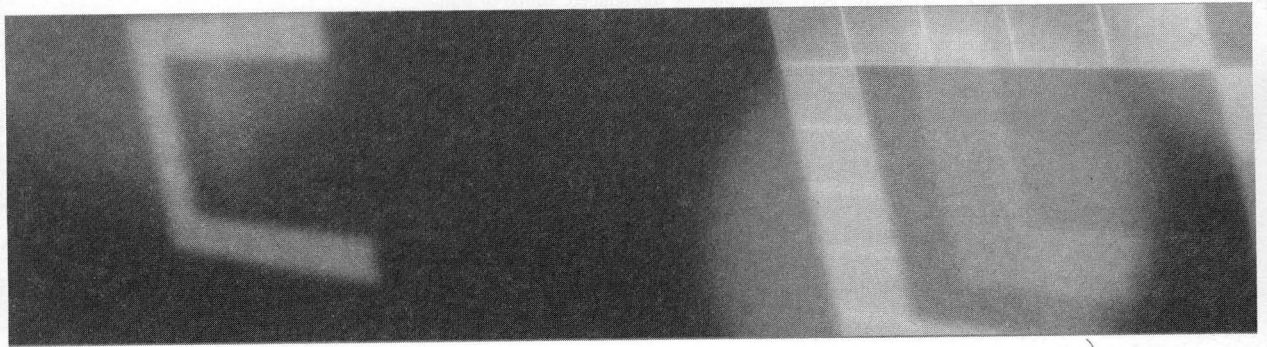# The SAGE Handbook of
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Disciplinary 'Specificity' and the Digital Submission

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INTRODUCTION

My main concern in this chapter, given the relatively recent entry of expert performance-practitioners into the postgraduate and higher degree programme of the British university and more widely, is with some of the implications for the higher degree/postgraduate submission and its examination, when the research enquiry is itself pursued, in significant part, through a creative practice that continues, in the digital age, to involve a performance-making whose outcome is real-time and event-based, combining live performance and spectating – hence that continues to cohere with certain notions of disciplinary specificity and identity.

In other words, these are creative practices that might still be called 'dance' or 'movement-based performance', or 'dance theatre', or 'collaborative performance', in the postgraduate/higher degree arena, even if it is also the case that each is more likely than not to bring together a number of instances of disciplinary mastery – lighting and sound design, dance but also choreography, electronic arts and music performance – upon whose contribution the researcher-practitioner's research activity and submission will in part depend, even if it does not seem to be the case that those of us who oversee and supervise such projects have necessarily legislated as to the status, with regard to a candidate's examinable submission, of another practitioner's input to it that is both itself creative *and* cannot therefore be 'owned' as such by the researcher-practitioner.

I want at this point to add what may or may not be a further and not unrelated complication in the case of higher degree/postgraduate submissions by expert performance-practitioner-researchers: where the indicative disciplinary markers sketched out above apply, and where either a live performance event or documentation of the same, or both (as is more generally required), are submitted for examination, then it seems to be almost always the case that the documentation submitted for examination will be digital, generally DVD-based; and, where it is at least 'adequate', both in terms of digital and 'dissertational' production values, and in terms of the 'knowledge-project' undertaken by the candidate, it is still likely to be the case that the performance-practitioner-candidate will have needed the expert input of a digital practitioner, in the production of the documentation. It will have needed, furthermore, *control* over that input that is appropriate to the performance register/s engaged with, in the overall research project, as a mode of advanced enquiry; and a degree of expertise with regard to managing the interface between the performance(-making) and the digital, that allows the candidate to ensure that the seductive play and potential of the digital does not seem to 'magic away' the 'resistant materialities' (Hayles, 1999: 245) (and their own seductive play and affective capacity) of the live.

PRACTITIONER-CENTRED MODES OF KNOWLEDGE, EXPERTISE AND THE SET-UP

The notion that disciplinary specificity might engage modes of knowing, 'knowledge objects' (Knorr Cetina, 2001: 175–188) and models of intelligibility (ways of seeing, knowing and doing) that differ from those that have been normalised within – for example – the mainstream traditions of schooling that applied to my own generation is one whose complexities lie beyond the reach of this chapter. (I mention my generation – and that of many senior university colleagues involved in higher degree supervision – specifically because I would categorise its own infancy, at least, as 'pre-digital', possibly lacking, on this basis, that so-called 'cognitive mapping' (Jameson, 1991) that is now apparently shared by a younger generation now entering higher degree programmes.) For the purposes of the present enquiry, the focus of which is disciplinary specificity, practitioner-centred knowledge modes and their implications for the formal submission in the digital era, I want to cite the work of Knorr Cetina on what she has called 'epistemic cultures' and subcultures (Knorr Cetina, 2001: 1–25), and to add to this perspective the notion of 'set-up' introduced by Rabinow (2003: 44–56).

