

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF NON-THEATRE SITES ON AUDIENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

Through a detailed performance analysis of Kindle Theatre's *Eat Your Heart Out* (2009), Punchdrunk's *Faust* (2006) and my own practice directing Tin Box Theatre's *Stop the Clocks* (2011), this thesis investigates the phenomenological impact of performances which take place in non-theatre sites. I explore phenomenology with reference to Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his *Phenomenology of Perception*, in relation to existing notions of theatre phenomenology examined by Bert O. States and Stanton B. Garner. Using site-specific discourse to frame my analysis, I emphasise that the phenomenological experience of an audience is key within site-specific work, and of significance to existing conversations about the genre. I argue for the importance of phenomenology in such work specifically since it offers a live, multi-sensory experience to audiences in a world of increasing digitisation.

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THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF NON-THEATRE SITES ON AUDIENCE

Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life: it exists to make one feel things

-Victor Shklovsky

(1965, p.12)

During Look Left Look Right's *You Once Said Yes* (2011), a series of one-on-one encounters with fifteen different performers across Edinburgh, I walked alone down Grassmarket listening to an MP3 recording. A voice described the street to me in great detail, the smells I would experience as I walked past the cheese shop, the hog roast shop, calling on me to notice things I had never previously considered despite my many trips down Grassmarket. This performance allowed me to experience Edinburgh in a new way, engaging all my senses, as each character shared their story with me and took me on the next part of my journey. How can such performances change the way we experience the world? What is it about performances which take place outside the traditional theatre auditorium which produce a phenomenological experience for audiences?

I will explore these questions through an analysis of Kindle Theatre's *Eat Your Heart Out* (2009) in Stan's Café Theatre Company's A.E. Harris warehouse and Punchdrunk's *Faust* (2006) in an abandoned archive building, relating this to my own practice directing Tin Box Theatre's *Stop the Clocks* (2011) in Newman Brothers Coffin Fittings Factory. My research in this area stemmed from an interest in site-specific theatre, a discourse which I will use along with explorations of phenomenology to frame this analysis. Although site-specific theatre is predominantly recognised as a mode of performance which is created for and centres on one particular site (Wrights and Sites, 2001), it is useful to analyse these performances within site-specific discourse, in light of Patrice

Pavis's statement that "the term [site-specific] refers to a staging and performance conceived on the basis of a place in the real world" (1998, p.337-8). Rather than focussing on how the original function of the site is revealed within the performance, which is frequently the current emphasis of site-specific discourse, I will demonstrate that of equal importance to emerging conversations about site-specific work is the phenomenological experience of audiences (i.e. matters they perceive with their bodily senses), within such non-theatre sites.

CHAPTER ONE: KINDLE THEATRE'S *EAT YOUR HEART OUT*

Eat Your Heart Out tells the story of a devastated world plagued by famine, where the last three cooks on Earth are set the task of creating a banquet for their Queen. Kindle Theatre transformed the interior of the A.E. Harris warehouse into an apocalyptic junkyard containing overturned cars, fridges, tyres and washing machines piled high against the walls, with a pathway between them along which the audience could move. Designed by local artists, the set consisted of rubbish collected from Birmingham which resonated with the locality of the site, as inhabitants of (or visitors to) Birmingham wandered through the city's discarded possessions. *Eat Your Heart Out*'s junkyard was complemented by the setting of its warehouse, located down a backstreet in an industrial area of the city; its vast cavernous space, bleak external walls and metal gates providing the perfect backdrop for the desolate environment of Kindle Theatre's apocalyptic world.

Figure 1. Apocalyptic Junkyard in *Eat Your Heart Out* (2009), A.E. Harris Warehouse, Birmingham. Set designed and installed by Tony Appleby and Claire Wearn. Photograph by Steven Davies, Claire Wearn and Alicja Rogalska



Working within this site, rather than a traditional auditorium, gave Kindle Theatre the freedom to incorporate the audience in the environment of the performance, challenging conventions of the spectator's "pre-eminently visual experience" (Wiles, 2003, p.12). This was achieved as the performance existed in a site which was not constructed to support the act of passive watching, unlike the theatre auditorium which is "reinforced by stage lighting, air-conditioning, protective arm-rests and an architectural emphasis on sightlines" (Wiles, 2003, p.12). Such a non-auditorium performance environment can directly engage the audience in a sensory experience, defined by Mike Pearson, academic and director of site-specific company Brith Gof, as "*phenomenological*", where "the emphasis is on bodily contact, corporeality, embodiment" (2010, p.29). In *Eat Your Heart Out*, Kindle Theatre created a sensory experience for the audience as they moved through the site, able to feel the crunch of leaves underfoot and the cold air of the warehouse alongside the visual impact of the junkyard surrounding them. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception* emphasised that human perception is rooted in bodily experience, stating that by "remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall rediscover ourself [sic], since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is...the subject of perception" (2004, p.239). As Mark Fortier notes, "phenomenology is not concerned with the world as it exists in itself but with how the world appears (as phenomena) to the humans who encounter it" (2002, p.38) and it is the theatre's recreation of lived experience through performance which can introduce this encounter to an audience.

It is undeniable that within all theatre performances the audience are subject to a phenomenological experience which utilises at least two senses. Bert O. States investigates this in his *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre*, analysing phenomenology in relation to a range of theatre styles including realism, which he claims

achieves the “imprisonment of the eye” (1985, p.69), as “the stage picture leads us by the [visual and aural] senses into its world” (1985, p.51). In his book *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*, Stanton Garner also explores these ideas, looking at phenomenology within contemporary drama from 1950 – 1993. His analysis of Sam Shepherd’s *Curse of the Starving Class* (1978), is particularly interesting as it highlights that theatre in the auditorium can also utilise the audience’s sense of smell. He describes a moment in which a character made toast on stage, the smell of which “fill[ed] the spectator’s appetites, calling to attention their bodily sentience as they [sat] across from the heating toasters” (1994, p.99). I consider, however, that site-specific work, which is predominantly promenade in form and takes place in sites not originally constructed for performance, has the potential to create a profoundly phenomenological experience where the “visual need not take precedence” over other senses (Pearson 2010, p.141). Thus working within the extensive A.E. Harris warehouse, Kindle Theatre had the freedom to call on different physical senses in the performance. For example, *Eat Your Heart Out* culminated in a banquet where the audience were served a two-course meal, a heightened phenomenological experience incorporating all five of the audience’s senses, most significantly taste. Although it is not unheard of for audiences to consume food as part of a performance in a theatre auditorium, Kindle theatre’s creation of this environment in combination with the multisensory performance served to re-create the lived experience of eating a meal, as audience members sat side by side with others at long tables within the performance. The normality of eating a meal in this extraordinary context drew out their perceptual engagement with the world of the performance event.

