



BETWEEN ART OBJECT, SITUATIONS and PERFORMATIVITY: investigating performativity as an ontological and psychoanalytic process within trans-disciplinary art practices.

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

Robert Mangion

Associate Diploma of Liberal Arts: Victoria University 1996

Bachelor of Educational Studies: Melbourne University 1994

Graduate Diploma in Education: Melbourne University 1993

Graduate Diploma in Fine Art: RMIT University 1988

Bachelor of Arts - Fine Arts: RMIT University 1987

School of Art
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

February 2016

Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Robert Mangion
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Abstract

One of the central questions within twenty first century art criticism is how to give an account of the human subject as a conscious, social agent in a globalised, post-industrial world of economic unpredictability and ideological uncertainty. Critical reflections on participatory practice in art often take the form of discourses that tend to reinforce the social constituents of the practice rather than taking account of splintered subjective experience. There is less evidence of critical engagement with the ontological and psychological dimensions of performative exchange.

This project aims to expand understandings of a performative paradigm of practice-led research. It does this by drawing from psychoanalytic and ontological perspectives on subjectivity to find out how, and to what extent a performative ontological experience may be possible in and through participatory art. It proceeds by analysing art historical models of post conceptual and dematerialised practice and critical literature linking performativity, relational-psychoanalytic theory and methods of performative ontology. From this, the research works through trans-disciplinary arts practice as a substantive site of enquiry. One of the driving aims of this project is to investigate performative ontology in and through artistic inquiry. Two research questions drive this research. Firstly, what is a performative ontology as art practice? Secondly, how may a participatory art practice reveal the performative ontological experiences of subject-object relations? To investigate these key questions, the research engages participatory and inter-subjective exchange in and through artworks as its principle practice-based methodology. The research process and its outcomes, works with a series of experimental workshop, performative enactments and cross media installations.

Theoretical frameworks come from performative, ontological and psychoanalytic perspectives. Of particular significance are ontological concepts of generative performance investigated through the work of David Davies and his ideas about the performative ontology of art. The research also draws from Judith Butler and her work on performativity in relation to subjective formation, as well as Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss and Slavoj Žižek who present three levels of psychoanalytic interpretations useful for this study. The research proposes that performativity is connected to iterative practices, which both authorise and negate subjects and their performances. The project investigates performativity as durational, by which the present gesture, enacted by the subject is always an iteration or repetition of preceding events. It is the assertion of this project that practice-led research, within performative modes of practice, need to enable the multi-variant voice emanating from participatory exchange. This enablement may then open to a more comprehensive articulation of a performative research culture, realised through enactments.

Key terms: Performative ontology, relational psychoanalysis, trans-disciplinary art practice, inter-subjectivity, experimental pedagogic art practice.

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This practice-based doctorate research focuses on a performative, ontological and relational psychoanalytic approach to trans-disciplinary practice. The project investigates performative experience in and through participatory art practice with the application of relational psychoanalytic theory. The research is sustained through performative enactments, experimental workshop and cross media installations. It recognises performativity as a productive, experience-producing dimension of artworks to raise questions about performance as art practice. The research investigates the possibility that performativity, in relation to art points toward a change from the emphasis on an artwork depicting and representing issues of an artist's contemplation to the affect and experience an artwork may provide for a viewer. In this context, concepts of performativity have the capacity to bring into awareness subtle aspects of influence and affect. These aspects are manifested both dialogically and relationally. The dialogical operates within a given temporal and situational context; the relational, produces an affect at the confluence of subject, object and participant. The artwork therefore is situated away from what it "represents" and expresses, and towards what it "does" and performs.

The British philosopher John Langshaw Austin coined the term *performative* in order to point to the act like nature of language.¹ He argued that in certain cases something that was said produced an effect beyond the realm of language. In other words, under certain conditions signs such as words as linguistic signs have the capacity to produce reality. Austin directs attention towards the potential for opening up a space for performative action. This premise situates the research.

In order to undertake the investigation this research project constructed specific situations linking performative and participatory spectatorship and engagement. These situations were expanded through combinations of workshop development, studio practice and installation procedures to investigate modes of production between objects and the given situations. By focusing on these modes, the trajectories between participating subject/object relations and events may be put into relief. This approach is articulated through a convergence of practice-led research, paradigms of recent art history, and theoretical discourse.

1.2 Key Issues

¹ Austin, J. L.: 1962, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon).

The research investigates how the performance of subjectivity may be produced in relation to material, social and psychological influences. These influences comprise the subject /object relationship as a merging of multiple narratives.

The research project approaches performativity as a complex condition inclusive of multiple procedures within trans-disciplinary frameworks. The procedures include modes of encounter, participation and engagement, collaboration, materiality, activities of making and installation, documentation, writing and discussion.

These processes constitute the conditions for exploring and directing performativity within the art practices. Defined as 'relational events', they are interwoven across three key focuses of inquiry including: (1) *The artist-subject-object relationship and its authorship*; (2) *The constitution of participatory and collaborative art practice*, and (3) *Psychoanalytic theory and inter-subjective exchange*.

The research considers performativity as durational. It proposes that the present gesture enacted by the subject is always an iteration or repetition of preceding events. The three key areas of inquiry are open to philosophical concerns appropriate to this concept. They comprise issues that draw from notions of repressed memory from Sigmund Freud. These concepts form the foundational structure for discussions concerning the temporal characteristics of performativity.

The research also draws on models of causality, duration and events, based on the psychoanalytic notion of "deferred action" and "return" as identified by Hal Foster (1996). According to Foster the models of deferred action and return, when applied to avant-garde practices, are a process of mimetic repression responding and attempting to work through the initial unresolved trauma of modernity.² Through this interpretation the avant-garde is registered as a form of trauma or gap in the symbolic order of history. Thus while the historical avant-garde struggled to work through the traumas of modernity, the neo avant-garde of the 1990s responded and attempted to work through the deferred action of this initial trauma.

Foster's position on return and deferred action echoes Judith Butler's (1990) philosophical approaches to subjectivity. Butler's approach to subjectivity exposes the gaps in identity formation, theorised through the notion of iteration as a repetition of performative gestures and how iteration functions in turn as a source of subjective and cultural formation (Butler 1990). Butler's work is also relevant for the investigations in this research.

The tenuous nature of subjective formation enacted by the individual in the passage between the "real" and the "symbolic" as referred to by Slavoj Žižek after his reading of Lacan³ assumes such

² Where Foster advocates a restorative dialectic for the first generation of neo-avant-garde postmodernism, he finds the dialectical approach to history inadequate by the mid 1990s observing "Different models of causality, temporality and narrativity are required; far too much is at stake in practice, pedagogy, and politics not to challenge the blinding ones that are in place' (*Return of the Real*, p 28)

³ For Žižek the exemplary point of disruption between the real and symbolic orders is best signified by the traumatic event. (Žižek, 1999)

identities to be unstable and erroneous. For Žižek the problem is the subject's tenuous relationship to the symbolic order through which subjective identity is maintained, yet ultimately posited as a fiction. The conclusion Žižek seems to draw is that without some artificial system of symbolic order by which to organise reality, the individual ceases to exist.

