylor, 2016: 3).

When offered as an ongoing practice rather than a static object, Rhizo-Memetic Art presents the dance of materiality and agency. It underscores how each arises from the other, and marks a radical shift of emphasis in Art and Performance away from nouns and towards verbs. In short, Rhizo-Memetic Art produces and curates dynamic acts by which complex systems of transdisciplinarity can become known and understood. And, in doing so creates new paradigmatic meeting place for memetics, poststructuralist philosophy and Performance.



## PLATEAUX

*At sunrise I stand in a vast plateau. It appears almost limitless, except for the shimmer of distant water and mountains on the horizon. Thistles, prickly scrubland, and the remains of trees protrude like bones from the surface. I hear a crow's alarm, and the ghostly intuitions that tie sinew to soul force me to walk out across bony shoulders and blades of flint. I find two streams, and in each I plunge my aching feet. In this moment of bliss I remember what I was searching for. Yet, in the water's flow I soon lose myself. In an attempt to catch my fleeting thoughts I cup my hands to drink. However many times I try, the water slips between my fingers and moves on, and so do I.*

*In midday heat, I approach a great mountain. Mustering my resolve, I climb. The incline is steep, and I claw my way along ever-shifting rubble, ripping great chunks of ramshackle earth from the mountainside. My nostrils fill with the pitchy vinegar of decay as objects emerge. There are photographs with faded faces rendered indecipherable. Books with rotten pages: relics from a place long forgotten.*

*I feel the mountain moan and shake as if great ruptures might burst forth from the rock and knock me from my footholds. Pressing myself close to the earth, I listen. Perhaps what I'm searching for is here. Amidst the growing schisms I dig my fingers further into the soil and rip a great tangle of roots from the debris. The rhizome wraps itself around my arm. Tendrils twist and intertwine: a whorl of wildness that connects me to the relics in the ground. I pull hard to release myself, ripping the root. I stow it in my pocket.*

*I climb a second peak, and then a third, searching for that which is lost. Yet I find nothing to hold my interest. The books and photographs remain upon the mountainside but I do not.*

*At dusk I stand at the summit of the third great mountain looking back upon my journey from the plateau: alabaster scorched white by daylight. My legs are heavy, and my hands raw. I want to stop. I take the creeper from my pocket and weigh it in my hand: hardly there at all. Compelled to walk on, I descend into the darkness on the far side of the mountains. In the black I hear the howling of wolves and the rhizome begins to twitch. I realise I am lost. Searching on I hear the singing of a child. She must be lost too. I follow the cries until I see a light in the distance, small like a pinprick but growing brighter. I move on, until I see not a child but a city. I know this place although I have never seen it before.*

*“This is Zora!” I cry, as I enter the labyrinthine metropolis. Wandering, I notice that into the walls of buildings there are carved: names of the famous, virtues, numbers, vegetable and mineral classifications, dates of battles, constellations, parts of speech. Ghostly images hang like shadows over pale stone. As if recognising something of its self the rhizome erupts from my pocket, sending out its tubers: connecting names and numbers, minerals and memories. Web-like, the rhizome spreads through the city at unfathomable speed. I climb now through roots to find there are stone pedestals upon which have been placed objects: photographs, their images clean and precise. Books with pristine pages. Between each idea and each point of this tangled warren I establish an affinity. I follow every vine; pluck at every knot, and memorise every item.*

*I follow the rhizome into a building and find a spiral staircase. Without hesitation I climb. At the highest point of this helix I find a window. It is not square, not circular, not arched. There is no glass, no walls surround it. It looks like no other window I have seen. As I approach it I feel connected. The wavelength of light around me shortens. Lost in recollection my memory is candescent: hotwired. Gravity rolls away and I feel information flow like the waters of the stream. I am at once inside my pocket climbing mountains of*

*moss. I hear the howling. I am chasing the cries of a girl in the dark. I am the rhizome. I have become wolf. Everything exists in this moment of delirium. But soon the light fades. I do not want it to fade. I want to stay.*