Viewing work such as *Eat Your Heart Out* as a ‘performance event’, a term most often used to describe site-specific theatre, “emphasises the significance of the spatial

encounter and is conceived as a whole experience for the spectator” (Wilkie, 2002, p.153). Explorations of space are central within such performances, and using the term ‘event’ helps to nurture the audience’s expectations of experiencing and interacting with the performance in a shared space and time, much like other public events. The “spatial encounter” implicit in *Eat Your Heart Out* as a promenade performance, where the audience moves physically through the space, is vital in framing the journey of the performance. Garner explores this notion, stating that “theatrical space is phenomenal space, governed by the body and its spatial concerns” (1994, p.92). In light of this, it is arguable that non-theatre sites can become theatrical with the physical presence of the audience, transforming site from a place (location) to a space (performance). Cathy Turner observes this distinction in her comment that “space is created by the ways in which place is *moved through*” (2004, p.373). The path which the audience takes through the performance then serves, along with the architecture created by the performers, to re-invent the space. As Turner suggests, “each occupation, or traversal, or transgression of space offers a reinterpretation of it, even a rewriting. Thus space is often envisaged as an aggregation of layered writings - a palimpsest” (2004, p.373). The A.E. Harris warehouse can thus be viewed as a palimpsest, as a previously un-theatrical place which, as a site owned by artists, is repeatedly transformed into a site for performance; performers and audiences alike continue to write-and re-write over it.

Utilising the open warehouse of the A.E. Harris, Kindle Theatre were thus able to manipulate the framework of the space

to distribute its audience ... providing prospects unfamiliar or impossible to
conspire in the auditorium ... impos[ing] new arrangements with the audience ...
to conspire effects of distance, closeness, obliqueness

(Pearson, 2010, p.176).

In *Eat Your Heart Out* the cooks were spread amidst the junkyard, embellishing the architectural landscape of the set with performance, creating an environment which surrounded audiences and towered above them. As they moved through the performance, audiences could respond as they would to a sculpture, described by Paula Rabinowitz as “three-dimensional engagement” (2002, p.36). She explains that “walking around the object to see its fullness, forces acknowledging, if only subliminally, the space beyond the object, encouraging an active looking” (2002, p.36). Such an “active looking” can enable audience members to fully perceive the space around them. As Merleau-Ponty notes, “we are rediscovering our interest in the space in which we are situated. Though we see it only from a limited perspective – our perspective ... we relate to it through our bodies” (2004, p.54). This “limited perspective” of real life is emphasised by Cormac Power in his comments that, as a human, it is impossible to press a “pause button in which I can freeze my situation, step outside it, and examine its contents ‘objectively’, because my perceptions are following one another relentlessly from past to future” (2008, p.186). I would argue, however, that such performances as *Eat Your Heart Out* can allow the audience to achieve a sense of Power’s analogy. Our bodily perceptions of the performance event are heightened because we are aware that we are at an event to perceive something, and are therefore able to “actively look” at the contents of the performance around us. If in real life, we felt a breeze blow past us, we may be indifferent or distinctly unaware of our experience of it, whereas if we were moving through a performance environment and someone blew us with a fan we may examine this feeling, particularly

because we see how it is constructed. In this way “theatre and phenomenology are intimately linked in that both aim to cast the familiar in a fresh and unfamiliar light” (Power, 2008, p.178), as evidenced my experience walking down Grassmarket in *You Once Said Yes*.

Figure 2. Apocalyptic Junkyard in *Eat Your Heart Out* (2009), A.E. Harris Warehouse, Birmingham. Set designed and installed by Tony Appleby and Claire Wearn. Photograph by Steven Davies, Claire Wearn and Alicja Rogalska



Cliff McLucas of Brith Gof uses the phrase “the host and the ghost”, to “describe the relationship between place and event” (qtd. in Turner, 2004, p.374) in site-specific theatre, something which is particularly useful to my exploration of phenomenology within *Eat Your Heart Out*. According to McLucas, “the host site is haunted for a time by the ghost that the theatre makers create” (qtd. in Turner, 2004, p.374). The A.E. Harris, originally a metal factory, now owned by Stan’s Café Theatre Company, is thus a ‘host’ to a multiplicity of ‘ghost’ performances. The potential of this approach has been seen by many others, as witnessed by the recent trend of theatre companies taking ownership of

disused sites, for example Shunt, who make work in the tunnels under London Bridge and Theatre Absolute, who took up residency in the former Fishey Moore's chip shop in Coventry.

The incorporation of such 'ghost' architecture into a 'host' site can also serve to cast the site into a "fresh and unfamiliar light" (Power, 2008, p.178), seen in the sense of tension created between performance and site. Alluding to his work with Brith Gof, Pearson describes this as

the creation of a kind of purposeful paradox ... through the employment of orders of material seemingly unusual, inappropriate or perverse at this site: an opera in a shipyard, an early Welsh epic poem in a disused car factory

(2010, p.36).

In the case of *Eat Your Heart Out* this incongruence was created through the combination of decadent music, a junkyard and a banquet within a site which was once a metal factory. Rather than creating work which was rooted in the history of the site, Kindle Theatre had the freedom to draw from a variety of stimuli; their music inspired by the Baroque era and their apocalyptic setting by our "contemporary obsession with Armageddon" (Kindle Theatre, 2009) in order to create a different world within the A.E. Harris. Such a "paradox" (Pearson, 2010, 36) serves to enrich the performance event, as the juxtaposition of the site and the content of the performance can influence the atmosphere of the space as it is experienced by its audience. The candle-lit banquet, for example, was held within a vast and eerie room; the very opposite of a convivial dining experience. By juxtaposing contradictory sensory elements within *Eat Your Heart Out*, Kindle Theatre were able to make the audience all the more aware of their surrounding environment.