The question of subject-hood and its formation also informs the work of Alain Badiou in *Being and Event* (2005) For Badiou an individual's subjective relationship to the present is also tenuous and undergoes changes upon the inadvertent manifestation of an event. The means, by which the subject realises oneself, is through a series of temporal episodes and the subject's acknowledgment of the significance of these episodes.⁴ For Badiou, the subject is a mode by which a body enters into subjective formation with regards to the production of the present. Subjectivity emerges from what he calls 'the *junction* of an intervention and a rule of faithful connection' (p. 239). The subject represents not the individual but what the individual is ultimately capable of becoming.

The concept of subjective formation, performativity and doubt resounds throughout this doctorate project. This approach has applications for considering practice beyond the centrality of artist as author. Instead practice is decentred so as to become enmeshed within a field of relational processes. This approach has relevance for considering the expansion of performativity in art away from a studio context, deemed to be insular, and towards an approach that encompasses relational, collaborative and discursive practice.

1.3 Main objectives

The main objective of this research project is to develop a body of work that investigates how performative situations may expand as contemporary art practices. These art practices have been at different times, as anarchic as a series of experimental art workshops; as self-contained as a group of art installations; as dialogical as a text and image based journal of inter-subjective exchange; as virtual as a social web site; and as geographically diverse as an international exchange and research visit. The resulting body of work has been developed at different stages during the research process.

The secondary objective of the project is to identify and expand various definitions of a performative paradigm of research within trans-disciplinary arts practice. The aim here is to investigate the ontology of performative practice within relational psychoanalytic contexts. This aim is directed in and through participatory art in order to activate perceptions and understandings of performance ontology. Definitions of key terms such as 'ontology' are provided as the terms arise in the following chapters. The investigation takes place through the focus on inter-subjective

⁴ According to Badiou subjectivity is not only formed as a consequence of an event but is dependent on its own affective conditions as a whole a bodily experience. This bodily experience is what will determine the path, procedure, existence and presentation into a new reality according to the form the subject takes.

actions such as participatory and collaborative engagement and dialogical exchanges. Each of these actions refers to the co-constructed nature of the subject/object relationship within relational, rather than autonomous contexts. By expanding performative practice beyond the normative view of the artist as author whose focus is on transforming materials, the research investigates ways of decentralising the subject/author position within a field of relational events and participatory practices.

1.4 Aims

The aims of this study are to set out the definitions of a performative paradigm of research within trans-disciplinary arts practice. In the process the project aims to identify and explore the disparity between individual viewer engagement and participatory viewer engagement within participatory art practice. The enquiry takes place through a series of experimental workshops and a number of composite art installations.

Each of these experimental workshops and art installations examines the role inter-subjectivity plays within manifold structures of trans-disciplinary art practice. The aim is to extrapolate concepts related to “repressed memory”, “deferred action” and “return”. Each of these concepts considers relational events as a function of temporal and interacting forces within a field in which every part affects the whole. The project investigates the affinity of performative aesthetics towards the participating subject(s). Moreover, it investigates performativity as a practice in art that embraces the viewer, relational events and the viewing field all of which are embodied within inter-subjective experience.

Inter-subjectivity as a component of performative theory is based on the view that personal psychological experience is interactive and continually embedded in relationships. From this starting point, the research explores how performative actions of inter-subjective, collaborative and dialogical exchanges operate within relational contexts to affect a work of art’s enactment. It examines the role performativity plays within manifold structures of relational psychoanalytic theory, and its reception as a trans-disciplinary art practice.

1.5 Research Questions

- *How may a performative art practice extend associations with relational psychoanalytical theory?*
- *How may a performative art practice reveal the participatory ontological experiences of subject-object relations?*

1.6 Outcomes of the Practice-led research

This practice-led methodology emanates from two operational platforms: a series of *experimental workshops* and a number of *trans-disciplinary art projects*. The latter arise from the former, which incorporate performance, sculptural and visual representations. These two platforms establish a range of situations for examining the project's primary subject of *participation* and *interactive exchange*.

1.6(i) Project Overview

The *Currents Experimental Workshop* program was conducted in four parts, over a four-year period. These workshops investigated the research questions. The outcomes of these investigations are introduced below and further elaborated in chapter five of this dissertation.

1: *Currents: Experimental Workshops and exhibitions in four parts.*

2: *Durational Performance Ontology in three parts*

Part one: Act of suspension – (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously).

Part two: Black Noise - (Cast of Absence).

Part three: Infinite recursion – (Back and forth along the Abyss).

3: *3rd – (Album of Dialogical Exchange)*

4: *Instruction / Enactment – (Or what little Hans did next) In conjunction with the Freud Museum London*

The following provides a brief introduction to each of these projects.

1.6(ii) Project 1: Currents Experimental Workshops

The *Currents Experimental Workshops* took place over the first four years of this doctorate candidature (2011-2014), in the studios of Footscray Community Art Centre in Melbourne's west. Participants numbered over thirty with varying degrees of engagement. Each weekly, three-hour workshop was conducted equally over thirty sessions; and each workshop program took place over an eight-month period.

The objective of the *Currents Experimental Workshops* was to provide a platform for participatory exchange, critical thinking and practical studio engagement. Vital to this objective was to locate dialogical exchange, participation and encounter as processes of inter-subjective production. A number of performative experiments trailed ideas in practice.

Forms of dialogue and group actions characterised the workshops. Authorship, as a key feature of enquiry, becomes a condition for exploration within a relational or collaborative context. It is enacted within interchangeable fields as a question rather than a fact. Thus, authorship is considered as a process to be interrogated rather than to be accepted without question, and as such it opens new possibilities of idea and execution.

My role throughout the duration of the *Currents Workshops* alternated between that of the artist, project coordinator, and curator of the *Currents* exhibitions. The workshops were structured to engage and construct forms of dialogue and group actions. At the end of each annual program the works produced throughout the workshops were curated into a major exhibition at the Roslyn Smorgon Gallery.

The *Currents Workshops* and subsequent projects and exhibitions addressed the project's research questions by providing a platform for exploration and experimentation with performative practice, contextualised within relational and psychoanalytical concepts. With consideration for ontological dimensions of subject-object relations they engaged and examined participatory experience.

1.6(iii) Project 2: Durational Performance Ontology

Durational Performance Ontology constituted three projects with an aim of investigating how artwork could focus on participatory and interactive exchange. They examined notions of durational performance located within psychoanalytic and ontological fields of inquiry. Performative and sculptural gestures suggest psychological shifts and a reconfiguration of relationships between the subject, objects and duration. Working in collaboration with a choreographer the three projects initiate a certain collapse enacted between the performative and sculptural gesture.

The works produced in Durational Performance Ontology engage with the theme of entrapment within circumstances; they cross a wide range of references from psychoanalysis to modernist literature and theatre. The resultant works include various material processes incorporating sculpture, drawing, painting, dialogue and choreographed performance structures recorded on video and photography. The works merge durational and participatory performance within installation formats.

1.6(iiii) Project 3: 3rd Album of Dialogical Exchange

This is both an artist's book and a new media project involving dialogical and visual exchange between two collaborating participants. To be produced at an installation of the same name, the album will be presented in a limited addition book form. It comprises a series of images, journal notes and extensive dialogical exchange over a six-month period. The project aims to initiate a

relational model of subjective formation through dialogical processes. The subject and the object of relational collaboration constitute each other and thus contain elements of each other.

The work draws upon ideas from relational psychoanalysis and the *analytical third*. This term refers in this context to a third subject co-created unconsciously by collaborating participants. The analytical third seems to take a life of its own in the interpersonal field between subject and object (Ogden, 1994).