My argument here is simple: it is that the expertise of professional performance practitioners whose interest is such as to direct them to the postgraduate/ higher degree programme of the university, is likely already to entail complex modes of enquiry that take place not so much *through* creative practice – this might suppose an enquiry that pre-exists, drives and conditions the enquiry that

follows – but *as* creative practice, where that creative practice is, as I have suggested above, complex, often multi-participant, relationally complex and internally differentiated. There are two different set-ups within which the expert-practitioner-researcher operates: the wider arts community/ies within which her or his expertise has been externally acknowledged as such, and the higher degree context. The set-up, according to Rabinow, is a network of heterogeneous and loosely linked institutional arrangements, pre-suppositions, expectations, attitudes, laws, ways of seeing and doing, concern with provenance and evidence, evaluative and interpretative models and understandings and so on. Each of these elements plays its part in disciplinary practice, and in the research context and culture; only some of them are consistently articulated discursively, but all of them participate in judgements of taste and value. In the case that concerns me here, where higher degree research is overlaid upon the economy of performance production, we might well expect to find certain elements of these two set-ups that 'fit', and some that do not; some might even be in sharp contradiction with each other.

Knorr Cetina is a sociologist with a particular interest in what she calls 'knowledge practices' (2000: 175–188) and how these operate within cultural contexts. Her reference to 'epistemic' or 'knowledge cultures' and subcultures seems to me to be particularly useful to my concern with expertise (in the performing arts and in the higher degree context): epistemic practices are 'knowledge-centred practices' – I would identify choreography as one such; while 'epistemic objects' are those that 'bind[…] experts to knowledge things in creative and constructive practice[s]' (1999: 182). These knowledge 'objects', she clarifies, are 'processes and projections rather than definitive things'. They are 'in the process of being materially defined' by the very research practices that identify them as being of research interest in the first place. To give you a sense of what I think Knorr Cetina means here, I want to identify 'integrity (in performance)', 'affective potential', the 'expert-intuitive processes in creative decision-making' and the 'logics of production specific to the discipline/s' as four such apparently nebulous, but vital 'epistemic objects' which an expert performance practitioner-researcher might identify to be of particular interest to explore in the higher degree research set-up, precisely because they have proved to be of interest in expert or professional performance-making presented to and validated in terms of the wider arts communities. Each of these four, it seems to me, unwritten/unspeakable in terms of some decades of published enquiry in the field, presents a particular challenge to researcher-practitioners, not least in those set-ups, like that of higher degree research, where research practices (knowledge practices) need to be documented precisely because the research activities and their 'objects' are action and process oriented, 'rather than definitive things' – although some may mistakenly assume that the available 'definitive things' of performance (e.g. 'the performer' or 'the body' or ' the show', that seem to lend themselves more readily to certain attempts at 'capture'), are indeed what performance and performance research are made of.

What Knorr Cetina understands by a 'knowledge-thing' is revealed in her account of 'epistemic cultures', which recalls Rabinow on set-ups. Epistemic cultures are once again more apparently nebulous than definitive; they are:

> ... amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms – bonded through affinity, necessity and historical coincidence – which, in a given field, make up *how we know what we know.* (1999: 1)

'Epistemic cultures' or subcultures, she adds, 'create and warrant knowledge', and the analysis she proposes is one that explores 'the meaning of the empirical, the enactments of object relations, [and] the construction and fashioning of social arrangements' within a disciplinary field (Knorr Cetina, 1999: 1).

I have described discipline-specific creative practices, above, as complex and internally differentiated. The qualifiers are important to what follows for a number of reasons: first, the noun 'practice' has become a major discursive player in certain fields and areas of research over the past decade; yet its ubiquity and apparent usefulness in these fields – it allows some of us, for example, to challenge the classic philosophical divide between something conventionally primary called 'theory' and something secondary called 'practice' – means that some of its users seem to me to run the risk of overlooking the fact that anything identified as 'a practice' is likely to entail a *set* of different and indeed uneven processes, performed within a particular set-up, to particular ends, where that set-up momentarily lends to those processes their particular identity. Rehearsal practices in the performing arts, for example, may function to elicit work from a performer or performers that will constitute new performance material, but they may also involve processes of repetition, aiming at detailed development and mastery of predetermined performance material. In both cases, the work of director or choreographer is delicate, painstaking and developmental, and likely to be characterised by highly individualised and often idiosyncratic processes, but these tend to differ remarkably when the projected outcome is identified as 'devised' or 'text-based', 'work in progress' or 'research led'. What characterises all of the rehearsal or workshop processes, however, is their radical difference from the performance outcome, where that outcome is presented to an audience, real-time event-based and involving the active presence of live spectators.

The 'knowledge objects' specific to the making, the ongoing enquiry that they enact, their developmental status at any moment-hence their incompleteness at any time-are constitutively *un*-likely to be crystallised in the performance outcome *as such*; *un*-available *as such* to spectating, what tends to be made available in the performance event is their transformation into the performance *effects* of the making. In terms of the higher degree/postgraduate research enquiry itself, carried out *as* creative process, the performance event, despite its capacity to refocus attention on spectating and thereby on 'the enactments of object relations, [and] the construction and fashioning of social arrangements' within the expert or professional performance subculture (Knorr Cetina, 1999: 1–25), is rarely itself the research-specific 'knowledge object', even if it is indeed the case

that it can stand as one momentary instantiation of the project, which allows that refocus on the spectatorial social and inter-relational. In research terms, 'we' – by which I mean the postgraduate/higher degree performance economy – *want to know something other* than what we see in the performance event (where, in some senses, what we actually see is our own relationship in and with 'the work').

