

THE PASSAGE OF ZEPPELIN

by

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ABSTRACT

My performance work is a non-verbal presentation derived from mythic and temporal structure. THE PASSAGE OF ZEPPELIN is a 15 minute theatrical work deriving from my concern with history presented as myth, temporality and distance, and from my work as a graduate student at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, M.I.T.

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My interest is not in philosophical speculation, but rather to examine a cognitive theory of the awareness of time, which I then propose to discuss in terms of "consciously manipulated" time in performance. The following two quotations are taken from a study on the cognition of time by Ernst Cassirer. His reflections are derived from cognitive theories of language based upon the differing levels of development of terminology for time found in primitive languages.

"The simple coordination of spatial form and temporal form that has often been attempted in epistemological inquiries, finds no confirmation in language. Language shows rather that thought in general and linguistic thought in particular must perform an operation of a different type and one might say of a higher dimension, in building up the representation of time, in differentiating directions and intervals of time. For "here" and "there" can be subsumed much more simply and immediately in an intuitive unity than is the case with the temporal factors "now", "earlier", and "later". What characterizes these factors as temporal is precisely that they are never, like things of objective intuition, given to the consciousness simultaneously. The units, the parts which in spatial intuition seem to combine of themselves into a whole, here exclude one another: the existence of one specification

signifies the nonexistence of the others and vice-versa. Accordingly, the whole fact of the representation of time is never contained in immediate intuition; differentiation and combination, analytical and synthetic thought consequently play a larger part than in spatial representation. Since the elements of time exist as such only because consciousness "runs through" them and in so doing differentiates them, this act of running through, this "discursus" enters into the characteristic form of the concept of time itself. Thus the form of "being" which we designate as succession, as time, appears to occupy a far higher level of ideality than mere locally determined existence."¹

Cassirer finds that the cognition of space and the cognition of time are not coordinated with each other, and are operations of different types. Spatial cognition can be intuitive, whereas the analytic and synthetic thought processes necessary for the cognition of time preclude intuition. In very limited consciousness, temporal relations can only be apprehended, however, through spatial analogy. This reflection on spatial/temporal analogy and the division of primary consciousness into the mutually exclusive categories of "now" and "not-now" underly my construction of temporal/visual phenomena. The sensation of a personal sense of time is necessarily a preverbal phenomenon. I will later

give examples of how this sensation has been expressed visually in performance.

"Involuntarily, language transposes the structural relations of time into relations of space:

Here	Now
Near	Far
Now	Not-now

Spatial "here" and "there" stand to one another in a simple relation of distance; two points in space are merely differentiated, there is in general no preferred direction in the passage from one to the other. As spatial factors, the two points are "potentially co-existent" and in a sense equivalent; a simple movement can transform "there" into "here", and "here" after ceasing to be such, can be restored to its previous form by the reverse movement. Time however reveals, in addition to the distinction and distance between its elements, a unique and irreversible "sense" in which it proceeds. The directions from past to future and from future to past are not interchangeable - each is peculiar to itself. But where consciousness is limited to spatial analogies - this unique character of the direction of time must remain obscure. As in the intuition of space, everything is here

reduced to the simple distinction of near and far. The only essential difference that is grasped and clearly expressed is that between "now" and "not-now" - between the immediate present and that which lies "outside" it. This present should not, to be sure, be conceived as a strict mathematical abstraction but as a psychological "now" encompassing all those contents which can be intuited as an immediate temporal unity, which can be condensed into an elementary unity of experience. It is no mere logical borderline, dividing earlier from later, but possesses in itself a certain duration, extending as far as the immediate, concrete memory. For this form of primary temporal intuition, the whole of consciousness and its contents falls, as it were, into two spheres: a bright sphere, illumined by the light of the "present", and another, dark sphere; and between these two basic levels, there are as yet no mediation of transition, no shadings or degrees."²

This area of consciousness described by Cassirer, where consciousness is limited to spatial intuition and can apprehend temporal relations only through spatial analogies, can be used as an analogy for situations of visually "manipulated" time. This primary temporal intuition is, Cassirer maintains, obscure; time "sense" is not yet apprehended. I believe that this refers to a preverbal stage

of development. What I find most intriguing, is the notion that temporal content can, therefore, be intuited by spatial analogy, in other words, purely visually. The gradations of time so represented cannot be very abstract, as they must remain on an elementary level of intuition, however, this also implies their conscious apprehension as representative of time. This moment of intuition itself (Cassirer calls it a psychological "now") possesses a duration peculiar to itself, and which extends as far as immediate memory. This entire duration, or "now", is reminiscent of what is commonly called reverie.