*My feet hit the floor. I rub my eyes and the day builds itself around me once more. I stand again in a vast plateau. It appears almost limitless: nothing except for the shimmer of distant water and mountains on the horizon. Thistles, prickly scrubland, and the remains of trees protrude like bones from the surface. I hear a crow's alarm, and ghostly intuitions force me to walk. Old sores open up and I forget what I am searching for. At a confluence of two rivers I stop. Staring into the stream I thumb a tangle of roots in my pocket. I weigh the labyrinth in my hand...*

Burrows, J. (2015)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Excerpt from the researcher's reflective journal. 03.11.15. Written in reference to: Calvino, I. (1974) *Invisible Cities*. Trans. Weaver, W. Orlando. Harcourt Brace Brooks.

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## APPENDICES

## REVIEW OF THE '*FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION*' FROM AUDIENCE

### MEMBER - KRISTIAN GATH (2014)

New societies bring new characteristics, and despite the trans-internationality of the web and its users, how we encounter cyber 'artefacts' and how we encounter each other within this hyper expanding space is of stark contrast to how we encounter physical artefacts and physical beings in the corporeal world – which in comparison, is for eternity unable to extend itself beyond its own physical limits.

*Florilegium* was an exhibition curated by James Burrows as part of a Practice-as-Research Ph.D. Its curatorial strategy explored the notion of 'memetic artwork' via collaboration with thirteen artists from multidisciplinary backgrounds who donated works, or works in progress to be partially exhibited within the gallery space.

Upon entering the exhibition space, you were presented with a series of artefacts and the performance documentation of works yet to happen, or in some instances awaiting creation. The observers of these artefacts were immediately faced with a handicap; they had encountered the precursors to these works that suggested that they were close by, and knew that they were to 'come into being', yet curatorial metadata was reduced down to the presentation of a single QR code per artefact. Interestingly, the feeling of confined proximity was heightened when passing through the exhibition as you heard what was to come through selected speakers; situated at intervals within the gallery that seemed to 'whisper' things that the viewer knew not of. The audio characteristics of this work displayed aesthetics reminiscent of our normative, mediated lives – a sense that upon entering the space, of flicking through TV stations. Essentially, although you saw the work, you have no full understanding of what it was that you are seeing - glimpsing decontextualized elements in passing.

This composition served to heighten the experience of the spectator in such a way that they *must* willingly become active participants within the memetic work in order to experience its full scope. The artefacts distributed within the space acted as tools to draw the unwitting spectator into the ‘hyper-meme’ constructed by Burrows. The exhibition appeared to seek a fusion of the corporeal with the digital whilst simultaneously exhibiting behaviours associated with the latter. Internet theorist Eli Pariser, author of *The Filter Bubble* (2011) states that we are expert ‘multitaskers’ – surfing, cross referencing and exchanging various sources of information simultaneously, in a way that shares characteristics with the viral internet meme.

Memes, particularly those that are viral, seek to distribute enough information to the viewer to allow them to become adequately informed or amused within a very short space of time; whilst partially revealing the most relevant information to the unwitting viewer. This prohibits the average viewer of memetic works from becoming overwhelmed by the depth of detail that commonly characterises scholarly articles of various subjects of interest. In this manner, the entire internet network has witnessed a dramatic increase in the population of memetic images within our common servers. This can be seen more prominently within social media networks such as Facebook.

Within *Florilegium*, the spectator observed brief and artistically summarised ‘memetic artefacts’ of this type; they were provided the opportunity to elect to pursue the work further in through the medium of their choice, or simply let the work pass over them. Among the literature distributed within the memetic work, the observer was informed that they access further artworks by scanning the QR codes with smartphone devices. They were even provided with an App recommendation which sought to guide the trans-experience from the corporeality of the physical work to that which lay beyond, in virtual, future spaces. Once the App was downloaded, the viewer was no

longer handicapped, and was able to scan and navigate beyond the physical artefacts toward scheduled performance events distributed as hidden pages or 'Easter Eggs' hidden on the artist's website. The viewer, much like someone browsing their Facebook or Twitter pages gained more control over the experience of the work, the more they engaged with its protocols. They had the *choice* to view any or all of the scheduled performance events, or to let the hyper-meme pass over them and encounter it via happenstance. This element was perhaps the most engaging – as the audience's experience is dependent on the subjective relationship they had with each artefact. It is the nature of the meme to 'happen across' the viewer, and use them as vehicles through which to transit elements of the 'hyper-meme' to new audiences and new spaces.