Kindle Theatre's *Eat Your Heart Out* also served to create an interactive relationship between its performers and spectators, something which is perhaps more readily achieved in an "open performance area", as there are "no formal divisions" (Pearson, 2010, p.75). As Peggy Phelan notes, performance is substantiated on "the interaction between the art object and the spectator" (1993, p.147), but within such performances as *Eat Your Heart Out* this interaction is heightened as the audience's physical presence is brought to the forefront. In performances within the theatre auditorium, as Garner observes, audiences are aware of their presence within the performance, which is sanctioned "through our applause, our laughter, even the attentiveness of our silence" (1994, p.49). Site-specific performance, however, provides the audience with an awareness of their *individual* presence, as audience members stand together in the light, aware of themselves in the gaze of the performers and each other. This realisation of presence can be explained in light of phenomenology, which "takes account of the fact that to be in the world is to encounter other people, and part of our awareness is an awareness that others perceive us" and specifically in Jean-Paul Sartre's investigation of "how we act in light of others who are watching us" (Fortier, 2002, p.41). In *Eat Your Heart Out*, the narrator facilitated this relationship by conversing with the audience directly, handing them objects to pass round such as a box containing a tiny carrot, highlighting the preciousness of food in a world of scarcity. The audiences' sense of touch was instantly awakened, allowing them to embark on a phenomenological exploration of this world through the object they held in their hands.

In an age where audiences are increasingly ready to interact with performances and contemporary theatre companies are able to facilitate such a desire with new modes of performance, it seems eminently fitting that new spaces for performance are being explored. Gay McAuley critiques the spatial construction of the traditional theatre auditorium as one which makes the audience feel “disempowered” (2000, p.281-2). She argues in favour of performance spaces which are “ordered in such a way that genuine exchange can take place between the human beings on stage and those in the auditorium” (McAuley, 2000, p.281-2). From the initial interventions into performer-spectator interaction from revolutionary practitioners such as Augusto Boal, among numerous others, continuous interventions within the theatre auditorium have since attempted to situate spectators within the action. Notably so is The Royal Court’s production of Tim Crouch’s *The Author* (2009), in which the entire staging consisted of two banks of audience directly facing each other, where the performers were seated amongst them and the story emerged from within the auditorium. However, it seems that work created outside a traditional auditorium already has an advantage in that there is no existing conventional performer-audience structure to contend with, just a space with which to play. Turner emphasises this notion in her comment that “it was the emptiness, not the structure, that fascinated me: this was a place in waiting, its previous functions outgrown, its future uncertain” (2000, p.36).

Perhaps such work is being created in line with changing modes of perception in contemporary society, where, as Hans-Thies Lehmann suggests in *Postdramatic Theatre*, “a simultaneous and multi-perspectival form of perceiving is replacing the linear-successive” (2006, p.16). Tim Etchells, artistic director of Forced Entertainment, writes that we live in an intensely media-driven society, where we are constantly “channel

hopping” (1999, p.111). Our perspective of the world around us can increasingly be seen as a collage of documented experiences, pictures, conversations from our own witnessed events and those we see on television and the internet. As a result it is arguable that the spectator of contemporary theatre, as Elinor Fuchs suggests in her *Death of Character*, is “too restless and driven to be contained in a theatre seat...prowl[ing] the total entertainment, simultaneously consuming and consumed” (1996, p.141). In performances like *Eat Your Heart Out*, the audience can break away from the same act of watching which they encounter daily on various digital screens, and develop a phenomenological awareness of their own living, breathing existence within the surrounding live performance event which they perceive through their bodily senses.

Beyond the constraints of the auditorium the spectator, or what Dermot Moran terms the “experiencer” (2000, p.177), takes on a fundamental role within the action of the performance. As a result, audience members could perhaps be more suitably described as witnesses to the performance event. In his site-specific performances, McLucas refers to the audience as “witness”, seen along with the “host” and the “ghost” to form a “trinity that constitutes the work” (qtd. in Turner, 2004, p.374). Forced Entertainment, who created such site-specific performances as *Nights in This City* (1995), holds the notion of witnessing central to their work. The artistic director, Etchells, argues for a more meaningful notion of the audience as witness, commenting that “to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one’s own place in them, even if that place is simply, for the moment, as an onlooker” (1999, p.17). It is this consideration of the audience as ‘witnesses’ which exemplifies the phenomenological impact of *Eat Your Heart Out*. This was epitomised in the banquet section where, after eating an offal stew which was brimming with sausages and other

morsels of dubious looking meat, a 'cooked body' was wheeled on, covered with a white cloth, which the audience could only assume to be the Queen. Thus the audience members were not only witnesses to the cooks' crime, but were implicated in it, as consumers of the stew seemingly made of the Queen's body. Their phenomenological perception of the performance was thus intensified by their physical complicity and embodied knowledge of the cooks' crime.

In site-specific performance the audience-as-witnesses may also be placed in role in line with the conventions of the site. An example of this is The Other Way Works's *Black Tonic* (2008-2009), performed in various hotels across the UK, which framed the audience as guests at the hotel. Four audience members were able to attend each performance; their tickets were printed as room bookings which were validated at a 'reception' in exchange for a room key. Throughout the performance the audience were guided to follow several actors who were portrayed as either staying or working in the hotel. The action took place in various locations around the hotel, including the audience's own designated room, the characters' rooms, the corridor, the lift and the hotel bar. As the event took place within the real space and time of the hotel, The Other Way Works created tension between the reality of the site and the performance occurring within it, in an imitation of guests and staff by performers and audience alike. The audience were thus made to feel as if they were witnessing the event happening around them whilst staying at the hotel, enabling them to perceive the performance from a particular phenomenological perspective.

It seems, then, that a significant part of the notion of audience-as-witnesses is a consideration of the way in which the audience are framed in a meaningful role within the performance, reinforcing their phenomenological presence. This was particularly significant within *Eat Your Heart Out*, as the audience themselves were alluded to as food. Upon entering the site, for example, a brown paper tag labelled with their name and expiry date was tied to each audience member's wrist. Such attention to detail acknowledged the presence of each audience member as a live participator in the performance event, with their name in writing, and an expiry date; the latter a recognisable label which we associate with food. Within site-specific performance, audiences are often framed in a specific role. Turner observes this, commenting that when watching a performance, "every audience member has a vast range of perceptual roles at their disposal: theatre spectator, tourist, game player, partygoer, voyeur, connoisseur, witness, scientific observer, detective" (2000, p.25). In the case of *Eat Your Heart Out*, our perceptual role was characterised literally as dinner.