Not only, then, does spectating, in the public event, involve practices and processes which are incommensurable with those specific to the making as an advanced enquiry; not only do the models of intelligibility that inform spectating – present but distanced, omni-attentive, often objectifying ('the performer'); visually focused and meaning-productive – differ radically from those engaged in performance invention; but, more importantly for the present enquiry, those 'knowledge objects' identified by Knorr Cetina, the 'processes and projections rather than definitive things' specific to the making, *are unavailable as such to spectating*. The outcome made available (in the present example, to spectating) is, in terms of the research enquiry, a momentary instantiation of a research undertaking that is non-identical with the research undertaking itself (2001: 181–183).

As non-identical – effectively – with itself, a momentary and incomplete instantiation of the enquiry itself, and unavailable as such to spectating – upon which the very status of expert performance-making does however depend – these aspects of performance-making are equally unavailable to those who might lend their digital expertise to the postgraduate/higher degree candidate seeking to document her or his work. The 'real work' was the developmental creative process, yet it is likely to be the case that what that creative decision-making constitutively entails is invisible to the documenting eye. I have written elsewhere at length on the difficult history, as 'knowledge object', of what I have called the 'expert-intuitive processing' that I see as central to the practices of expertise in the creative and performing arts[1]. For historically specific reasons, something hypostasised as 'intuition' – a noun, rather than a process word – has been largely marginalised, indeed erased from, much of the published writing of Critical Theory, Cultural and Performance Studies – as largely have, by the way, enquiries into the expert and the professional in the creative arts. My argument in this chapter concerned with the postgraduate/higher degree enquiry turns on the need to recuperate expert-intuitive processes as key to expertise in the creative arts. Expert-intuitive processes are both constitutive to creative decision-making, *and* their output systematically undergoes, in the hands of the expert/professional practitioner and in the developmental processes of the making, a degree of transformation when that output come into contact with the production logics specific to the discipline.

What are the implications for that documentation that is indispensable to the research submission, where documentation alone can guarantee to live performance in the higher degree context its capacity to be disseminated to the wider research community? Put simply, as expert spectator and performance

document-maker, *I can neither see nor hear* expert-intuitive processing at work, precisely at that moment when I know it is working – and nor, then, can the camera or sound recorder; and if I can, in many instances of working with expert practitioners, see or hear its outcome or effect in the making processes, I cannot see either the cause of that effect, nor what happens in performance-making developmental terms, when the outcome of intuitive processing meets the production processes equally vital to expert performance-making in one or another discipline. Along the same lines, the higher degree candidate/expert-practitioner-researcher cannot begin to see the processes constitutive to her own creative practices unless and until we allow her to acknowledge their vital role, as 'knowledge objects' in enquiry into the set-up specific to the making; she cannot begin to see what Knorr Cetina calls the 'amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms – bonded through affinity, necessity and historical coincidence – which, in a given field' (1999: 1), make up *how she knows what she knows as an expert practitioner.*

How then might the higher degree candidate identify, document and archive disciplinary specificity, in performance-*making* practices, as distinct from the practices of expert spectating, upon which much performance-documentation tends to be modelled? What is at stake in this question is the issue of the university's failure, over recent decades, to engage theoretically with disciplinary specificity, in contrast with the widely preferred and marketable 'interdisciplinarity.'

CAN WE RE-*MEMBER* THE UNSEEN, THE MARGINALISED, THE UNSPOKEN AND THE ERASED *DIGITALLY*?

I have made a number of points, above, with regard to knowledge made widely available through published writing in the university, contrasting that knowledge with expert performance-making set-ups, 'knowledge things' and models of intelligibility that are both constitutive to disciplinary practices in the arts professions and largely erased from, unspeakable within or invisible to that published writing which attempts however to concern itself with decision-making in the creative and performing arts. I have drawn on the insight of Knorr Cetina (2001: 181), to suggest that in some of these cases, key 'knowledge things' specific to the making are 'processes and projections rather than definitive things', which quality tends to lend itself to their overlooking. I have suggested, equally, that the input of digital technology to the research degree documentation project might, with the very best of intentions, overlook or magic away precisely what needs to figure in documentation if we are to attempt to do justice to creative decision-making as a significant part of the postgraduate/higher degree enquiry.

I have intimated, indeed, drawing on the notion that different generations involved in the same higher degree programmes might be differently 'cognitively

mapped' when it comes to 'knowledge things' and processes in the digital age; and I have argued that some of us, expert though we may be, *do not necessarily know what we need to know*, or say, or show, if we are to begin to account for the specificity of disciplinary practices in the field. I want at this point to clarify my *sense* (I use the term advisedly, lacking an adequate evidential basis) that where certain knowledges in expert practice have been widely erased or marginalised – in part because the established and scriptually based research degree programme prioritises older knowledge objects – expert performance-maker-researchers may well *not know what they have forgotten* in the making processes. It follows that the not-known or forgotten is unlikely to be documented as such, however well-meaning the team that attempts to document the process.