I chose not to attend all of the programmed works, and to observe the hyper-meme's development by happening upon it. This reminded me of the guerrilla art practices and Happenings of the twentieth century that precede memetic art. Happening across something as engaging as a meme immediately attracts audiences with shared experiences in a manner completely alien to conventional theatres. Here you do not buy a ticket, or pay for a subscription, but essentially become a product of the work by encountering the curated artefacts like signposts on an unknown landscape.

It should be noted that upon completion of the various exhibited works, the associated website 'Easter Egg' was updated, emphasising the choice made to actively engage with the hyper-meme itself, and the primacy of the audience as navigator of their own uniquely subject experience. In this manner, Burrows presupposes a new genre of twenty-first century theatrical and contemporary art, acknowledging the drive of the meme within cybernetic space and also as a vehicle for social discourse.

## **ARTWORKS OF THE *FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION***

*LUPINE* (2014) Devised by Catarina Soromenho. Performed by Catarina Soromenho and James Burrows.

### **DESCRIPTIVE EXCERPT FROM '*FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION*' BOOKLET:**

Exploring the ritual process of hand-making and applying facial masks, *Lupine* questions the inter-personal and sensorial nature of 'mirroring'. Unfolding across both physical and digital 'sites', the human image is entombed within infinite visual feedback loops produced by projector and web-based cameras.

In response to Memetic Node: "Wolf".

### **CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*Lupine* was performed in the exhibition space in the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2014.

40 minutes in length, this performance utilised iPad FaceTime capabilities and HD projectors to produce visual feedback loops that were projected back onto the performer's bodies. Catarina Soromenho's body was utilised as the main canvas for these visual loops, whilst James Burrows performed via Wi-Fi, in another studio. Catarina wore bandages to cover her upper torso, and plain black underwear.

Prior to receiving the "FaceTime" call, Catarina collected lumps of coal from the exhibition space, and mixed these with oil in a white marble pestle and mortar in order to produce a thick carbon-based paint. The same substance was pre-set in James' studio space. Once the FaceTime call was successfully projected, the performers began a ritualistic painting of the face, using each other's looping, and merging images as a mirror.

The following text (sampled from the microcomputer virus Elk Cloner (1982) written by Richard Skrenta for DOS) was spoken by the performers in unison over FaceTime audio and signalled the end of the performance:

*It will get on all your disks.*

*It will infiltrate your chips.*

*Yes. It's cloner.*

*It will stick to you like glue*

*It will modify RAM too.*

*Send in the cloner.*

*THE END* (2014) Devised by Calun Griffin. Performed by Calun Griffin and David Berry.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

Taking place over 18 hours on four days, this durational performance explores multiple notions of 'the end' as a dialogue between Buddhist meditative practices and creative re-contextualisation of visual motifs drawn from the Major Arcana of historical tarot. Speculating on a multiplicity of psychological and physiological limits, *The End* attempts to highlight a connection, or lack thereof between the card, the reader and witness. For a moment...for ten thousand moments.

In response to Memetic Node: "End".

**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*The End* was performed in the exhibition space in the Arts Centre, and prepared in multiple studio spaces at Edge Hill University on: 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, & 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2014.

Each performance was 4 hours and 30 minutes in length. Each performance began as an interpretation of one tarot card chosen by Calun Griffin, and re-worked via body-based graffiti art by David Berry. Prior to painting, Calun prepared by placing small fabric covered canvases on multiple points over his naked body (the solar plexus, centre of chest, inner wrists and inner elbow). After fitting a protective mask, a large, circular wooden canvas was strapped over Calun's face, rendering him blind.