Language in *3rd - Album of dialogical exchange* becomes material, acting as a schematic framework for a body of work installed in the gallery. The album contains a script, which becomes a narration for the viewing space and the possible encounters between the audience and the forms installed within it. The album itself acquires a physical presence similar to the materials initiated in the proposed installation that will accompany it. Dialectical exchanges become material form through a temporal and choreographed treatment of dialogical presentations within the context of the installation.

1.6(v) Project 4: Instruction/Enactment (*Or what Little Hans did next*)

The research for this project was conducted in conjunction with the Freud Museum in London. It situates the philosophical core of all of the other projects produced for this doctorate. The research grew from dialogue with Sophie Leighton, curator of the Freud Museum, and an invited research residency at the Museum in May 2014. The intention of the residency was to develop a work from the material generated there. This involved extensive preparatory research of the Freud Museum collection, as well as its history and building design.

The title *Instruction/Enactment (Or what Little Hans did next)* draws on Freud's case study of "Little Hans" in the publication of *Analysis of a Phobia in a five-year-old boy* (Freud, 1909). In part the aim of locating this project within the Freud Museum was to examine the allure of "absorption" as embodied by visiting the home, which has since become a museum or shrine of this celebrated individual. The work produced for this project examines the agency of the disruptive act. It asks how may a metaphoric act of trespass or intervention disturb the visitor's reading of the "memorial", by adding content such as sculptural object, performance, photography, text, or by the metaphoric displacement of treasured object's from one context, the collection, into another, the exhibition. In part, by drawing on filmed and photographic imagery of the Freud Museum, the project investigates psychological transference generated between subject and object relations in a series of miniature instruction-enactment performance works.

1.7 Summary

Through a series of experimental workshops, and performative and composite art projects, with my identified role as participant and researcher, the project investigates its key questions to do

with the performative ontology of artworks as relational and participatory events. The outcomes of the research manifest as artworks made through the workshops themselves. These include a combination of lens-based images, drawing, sculptural objects, text, performance and a range of technical supports, presented within installation settings. Each artwork and each workshop is considered methodically and examined according to the psychoanalytic and ontological perspectives and questions framing the research.

The outcomes are presented as an exhibition of work that experiments with the viewing environment where composite practice and processes are installed as a chain of events. Throughout all of the research projects the configuration of performativity is crucial. It is seen as a complex condition informing all of the processes that include: modes of encounter, relational psychoanalytic theory, inter-subjective engagement, collaboration, discursivity, materiality and temporal processes. These processes constitute the conditions for exploring composite, participatory, art practice as a durational event, through three key focus areas: (1) performativity as inter subjective exchange; (2) performativity as material ontology; and (3) performativity as causal and temporal process. Each of these is addressed further below.

1.8 Performativity as Inter-subjective exchange

The research investigates the repudiation of single authorship by experimenting with forms of collaborative art practice. It seeks to understand authorship within the relay of inter-subjective exchanges. Throughout this process the research deliberates on the analytical process of tracing the co-creation of Ogden's "analytical third" entity (1994) which may emanate from collaborative exchange.

It investigates how dialogical and inter-subjective actions like self-representation may operate in and through performative enactments. Further, it seeks to understand how a work of art may reveal the influence of discursive exchanges operating within relational contexts. By applying psychoanalytic, performative and ontological frameworks and questions, the research is also seeking to put the concept of 'self' to the test. Each of the inter-subjective, participatory art exchanges investigates the co-constructed nature of responses within relational, rather than autonomous contexts. These include psychological discourses around transference, displacement and unconscious expression concerning the recreation of fictional entities. Thus the participatory art practices have the capacity to put 'identity' itself to the test.

1.8.2 Performativity as Material ontology

Material elements are considered in relation to each other with the artworks and installation, as the sum of its parts, opening to an associative potential. The artwork produced in this research project examines associated meaning, via arrangements of performance video, sculptural, found and re-assembled elements. These aesthetic elements are brought together in and through the

participatory art exchanges to form novel, complex and multilayered connections between 'things' or entities within connective situations.

1.8.3 Performativity as Causal and temporal process

The project embraces performativity as an iterative practice and calls on models of causality, duration and narrative structure, drawing from the psychoanalytic notion of "deferred action" (Foster, 1996). Foster explains that revisiting the past through "deferred action" works to locate the displacement of an initial failure, which must be continually worked through in order to disrupt, but not necessarily fully resolve its affect. Thus while the historical avant-garde struggled to work through the traumas of modernity, the neo avant-garde of the 1990s responded and attempted to deal with the deferred action of this initial trauma. Foster posits a view of contemporary cultural production as a necessary elucidation of historical collapse in order for the subject to enter the historical process and act with agency in the present. Through this interpretation, the concept of performativity registers as a form of both return and disruption within the symbolic order

1.9 Conclusion

During the course of this doctorate project the research has engaged with these source materials and critical analysis of theoretical text. This enquiry resulted in new works that engaged numerous participants in various ways. Critical thinking and practical studio engagement including performance, dialogue and participatory exchange evoked various responses. Such participant responses contributed to analytical descriptions of the relational praxis used throughout the research, and suggested implications for the final outcomes.

Often the forms underpinning aesthetic experience, in the present moment, constitute blurred distinctions between the subject and object of art. Frequently this is prompted by the joint presence within the viewing experience of a participant viewer and the artist-author in the co-creation and presentation of the artwork. Translating these ideas into my practice, I considered the ontological relations generated between artist-artwork and the participant viewer as an interchangeable and performative field of encounter in which the participant viewer is called to respond to the susceptibility of particular performative situations. This performative ontological framing of the work prompts questions, such as, how may individual involvement within human relational contexts induce ontological awareness of experience as a form of understanding? How may subjectivity be understood as a product of relational psychological exchange within a field of causal events? The answer to these questions needs to begin with a discussion of the workings of the dichotomy of subjects, objects and events.

The project examines these discussions through a series of works involving participants within relational situations seen as mutually co-constructed. The subjectivities of all participants are contributing to the form and content of the dialogue that develops among them. The emphasis on

performative enactments in aesthetic contexts attempts to keep the focus directly on the point of contact between the participants and on the form of transactions that emerges between them. Performative enactments provide relevant opportunities to gain a window on unconscious motivations and meanings of the participant that have not been previously articulated.

In summary, this research project is preoccupied largely with the philosophical underpinning of contemporary performative theory. Drawing on psychoanalytical, ontological and relational theory it explores the performative and participatory implications for trans-disciplinary art practice. It aims to render performativity in art more concrete as a post-conceptual model. The intention is to contribute knowledge to the field of performative art practice and theory with new interpretations drawn from psychoanalytical and ontological perspectives, rather than purely social or ethnographic standpoints. These objectives are expounded within the following chapters.

The Introduction, as chapter one, summarises the research questions, the key themes, approaches and findings. Chapter two elaborates upon the research context, situating the research in a community of practice. It provides an overview of the development of the doctorate project, giving examples of influential contemporary performative arts practitioners and linked theoretical ideas. The chapter functions as both a contextual review and description of practice linked to the key theme of performativity in art. It begins with a brief overview of my early research interests, defining shaping areas and aesthetic strategies that contribute to the primary methodological approach. Then an in-depth discussion of the research context situates the development of creative works in response to experimental workshop engagement. The chapter concludes with a discussion of key insights.