It is on these sorts of bases that I propose to identify certain categories of knowledge-object (or objectual practices) that are widely omitted from post-graduate programmes in the university, despite the sense (once again) of their pertinence that most expert practitioners retain; these are 'knowledge objects' that the expert practitioner and those who evaluate her work hold onto, but that, in my experience at least, relatively rarely constitute a major research focus in postgraduate work and that research documentation, as a consequence, rarely remembers. The first is *expert-intuitive processing* in creative decision-making that is expert in kind; the second is *signature practices* which – for knowledge-historical reasons – many in Cultural Studies continue to overlook in their preference for knowledge systems in place of the name of the artist, even though it is through her or his ability to identify and engage with these that the named expert practitioner's work is known. Signature, it is worth noting here, is *practised*, tends to be im-*pressed*, rather than to have its own 'thingness'.

The third, rehearsed to some extent in the Deleuzian tradition (Deleuze, 2001: 26) and taken up more recently by Brian Massumi (Massumi, 2002), is *singularity* (or the aspiration to the same in the named arts practitioner's work); the fourth is the *sensibility* of the expert practitioner. A fifth objectual practice, bound up in the previous three, has been identified in Massumi's work (2002) with regard to the artist as a working practitioner, as *qualitative transformation* (162) – the need, in the artist, as futurologist, to focus on the next piece of work (which might 'be better' able to articulate the artist's own ongoing quest and enquiry), rather than earlier work or the previous work, which tends to be the piece with which the academic researcher, whose work is necessarily backward-looking, wants to concern herself.

If these are both articulated in and indeed constitutive to the making processes and outcome of the researcher-practitioner's work, yet their name is rarely spoken as such when it comes to the usual reading in the higher degree programme in the university, how might any of us proceed to re-member them, when it comes to the effective documentation of 'own creative practices' in the higher degree set-up? I have indicated that I sense that these objectual practices are constitutive; I would

argue, in addition, that 'we' *know them when we see them*, in the university, rather better than we know how to instruct others to identify them.

On the basis of these sorts of observations, my question continues to be *who should and can* document and archive expert performance-making practices, in a practice-led-research context? I have argued elsewhere (Melrose, 2007) that it is solely on the basis of the higher degree programme's recognition of the disciplinary expertise of the practising artist, and on our ability to discursively articulate – on her and our own behalf – what is specific to her expert practices, that we can begin to identify what is needed of the IT-practitioner who would effectively document another's postgraduate or doctoral research. We do need to acknowledge that, *like* the expert arts practitioner and the expert performance researcher, the digital practitioner is similarly expert. But what this shared expertise means in terms of practice, given my argument above, is that all three of us, as experts in our disciplines, tend to make decisions via the operations of a discipline-specific expert intuition.

I proceed to argue in this chapter that it is time for some of us in the higher degree programme to identify expert-intuitive processing, signature practices and the aspiration to singularity in expert decision-making *as such,* if we are to begin to master some of the implications of these knowledge things, not least for documentation or archiving of an other's expert-practices in the higher degree set-up. As long as some of us fail to do so, we run the risk of replicating, in the higher degree documentation produced, precisely that erasure of data specific to disciplinary specificity, disciplinary expertise and performance-making processes – rather than spectatorial practices and their secondary processing – that seems to me to characterise much current research degree work presented for examination. 'We' – in generational terms – run the risk, in the higher degree programme, of drawing on that ('pre-digital') writing whose importance figured in our own higher degree studies, despite the clearly demonstrated fact that such writing, almost by definition, is expert but spectatorially positioned, with regard to what it has taken to be its analytical object. Is it provocative to observe here that the writing of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, is both expert, and in general spectatorially positioned with regard to its target object? As an expert practice of writing, it is embedded within and operates *within* expert writing, even if some of it attempts systematically to target practice modes that lie outside writing. When we come back to Knorr Cetina's notion of the 'amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms – bonded through affinity, necessity and historical coincidence – which, in a given field, make up *how we know what we know*', we might need to acknowledge that the amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms, the knowledge objects and the models of intelligibility that make up how the critical theorist knows what she knows, tend to be scriptural (de Certeau, 1984), writerly, to operate within and in terms of a writing mastery of whose registers often lie outside the established expertise of the arts practitioner.

WHERE/HOW TO BEGIN?