Using the staging of Robert Wilson as an example of a "manipulated" time situation, one can apply Cassirer's distinctions of differing levels of time consciousness to illustrate its effect.

Wilson's most characteristic devices are distortions of proportion and scale. The human figure is often disproportionate and inapropos to a given situation (chairs in altered scale are one of Wilson's trademarks). The temporal/spatial analogy is made through the slow movement of objects, generally of objects massive enough to be presumed immovable parts of scenery. The movement itself is almost imperceptible, one is aware of the direction of motion, but

the process of motion is so attenuated that one cannot focus consciously on it. The subtly changing spatial relationships define a temporal state unique to the staged situation. Impossible to relate to any physical "clock" time, the reverie of the spectator involved in viewing these changing relationships is very similar to the psychological "now" of Cassirer's definition of primitive consciousness.

Cassirer gives a break-down of the different stages of development in temporal cognition: "In general, the development from the feeling to the concept of time reveals three different stages, which are also of crucial importance for the linguistic reflection of the consciousness of time. At the first stage the consciousness is dominated by the opposition of "now" and "not-now", which has undergone no further differentiations; at the second, certain temporal "forms" - completed and incompleting, continued and momentary, action - begin to be distinguished so that a definite distinction of temporal modes is developed; the final stage is characterized by the pure concept of time as an abstract concept of order, and the various stages of time stand out in their contrast and interdetermination."³

The fully developed consciousness, particularly the consciousness of scientific cognition, does not content

itself with this simple opposition of "now" and "not-now" but raises it to its richest logical development. It produces abundant gradations of time, all encompassed in a unitary temporal order in which every moment has its specific position. Epistemological analysis shows that this order is not "given" by sensation and cannot be derived from immediate intuition. It is rather a work of the understanding - particularly of causal inference. It is the category of cause and effect which transforms the mere intuition of succession into the idea of a unitary temporal order of events. The simple distinction of separate points in time must be transformed into the concept of a mutual dynamic dependence between them, time as a form of pure intuition must be permeated with the function of causal judgement, before this idea can be developed and stabilized, before the immediate feeling of time can be transformed into the systematic concept of time as a condition and content of knowledge."⁴

The enrichment of consciousness from primitive to sophisticated temporal awareness follows defined stages: "now", "not-now"; the distinction of complete, incomplete, continued and momentary action; the awareness of gradations of time within a unitary temporal order; leading to the capacity for causal inference. These stages can be

translated visually, indeed, visual examples of the third stage of distinction are theatrical stock-in-trade. Discontinuous with what a fully developed consciousness perceives as normal time, "staged" or "manipulated" time is the product of a long tradition of illusionistic conventions: the "flashback" of memory or dream sequences; the shot of calendar pages rapidly succeeding each other and as quickly being blown across the newsroom floor by the wind; the gradual, visible "aging" through make-up effects; are all examples of the myriad theatrical conventions instantly recognizable as the passage of time.