Calun was then aided into an assumed position by David Berry, in a well ventilated and protected studio space. (Dust sheets were placed underneath Calun, and over any nearby surfaces. David Berry then interpreted the tarot card by applying water-based spray paints to Calun's body, with the majority of iconographic imagery being applied to the series of body canvases and a small wooden table. This aspect of the work was usually completed within an hour.

Calun was then led to the exhibition space in the Arts Centre, and helped onto a raised staging rostrum. For each card, Calun chose a symbolic object (a porcelain heart, a hammer, a pair of glasses, and a plate of food) and these objects were either held by the performer, or placed upon the wooden table. The performer remained stationary, entering into a meditative state for the remainder of the performance time. The cards interpreted were:

*Lovers*

*Judgement*

*Strength*

*Death*

*MERMAN* (2014) Devised and performed by Daria D'Beauvoix.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

I've been performing burlesque for nearly four years – mainly as ethnographic participatory research for my MA. Partly because I was getting bored of painting. *Merman* charts my personal struggles with burlesque coming from a conceptual arts background into the entertainment industry; my frustrations with the stigma of the mere word burlesque, my displeasure with striptease and ultimately my sadness at not feeling 'woman' enough to perform successfully for an audience. I began to find my own way of being creative – it was dark and somewhat daunting for burlesque audiences who expect a glamorous striptease and are presented with a performer inspired by the horror genre and feminist politics. I identified with my source material somewhat, as a misunderstood creature that very friendly (jovial even) once you get past the menacing exterior. The act depicts a difficult journey in burlesque from sickeningly sweet striptease into the dark, whip-cracking unknown.

In response to Memetic Node: "Merman".

...

**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*Merman* was performed in the exhibition space in the Arts Centre and on one occasion, in the outdoor amphitheatre, Edge Hill University on: 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2014.

Five minutes in length, this work was performed four times each day over four days. The performer, Daria D'Beauvoix, began the work dressed in a green rhinestone brazier, black underwear, green elbow length gloves, a green feather boa and black feather bustle. All elements of costume were constructed by the artist herself. Daria performed a short striptease routine, removing the gloves, bustle and brazier in time with musical accompaniment reminiscent of American vaudeville.

Once these items of costume were removed, the musical accompaniment signalled a change in mood. The performer stood still, and methodologically presented a reverse-striptease, dressing in a black floor-length dress and picking up a 6ft leather bull whip. The jovial expression of the prior section was replaced by a dissociative performance demeanour. The second aspect of the performance primarily consisted of a series of combinatory whip-cracks. The performance culminated in an extended whip combination in-time to the death-metal auditory accompaniment.

*LITTLE RED* (2014) Devised and performed by Frances-Kay.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

Shower gel, perfume, boxing gloves and coal. Derived from the marvellous world of fairy-tale, *Little Red* explores the romanticised settings of life and love; muddying themes of violence, childish play, caricature and popular music. Whilst offering a lively spectacle, this forty minute performance traverses a sinister landscape, and presents the excuses we adopt, through dance, repetition, repetition and interaction.

In response to Memetic Node: "Chanel No. 5".

...

**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*Little Red* was performed once in Studio 3, and for the remainder, in the exhibition space in the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 6<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, & 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2014.

Forty minutes in length, this work was performed twice daily over four days. The performance space was prepared prior to commencement by the artist and assisted by James Burrows. This preparation included the instalment of a clean dust-sheet which was taped to the floor using black gaffer tape. An A1 sheet of white paper was attached to a nearby wall or window. The performer, Frances-Kay placed a series of toiletries (shampoos and body-washes) and perfume bottles around the edges of the dust-sheet. A red velvet cape and two black boxing gloves and several lumps of coal were also placed in the performance space. Frances Kay wore a plain black sports bra and matching underwear. She also wore knee protectors and steel-toe-capped boots.

The performance itself highly repetitious, and the initial 20 minutes of the work looped through a tightly choreographed movement phrase within which the performer would repeatedly rub coal into her skin and then apply highly scented perfumes to the site of the coal mark. The performer would grab her neck before falling to the ground. This aspect of the work was accompanied by the opening musical phrase; from INXS' *Never tear us apart*.