The notion of the audience as objects of food within a cannibalistic world was carried throughout the performance and enforced through Kindle Theatre's utilisation of the 'host' space, transformed by the 'ghost' architecture of the set. Beyond the junkyard was a tunnel made from chicken wire which the audience walked through on ground covered in hay. Such inclusion of natural elements from the outside world once more drew on the audience's phenomenological experience of the performance. States refers to this as "living things" which are "tethered to the real world" (1985, p.37). By "living", States suggests objects that "are alive in the sense of belonging to immediate existence, to the steady flux of signs, but not yet to the world of art" (1985, p.37). Placing such a real world

material as hay on the ground so that the audience could smell it and feel it beneath their feet triggered feelings associated with being on a farm, alluding to the journey of animals to the slaughter house. This served to increase the audience's sense of their perceptual role within the performance. The tunnel was constructed in a circular path, so that the audience could see the other audience members traversing the space on the other side, a herd of bodies moving through chicken wire. This reinforced the notion of the audience's phenomenological "encounter" (Fortier, 2002, p.41), witnessing others as they imagine they are being witnessed themselves.

Thus, such alternative 'host' sites for performance as the A.E. Harris enable a 'ghost' performance to create a phenomenological experience for its audience-as-witnesses, whose physical presence within the site brings the performance event to life. Previously un-theatrical sites such as the A.E. Harris which are now used as received sites for art are thus vital, not only in serving to support developments in performance as practitioners continue their "enquiry of what theatre is *and might be*" (Wilkie qtd. in Pearson, 2010, p.9), but in "allow[ing] us to rediscover the world in which we live, yet we are always prone to forget" (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p.32). Stan's Café Theatre Company comment that the A.E. Harris space is "here to help make interesting things happen that otherwise wouldn't happen" (Stan's Café Theatre Company, 2011), highlighting the possibilities of work within such spaces,

whereby practitioners use their focus on geographical space to explore a range of theatrical, conceptual, political and virtual spaces. Thus the potentially restrictive *specificity* of the work is expanded to allow for multiplicity and ambiguity

(Wilkie qtd. in Pearson, 2010, p.9).

CHAPTER TWO: PUNCHDRUNK'S *FAUST*

When performance is located outside the spatial construction of the theatre auditorium and audience members are placed within its environment, it is often referred to as immersive. Although such performances as *Eat Your Heart Out* could be described as immersive, this term holds resonance with the work of Punchdrunk, who explore this notion on a deeper level. As journalist Susannah Clapp comments, “this was the decade of immersive theatre. All over the country, dramas flew out of purpose-built stages ... and had spectators on their feet, helping to create their stories. The company that set the movement alight was Punchdrunk” (2009, p.4). Andrew Eglinton points up that despite reviewers’ frequent utilisation of the term ‘immersive’ (Billington 2009; Mountford 2009), to describe a “type of performance that engulfs its audience in a responsive environment, rarely is the term subject to further questioning” (2010, p.49). Eglinton questions whether immersion is a “phenomenological state experienced by all” (2010, p.49), and I argue that it is. Garner underlines phenomenology as a means of returning “perception to the fullness of its encounter with its environment” (1994, p.3), and this is incarnate in Punchdrunk’s *Faust*.

Felix Barrett, founder and director of Punchdrunk theatre, holds the notion of the “phenomenology of theatre” central to his work, which he creates in reaction to the dominant proscenium configuration of theatre, characterised by the spatial separation of audience and performer, physical stasis in the auditorium, and a sensory experience often confined to sight and sound

(Eglinton, 2010, p.47).

Like McLucas's notion of the trinity of host, ghost and witness, Barrett describes the audience as the "epicentre" of Punchdrunk's performances, "upon which all elements of the production converge" (qtd. in Eglinton, 2010, p.48). This was certainly the case for their production of *Faust*, described as "an epic journey into the heaven and hell of Faust's legendary downfall" (Punchdrunk, 2006a) which left its audience to find their way through a five-floored disused archive building in Wapping, shaping their own narrative.

Punchdrunk located this adaptation of Goethe's *Faust* in 1950s Southern U.S, where the musician Robert Johnson had sold his soul to the devil. The event began in a seedy bar, where the audience members learned of Robert Johnson and his fateful decision. They were then ushered into a large lift and were each given a white mask to wear for the duration of the performance. From this point on they were left alone to explore the space. Punchdrunk transformed the warehouse space into a variety of different rooms, connected by candle-lit corridors housing eerie statues. These included a motel reception room, a fifties diner, a cornfield and most hauntingly, an empty room which contained only a noose hanging from the ceiling and an overturned chair underneath it.

Figure 3. A room in *Faust*, 21 Wapping Lane, London. Set designed by Robin Harvey. Photograph by Stephen Dobbie, Benedict Johnson and David McCormic.



Figure 4. Cornfield in *Faust*, 21 Wapping Lane, London. Set design by Robin Harvey. Photograph by Stephen Dobbie, Benedict Johnson and David McCormic.



The practice of giving masks to the audience is a trademark element of Punchdrunk's work. Gareth White comments that the purpose of the masks is "not just about being anonymous" (2009, p.221), but is a technique to increase the immersive nature of the audience's experience. He comments that the use of masks "seems to inhibit interaction between spectators, and between spectators and performers" in order to "disrupt our identification with the crowd, and facilitate a more immersive and less performative experience" (White, 2009, p.225). In opposition to the notion of a phenomenological sense of physical presence in the audience's awareness that they are being watched by another, it seems that the mask allows the audience to feel present within the performance as "part of the scenery" (White, 2009, p.224). A similar result was achieved in Shams's *Reykjavik* (2010-11), in which the audience were instructed to wear white boiler suits, enabling them to feel part of the bleak, white, Icelandic landscape of the performance.

It seems that it is Punchdrunk's use of masks which allows the audience to fully immerse themselves within the performance, heightening their individual phenomenological perception of the performance event and drawing them in as participants. As White describes,

when characters address spectators - for example when Mephistopheles seductively takes someone by the hand and pours them a shot of vodka - people do seem to respond less self-consciously, hidden behind the mask, than they might if openly visible to an audience

(2009, p.224).

This technique of immersion was also explored by Lundahl & Seidl in their *Symphony of a Missing Room* (2011), in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. For the majority of the performance, the audience wore goggles which limited their field of vision to a white light, and wore headphones which provided alternate sound effects to the ones the audience would have heard in reality. As an audience member, I lost any feelings of self-consciousness and became immersed in an imaginary world, guided by the voice in my ears and the touch of the performers who guided me. What is most interesting about this performance is that in limiting the audiences' vision, the company were able to centre the experience on the tactile and aural elements within the performance, reinforcing Pearson's the notion that the "visual need not take precedence" (2010, p.141).