Opposed to a representation of "time" passing, or historical time, is the sensation or awareness of the present moment. My thoughts stem from an interest in the phenomenon of personal time; that is, an awareness of the sensation of the passage of time by an individual. The term "awareness of sensation" is well illustrated in the following quotation from the Polish poet, Czeslaw Milosz: "All the same, America was difficult to get used to. My circumstances brought about an acute recurrence of my old sickness, which I may have suffered from even in high school. As far as I know, it does not figure in any psychiatric handbook. It consists of a disturbance in one's perception of time. The sick man constantly sees time as an hourglass through which states,

systems, and civilizations trickle like sand; his immediate surroundings lose the force of reality; they do not last at all, they disintegrate; in other words; being is unreal, only movement is real. Those who plant flowers, till the fields, build houses are deserving of pity because they are seen as participants in a phantasmagoric spectacle, and to him they are no more real than to a demon who flies up to their windows at night and peeks through the pane. They are fore-doomed because the order in which they have established themselves and which shapes their every thought and feeling is, like every order, ripe for destruction."⁵

The effect of the sensation described by Milosz so succinctly "...being is unreal, only movement is real" is literally transferable to describe the effect of a temporal art form (theater, music, dance) upon both spectator and performer. The temporal order is a given, the length of duration of the work. The gradations of time within the piece, the secondary level of duration, are relative. Instants are either violently pursued and frozen, or coaxed into revelatory position; the attitude of the individual artist towards time virtually manipulates time. This suspension of "normal" time and immersion in "manipulated" time is conducive to reverie (loss of self within the moment) and is a basic condition of temporal art forms.

The American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey developed a theory of artistic creativity derived from ordinary experience. His aesthetics is based on the natural tendency of a being in nature to move toward equilibrium and an ordered relationship with the environment. "For only when an organism shares in the ordered relations of its environment does it secure the stability essential to living. And when the participation comes after a phase of disruption and conflict, it bears within itself the germs of a consummation akin to the aesthetic."⁶

Being is then a search for stability in a universe in flux and those moments of regained unity provide the individual an enjoyment termed aesthetic. What makes Dewey's theory so instructive for my purposes is that his is a temporal theory; in his worldview, stasis is momentary but ever-recurring - the universe itself is a continuously developing temporary relationship of stasis. Movement, change and rhythm are then the basis of life. Time, in Dewey's terms, is synonymous with growth as organizational change. He explains how the rhythm of the periods of stasis develops from purpose, to emotion, and ultimately to their artistic perpetuation: "The rhythm of loss of integration with environment and recovery of union not only persists in man but becomes conscious with him; its conditions are material out of which he forms

purposes. Emotion is the conscious sign of a break, actual or impending. The discord is the occasion that induces reflection. Desire for restoration of the union converts mere emotion into interest in objects as conditions of realization of harmony. With the realization, material of reflection is incorporated into objects as their meaning. Since the artist cares in a particular way for the phase of experience in which union is achieved, he does not shun moments of resistance and tension. He rather cultivates them, not for their own sake but because of their potentialities, bringing to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total."⁷

The word alive implies existence here and now, when the past, present and future are integrated comfortably in an individual. This temporal integration is the foundation of Dewey's definition of art: "Art celebrates with particular intensity the moments in which the past reenforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is."⁸

This temporal cycle of ordered change, of rhythm, may be patterned spatially. That it may be patterned aurally is, of course, obvious. I would like to present some thoughts on a temporal theater; not the "theater" per se, but performances

whose concerns are an awareness of the physical (visual) properties of temporal phenomena. Some theatrical performances present states of objectified (one might even say reified) time. The performances of Robert Wilson, Robert Whitman and Lucinda Childs are some examples. Contrast in scale of objects, cyclical repetitions of actions and dramatic variations in staged "time" which create extra-temporal states of performance are some of the devices used to produce a marked alteration in the viewer's sense of time. Staged time refers to the delimitations of duration imposed upon staged actions by the director or actor. The visual manipulation of this "sense of timing" with minimum verbal exchange is one of the most striking achievements of this type of performance. Although (in the case of Childs and Wilson) dependent as well upon the psychological effect of cyclical process music (the methodic and gradual alteration of recognizable rhythm patterns over a span of time) the visual displays of these artists function as powerful spatial presentations of temporal changes in state.

George Kubler, in The Shape of Time elucidates several fundamental considerations of an art historian's concern with a work of art as a time-related phenomenon. I believe he specifically treats the artifact(s) as ontologically representative of history, beyond their own socio/historical

context.