Once this initial phase had been "escaped" by the performer, Frances Kay dressed herself in the red velvet cape, and put on the boxing gloves. She proceeded to methodologically smash the perfume bottles by stamping on them with the boots. She also smashed the toiletry containers, producing a Pollock-like composition upon the dustsheet. Throughout the performance, Frances-Kay would intermittently walk to the A1 sheet, and write the following phrase "Just Follow Her Eyes". In returning to the work, she would vandalise the sentence until only the phrase "~~Just~~ Follow Her ~~Eyes~~" remained.

The work culminated in a repetition of the opening phrase, now accompanied by Paloma Faith's adaptation of '*Never tear us apart*'.



*RSVP* (2014) devised and performed by Victoria Johnson and David Henckel (WeAreCodeX).

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

*WeAreCodeX* present an engaging piece of performative research which deconstructs the conventions and pretensions surrounding the notion of an 'opening night'. What is exclusive? Who is invited? How is your experience dependant on pre-conceived notions, reviews or word of mouth? You are cordially invited to enjoy an interactive installation experience which blurs the boundary between audience, performer and artwork.

In response to Memetic Node: "Transformed Text".

...

**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*RSVP* was performed in the Rose Theatre at the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

30 minutes in length, this work was performed once daily over four days. The main elements of the work consisted of an extended visual and sonic projection, utilising the Rose Theatre's cinema screen, a smaller scale live projection-mapping exercise utilising a series of white gallery plinths directly below the main screen, and the installation of a number of visual motifs (objects) that were positioned in the theatre space behind the cinema screen. The audio score was sampled from auditory documentation of gallery visits, and the accompanying visual presented a series of fragmentary visual icons also drawn from these gallery visits. The objects placed in the space were referenced to the "non-art" objects photographed during Victoria and David's documentation of multiple gallery opening nights in Greater Manchester during the devising period. These included wine glasses, a rug, collection of post-it notes, a broken television set and a swing-door with a golden push-plate.

Prior to entering the theatre, audience members were provided with a fake review of the work they were about to witness. During the performance, audience were seated in the Rose Theatre's central seating bank, and the "actors" were placed within the audience as stooges. The majority of performative action within the work was orchestrated by lighting queues which highlighted the objects behind the cinema screen in tandem to the auditory score. Intermittently, the performance stooges would interrupt the flow of the mediated elements, by answering telephone calls loudly, moving onto the stage to adjust the placement of objects and shouting up to the technical box to re-start to the work.

The performance concluded with a faux Q&A with the artists, who assumed comically pretentious personas, and offered purposefully rhetorical answers to audience questions. Notably, some audience members walked out of the "Q&A" expressing their displeasure towards the artist's attitudes.

*VIZUAL: IZE* (2014) produced by David Berry & Stephen Barkey.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

A series of evolving contemporary paintings inspired by the network of social media feeds within *Corpus 1*. In an age of information overload we become ever more selective in what we choose to consume; disregarding certain information whilst becoming immersed in others. De-contextualising elements from text based feeds and tweets, *VIZUAL: IZE* restructures them, and places them within the realm of the canvas.

In response to Memetic Nodes: "Grill" & "Dwaine".

...

**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*VIZUAL: IZE* was installed in the exhibition space of the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

Work of *VIZUAL: IZE* was primarily presented through the form of painted canvas, utilising graffiti style application, and drip-paint. The series of canvases were accompanied by a collection of smaller framed prints which drew upon textual and visual excerpts from *Corpus 1* in a range of mediums (fabric, tape, stencil and free-drawing).

In total, five painted canvases, six framed prints, one wooden sculpture, one large tape-constructed QR code, and a research journal were submitted for exhibition.

*MONMON* (2014) written and performed by an ensemble cast: Elric

Cadwallader; Kylie Heron; Shane Betteridge; Will Comer; and Fiona Baker.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

A series of dramatic monologues: Five People, one Pier. Their stories spanning fifty years; love, death, betrayal, pride, fear, chance, regret, perversion and sexual liberation collide in this, *our* florilegium. And, as they bare their souls from in the mouth of madness, these seemingly unrelated people learn that they all share in the darkest of secrets. A series of monologues for when the tide goes out.