Memory, remembering and forgetting – if not in their specific relationship with arts practitioner expertise – do figure in and in some instances are explicitly thematised in the work of a number of twentieth century writer-philosophers, as are certain questions relating to the nature and performative power of art itself. The writing of Jean-Francois Lyotard, concerned notoriously with the postmodern and with master narratives (Lyotard, 1971/1984), has also observed more recently, of the artwork, that the signature artwork tends to disarm the viewer; it tends to disarm 'thinking machines' or 'representing machines' (Lyotard, 1991: 17) – hence, those engaged by the critical writer. If Lyotard's judgement of the 1980s was valid, it might seem that something 'in' that art tended to locate itself, on or outside the margins of written and possibly digital inscription. In the face of art's powers to disarm, however, the response of the academic and critic is to seek at great haste to write 'twenty or one hundred pages', in an attempt 'to pick up the [mind's] pieces, and [to put] the plot together again'. That expert writerly picking up of the mind's pieces, by the academic and critic, immediately renders that experience historical, and the critical commentary both reactive, spectatorially centred, and other to that art with which it nonetheless purports to engage. Attention has shifted hence from cause to effect, from artwork to art effect; with the consequence that enquiry has shifted to the spectator, and away from any sense of either the artwork or the signature and sensibility of the artist as inventor and futurologist. This is a curious but widespread peculiarity of what might be called 'art-writing'. Art-writing, in turn, 'stages' and reproduces the dominant models of intelligibility that informed critical perspectives from the 1970s onwards and that are widely taught in postgraduate seminars; it replicates a schism between the communication sciences, on the one hand, and aesthesis, or the operations of aesthetic judgement, on the other hand[2]. What I have called *'signature practices'* in the making, and the singularity and qualitative transformation the artist aspires to, have as a consequence of this sort of schism, been systematically under-theorised in the set-ups that have dominated in the older university, not least under the headings of critical theory and the critique of representation.

On this basis, 'the show' is not 'the [research] thing', and nor does 'the show' constitute, in itself, whatever I am recognising as signature: the signature of the artist is likely, instead, to emerge with time, on the basis of performance regularities identifiable *across the researcher's body of work*. In performance-making terms, *choreographic* regularities tend to be identified through engagement with a complex, historically differentiated practice-memory, which informs and conditions expert-intuitive process and decision-making, where these are equally conditioned by the aspiration to the new, to qualitative transformation (Massumi, 2002), and, in Knorr Cetina's terms (2001: 185), these are 'under-girded' affectively.

Can we require of the digital document-maker that he or she be concerned with the enquiry into signature practice, into the indices of affective investment

and where and how these might be identified, and into the practitioner's own drive to qualitative transformation? Such a concern would mean that the documentation processes need to enquire into their own capacity for presentation and representation. We might need, if that were to be the case, to call for a reflective digital practice and practitioner, a capacity for praxiological enquiry (an enquiry through expert practices into expert practices) in the digital document-maker, which I would argue is likely to lie within her or his competence – yet this might suggest that the digital document-maker needs herself to be a researcher. Any such praxiological enquiry needs to be attentive to the different *registers* and peculiarities of practice, as these are deployed in different discipline-specific set-ups. The encoding scheme or schemes adopted, and the meta-data that apply, need to take onboard, and to categorise, not only knowledge complexity, but the ongoing speculative nature we might expect of the practice-led enquiry in the higher degree set-up.

Lyotard's *The Inhuman* (1991) is subtitled with deliberate informality, in the French, *Causeries sur le temps*, or 'chatting about time', and these chats include the subject of the times of art-making. In Lyotard's terms, the artist's signature practices might equally be resistant to *digital* inscription – at least if the latter is pursued unreflexively. His 1980s use of the term 'digital inscription' is unlikely to have come out of much hands-on experience of digital inscription; he was, after all, a professional philosopher-researcher and writer. It is rather more likely to have come from others' *written* observations on the digital, including Adorno's observations on music, which Lyotard cites. As far as the twenty-first century digital is concerned, then, Lyotard's 'conversations' of the 1980s are 'history'. His expertise as philosopher, meanwhile, was writing-based, and it took writing as its means of production as well as its outcome. His interest in aesthetics in the 1980s, then, 'comes out of' the registers of writing specific to the discipline of philosophy, and out of the perspective of expert spectator – whence my caution. As philosopher, Lyotard tried nonetheless to focus on what, according to his own disciplinary orientation at the time, might seem to resist writerly inscription.

The art-*effect* (we need to recognise the implications of the final term) *dis*-arms, for Lyotard, in the way it brings uniquely together an abiding enigma and the work's technicity; the greater its technicity, he argues, citing Adorno (Lyotard, 1991: 'Matter and Time'), the greater the likelihood that it will make itself available to digital inscription; but as a direct consequence, the less its abiding enigma is available to be grasped as such. There are a number of points I want to make here: first, Lyotard's clear concern is with the impact of the work on a perceiver, and not with the work of making the work. Second, while Lyotard's highly conventional attempt to dissolve the art into two qualities – the technical and the enigmatic – has a certain appeal, my own approach has been to argue that creative decision-making proceeds through the catalytic interrelationship of – for example – (the outcome of) expert-intuitive processing and the production logics specific to the discipline. My identification of expert-intuitive process in creative

decision-making as a model of intelligibility vital to the making sets out quite particularly to recuperate that expert-intuitive processing from the realm of the other-than-rational, where so many have sought to locate it, to the detriment of performance theoretical writers' understanding of creative process. Expert-intuitive outcomes, in other words, partake of both the enigmatic and of the technical, are constantly tested in terms of the technologies (in the widest sense) of performance-making and its events.