Chapter three provides an overview of the literature and theoretical framing of the research project. This framework has strong links to the methodology discussed in chapter four and draws on the philosophical work of key theorists to foreground the concept of performativity as a generative and transformative creative force. Discussion moves from an overview of key terms and concepts to more detailed accounts of how the concepts under examination are evaluated in the context of participatory art practice.

Chapter four starts with an overview of the primary methodological approaches structuring the study, which defined key areas of interest and helped shape aesthetic strategies. The chapter considers practice-based research as a methodology mediated through a series of four experimental art workshops and a series of art installations.

Chapter five provides an exposition of the development of works established in response to the *Currents workshops* and a discussion of key insights. The chapter is divided into four segments that outline the approach taken within each the research projects. Each of the project outlines is developed across three segments. The first segment sets the parameters of discussion by

providing an overview of practice-led research. Then, there is an outline of an approach to practice-led research with an emphasis on the appraisal of this strategy within trans-disciplinary fields of performative, ontological and relational psychoanalytic in art. Thirdly there is a project analysis grounded in descriptive interpretation. While no finite foreclosure of meaning is pursued in this context the activity of interpretative analysis proceeds with the goal of illuminating the research questions that steer this doctorate. Chapter six summarises specific strategies with an overview of the outcomes of the project and reflections upon them.

Chapter two: Research Context

2.1 Overview of Research interests

Early in my arts practice I was interested in cross-disciplinary approaches to research. My education and personal inclination predisposed me to work in an interdisciplinary manner. For the past fifteen years I have pursued linkages between art and cognition, performativity, semiotics and psychoanalysis. This has been a time of immersion in an exploration of the junction points and connections materialising from the porosity of boundaries pursued through practice-based methodology.

My work across environments, both formal and informal, has investigated perceptual conditions of subject and object relations within cross media installation contexts. The emphasis has been on exploring and applying ideas associated with the “post medium condition” where art crosses any media or material, dependent on the concept being pursued. Rosalind Krauss considers the “post-medium condition” as the abandonment by contemporary art of the modernist emphasis on medium as the source of artistic significance. Jean-François Lyotard (1979) argued that the post-modern condition is characterised by the end of “master narratives.” This end was identified by the collapse of crucial Enlightenment ideas of progress, reason and emancipation underpinning a rationally ordered society. Krauss sees in the post-medium condition of contemporary art a similar departure from unity and consistency. The dominance of formal narratives of modern art ended when conceptual art and other contemporary practices jettisoned the specific medium in order to juxtapose image and written text in the same work. For Krauss, not only did this spell the end of art’s insistence on medium specificity, as consistent with modernity’s formalisation of matter and meaning, but also advanced the usage of non-traditional mediums within trans-disciplinary contexts in art adopted from a host of disciplines. (Krauss 2010)

In a series of writings since the mid 1990s Krauss has argued for the examination of medium specificity in order to distinguish forms of artistic practice in contemporary, new media contexts. Her critical positioning of medium specificity was presented originally as art criticism that was challenged by the extensive proliferation of electronic and new media and the threat to concepts of medium specificity (Krauss 2000). Suggesting that the medium is not reducible to its physical properties, Krauss deviates from Clement Greenberg’s notion of medium specificity, according to which a medium’s exclusive and proper artistic property defines a medium’s unique qualities as art distinguished from theatre or other art forms. Krauss advances the idea of a medium acting as a supporting structure vindicated by conceptual possibilities inherent in the artwork.

If modernist theory itself defeated by such heterogeneity-which prevented it from conceptualizing video as a medium - modernist, structuralist film was routed by video’s instant success as a practice. For even if video had a distinct technical support - its own

apparatus, so to speak - it occupied a kind of discursive chaos, a heterogeneity of activities that could not be theorized as coherent or conceived of as having something like an essence or unifying core. Like the eagle principle, it proclaimed the end of medium/specificity. In the age of television, so it broadcast, we inhabit a post/medium condition. (Krauss 2000: p.31)

On the one hand, Krauss reaffirms the conspicuousness of the material support on which the modernist idea of medium specificity rests. On the other hand she avoids any direct association between the medium and its physical characteristic, and instead highlights the significance of certain conceptual expression, which focuses the medium's effect beyond its materiality. Hence, her notion of a medium as a 'supporting structure' brings together the technical specificity of a distinct medium with the formal and conceptual diversity of artistic creation (Krauss 2000).

Working with the concept of the *post medium condition*, in my art practice, three elements (temporality, mediums and form) became increasingly relevant to the space, process and conceptual contexts being pursued or generated. Within these contexts, my art practice involved the combination of painted and lens-based images, drawing, sculptural objects and a range of technical supports. These were combined within performative installation settings. It is from this background that I positioned my PhD research project.

My focus has been on trans-disciplinary art practice with an experimental focus. I situated my practice within contemporary art spaces particularly in relation to Kings ARI, located in Melbourne's CBD, which I helped to establish in 2004, and ran as a committee member for approximately six years. My key focus while at Kings ARI was experimentation across mediums, participation and spatial exploration. In the project *+Reduction* I collaborated with a sound artist/composer James Hullick in a work that was concerned with the exploration of three elements including duration, sound as event and the corresponding perceptions formed across various art objects. The work developed relative to the architectural space and performative contexts generated throughout the duration of the exhibition, forming relational ontologies within it. My work in *+Reduction* had been determined by the need to formulate an interactive environment between art objects, text, sound events and the participating subject. The project explored connections between architectural space and the affinity towards duration and perceptions of a sound event.

In principle Kings ARI supported and exhibited a range of cross art practices with a particular focus on video and lens-based work. Kings ARI championed emerging artistic talents and provided a venue for established artists to experiment and take risks. The gallery promoted conceptual practices and curated projects. As a gallery run by artists and not limited by prescriptive institutional or commercial constraints, Kings ARI had the freedom to exhibit work that it considered to be innovative, current and challenging. At this time, Kings ARI was not bound to supporting one medium, rather it endorsed a multi disciplinary focus exhibiting a variety of

mediums including photography, video, sculpture and drawing as well as ephemeral work such as performance, installation and sound art.

Consequently, my work is determined less by formal concerns for material properties, and more by the necessity to articulate the trajectories between concepts, art object and the participating subject.

Examples of my work that illustrate some of these concerns can be seen in *Intertextual Bodies Project*, initiated in five parts, including *Act of Body Disqualification*, *Act of Trespass*, *Act of Being Inside/Out* and *Act of Refusing to Dance*. The key thematic focus throughout all these projects was the workings of inter-subjective exchange, generated through dialogue and performative association. Inter-subjectivity generated not by individual psychological factors, rather through interpersonal projection and transference. Each of the actions in *Intertextual Bodies Project* referred to the co-constructed nature of psychological responses within participatory, rather than individual contexts. These included dialogue around *transference*, *displacement* and *unconscious expression*.

On reflection, the works produced for *Intertextual Bodies Project* created the platform from which this doctoral research project emerged. Drawing upon the research questions, the works created an ethnographic portrayal, in which the unfolding actions form an indexical trace of the social and psychological sensibility of the work.