In response to Memetic Node: "Pier".

...

**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*'MonMon'* was performed on a pop-up stage in the bar area of the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 12<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2014.

As a series of six dramatic monologues from five characters, *'MonMon'* was performed with minimal set, on a single rostrum stage on four occasions. The only aspects on set were a small wooden table and a matching chair. The performers wore costume, and brought signifying props onto stage as they entered.

Each of the performed monologues presented a faux autobiographical narrative with each producing a strong theme of confession. Characters included a middle aged man reminiscing on the disappearance of his elder brother; a tie salesman moving to a new town; the tie salesman's wife discussing her lonely existence; an eavesdropping neighbour; and a retired lighthouse keeper. Each individual work lasted between 10 and fifteen minutes, with a short break before the next performance. The Arts Centre bar remained open, and the work took on the ambience of a script-slam event.

Each monologue was written by the performer, and whilst each followed a distinct narrative, points of connection were established with other works, as the evening's monologues continued. The audience were able to plot an overarching storyline, by filling in gaps in the plot provided by each performer, told from differing subjective viewpoints. The performance culminated in an extended second monologue from Elric Cadwallader, whose performance concretized the fragmentary nature of the overarching storyline.

*POSTCARDS FROM A PACK OF LIES* (2014) Written and presented by

Stephanie Fowler.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

*Postcards from a Pack of Lies* offer a unique view of the concept of visual text. The text presented questions the canonical format of literature, playing with boundaries of what we consider literature to be. The work explores the limitations and freedoms of the reader's role within literature, specifically the order of events which are revealed to the reader through encounter with text. It examines the idea that text involved in our everyday lives are part of storytelling; emails, texts, post-it notes, even the scrap piece of paper you half-wrote a sentence on. These small bits of information are sentences in the story of life.

In response to the Memetic Node: "Abyss".

..

**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*'Postcards from a Pack of Lies'* was installed in the exhibition space of the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

Work of *'Postcards from a Pack of Lie's'* was primarily presented through the form of a series of handwritten postcards, printed text message screen-shots and email print-outs. These textual elements were pinned to a dark green presentation pin board, and connected together with a web of red string. Alongside the presentation of this board, a wooden chair and table were positioned. On the table, a small "keepsake" box was placed, containing a number of small children's toys, a small handwritten diary and a collection of annotated photographs.

As an encounter, the reader was able to order and re-order the elements of text and accompanying visuals by re-pinning them to the presentation board, thus altering the canonical format for the next reader. Elements of narrative content were also to be found in the "keepsake" box, and through tactile encounter with the objects inside.

*FORGOTTEN FOOTSTEPS* (2014) adapted and performed by Cathy Formby and Stephanie Brittain.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

*Forgotten Footsteps* offers a new interpretation of a much-loved Christmas melody 'The Coventry Carol', sometimes known as 'Lullay Lullay'. Mother and daughter duo Cathy Formby and Stephanie Brittain share a life-long love of percussion and are interested in the human response to musical rhythm and pulse. Rhythm's effect health, wellbeing and social bonding have long been observed by experts and have been seen to have made a valuable contribution in the treatment of many mental and physical disorders. By layering the various musical rhythms onto this simple yet familiar melody, Cathy and Stephanie are keen to discover how this carol may be perceived when heard in a new presented form.

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In response to Memetic Node: "Riff"

**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*Forgotten Footsteps* was performed in the bar area of the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

As a short (3-4 minute) choral work for voice and percussion, *Forgotten Footsteps* was performed on four days. Cathy and Stephanie wore matching rehearsal blacks, and played a Bodhran and a standing hand drum in accompaniment to their vocal adaptation of the *Coventry Carol*. Given the rhythmic nature of their adaptation, Cathy and Stephanie focused on potential modifications of the core melody or 'riff' of the original work through percussion, layering vocal harmonies over these modifications in a fluid and responsive way.