In such performances as *Faust*, which take all senses into equal consideration, there is inevitably emphasis on how the performance can be perceived by the body. Garner explores notions of "the body as the centre of theatrical experience" (1994, p.5), a key preoccupation of *Faust*, as a performance which, to repeat Barrett's phrase, used the audience as "epicentre" (Barrett qtd. in Eglinton, 2010, p.48). White describes the ways in which he was able to freely interact with Punchdrunk's performance environment, commenting that "if there is a chair, there is no reason not to sit on it, and if there is a library, we can pick up the books and read them" (White, 2009, p.223). This is a striking

contrast to Garner's description of the "spectators in the modern theatre and their phenomenal disembodiment as they sit in the dark" (1994, p.106). This is arguably because in the traditional seating arrangements of the theatre auditorium, the mind experiences the performance in isolation as, predominantly, the body remains in stasis and three out of the five senses lie dormant. Merleau-Ponty's analysis of human perception of the mind and body moves away from Derrida's notion of the two concepts being distinct, as he claims that "for the first time, we come across the idea that rather than a mind *and* a body, man is mind *with* a body, a being who can only get to the truth of things because its body is, as it were, embedded in those things" (2004, p.43). It is in such immersive performances as *Faust* where the spectator's mind *and* body is embedded in the landscape of the performance, that Punchdrunk can facilitate an experience of the "world as it is lived" (Garner, 1994, p.26).

In *Faust*, the phenomenological impact of the performance also depended on the emotive quality of fear which was evoked. Just as in *Eat Your Heart Out*, when waiting for the banquet section of the performance I felt an anticipatory hunger as before any other meal, it seems that audiences of Punchdrunk's *Faust* experienced real fear. Fiona Mountford describes these feelings in her experience of the performance: "when someone - an actor? A fellow spectator? - brushes past you in the Stygian gloom, it is truly sinister. How thrilling that theatre can ... thrust us way outside our comfort zone" (2006). It is arguable that this quality was enhanced by the space itself in its otherness to the traditional theatre auditorium, a place beyond the audience's "comfort zone". Leslie Hill questions, "where are the contemporary spaces that offer the heat and friction, the danger and excitement theatre tendered back in the days when it was the most combustible building in the city?" (2006, p.211). She resolves that "the toothless old theatre building holds no fear

... it's the architecture of the tube tunnels, the bridges, the skyscrapers and the airports that now whisper *inferno*" (2006, p.211). I do not argue that traditional theatre spaces have no relevance today, but rather that other sites have a valuable architectural contribution to make to the audience's phenomenological experience of the performance. For example, in Grid Iron's *What Remains* (2011), performed in Edinburgh University's Medical School Anatomy Department, it was the architecture of the site which helped to evoke this sense of fear, as we followed the story of a composer tortured by his desire for surgical precision in his compositions. Awaiting the final scene, the audience stood up against tall, iron railings, peering into the darkness ahead, able to make out the shapes of statues and the silhouette of a skeletal dinosaur, which were in fact part of the Medical School's exhibition room. The silence seemed to fill the building as we waited in this unfamiliar place, unsure of what was to come. These unpredictable sites for performance, therefore, hold a multiplicity of possibilities in the creation of exciting experiences for audiences. It seems that creating genuine experiences of fear and danger is a central part of the excitement of Punchdrunk's *Faust*, perhaps fitting in an age where we continually seek stimulation and adrenalin rushes, from energy drinks to roller coasters. By allowing their audience to freely immerse themselves in the world of the performance, Punchdrunk show that performance can also create exciting experiences.

As Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt observe, "site-specific performance tends towards a high level of interactivity", as spectators are not only physically interacting with the space as they travel through it, but often become spectator-dramaturgs as they find their own meaning in the performance" (Turner and Behrndt, 2008, p.198). Such a notion is exemplified in *Faust*, as "instead of being led or directed from location to location, audience members wander through the venue at will, catching glimpses of performers and

scenes as they happen across them” (Freshwater, 2009, p.66). In such performance, the audience is required to participate actively in the construction of the narrative as they choose their own journey through the space. Punchdrunk made this decision in order to deliberately reject the “passive obedience usually expected of audiences” (Punchdrunk, 2006b). It is interesting to view this in light of the phenomenology of presence, as Garner observes in relation to post-Husserlian phenomenology, which has

rejected presence as unitary self-givenness in favour of a view of presence as constituted by vanishing points and dissociations ... set[ting] into play additional levels of deferral, subjecting the perceptual status of the object to further unsettling and complication

(1994, p.39).

Such a notion seems particularly poignant in light of Punchdrunk’s *Faust*, where each spectator’s responsibility for their own experience of the performance is arguably a radical way of unsettling the perceptual status of the theatre object; it heightens the phenomenological impact of the performance event through the inevitable “vanishing points” and “dissociations” (Garner, 194, p.39) of each spectator’s individual experience. While the audience are in one room, they are completely unaware of what is going on in the others. So, in this sense, *Faust* mirrors our phenomenological experience of life, catching fleeting glances of moments as they pass us by, and whilst we are in one place we cannot help wondering if there is something more exciting happening elsewhere.

This feeling was exemplified in my experience of *Hotel Medea* (2011), an overnight performance in Summer Hall, Edinburgh. In one section of the performance, the audience were split into two groups. One group were taken by maids and dressed in pyjamas, after which they were tucked into bunk-beds with a cup of hot cocoa and read a bedtime story. The other group sat in a circle beside the bunk beds and talked about love. I soon realised that those in the bunk-beds were framed as Medea's children, whilst the other group of audience members, in a space representing Medea's bedroom, were to witness a moment from her relationship with her power-hungry husband. As an audience member in the first group, I found it difficult to go to sleep as I wanted to watch what was happening on the other side of the room. As in *Faust*, this moment explored our phenomenological experience of life, in our constant fear of missing out. Whereas in *Faust* the audience members chose which moments they were to experience, in *Hotel Medea*, what each audience member witnessed was controlled. This served to increase the first group's sense of childlike vulnerability, heightening our perceptual experience as Medea's children, who are supposed to be asleep.