Rather than elaborate a system of classification (an underlying critique of art historical cataloguing of works into early, classic, late and decadent developmental phases is implicit in his book), Kubler attempts to broaden the field of inquiry to the question of actuality, duration and historical distance. He defines the realm of art works: "Artistic inventions alter the sensibility of mankind. They all emerge from and return to human perception, unlike useful inventions, which are keyed to the physical and biological environment. Useful inventions alter mankind only indirectly by altering his environment; aesthetic inventions enlarge human awareness directly with new ways of experiencing the universe, rather than with new objective interpretations".⁹

He illustrates the dilemma of an historian, investigator of what was once actuality, without a vocabulary or methodology equipped to analyze temporal content.

"The difficulty with delimiting the categories of time has always been to find a suitable description of duration which would vary according to events while measuring them against a fixed scale. History has no periodic table of elements, and no classification of types or species; it has only solar time

and a few old ways of grouping events, but no theory of temporal structure."¹⁰ The description of duration, he argues, is necessary because: "the figures and shapes described by the history of things are...so distinctive that one asks whether artifacts do not possess a specific sort of duration, occupying time differently from the animal beings of biology and the natural materials of physics."¹¹

While he offers no specific definition of duration, he does suggest ways in which it could be measured: "Because duration can be measured by the two standards of absolute age and systematic age, historic time seems to be composed of many envelopes, in addition to being mere flow from future to past through the present. These envelopes, which all have different contours in the sense that they are durations defined by their contents, can be grouped easily by large and small families of shapes. We are not concerned now with the diminutive shapes of personal time, although each of us can observe in his own existence the presence of such patterns, composed of early and late versions of the same action. They extend through all individual experience from the structure of a few seconds duration to the span of the entire life. Our main interest here is in the shapes and forms of those durations which either are longer than single human lives, or which require the time of more than one person as collective durations."¹²

Kubler's definition of the field of inquiry, then, would seem inappropriate in the context of contemporary art history, from the development of photography to the present moment, for it has been marked by an ever-increasing interest in precisely those personal shades of time left apart from what he feels to be the "higher" order of things. This area of consideration, the interpretation of the temporal content peculiar to the art works themselves, has been attempted by some contemporary art historians. The following comments by John Berger on the photographs of Don McCullin and Paul Strand are written from this perspective.

"McCullins most typical photographs record sudden moments of agony - a terror, a wounding, a death, a cry of grief. These moments are in reality utterly discontinuous with normal time. It is the knowledge that such moments are probable and the anticipation of them which makes "time" in the front line, unlike all other experiences of time. The camera which isolates a moment of agony isolates no more violently than the experience of that moment isolates itself. The word trigger, applied to rifle and camera, reflects a correspondence which does not stop at the purely mechanical. The image seized by the camera is doubly violent and both violences reinforce the same contrast, the contrast between the photographed moment and all others."¹³

Berger comes close to a definition of actuality vs. duration in his discussion of the work of Paul Strand. "His method as a photographer is more unusual. One could say that it was the antithesis to Henri Cartier-Bresson's. The photographic moment for Cartier-Bresson is an instant, a fraction of a second, and he stalks that instant as though it were a wild animal. The photographic moment for Strand is autobiographical or historic moment, whose duration is ideally measured not by seconds but by its relation to a lifetime. Strand does not pursue an instant, but encourages a moment to arise as one might encourage a story to be told."¹⁴ Berger elaborates the attitude towards "being" which he sees in Strand's photographs: "...the present tense of the verb to be refers only to the present; but nevertheless, with the first person singular in front of it, it absorbs the past which is inseparable from the pronoun. I am includes all that has made me so. It is more than a statement of immediate fact; it is already an explanation, a justification, a demand - it is already autobiographical...his (Strand's) photographs convey a unique sense of duration. The I am is given its time in which to reflect on the past and to anticipate its future; the exposure time does no violence to the time of the I am; on the contrary, one has the strange impression that the exposure time is the lifetime."¹⁵