My third point returns to issues already raised above: the 'picking up of the mind's pieces', by the academic and critic immediately renders the initial, spectatorial engagement historical: the 'is it happening?', of Lyotard's sublime (1994) is thereby rendered – and recuperated – as 'it happened'. The academic and critic, on this basis, are history. Yet Lyotard hardly seems to be unaware of some of these difficulties: one remedy to be found in his essay on time, which might seem to allow us to document while abstaining from these instances of secondary appropriation in the case of the expert practitioner's work, would be to undertake a process of documentation that might 'mediate [...] what happens before reacting' to it (1991: 58–77). The timing of documentation, on behalf of the expert arts practitioner-researcher, is thus critical. By my use of the words 'on behalf of ...', I mean a documentation carried out in terms that relate as tightly as possible to the practitioner's creative practice pursued as an advanced research enquiry. I would argue that it needs to begin to be undertaken before it seems to be necessary or useful, and visited systematically throughout the schedule for the development of the research project.

The research undertaking and its documentation needs to begin to engage with the making processes, well in advance of the performance event (which is not necessarily its primary focus), in a set-up activated on the basis of an evaluation of the practitioner's already-evidenced expertise. One should, thereafter, be able, with expert process in mind, to begin to engage with and document the time of the work's evolution, leading up to something like 'the work that finishes the work' – as Lyotard has so neatly put it, albeit in reference to Freudian psychoanalysis (1991: 56). Without that engagement with the making processes, in the research context, the academic researcher's attempt to seem to put the work back together again, *after experiencing it*, is likely to be *other* to the signature effect that I am targeting, and would thus 'owe[...] nothing', in Lyotard's words, 'to the place [the work] can take (and which in a sense it never takes) in the intrication of sensory positions and intelligible meanings' (56–57) specific to the practitioner's understanding and undertaking.

EXPERTISE, DISCIPLINARY SPECIFICITY AND ITS DOCUMENTATIONS

We might expect that the practitioner herself, bringing her expert recall of what she was looking at and staging, in the developing work, and how she then

realised it in terms of professional production logics and production values, is best placed to provide valuable input to the effective documentation of what we widely accept to be 'her work' in the higher degree set-up. Her insight, in the terms I have set out, should lie in her ownership of and ability to recall the initial impetus and the making processes themselves, as distinct from their outcome. Yet a number of factors come into play here, particularly when the candidate is constrained to seek to find some kind of empirical fit between the higher degree set-up and its own knowledge project and those specific to creative practice.

I have argued that certain models of intelligibility and 'knowledge-objects' are highly particular to her disciplinary mastery and expertise, and added that these tend to be non-identical with the models of intelligibility and 'knowledge-objects' to be found in the higher degree seminar that widely continues to be preoccupied with the production of writing in complex registers, pursued from particular positions with regard to its analytical object. Lyotard's identification of the abiding enigma of the artwork, regardless of the fact that his concern is with the art-effect, may well apply to the artist's own grasp of her 'process', not least in the sense that a creative 'unknowing' is often cited by the arts-practitioner as a way of seeing and knowing that is vitally important to making new work. Lyotard's concern with what he called 'digital inscription', in the mid-1980s, and apparent failures of that inscription when it comes to art's abiding enigma, promotes me to ask, at this point, whether we can now anticipate a better 'fit' between the operating systems available to the digital documentation of creative process more generally, and their effects, when our concern is with the digital documentation of discipline-specific creative process.

Massumi's qualitative transformation and the futurology he attributes to the practising artist (Massumi, 2002: 4) together seem to suggest a willingness in many artists to shake themselves free of certain sorts of knowledge acquired at particular points in the making. What I have sometimes seen as a wilfully retained 'expert unknowing' in expert practitioners' process is plainly likely to manifest itself with regard to the expert-intuitive operations themselves, to the impact of contingency and happy accident on production processes, and to the notion of what the emerging work might or might not seem to thematise. Yet at the same time, in expert practice, mastery of modes of production, taken in the fullest sense, grows in the doing of it, as a set of practices few of which are developed discursively in the same practitioner. In his 'Derridean dispersion and Heideggerian articulation', practice theorist Charles Spinosa (in Schatzki et al., 2001: 199–212) accounts for this sort of practice mastery in terms of its acquisition through what he calls a 'tendency of [practice] elaboration' (200) that both contributes to expertise and is likely not to require either full awareness of that process, or any discursive articulation of it.

Similarly, that the artwork lends itself notoriously to endless unfoldings suggests a complexity of signifying potential that the professional arts practitioner (Francis Bacon's painting in Deleuze's account [2005] comes to mind) might well *sense,* without aspiring to participate in those processes of meaning-production.

Sensing is taken by that practitioner not merely to be a wholly adequate mode of knowing but one that is preferred to discursive articulations – a fact that we might need to explore from the perspective of the range of models of intelligibility that apply, rather than disparage. That sense and sensing, here, are bound-up with an exercise of judgement, in the expert arts practitioner, that parts at least of the wider arts community/ies have validated is, once again, a matter whose complexity lies beyond the reach of this chapter.