It is interesting that Punchdrunk is described by the *Guardian* as a company that "stages experiences, not plays" (Editorial, 2009, p.34). While it is important to recognise the unique experience of the audience in such work, in this adaptation, the story told by the play text holds the original close to its core. The performance explored new ground by placing the play in a non-theatre site and spreading it out across multiple rooms. In this way *Faust* "undid narrative time, whilst allowing the audience to enter and explore a sensory play world" (Mermikides and Smart, 2010, p.195). A classic European legend, the story of *Faust* is well-known, retold not only by Goethe but firstly by Christopher Marlowe in his *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus*. In choosing such a well-known story

to adapt to the space, it is assumed that a large proportion of audience members are familiar with the events of the narrative. In this sense, the story itself may be described as a 'ghost', which Punchdrunk placed into the 'host' site. Both Goethe and Marlowe's plays perhaps run in the minds of the audiences as they recall ghosts of other performances, or for some it may be the ghost of the story itself which haunts their experience of Punchdrunk's performance event. As Power observes, our present experience is always fundamentally "shaped and mediated by prior experiences and the anticipation of future experience" (2008, p.193), and these become the 'ghosts' of our theatrical experiences.

Punchdrunk, like Kindle theatre and its *Eat Your Heart Out*, did not take inspiration from the original function of the site in their creation of *Faust*, but instead used its vast internal architecture to create an immersive performance environment which in turn provided the audience with a physical and sensory experience. It is precisely Punchdrunk's intention to inhabit disused sites in order to create "sensory theatrical worlds", focusing "as much on the audience and performance space as on the performers and narrative", as their "designers occupy deserted buildings and apply a cinematic level of detail to immerse their audience into the world of the show" (Punchdrunk, 2006b). Perhaps this is symptomatic of companies who work in disused sites such as factories or warehouses that no longer house the machinery, interiors, or workers which defined their original function. This provides the performers with the freedom to interpret the space in their own way, writing the performance environment upon it. Performances located in functioning sites on the other hand are inevitably shaped within the conventions of the performance's location, as evidenced in *Black Tonic*, where The Other Way Works utilised the conventions of the site to enable the audience to witness the events of the performance as 'hotel guests'. Our work within Newman Brother's Coffin Fittings factory for *Stop the*

Clocks seems to be situated between these examples. As *Stop the Clocks* was the first performance to take place in the site, which closed in 1998, the history was very present to us and was our core inspiration when devising. In addition to this, it was also the emptiness of the site and space that allowed us to explore another world which could symbolically resonate within it.

CHAPTER THREE: TIN BOX THEATRE'S *STOP THE CLOCKS*

Stop the Clocks (2011) was a collaboratively devised performance in Newman Brothers Coffin Fittings Factory, situated in Birmingham's old industrial Jewellery Quarter. Phenomenology was fundamental to *Stop the Clocks*, as an exploration of the lived experiences and memories of Mary Fincher, a fictional character. Within the performance the audience moved through various environments which provided a sensory engagement with experiences from Mary's life. I hope to interrogate the ways in which we sought to create a phenomenological experience for our audience, and how we situated this within the site, which I will argue became a symbol of the lives which it once helped to commemorate. Turner describes that often in site-specific performance "the real site is fictionalised, made metaphoric, but remains physically present and capable of other fictions, other metaphors, other occupations" (Turner, 2000, p.39).

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological investigation of objects is relevant to *Stop the Clocks*, as the inciting incident of the performance centred on the arrival of a box containing six objects, each of which represented a moment from Mary's life. As Merleau-Ponty notes,

our relationship with things is not a distant one: each speaks to our body and to the way we live ... [as] people's tastes, character, and the attitude they adopt to the world and to particular things can be deciphered from the objects with which they choose to surround themselves ... [including] their preferences for certain colours

(2004, p.48).

The six objects significant to Mary were revealed to the audience in the opening sequence of *Stop the Clocks* inside the factory, and each reappeared throughout the performance at the point in which the story it represented was told. For example, a performer held a small ring box in her hands when introducing the moment of Mary's engagement. We decided that Mary's favourite colour was green, and so each of the audience members were given a green flower upon entering the site. The colour green was then incorporated throughout the performance, from green bunting and decorative green ribbon in the courtyard to a green cloth which was used to bundle all the objects together in the opening sequence to symbolise both baby Mary and the birth of her stories within the performance. By incorporating such detail we hoped to provide the audience with a perceptual understanding of Mary's character.

Figure 5. Birth of objects sequence in *Stop the Clocks*, Newman Brother's Coffin Fittings Factory, Birmingham. Photograph by Jay Hooper.



In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty aimed to “show that the world of perception is, to a great extent, unknown territory ... [and] one of the great achievements of modern art and philosophy ... has been to allow us to rediscover the world in which we live” (2004, p.32). In addition to modern art and philosophy, I argue that it is site-specific theatre which allows people to re-engage their sensory perceptions of the world around them. We focused on the perception of discovery in our creation of the ‘shed’, an experience within *Stop the Clocks* which we framed as one of Mary’s earliest memories. Within this scene, we aimed to create a sense of childlike exploration, encouraging audiences to take a moment to engage their senses, exploring the touch, feel and smell of objects as a child might as they witness them for the first time. We placed plant pots around the space with such contents as herb plants, bulbs, or seeds, each with a label which read “touch me”, or “smell me” or “shake me”. The room itself was small, creating an intimate atmosphere, and had hooks on the walls, originally used to hang various samples of coffin fittings, but which we used to hang garden implements. We heightened the aural environment of the room, as performers stood amongst the audience and used a metal bucket, a bag of plant bulbs, and a hat containing wooden balls to create the sound of rain hitting the roof of the shed and dripping through into a bucket. In this scene our implicit focus was on the shed as Mary’s place to escape to, and we drew on the cosy feeling that can be created by the sounds of rain outside, for those inside who are safe in the knowledge that they are warm and dry. We found that using stools instead of chairs in this moment was a useful strategy for immersing the audience within the performance environment, as the stools gave no indication of which way to face, in complete otherness to the constructed sightlines of the traditional auditorium.