A further case for the manipulation (in this instance conscious and deliberate) of time by the artist is taken from the writings of J. Burnham. It is predicated on a structurally transparent system of art history and criticism; simplified here almost to "game rules". "Formal transgressions are based on literary and plastic innovations which perpetuate the illusion of historical change; historical transgressions are essentially structural disruptions subverting the temporal myth of art; that is, they destroy the illusion that art progresses from one style to the next through time. Historical transgressions, to use Marcel Duchamp's term, "short-circuit" the evolution of formal transgressions. And quite obviously, Duchamp was the first artist to employ historical transgressions as a matter of strategy. Here there are several approaches; the most common is the production of works which are far ahead of their time historically and remain unexplained, that is, the ready-mades again. Art may also transgress various barriers of the art myth, for instance art which is art through its deliberate non-uniqueness, or dialectical use of seriality. Another example would be works which focus on the time element but in such a way that time is negated or reduced to a finite duration. (It must be remembered that mythically, works of art function only as points on the time continuum, never as events.)"¹⁶

I question the simplification of the argument: "Production of works ahead of their time" assumes an a priori comprehension of the entire temporal system and its predictable future. The mechanism by which an artist may successfully calculate temporal effect within a closed system is nevertheless an interesting speculation. Burnham elaborated the mechanics of the situation in a later essay: art becomes "temporal immersion in a continuous contextual flow of communicated experiences." The art object is, in effect, an information "trigger" for mobilizing the information cycle. Making, promoting and buying art are real time activities. That is to say, they happen within the day-to-day flow of normal experience. "Only Art Appreciation happens in ideal, nonexistential time."¹⁷

Notes on the genesis of my own work

The words "theater" and "performance" pose today problems of definition. While it is not within my objectives to clarify these boundaries, I would like to offer some speculations on performance and myth.

"I am a bit impatient when asked, 'What is the origin of your experimental theater productions?' The assumption seems to be that "experimental" work is tangential (toying with some

"new" technique each time) and tributary. The result is supposed to be a contribution to modern staging - scenography using current sculptural or electronic ideas, contemporary music, actors independently projecting clownish or cabaret stereotypes."¹⁸

"What is the theater? What is unique about it? What can it do that film and television cannot? Two concrete conceptions crystallized: the poor theater; and performance as an act of transgression."¹⁹

While Mr. Grotowski would surely accuse my work of "artistic kleptomania" for integrating borrowed mechanisms from what he considers foreign media (i.e. movie projections and other assimilated elements), I find that his exposition of the actor's performance as an act of transgression serves also to contextualize some aspects of performance art.

In his search to define those characteristics unique and essential to theater, Grotowski eliminated all elements of theater which he considered superfluous. The existential basis of theater is then found in the actor-spectator relationship, in his terms a "perceptual, direct, 'live' communion."²⁰ Stage, lighting, plot, costume and the other theatrical trappings are found to be secondary, expendable

"tricks". This "perceptual communion" (a videot might call it "real real time" communication) is what has made performance art so attractive to artists and audiences in recent years. In an essay laying the foundations of his theory of the "holy actor", Grotowski outlines a performer-audience relationship which is strikingly reminiscent of some of the motives purported to "holy" performance art. (I refer to those early proponents of performance work who produced sacrosanct, ritualistic 'body' work, at times pushed to self-martyrdom.) "In this struggle with one's own truth, this effort to peel off the life-mask, the theater, with its full-fleshed perceptivity, has always seemed to me a place of provocation. It is capable of challenging itself and its audience by violating accepted stereotypes of vision, feeling, and judgement - more jarring because it is imaged in the human organism's breath, body and inner impulses. This defiance of taboo, this transgression, provides the shock which rips off the mask, enabling us to give ourselves nakedly to something which is impossible to define but which contains Eros and Caritas."²¹

Defiance of taboo necessarily implies myth, as taboo is born of mythologising perception; performance work then finds its origins in individuated response to myth. What is the nature and function of modern theatrical/mythic incarnation? From

tribal ceremony to medieval passion play leading to modern moral "problem" theater (including documentary film) theatrical catharsis has been a formative tool for societal and individual awareness. The dissolution of societal boundaries once defined by religious necessity dissolved much of the traditional basis for myth, but, I would argue, not its need. Recent theatrical history has proposed to us (aside from "holy" actors): theatres of mysteries (Wilson, Whitman), splendors (Foreman); and luxurious bizarrities (Ludlam).