Experimentation within workshop situations

An extension of research into performativity and participation as a contemporary art practice has involved my examination of critical pedagogy. My experience as instigator, coordinator and curator of the *Currents experimental workshops* program is relevant to this research. Within the *Currents* program, critical praxis and systems theory were considered as methodologies for experimentation with participatory and performative engagement in visual arts practices. Performativity is approached here as a complex condition inclusive of multiple procedures within trans-disciplinary frameworks. Such procedures include modes of encounter, participation and engagement, collaboration, materiality, activities of making, installation processes, documentation, writing and discussion.

Planned and conducted according to principles of participatory action research, as defined by McTaggart (1989), the *Currents experimental workshops* evinced a methodology and constructed situation where a group of people could organise the conditions under which they may gain new insights of performative and participatory practices from their own experiences and make those insights accessible to others. The term “participatory” stresses that a key aspect of the methodology is the engagement and the proprietorship of those directly involved in the *Currents*

experimental workshops. Participatory research is a variant within a “family” of action research traditions as described by Dick:

Action research described as a family of research mythologies, which pursues action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time. In most forms it does this by using a cyclic or spiral process, which alternates between action and critical reflection, and in the later cycles, continuously refining methods, data and interpretation in light of the understanding developed in the earlier cycles. (Dick 2004)

A definition by McNiff (1996) links the three elements of enquiry, action and purpose.

This involves:

- Systematic, critical enquiry made public,
- Informed, committed intentional action, and
- Worthwhile purpose.

The Currents program was a methodical, critical enquiry made public. Major exhibitions of all four Currents workshop programs were curated at the end of each annual program. The worthwhile purpose was two-fold. Firstly, to produce experience that would contribute to the professional knowledge base of participants; and secondly for participants to develop their practice through self and collective reflection. The core objective of the *Currents* workshops revolved around inter-subjective exchange. A number of experiments were undertaken to test ideas in practice. The workshops were structured to engage and construct forms of dialogue and group actions. A key feature of the *Currents experimental workshops* was the exploration of interchangeable fields including art object - event, artist - author, participant – interpreter. These fields coincide as a collection of forces within a transformative research context. Authorship became a condition for exploration within a relational or collaborative context. It was enacted as a question rather than a fact. Knowledge formation within this context was constantly undergoing change, as new experiences are exchanged among participants through the process of dialogical interchange.

The use of practitioner research or participatory research is a tradition that can be traced back to Cory (1953), Elliot (1978), and Stenhouse (1980). These pioneering researchers developed the idea of “teacher researcher”, one who reflects on his or her own practice and responds from cycles of critical reflection on practice.

Critical praxis within the *Currents* workshops were informed by ideas from four key interconnected discourses including: *The Domain of Creativity* (1990) by Russian theorist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi; *The Ignorant School Master* (1998) by French philosopher Jacques Rancier; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) by Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire; and *Border Crossings* (1992) by educational and cultural theorist Henry Giroux.

For Csikszentmihalyi creative value is an operative process mediated between the individual, the artistic field and the cultural domain. His conclusions are that it is not possible to even think of creative evaluation, let alone measure it, without taking into account the parameters of the cultural symbol system or domain in which creativity takes place, and without considering the social roles and norms of the field that regulates the given creative activity. Within Csikszentmihalyi's systems theory model lays the possibilities for systemic interjection and cultural resistance.

The key pedagogical discourses and practice that Giroux was to take up and develop involved the combination of post-structuralism and cultural studies within the project of promoting radical democracy. He presented his shift as a "border crossing" that involved transformative, trans disciplinary perspectives, which overcame the punitive abstractions and separations of fields like education, social theory and art. In his critique *Public pedagogy and the Politics of neo-liberalism: making the political more pedagogical* (2004) Giroux appeals for a form of pedagogy that establishes a type of agency in public and institutional spheres that offer points of resistance to neo-liberal configurations of the 'entrepreneurial self'. Instead of producing subjects that contribute to society in democratic ways Giroux places education squarely and directly as complicit in producing a type of cultural politics based on market as opposed to emancipatory values.

What interests Rancier, on the other hand, is the presumption of equality of intelligence between teacher and student; the point being not to prove that all intelligence is equal, but to see what can be achieved under this hypothesis. For Rancier this presumption is more specifically a methodology and not a goal. Equality is continually verified by being put into practice.

Freire argues for a revision of education away from a market driven model of learning through which teachers deposit information into pupils to produce manageable, productive subjects under an authoritarian social apparatus. He develops instead the idea of a participatory problem posing education in which students are critical co-investigators in dialogue with their teacher. One of Freire's key concepts centres on a critical consciousness that allows people to understand their social reality, to enter the historical process and act with agency.

Drawing from these ideas, the essential factors steering the *Currents* workshops is the view of experimentation as a research context that situates reflective critique and collaborative practice. Reflective critique warrants consideration on issues and makes explicit the interpretations, biases, assumptions and concerns upon which actions and decisions are made. Collaborative practice assumes that each person's ideas are equally significant as potential resources for creating interpretive categories of analysis, transferred among the participants.

2.2 Situating Performativity

Performativity is an interdisciplinary concept that emerged out of linguistic ethnology in 1955, and later in cultural and gender studies through the work of Judith Butler in 1993. The performative is understood as the constitution of meaning through acts or practices.

Performance is often referred to as a unique and spontaneous event in the present tense that cannot be adequately re-presented or captured.⁵ Performativity on the other hand signals an awareness of the way the present gesture is always an iteration or repetition of preceding acts (Butler 1993). Judith Butler posits the concept of performativity and subjective formation through her influence of Lacanian psychoanalysis and speech act theory and in particular the work of British philosopher, John Langshaw Austin who first introduced the notion of performativity into linguistic theory in 1955 (Austin 1962).⁶ Austin coined the term *performative* in order to point to the *act like* character of language. Through her understanding of “performativity” Butler explores the ways that identity formation occurs through social reality (the symbolic order); it is not given as natural but is continually created as an illusion through language, gesture and all manner of symbolic social authorization (Butler 1993).

Of particular significance to my research are the ontological theories of generative performance as presented by David Davies who points out that artworks are not simply products of performance, rather an artwork is a performance in itself. For Davies an artwork is viewed firstly as a process completed by the product. Davies’ theory is an effective starting point in the study of the performativity in relational and ontological art practices. Davies extends this performative ontological discussion further in his thesis *Art as Performance* (2004) claiming that art is an action type whereby artistic content is enacted and articulated through an artistic medium. Davies main contention is that an artwork is a performance generated through a series of actions carried out by the artist in the execution of a work.

Historically this research draws upon ontological theories of generative performance in art, acknowledging the seminal debate between Michael Fried (1967) and Robert Morris (1966). Their debate generated ideas about artworks as event types that produce either durational, situated viewing or real instantaneous experience of enactment. Their discussion introduces the consequences of theatricality within sculptural and installation practice. The term *theatricality* arises in part as a reaction to entrenched domination of the term performativity, a description that has now achieved a degree of critical authority in the field. The notion of theatricality in visual art practice has been employed in anti-theatrical discourse by Fried (1967) to suggest ideas of

⁵ Margret Iversen (2007) referencing Mary Kelly in performance work that is no longer a question of investing the object with artistic presence: the artist is present and creative subjectivity is given as an effect of an essential self-possession.

⁶ Austin, J. L.: 1962, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon).

inauthenticity and deception. It is argued that contemporary theatricality in participatory visual art practices is critically formed by this struggle (Morgan and Wood, 2007).