Figure 6. The Shed room in *Stop the Clocks*, Newman Brother's Coffin Fittings Factory, Birmingham. Photograph by Jay Hooper



In *Stop the Clocks* we were working within a site which had no electricity and so we relied on musical instruments, found objects, and the performers' own voices to create the majority of our sound throughout the performance. In the 'shed' scene we also utilised the architecture of the site to explore different ways of making sound in order to enhance the audience's phenomenological experience. When describing Mary's childhood memories of crouching outside her parent's dinner parties as she strained to hear their conversation, performers in the next room played soft music on a ukulele, clinked wine glasses and spoke in murmuring voices intermingled with laughter. As the walls which separated these rooms were made of a thin wood we were able to achieve a quality of sound which was distant but still audible. This enabled us to recreate Mary's experience for the audience, as they themselves strained to listen to the sounds next door. The performers also slammed the wooden door of the room shut as the audience were told Mary's story of being locked in the shed by her older brother, and a performer walked down the staircase above the room as the audience were told Mary heard someone coming

to get her from the shed. Unlike the sound effects used in most theatre auditoriums, the performers were able to utilise the features of the building to create these sounds in actuality. As Schechner observes, “performances are always actually performed” (Schechner, 1985, p.41), and so live performed sound is perhaps closer to a phenomenological experience as the audience witness its live creation. In Philip Auslander’s *Liveness*, he critiques this notion of live experience, claiming that “live performance is the category of cultural production most directly affected by the dominance of the media” (1999, p.2). Fortier comments on Auslander’s position stating that “we can no longer be ‘live’ in an essential and authentic way” (2002, p.44). I would argue, however, that it is possible to achieve liveness in such a performance. This can be explained by State’s observation that theatre “brings us into phenomenal contact with *what* exists, or with what it is possible *to do*, theatrically, with what exists” (1985, p.37). He examines this notion in light of the fact that “one could define the history of theatre ... as a progressive colonisation of the real world” (States, 1985, p.36). When read in light of practice which takes place in real sites, placing the audience in phenomenological engagement with surroundings which are ‘real’, site-specific theatre seems to move beyond States’s notion of the phenomenological experience of watching and hearing lived experience on stage, allowing audiences to perceive lived experience in real world sites.

Pearson notes that “much site-specific performance is ostensibly predicted upon *phenomenological* encounter” as performance which is located “in a real world, it may occasion or necessitate real world responses, but in a new frame of reference- performance- which of its nature may heighten or exaggerate immediate effects” (2010, p.171). This can be seen in figure 5, above, where it is evident that aspects of the real have impacted on the performance. This photograph captures that during this performance, the

sunlight streams through the window, casting a warm glow over the performance area. This effect is enhanced by the architecture of the site, as the sunlight casts a silhouette of the large, nineteenth century factory windows. The audience were bathed in sunlight, in touch with their phenomenological experience of this effect of nature. Such a natural moment could not have been relied upon for every performance, creating an effect which was specific to that audience.

It is also in witnessing the real effects of the site on the performer which heightens the audience's phenomenological experience of such performance events. Pearson states that "in the dynamic interplay of body and environment ... performers encounter - and counter - the immediate effects of site. Audience witness the impact of real phenomena" within an "active and animate environment ... eliciting ranges of physical and emotional response" (2010, p.173). Here Pearson describes the effects of Brith Gof's *Goddodin* (1988) performed in a disused Rover car factory, where, within a setting "flooded with water", performers "climbed rope nets to a deafening soundtrack in the concentrated jets of high pressure hoses" (2010, p.173). In such performances, the audience are witnesses to the real responses of the performers to their actions and environment. This was the case in the final moment of *Stop the Clocks*, where the energy of the performers' physical scores served to make them incredibly out of breath, paralleling their representation of Mary becoming increasingly tired as, despite having a heart condition, she manages to give birth to and raise two children. Such a moment was emphasised by the environment of the factory, where the cold, dusty rooms only served to increase the performers' struggle.

It is interesting to analyse this moment in relation to Garner's analysis of Pinter's *The Caretaker*, as he describes the setting of the play in the Caretaker's room, where

the human subject confronts its inescapable inherence in the world of objects, registered in the sensory channels through which objects exist as phenomena.

... The elements of this field in *The Caretaker* impinge on the body: the air from the window is cold, as is the rain that comes through it; the bedcovers are dusty; the light bulb on the ceiling is bright; objects are in the way

(1994, p.115).

It is interesting to consider, in relation to Garner's analysis of the phenomenology of the fictional world of *The Caretaker*, how these elements could be embodied by the audience if they were to be immersed in the environment of the performance. In site-specific performance, such imagined sensory phenomena would be moved from the stage and created in actuality for audiences, who themselves would be able to feel the cold air coming from the window, to touch the dust on the bedcovers. In *Stop the Clocks*, even when the audience were seated, their bodies were engaged in sensory experience. On Mary's train journey, each spectator was given a ticket to board the 'train', and as the performers announced that it started to rain, the audience were sprayed gently with vaporisers. As the performers described Mary resting her forehead on the cool, rain-streaked glass, the audience could still feel the cold drops of water that had been sprayed onto their arms moments before. In these ways the audience were constantly reminded of the presence of their bodily perceptions, in empathy with Mary's experiences. Perhaps such a moment caused them to recall memories of similar moments within their own lives,

as Henry Bergson states “with the immediate and present data of our senses we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience” (1911, p.24).

Like Punchdrunk’s *Faust* we were able to utilise the space of the site to immerse the audience in the environment of the performance. We explored this in particular in the tiny room in which we staged Mary’s proposal. Like the goggles worn by the audience in *Symphony of a Missing Room* in Birmingham’s Museum and Art Gallery, we limited the audience’s visual experience in this moment order to heighten their aural engagement with the room. Framed as a café, the room was dark apart from a performer’s head torch, which shone on a table in the corner, lighting up Mary’s two hands which rested on it, waiting. Three performers stood in the room, amongst the audience, creating the sounds of the café using cutlery, wine glasses, and their voices. One performer strummed gently on a ukulele. This served to create the sense that the audience were in a bustling café, faintly hearing snippets of conversations at other tables, but allowing the light to direct their gaze to the table where a story was about to be told.

We also incorporated one-to-one performance in *Stop the Clocks*, where spectators were led to different parts of Mary’s house to sit with a performer who told them a story from Mary’s life there. In this moment, each audience member’s feelings of physical presence were heightened as a performer engaged in an intimate conversation with them. As Garner contends, “as long as theatre stages the perceiving body before other perceiving bodies, it will ... offer up the phenomenal realm as a constitutive dimension of its spectacle” (1994, p.230). Therefore in this moment, the audience member was placed in a situation where the performer relied on their presence in order to perform exclusively for

them. This heightened their feeling of phenomenological presence, making them aware of their responsibility as witness to this story, and of themselves in the gaze of the performer who sat opposite them.

Throughout the piece, Mary was described in the third person and appeared only as a disembodied figure; a shadow, a pair of hands, a faceless woman. Her presence in each scene was symbolic, created through a subtle acknowledgement of her absence. As Power notes, theatre should “be seen as a place of almost infinite possibility in which presence is subject to playful manipulation” (2008, p.198), and it was in our manipulation of Mary’s presence which gave the audience the freedom to imagine her, perhaps allowing her to be a person whose lived experiences were close to their own. After the performers had portrayed the last moment of Mary’s life, the audience were given MP3 players in which they heard the actual speaking voice of Mary. We felt that the MP3 players provided an interesting feeling of intimacy for each audience member, the sound being contained to their own ears through headphones, evoking the sense that their imagined Mary was speaking to them alone.