My piece is composed of discrete tableaux, the elements of which then recombine themselves. Movement, of the props and of the performers, is used as a link between music and image - by this I mean that the movement translates or is the transitory medium between sound and image; that the movement, gradual and controlled, is a visual state between sound and image.

This type of performance exists in a special span of time: the immediate present. Corresponding to the primitive state of consciousness described by Cassirer of "now" and "not-now", the performer is not "miming" actions, the actions performed represent nothing other than what they actually are. To give an example, a performer drinking a glass of

water on stage performs the act for its physical and not its significant content; he is not pretending or making as if, the action is self-justifying and not symbolic. The action alone is its own meaning. In a performance where various perspectives of action are presented (multi-media) this demands a constant refocusing on the part of the viewer. It is a matter of subjective choice where the viewer gives his attention, his essential experience is that of an open-ended, somewhat random presentation. Any associations drawn with respect to interpretation are therefore of necessity subjective, as each viewer will focus his/her attention on different actions, and for different lengths of time. The actions then serve to sharpen our awareness of the passage of time, through a confrontation that can also be experienced as boring or a sense of lack of continuity. This type of performance, being characterized by flow and progression, that is no well-defined subsections and no defined plot would indeed seem to negate meaningfulness. It is, however, this confrontation with self and being measured against a constant flow (the performance) that is the basis for the perception of the individual self as a temporary phenomenon.

My discussion has taken me from a small exposition of a basic formulation of temporal cognition, through a temporal aesthetic theory, to the beginnings of a discussion about the

role of performance/myth. I do not claim any objectivity whatsoever for the views I take or the opinions I present. Again, in the words of Jerzy Grotowski: "One should not make too many speculations in the field of art. Art is not the source of science. It is the experience which we take upon ourselves when we open ourselves to others, when we confront ourselves with them in order to understand ourselves - not in the scientific sense of re-creating the context of an epoch in history, but in an elementary and human sense. And in the long procession of suffering mothers it is not the historical context of Niobe which interests us. Of course, the past is present inasmuch as we can still hear and understand its voice. It is doubtless rather different from that of the mother weeping over her children at Auschwitz, and this difference constitutes the whole historical context. It is hidden, and if we try to separate it, to underline it and accentuate it, then we lose everything since artistic experience is an open and direct one." ²²

This is not a disclaimer from the responsibility of explaining one's thoughts and intentions, but an acceptance of certain limitations which spring from the verbal presentation of non-verbal material. All of this is done to satisfy the request for rational explanation of an irrational process. To say a few words about the genesis of the piece,

my most effective working method is reverie, before a sheet of blank paper. Progress is in leaps and bounds, sometimes backwards, and never measurable against a given outcome.

The Performance Passage of Zeppelin

The temporal present in this piece is an evocative state, intended to exist both as real action, coherent in itself as a gesture, and a dream-state action. The realm of dream-state or dream consciousness is an attractive alternative when one is seeking to isolate and utilize a state of consciousness that is at once comprehensible to the viewer as a fantastic, unreal place and yet an entirely commonplace occurrence, as everyone dreams. The physical setting is the workings of the Zeppelin; repetitive action is present for the integrity of the gesture itself, and also as a metaphor for actual manoeuvres used in flying airships.