2.3 Research Context

The presentation that follows considers the focus on arts, performative, experiential and relational dimensions from two perspectives. Firstly, from within an art historical context in order to explain how the research is framed in light of an existing body of work and its potential to contribute to an emergent area of performativity in visual art. Secondly, the emphasis on performative and relational dimensions in art is drawn from a post-Freudian, psychoanalytic perspective with a focus upon contemporary relational theory.

This research recognises the limited definition of participatory and relational art practice in the work of Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), as identified by contemporary art critic Claire Bishop (2004). Thus the research seeks to extend the investigation beyond the focus on 'social art phenomena'. Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) advances the idea that relational aesthetics and practices take as their point of departure, human relations and enactments with affinity to harmonious community. Clare Bishop (2004) largely rejects Bourriaud's notion of a "microtopian" community in participatory and relational art, proposing instead an oppositional mode of artistic experience and model of subjectivity that is altogether more divisive and incomplete. She argues that:

Recurrently, calls for an art of participation tend to be allied to one or all of the following agendas. The first concerns the desire to create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation. The hope is that the newly emancipated subjects of participation will find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality. An aesthetic of participation therefore derives legitimacy from a (desired) causal relationship between the experience of a work of art and individual/collective agency.

The second argument concerns authorship. The gesture of ceding some or all authorial control is conventionally regarded as more egalitarian and democratic than the creation of a work by a single artist, while shared production is also seen to entail the aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability. Collaborative creativity is therefore understood both to emerge from, and to produce, a more positive and non-hierarchical social model (Bishop 2006, p12).

By engaging ideas such as those expounded by Bishop, performative and participatory art practice may be positioned outside the narrow focus of social art phenomena into expanded ontological categories. Instead, performative theory may advance an ontological and relational-psychoanalytical practice that emanates through a multiple register process. It is inclusive of manifold procedures; related to spatial and object production, participatory spectatorship, visual representations and temporality. By examining performativity through ontological and relational-

psychoanalytic perspectives, and entering experimental modes of engagement, the research advances the potential for trans-disciplinary and participatory art practices.

2.3.1 Early Participatory Art Practice

A prevailing feature of critical art practice since the 1990s has become an awareness of the site and circumstances in which artworks take place and the artworks' effect on the viewer. A common thread between early relational and participatory art practices such as those of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Vanessa Beecroft and Rirkrit Tiravanija, can be seen in how they positioned experiential, situation-based work to privilege it over discrete aesthetic objects. An inference may be that the autonomy of an art object, as circumscribed by Greenbergian high modernism, signified detached or objective engagement of the viewer. This was contrary to the social engagement offered by participatory and relational art. Situation-based art works were therefore viewed to be at odds with a formalist and autonomous aesthetic experience.

Established debates about participatory and relational art practice question the value of the autonomous art object by emphasising a direct engagement by the viewer. Relational and participatory art projects often engage deconstructive strategies of specific social systems. The challenging assumption put forward by these practices would seem to suggest that critical practice in visual art has turned increasingly toward the production of experience over that of the production of autonomous art objects. However, this is not to imply that all artists associated with aspects of relational and participatory aesthetics operate strictly within the limits of social contexts and experience.

On the contrary, many recent developments in the works of artist such as Amelie von Wulffen (Germany), Carol Bove (Switzerland), Katie Paterson (UK), Trish Donnelly (USA), Andro Wekua (Georgia), Rudolf Stingel (USA) and Sophie Calle (France) use constructed scenes in their trans-disciplinary installations to build and deploy elaborate fictions overlaid with real situations. Through their practices these artists demonstrate a keen interest in contemporary fields of participatory and relational engagement. Their approach is contextualised through the examination of subjective performativity, relational causality and open delineations of material ontology which are particularly well illustrated in the work of artists such as Lucy Mackenzie (UK) and in particular Mirosław Balka (Poland).

2.3.2 Art practices Relevant to this study

In accord with my research, the artistic figures that best epitomise the turn toward performative, psychoanalytic and ontological interpretation in recent practice, include Bruce Nauman (USA), Mirosław Balka (Poland), Ugo Rondinone (Switzerland) and Mike Kelley (USA).

These artists shift focus from an individualised internal position to an outward affect. These artworks do not represent the emotional, interior space or consciousness of the individual artist. Instead they form part of a perceptual chain of external connections – which they share with viewers and through which meaning is produced in relation to a given situational reality. The outward affect impacts upon the viewing situation, simultaneously drawing the viewers into a constructed, inter-subjective situation and back recursively to themselves.

Nauman is interested in language, sound art and literature. He used the psychological power of language (in drawings, video scripts and neon installations), dismantling linguistic structure, creating puns and oxymorons and linking contradictory words in repetitive sequences. Using flashing neon signs, he stripped words and, later, actions of their conventional meanings, leaving unsettling psychological ironies and moral dilemmas in their wake.

Rondinone's work explores themes of fantasy and desire. Many of his pieces coax the viewer into a pensive state like the blurred, brightly coloured, concentric rings of his target-shaped paintings. His large rainbow signs are just as enigmatic with their authoritative affirmations of "Hell, Yes!" or "Our Magic Hour." These signs seem to point to some hidden aspect of reality and history. The signs summarise and make tangible an unnamed collective desire.

Balka's work carries psychological gravity and the metaphorical and physical weight or presence of the body. Underpinned by the collective memory of recent history, his work often employs poignant materials that evoke temperature and light as well as having a strong visual symbolism. The themes of surface and depth, 'above' and 'beneath' are treated as both a physical and mental landscape. The work also points to questions of how history can leave traces in the form of artefacts and scars on the landscape and our collective response to them.

Kelley explored themes as diverse as American class relations, sexuality, repressed memory, systems of religion and transcendence, and post-punk politics. He brought to these subjects both sharp critique and copious, self-deprecating humour. He returned time and again to certain underlying psychoanalytical themes, including displaced memories, disjunctions between selfhood and social structures as well as fault lines between the sacred and the profane.

My practice references all four artists insofar as they place emphasis on a performative model that position art as an event of unfoldment. As such the precondition of their material ontology is that which seeks to do justice to the work's own intrinsic dynamic as a performative event, where the borders between the artworks inside and outside are porous and unstable. All four artists reflect elements of my practice insofar as they problematize the creative act as one not performed by the artist alone; the spectator's involvement is deemed to be the consummation of the artistic activity. More so the viewer's involvement is not merely regarded as the completion of the work, as through the interpretive act but rather as substance, malleable for utilisation.

2.3.3 Relational Psychoanalysis into Performative art Discourse

Inter-subjectivity is a component of relational theory based on the view that personal psychological experience is dialogical, performative and continually embedded in relationships. Therefore, crucial to this research is an understanding of the principals of psychoanalysis. This approach is expressed through a convergence of relational psychoanalytic theory posited within discursive art practice. At the core of this work is a set of propositions that probe the essences of relational transference as opposed to individual psychological drives.

An important difference between relational psychoanalytic theory and traditional psychoanalytic approach is in its theory of motivation, which would allocate significance to real interpersonal relations, rather than to instinctual drives (Brandell 2010). Most Freudian theory proposes that human beings are motivated by unconscious sexual and aggressive drives, which are biologically rooted and essential. Such drives are ultimately shaped by the individual's interpretation of lived experience, coupled with the repression of actual experience via denial, and reaction formation. Repression and rationalisation are running hand in hand in the Freudian ego-construction. This is a structural approach to psychoanalysis.