I have rehearsed some of the knowledge 'difficulties' of expert creative process and its anticipated digital documentation in the field of the higher degree submission, in order to raise the question of how we might test these knowledge specificities against the epistemic specificity, the 'amalgams of arrangements and mechanisms – bonded through affinity, necessity and historical coincidence – which, in a given field, make up *how we know what we know'* in the field of digital practice. In order to begin that task, I want to cite Rudi Laerman and Pascal Gielen's 2007 web-published, 'The Archive of the Digital An-Archive', as an example of writing in the field that comes out of what I persist in identifying as the disciplinary set-up specific to the sociology of the arts.

The writers announce an explicit Foucauldian interest in 'the law of what can be said', as their starting-point. In terms of the notion of a disciplinary set-up that I have begun to identify, their published article itself suggests to me that the authors write, if I might put it this way, *out of writing* itself, and out of what I would identify as a critical 'belief in' writing as the dominant knowledge-medium. Despite a stated concern with 'contemporary cyber-reality', their disciplinary set-up seems – again on this limited evidence – not merely to privilege writing, but their text is repeatedly concerned with what they identify as the 'ongoing *discourse* "on" the digital archive' (my emphases). The archive users they reference, in turn, typically '*read* data' (my emphasis), rather than viewing it, thereby prioritising the orders of writing and reading; and the writers themselves openly observe that even in the case of 'the treatment of images and sounds (both need words in order to become meaningful) [in archival terms]'.

Meanwhile, Laermans and Gielen (2007) set out observations on the differences between a database, which is user-need oriented and hence open to constant update, and an archive, which is a necessarily closed and hence stabilised database. They note the fairly widespread argument that 'the digital' and 'the archive' 'are clashing notions because they refer to the basic, and opposite, characteristics of old and new media', and, as a consequence, that the digital archive is differently evaluated by traditional archivists and 'new media' archive specialists. Where their work seems to me to become more compelling, is in their identification of what they call the 'hidden performativity of computer programs, which make information production simultaneously possible and impossible'.

'The archive of the [digital] archive' itself, note the writers, is 'not neutral'. They cite Wolfgang Ernst's observation (2002) that 'Behind every collection [of information] that is dressed up in a narrative or iconic way stands a bare technological structure, an archival skeleton that is with strategic consciousness

withdrawn from discursive access on the level of the interface (…)'. 'Apparently without irreversible hierarchies', they note, still citing Ernst, 'the system of technical transfer and storage protocols is, beyond the visible surfaces, much more rigid than a traditional archive ever was'. In media-theoretical terms, the writers add, 'most users do not actually observe the […] mediating and performative role of the different sorts of programs on which they rely when storing, retrieving or processing information'. What is at work, the writers point out, at this unobserved and generally speaking unobservable level, is a 'sub-media space within which hierarchies of carriers of signs lead into dark opaque depths'.

From the point of view of the known and knowable in expert performance-making practice that I have set out in this chapter, the writers' uses of qualifiers like 'dark', 'opaque' and 'unobserved' are momentarily appealing: there is an order of the unknowable here; yet it is an order identified by the writers as operating performatively in a 'sub-media space' of 'dark opaque depths', from where it exercises a control that might seem to *perform the performers*, removing from them a capacity for choice that they might otherwise take to be their own. If we were to review this sketch for a model of knowledge against the disciplinary specificity of performance-making practices, we might be obliged to acknowledge that what I have identified throughout in terms of the specificity of the discipline pre-exists and provides the constitutive ground to the practices of expert performance-making engaged in the higher degree set-up by the candidate concerned. We do not need to dramatise these in terms of 'dark opaque depths'; indeed I should prefer to draw on the Deleuzian model of a 'plane of immanence' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 49), whose reach and power are such that all instances of new practice are always already given. 'Dance', in other words, predetermines, regulates and controls certain constitutive aspects of inventive practice even in the hands of the edgy, challenging practitioner, and it informs the expectations and modes of engagement of performance's spectators; yet it is almost certainly the case that this order of control is extra-discursive. It is 'held', and it is progressively elaborated, for one or another expert practitioner, in the practice of it.

When Laermans and Gielen note an order of control operating in the digital realm that is relatively inaccessible to and unownable by the user, my own *sense* is that the expert user, in the higher degree set-up, will have insight into these complexities. After all, the determining player operating in the writers' 'dark sub-medial space', in mediological terms, surely emerges on the basis of industry standards, regulated by Relational Database Management Systems (RDBMS). These industry standards, as I understand it, are agreed not only between multiple authors but between authors and vendors of these systems, in order to maximise 'inter-operability' between systems.

Unlike the plane of immanence in dance, however, all operate in the digital arena within a linguistic frame and use 'pseudo-code' (programming statements) which resemble language, and programming algorithms which are normally stated in standard language before being translated into programming 'languages'

(e.g. SQL, C++, PERL, Java). These are rules-based systems, and all users rearticulate them, regardless of their own aspiration to digital difference.