In choosing characters, positions and movements for the piece, I tried to have all elements have an inner logic of their own, i.e. they made sense in the context of performance and in the continuity of the piece, as well as being historical metaphors. I tried to achieve a balance between metaphorical and literal meaning of an action, and also between live and mediated imagery. The film image and the

live performance are meant to work in tandem. The piece is composed of images relating to aspects of Zeppelin flight: some of the machinery involved, procedures, personages. It is basically a visual piece, continuity is dependent on movement and is non-verbal. Images realised come from the film, music and text are pre-recorded. Individual characters are recognizable, Dr. Eckener, the widow, the navigator, the balance operator, the cook. The attention of the audience should not be focused on any individual aspect with predominance over any other, however, but a state of reverie should be induced, with associations between the images gradually leading to a personal interpretation of "story". There should be a feeling of continuum about the actions, once begun, their duration could be infinite, this is alterable by abrupt starts and stops, changes in momentum, direction. Each of the functions performed is entirely self-contained.

The audience enters the prepared performance space, a scaffolding, a mock-up of a Zeppelin body and nose, and some lines suggestive of the rigging of the airship are visible. After the audience has taken its place, the performers enter slowly through the door of the Zeppelin. As they approach the scaffolding, they put on various fragments of "costume", gloves, apron, hats, crew sweaters. They take their places

on the scaffolding, and the film of the Hindenburg starts. The action of the crew on the scaffolding is representative of the constant motions needed in order to keep the Zeppelin in flight: the balance operator is a sort of perpetual motion machine, whose original function was to keep the airship in trim. The navigator is constantly plotting the course and taking directional readings. The cook is constantly preparing food. The captain walks through the entire space, surveying activities. He takes letters from his pockets, walks back to the scaffolding. The actions of the performers on the airship are equivalent to a sort of drone, an endless repetition. It is important that the actions performed be both abstract and narrative, to contribute to the atmosphere of the piece, yet not to be mimed or emoted gestures. The film shown details the entire life-span of the Zeppelin Hindenburg, from its construction to its demise. Compiled of original newsreel footage, it is combined with an audio track which I composed of sound material dating from the 1920's and 30's.

After the performers have entered, the Captain climbs up to top section of scaffolding, balance operator to middle section section, and the navigator gets onto the lowest section of the platform. The balance operator walks across the back of the balance beam space, arranges weights

evoking the trim of the ship. The navigator plots direction of the ship on the map, notes his calculations in the log book, takes readings, notes his calculations each time.

The action continues cyclically repeating, the balance operator climbs the balance beam and starts swaying it up and down. The captain climbs down from the top section, walks through the back platform of the balance space, surveys the activity of the balance operator. He climbs down to the level of the navigator, verifies the notations in the log book, makes a signal on the telegraph. He takes some letters from his pocket, slowly climbs out of the scaffolding and walks up to the rigging lines near the audience, reads the letters, and returns to the scaffolding. The cook has been slowly ambulating throughout the performance space, making quick hand gestures imitating the motions of cooking. As the captain returns to the scaffolding, the cook also slowly works his way out of the central performance space. The widow appears on the stairway, slowly waving her hand in a goodbye gesture. She comes down the stairs to the bottom, walks slowly forwards to the audience, raises her hands, gloved with long, red gloves, palms facing the audience, and slowly traverses the space with arms raised. She walks back until she gets near the rigging, remains standing. This action coincides with the explosion of the Hindenburg, which

plays on the back wall. After the body of the ship has touched the ground and consumed itself, the widow starts to move again, turning slowly until she gets to the middle of the performance space and then, using a pushing motion of the arms, walks slowly backwards out of the space. Wiping his apron, the cook exits as the widow is backing out of the space. After the end of the film, the crew stands in place without moving, then they all descend the scaffolding, shedding the elements of clothing which they had put on at the beginning of the piece.

The audio material is contemporary with the Zeppelin period, except for a translation of a speech by Dr. Eckener. The acoustics of the available performance space, a very "live" space with exaggerated echo, presented a problem, as delicate audio effects were virtually impossible. The tape is composed of a layered collage of looped voices interspersed with contemporary (1927 - 45) songs.

FOOTNOTES

1. Cassirer, Ernst. The Philosophy of Symbolic Form. (pp 215-216) Yale University Press 1967
2. Op. Cit. (p 217)
3. Ibid. (p 218)
4. Ibid. (p 218)
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