The poststructural approach reappraised the structural predominance, particularly through the work of Jacques Lacan. In the 1970s Lacan's poststructural approaches focused on the local and specific of relations between subjects or entities, rather than the grand narratives of structuralism, allowing older theories, such as those of Freud, to be reconsidered from different perspectives. Contemporary relational and inter-subjective theorists, such as Greenberg and Mitchell (1983), place emphasis on the performativity of lived conscious experience, dyadic attachments, affective atonement, social construction and mutual recognition over the role of interpretation and analysis. They argue that the primary motivation of the subject is to be in relationships with others. Consequently, early relationships usually with principal providers, shape expectations about the way in which needs are experienced. Thus, needs and impulses cannot be separated from the relational contexts in which they occur. This concurs with Freudian, object relation theories as interpreted by Malanie Klein (1975). Object relations theory is an offshoot of psychoanalytic theory that emphasises interpersonal relations, primarily in the family and especially between mother and child. "Object" actually means person and especially the significant person that is the object or aim of another's feelings or objectives. "Relations" refers to interpersonal relations and suggests the residues of past relationships that affect a person in the present.

Psychoanalysis in the present context remains an influential resource in art discourse, criticism and practice. Two expedient levels of psychoanalytic interpretations of art include firstly a symbolic reading and secondly parallels in language and dialogue. (Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh, 2004). Symbolic readings of the artwork are governed by the process of deciphering the subject in terms of a latent message hidden behind a manifest content. The French philosopher Sarah Kofman suggests that aesthetic development avoids the trappings of neurosis and takes

the place of the psychoanalytical treatment, describing a method in which artistic process is remodelled as psychoanalytic case study. (Kofman, 1988)

This psychoanalytic dissertation emphasising ideas of dialogical exchange within performativity informs my research project. This raises questions about who or what is to occupy or substitute for the position of the “analyst” and “analysand” in the performance or enactment of the artwork: is it the artist, the participant, the viewer or some combination based on the relay between them all? The innate porosity within this confluence suggests a loss of boundaries, blurring any divisions between where what is self and object whereby the distinction between self and external object is not clear.

Judith Butler’s work draws on dialogical and speech-act theory to explore the ways that social reality is not a given fact, but is created continually as an illusion through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social signs (Butler 1990). As Butler illuminates, within speech act theory a performative act is a discursive practice that performs or constructs that which it designates (Butler 1993). A speech act can produce that which it names. However, this occurs only by reference to the accepted societal norm, code, or contract, which is constantly reiterated and thus performed by the subject in the pronouncement.

Butler takes these ideas further by exploring the ways that linguistic constructions create our reality through the speech acts in which we participate habitually. By infinitely citing the conventions and ideologies of the social world around us, we enact that reality; in the performative act of speaking; we integrate that reality with our bodies, but that "reality" nonetheless remains a social construction. In the act of performing the conventions of reality, by embodying those fictions in our actions, we make those artificial conventions appear to be natural and necessary. By enacting conventions, we do make them "real" to some extent, but that does not make them any less artificial (Butler 1990).

Butler contends that our sense of independent, self-willed subjectivity is really a pre-existed construction that comes about through the enactment of social conventions. According to Butler subjectivity can be understood as a performative citation, which either expresses or disguises an interior 'self'. As a performative citation, subjectivity is a performance, which broadly interpreted, constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority (Butler 1990).

The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender and subjectivity are an act, which have been rehearsed, in much the same way as an actor uses a script. For Butler, the distinction between the personal and the political or between private and public is a fiction designed to support an oppressive status quo. According to Butler our most personal acts are, in fact, continually being scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies (Butler 1990).

Ogden (1994) presents persuasive arguments for the “dialogical speech act” and inter-subjective formations. He posits the idea of the inter-subjective, analytic third in his effort to conceptualise the interdependence of the subject/object relation through transference and countertransference in the analytic process. Within relational psychoanalysis the analytical third is both the symbolic acknowledgement of the co-created ‘other’ and the intentional formation of active space whereupon both collaborating participants may move in construction of “thirdness”. Ogden is concerned to identify a jointly created ‘unconscious’ that might appear between analyst and analysand. Through the art performances in this project there is an examination of human communication through relational theory as a practice in art, which embraces the viewer, relational events and the viewing field. These facets are all embodied within dialogical and inter-subjective experiences in the quest to find, articulate or manifest a possible ‘third’ entity of unconscious subjugation and conscious transformation.

The term “analytical third’ is used in this study to refer to a symbolically formed third subject, unconsciously co-created by collaborating participants, which seems to take a life of its own in the interpersonal field between subject and object relations as an outcome of collaborative exchange. Hyslop (2009), writing on the subject–object relation, is concerned with the examination of human experience, and the issues that arise from the premise that the world consists of *objects* (entities), which are perceived or otherwise presumed to exist as entities, by *subjects* (observers). These dialogues underscore the ideas of performativity informing my research project. My research argues that by incorporating these concepts and ideas different modes of art practice may be possible to house complexity and enable different codes of reading over time. At its core this research addresses the subject of human communication. It does so through the focus on dialogical exchanges, inherent within participatory and relational aesthetic practice. In this view the relational psychoanalytic encounter is seen as mutually co-constructed between two or more active participants, with the subjectivities of *all* participants contributing to the form and content of the dialogue that emerges between them (Ogden,1994; McLaughlin,1991; Hoffman,1992).

The emphasis on the importance of performative enactments in the aesthetic context of this project attempts to keep the focus squarely on the point of contact between the participants and on the form of emerging transactions. Performative enactments are viewed as relevant and significant opportunities to gain a window on unconscious motivations and meanings held by the participant. Such meanings have not been hitherto articulated or evidenced.

Chapter Three: Review of Literature

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature and theoretical frameworks underpinning the research project and informing the methodology as discussed in chapter four. The literature review draws on the philosophical work of key theorists to foreground the concept of performativity and participatory practice as a transformative influence in visual art. The literature review also provides a context to build and extend current research into performative art practice in light of existing work in the field.

Critical reflections on performative, relational practice in art such as those of Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) often take the form of discourses which reinforce the social, participatory and de-materialised constituents of the practice; they also emphasise the cultural, social and political interpretations of its context. Little has been written of a critical nature about the ontological dimensions of relational practice and its materiality, or the inter-subjective, psychological possibilities of performative exchange. Bourriaud's theoretical trajectory exhibits discrepancies, which indicate the limitations of an individualistic account of subject formation framed in exclusively cultural terms.

My research draws more broadly from poststructuralist and post-Freudian positions and offers a range of theoretical stances, from Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Sarah Kofman and Jacques Lacan. The research also draws from relational psychoanalytic frameworks through the writings of Jay R. Greenberg, Stephen A. Mitchel, Thomas H. Ogden and Jessica Benjamin.

The research acknowledges in particular the writings on performativity and participatory practice of John Langshaw Austin, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan as interpreted by Judith Butler; also Martin Heidegger via interpretations of Barbara Bolt and Claire Bishop, Dorothea Von Hantelmann, Michael Fried and David Davies. Their work forms the conceptual underpinning of my aesthetic and methodological understandings.