The final traversal through the site retraced the journey of the performance, and as the audience walked back through each room, a performer stood within it, as Mary, recapturing moments from her life which we had explored within the performance. It is interesting to consider this moment in light of Alison Oddey’s notion of the “performance walk”, explored in her essay “Tuning into Sound and Space: Hearing, Voicing and Walking”. She notes that

the walk invites the 'spectator-protagonist', to interact with the living environment surrounding them, to look at objects, to new modes of perception, which focus the spectator's memories of self and to think differently, walking across time

(2009, p.134).

Her sense of "walking across time" seems particularly relevant here, as the audience retraced the steps they had previously taken through Mary's life, considering moments and experiences from it; similar to the psychological process a person often experiences when someone has died. Through this act of walking, the spectator thus becomes the "protagonist", as it is in their movement through the space which enables them fully to perceive the performance, and in this case, enables them to re-embody Mary's lived experiences while listening to her voice.

At the end of their journey, the audience reached the room where Mary and her stories were born. In a sequence in reverse to that at the beginning, each object was slowly replaced into the box. The performers then each took off their green flowers and placed them in the box of objects, encouraging the audience to do the same as a memorial to Mary. In this moment, the flowers which the audience members had worn for the entire performance became a symbol of death, reminiscent of the ritual of placing flowers in the grave. Enabling the audience to do this allowed them to interact with this ritual within the performance, creating a phenomenological moment as they placed their own flower down; perhaps re-living a remembered experience of doing so in life. There was a similar moment to this in *Hotel Medea*, where at the very end of the performance the audience entered a shrine room in which lay the 'bodies' of Medea's children. The audience were

invited to place flowers, candles and toys on the graves, until both bodies were covered in offerings. Just like passing round the box containing a carrot in *Eat Your Heart Out*, the audience were given a tactile experience, and in both *Stop the Clocks* and *Hotel Medea*, their act of placing down offerings was their literal contribution as witnesses to the performance.

The final room of *Stop the Clocks* was structured with floor to ceiling wooden shelves, used originally as a storeroom for the coffin fittings factory. These shelves housed metal boxes, one of which we used as a symbolic coffin to contain Mary's objects, and which inspired us in our early decisions to make this a conceptual basis for the piece. It was here that the symbolic impact of the site within the performance was revealed, as a factory which had helped celebrate lives for over a century. In order to symbolise all the lives which the factory had commemorated, we utilised the other boxes in the other shelves, each with a label indicating a person's name and their dates of birth and death, markings associated with gravestones. More than a symbolic graveyard however, we wanted this room to highlight all the stories of lives that have yet to be told, and so a label was attached to each empty shelf giving a name and date of birth, but no end date. Mary's label was one of these, and as their MP3 players faded into music, the audience witnessed Mary's box being placed in the shelf, as a performer wrote the date of her death on her label and tied it to her box. After a moment of stillness, the spectators were able to explore the small room on their own, touching the labels to read the names, embarking on a sensory engagement with the labels in this candle-lit room, scented by incense burning in the corner.

The names which we wrote on the labels of the shelves and the boxes were fictional, but perhaps those on the empty shelves, which represented the living, would have had more resonance with the audience if we included their own names on them. This could have further highlighted the event as an extension of their own lived experience, allowing them to recognise the importance of their own personal presence within the event, as in *Eat Your Heart Out*, where each audience member wore an identifying label round their wrist. As we plan to remount the production, we will endeavour to do this, and will also write the names of the real people commemorated by the factory on the labels tied to the boxes, emphasising the crossover between the fictional story of the performance and its resonance within the actuality of the site.

It was compelling to watch the audience emerge from this final room, and as they removed their headphones and walked out onto the street outside, they seemed quite calm and serene. One audience member commented that “upon leaving the [factory] it seemed to heighten our senses, seeing everything with a rediscovered appreciation” (Sandhu, 2011). This evidences that the phenomenological impact of such performances can serve to reawaken people’s perceptions of the world, as reinforced by the thoughts of Merleau-Ponty.

Conclusion

Looking beyond existing definitions of site-specific theatre as work which occurs within one particular site, requiring that layers from this site are revealed within the performance through “reference to ... historical documentation ...[and] found material” (Wrights and Sites, 2001), it seems there are other notable qualities of work taking place in non-theatre sites. It is fundamentally important to consider that such performances take place within, and are thus open to, the effects of the real world; allowing the artist to create a deeper connection with the audience’s experience of the performance event. As Acty Tang, site-specific performance practitioner states, “I don’t want spectators to look at a stage that is wiped blank every time, failing to make the link with their realities” (2007, p.96). Sites for performance which exist beyond the constraints of a traditional theatre auditorium can also challenge artists to experiment with the spatial placing of the audience, incorporating them within the environment of the performance. Once the audience members are moved from their comfy theatre seats, they can become part of the space, shaping it with their movement, potentially engaging in a phenomenological experience of the performance which utilises all of their senses.

McLucas claims that “the public is an active agent and theatre doesn’t exist until it/they is/are engaged” (qtd. in Pearson, 2010, p.37), thus it is crucial to continue to analyse the response of audiences to such work. It is evident from *Eat Your Heart Out*, *Faust* and *Stop the Clocks* that phenomenology is a key element of work occurring outside the theatre auditorium, and should be recognised as an eminently useful frame with which to analyse audiences’ experiential knowledge such performance events. As States explains, “if you want to investigate a new aspect of human experience you can’t use the old vocabulary of

signs because, as far as expressiveness goes, the old vocabulary *is* the old experience” (1985, p.100).

As Garner writes, “to interact with a world of objects on a phenomenal level is to ... discover the instabilities of self and body within this world” (1994, p.115-6). Such an experience seems profoundly significant in an age permeated by media technology where our “world view is being increasingly dominated by technical equipment” (Auslander, 1999, p.32). It seems that performance which allows the audience to actively engage with the work at hand in a multi-perspective form of engagement would appeal to new generations of young people brought up within such digitised environments, as Auslander contests, “the desire for live experiences is a product of mediatisation” (1999, p.55). If Fuchs is right in her assumptions that the modern spectator is indeed becoming “restless” (1996, p.141), then we must embrace such modes of performance for finding new ways of exciting them.

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