The performance document-maker, in other words, in seeking to inscribe digitally what is particular to the expert practice concerned, has a wide but strictly limited range of options available, but cannot otherwise intervene in the display options that these control. Hence in adhering to standards, she attempts to obtain a best approximation of how the end user will receive the material; and in the higher degree set-up, that end-user can be expected to be expert at least in terms of the disciplinary field within which the candidate's work is located. That user may well not (yet) be expert in the fields of digital inscription, and will need as a consequence to be guided by the candidate's own account, included in the mixed-mode postgraduate or higher degree submission, of some of the meta-praxiological issues at stake.

My argument, thus, is that by taking the adequate digital inscription itself of the 'knowledge objects' specific to expert performance-making process *as external measure of* the latter, the expert-practitioner postgraduate/higher degree candidate will begin to obtain an insight into the knowledge specificity of her practice that is currently unusual in the higher degree set-up. In such an undertaking, where knowledge systems are overlaid, the one upon the other, it is likely that the performance practitioner will begin to be able to dissolve complex notions that an unreflective language use has the capacity to render monolithic.

In this context, Lyotard's observations on time, memory effects and digital technologies (Lyotard, 1991: 50–87) seem to me to be of interest, despite rapid technological development and cultural dissemination over the past two decades: for Lyotard, remembering is not monolithic but internally differentiated, and I would argue that it is in part this internal differentiation that lends itself to the sort of praxiological enquiry into documentation that I am calling for here. Plainly the terms he used re-engage with the philosophical tradition that provides his own disciplinary expertise, and his enquiry into what he terms 'temporal syntheses' revisits Kant, on apprehension and reproduction, Bergson on recognition, and Freud, on memory; yet his suggestions seem to me to resonate with certain sorts of distinctions we might make between certain sorts of material used in documentation.

From the perspective of 'preservation' of a past that needs, in fact, to be reconstructed (since the cyber-realm otherwise has no memory), Lyotard focuses on what might be the bases for the practitioner-documenter's selection of already digitised data, already delocalised and detemporalised, and on how simulacra – one of which is 'the past' itself, and another of which is 'signature' – are produced, and might be grasped auto-reflexively as well as expert-intuitively (1991: 50). It is these simulacra, once constructed, he argues, that re-anchor data in a number of conceptual frames which are likely in turn to trigger their own memory effects on behalf of an expert user-researcher, provided we make awareness of those sorts of frames available discursively.

The three memory effects noted by Lyotard, in the mid-1980s, he argues, 'coincide more or less with three very different sorts of temporal synthesis linked to [digital] inscription' (50): the first mode of temporal synthesis, 'breaching' renders the past in terms of habit, including habits of thought and feeling; it coincides with the identification of elements drawn together on the basis of affinity, habit or habit-memory. The second, 'scanning', effects its own temporal synthesis and seems to evoke the experience that attaches to that synthesis: it 'implies not only the retention of the past in the present as present, but the synthesis of the past as such and its reactualization as past, in the present (of consciousness)'. Remembering, 'implies the identification of what is remembered through its classification in a calendar and a cartography' (51), and it is self-referential: 'it remembers its own presuppositions and implications' (53). The third mode of temporal synthesis, 'passing', coincides with that involuntary but often puzzling memory, which can seem, as though uninvited, to 'come to the practitioner': it is associated with 'working through', in the Freudian psychoanalytic sense of the term. Passing, Lyotard adds, uses up more energy than other techniques, because 'it is a technique with no rule, or a negative rule, deregulation'. It involves an ongoing 'working through', where elements retained trigger again, in the practitioner, an ongoing enquiry that seems, even as one's work reaches its momentary, public instantiation – always a compromise with resistant materialities – to be unanswerable.

CONCLUSION

If 'we' are to work together, as differently skilled expert practitioners, on the digital documentation of signature creative *process*, with a mixed-mode dissertation in mind, I would argue that a meta-theoretical engagement, on the part of the expert digital practitioner, working with the artist on the expert-practitioner document, is important. First, the latter needs to be in a position to advise the former, as to what is constitutive to the making processes, and what has most commonly been overlooked; and the former needs, on that sort of basis, to be able to trial and test digital solutions for disciplinary problems. 'We' may need to re-invent historically precise set-ups, and to provide alternative perspectives with regard to missing data, if we are to overcome long-established and naturalised prejudice.

The inventiveness and the professional virtuosity of the digital practitioner are central here, as soon as we recognise that in order to document the shift in perspective to practitioner expertise and experience, creative digital solutions need to be found. Second, the expert digital practitioner needs to learn to make explicit and therefore transparent to the artist, the existence and operation of rules in setting the parameters of the digital document. Third, and finally, all partners need to recognise the limits which the existence of a rules-bound digital system imposes on any attempt to record material, requiring that the higher

degree candidate constitute a rich meta-narrative, derived through collaborative invention, if its complexities are to be understood by an eventual user.

NOTES

1. http://www.sfmelrose.org.uk
2. Osborne, P. (2000). *Philosophy in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge.

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