Given the duration of the work, Cathy and Stephanie took requests from the audience after their performance of *The Coventry Carol*, and offered to attempt similar rhythmic adaptations of the audience's requests. In that regard, the duration of the complete performance differed on each occasion, with at least on one occasion, members of the audience participating in group song.

*LEONARD* (2014) constructed and photographed by Harriet Godden.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

A photographic storyboard, with puppet: "My work seeks to capture a moment in time, expressed through imagined characters. I hope to explore the relationships between us, our eccentricities and mundanities, our connectedness and our isolation. I've always had a fondness for dolls and puppets because I find them to have an inexplicable, magical quality. In much of my previous work my characters are peculiar beings, but with this project I chose Leonard, an average, insignificant guy gazing out onto the vast ocean, his thoughts and feelings unknown. I wanted the identity of Leonard and his life to be a mystery, so that the moment be felt more deeply and to reflect the mystery of existence itself. I try to use everyday materials and to recycle fabrics wherever possible, because I like the idea of making something new from unwanted items." Leonard is made from wire, wadding, old stockings and jumpers.

In Response to Memetic Node: "Shifting Sands".

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**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*Leonard* was installed in the exhibition space of the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2014.

This artwork consisted of a small articulated puppet, and a series of three portraits of the puppet: Leonard, documenting Harriet's photography of him in situ on Brighton Beach. These portraits were shot in High Definition and had been mounted on wooden canvases.

Harriet was not able to install the work herself at Edge Hill University, so the puppet and accompanying images were couriered to my home address. Included in the delivery was Harriet's own curatorial intention for the work, stipulating how the puppet and images should be presented. She did not wish for the canvases to be hung, but placed at floor level and surrounded by beach shingle or gravel to match that presented in the photographic imagery. The puppet itself was to be presented next to these images, unprotected, so that viewers of the work could articulate the puppets wire frame.

*UNTITLED* (2014) constructed and photographed by Frank Fontaine & Violet Blonde.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

A Series of photographs, with costume: designer, club kid: "I first got involved in art at a young age but disliked the educational institutionalisation of art, preferring the notion of pure creativity. I love working with a variety of mediums – anything from chicken wire to oil paint. I'm inspired by the endless chaos of the world, and being gay in 2014." – Frank Fontaine

In response to Memetic Node: "Candy Floss Filth".

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**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*Untitled* was installed in the exhibition space of the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

Manchester based artists Frank Fontaine and Violet Blonde produced a series of original Drag inspired costumes, or club-looks based on their chosen source material, which were then photographed and send via email to me. In total, Frank and Violet submitted a series of six individual looks, and multiple elements of photographic documentation which were printed and framed within the exhibition.

*REMIX* (2014) sampled and composed by Dave Forrest.

**EXCERPT FROM 'FLORILEGIUM: EXHIBITION' BOOKLET:**

Audio remix with graphic accompaniment. A remix of audio content generated by multiple nodes of *Corpus 1*. The software used to generate the audio in its re-structured format is displayed, providing an encounter with the 'act' of remixing, alongside the completed audio composition.

In response to multiple Memetic Nodes.

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**CURATOR'S DESCRIPTIVE METADATA:**

*Remix* was installed in the exhibition space of the Arts Centre, Edge Hill University on: 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2014.

Dave Forrest's remix of audio content extant within *Corpus 1* was presented within the exhibition space as a white, wireless speaker connected via Bluetooth to the Arts Centre's sound system. Audio sampled in this remix included The Knife's *Silent Shout* (2006), Annie Lennox's *Lullay, Lullay* (2010), The Cure's *A Forest* (1980) and Armen Ra's *Crane* (2010) alongside audio sampled from the BBC Two's 1977 broadcast of *Not I* introduced by Billie Whitelaw. The accompanying visual element: a video-grab of computer software *Audacity* was displayed via the main projector in the Arts Centre for limited periods of time, as this projector was used primarily to present exhibition element *Florilegia 3: Generative Archive*.