This review will focus on themes considered most relevant to this PhD research project with a concentration on performativity as an ontological and relational psychoanalytic process within trans-disciplinary art practices. To illuminate this focus the topics of this literature review are organised in terms of three principle themes that emerged repeatedly throughout this research: firstly, *performativity as inter-subjective and participatory experience*; secondly, *performativity situated as a material ontology*; and thirdly, *performativity positioned as iteration within temporal process*. These approaches are critical in this research project to understanding forms of engagement that emphasise a psychoanalytic and ontological location of the subject.

3.2 Performativity as Inter-subjective and Participatory experience

This research draws from inquires into performativity as inter-subjective and participatory experience by engaging with the complementary definitions of “*performance*” and “*performativity*”. Performance is commonly referred to as a series of unique and spontaneous events in the present tense that cannot be adequately re-presented. Performativity by contrast signals an awareness of the way the present gesture, enacted by the subject is always an iteration or repetition of preceding acts (Butler 1993).

Butler’s work draws on speech-act theory particularly the work of British philosopher John Langshaw Austin who first introduced the notion of performativity into linguistic theory in 1955 (Austin 1962).⁷ Austin coined the term *performative* in order to point to the *act like* character of language. He argued that in certain cases something that was said produced an effect beyond the realm of language. In other words, under certain conditions verbal signs can generate reality. The classic examples of what Austin at first thought would constitute a particular category of “performative” utterances originate in legal discourse: “*I hereby sentence you to six years imprisonment without parole.*” These speech acts actually *do* something rather than merely *represent* something. In making that statement, a person of authority changes the status of a subject: the words *do* what they say.

These ideas explore the ways that social reality is not assumed as given, but is continually created as an illusion through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign (Butler 1988). As Butler clarifies within speech act theory, a performative act is a discursive practice that performs or constructs that which it designates (Butler 1993).

Butler suggests that by infinitely citing the conventions and ideologies of the social world around us, we enact that reality; in the performative act of speaking, we integrate that reality by enacting it with our bodies, but that “reality” nonetheless remains a social construction. In the act of performing the conventions of reality, by embodying those fictions in our actions, we make those artificial conventions appear to be natural and necessary. By enacting conventions we do make them “real” to some extent, but that does not make them any less artificial (Butler 1988). Within this PhD research Butler’s approaches to Austin’s frame of reference are explored to determine how performativity may include bodily acts and acts of dialogical exchange in and through participatory practice. The work in this project experiments with these ideas by exploring the ways that linguistic constructions create reality through the speech acts we habitually participate in. According to Butler subjectivity can be understood as a performative citation, which either

⁷ Austin, J. L.: 1962, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon).

expresses or disguises an interior 'self'. As a performative citation, subjectivity is 'an act,' which broadly interpreted, constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority (Butler 1988).

Butler's influential text "*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*" (1988) has been foundational to my understandings of performative discourses as they relate to my subject. Whilst Butler draws on performativity in her theorization of gender, she is cautious to differentiate between 'performance' and 'performativity'. These discrepancies retain a particular influence on my study in that it is argued that performance presumes a subject whilst performativity disputes the very notion of the subject. Thus while performance can be understood as a intentional 'act' such as in a theatre production or performance art, performativity must be understood as the iterative and citational practice that brings into being that which it names. In this PhD research performativity is also viewed not as a singular 'act', rather a reiteration of a set of models.

The notion of conventionality and iterability (the capacity of a sign to be repeatable in different contexts) within Butler's stance on performativity may not sit comfortably with the preconceived notion of uniqueness often associated with presumptions of originality in a work of art. However in Butler's thesis, there is no subject preceding the repetition. Rather, it is through performance that the 'I' of the subject comes into being. She argues that there is no performer prior to the performed and that the performance constitutes the appearance of a 'subject' as its effect (Butler 1991: p. 24). Whilst Butler's work specifically addresses the way in which gender is materialised in the everyday, by implication this would suggest there are some interesting similarities between this materialisation in subjectivity and the way in which 'art' becomes materialised. This is something I investigate further in the following chapters.

Judith Butler's work draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis to explore the ways that social reality is not a given fact but is continually created as an illusion through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign (Butler 1990). As Butler illuminates, within speech act theory a performative act is that discursive practice that performs or constructs that which it designates (Butler 1993). A speech act can produce that which it names, however, only by reference to the accepted societal norm, code, or contract, which is constantly reiterated and thus performed by the subject in the pronouncement.

This dialogue underscores the ideas of performativity informing this research project. The notion of the performative in relation to art points to a shift from what an artwork depicts and represents to the effects and experiences that it produces or, to follow Austin, from what it "says" to what it "does." In principle, the performative triggers a methodological shift in how we look at any artwork and in the way in which it produces meaning. Understood in this way, it indeed offers a novel and challenging change of perspective.

3.3 Performativity and Relational Psychoanalysis.

The French philosopher Sarah Kofman's 1988 work, *The Childhood of Art: An Interpretation of Freud's Aesthetics*, has been helpful in focusing a working procedure in my art practice, particularly in regards to relational psychoanalysis. Kofman suggests that aesthetic development evades neurosis and takes the place of the psychoanalytical treatment, describing aesthetic development as a method in which artistic process is remodelled as psychoanalytic case study (Kofman, 1988). This research project is informed by post-Freudian psychoanalytic discourse of this kind, which emphasises ideas of the dialogical within performativity.

The implications for art practice emanating from the psychoanalytic model of exchange between analyst and analysand raises questions about who or what is to occupy the position of the analysand in the performance or enactment of the artwork: is it the artist, the participant, the viewer, the critic or some combination based on the relay between both analyst and analysand, artist, participant or viewer? Particularly relevant to this research are the relational and inter-subjective theories of Greenberg and Mitchell (1983). Rather than emphasising the role of analysis and interpretation, they place emphasis on social construction, the performativity of lived conscious experience, dyadic attachments, affective atonement, social construction and mutual recognition. They argue that the primary motivation of the subject is to be in relationships with others (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983). These propositions are appropriate to my research because they contend that the principal incentive of the individual is to be in relationships with others.

3.3 (i) Third-ness

This research project investigates the repudiation of single authorship by experimenting with forms of participatory art practice. It seeks to understand authorship within the relay of inter-subjective exchanges. Throughout this process the research deliberates on the analytical process of tracing the co-creation of an "analytical third" entity (Ogden, 1994), which may emanate from collaborative exchange.

Ogden (1994) presents persuasive arguments for inter-subjectivity. He posits the idea of the 'inter subjective, analytic third' in his effort to conceptualise the interdependence of subject-object relation of transference and countertransference in the analytic process. Within relational psychoanalysis the analytical third is both the symbolic acknowledgement of the co-created 'other' and the intentional formation of active space whereupon both collaborating participants may move in construction of "third-ness". He used the term analytic third to denote the relationship of an entity created by two participants in the dyad, a kind of co-created subject-object. According to Ogden this pattern or relational dynamic, which appears to form outside of conscious will, can be experienced either as a vehicle of recognition or something from which we cannot disengage ourselves. Taking on a life of its own, this third entity may be in concurrence, like the patterns

formed between analyst and the analysed or the mother and child. Ogden presents persuasive arguments for the “dialogical speech act” and inter-subjective formation. He is concerned to identify a jointly created ‘unconscious’ that might appear between analyst and analysand in the analytic process.

The term ‘analytical third’ is used in this research to refer to a third subject unconsciously co-created by collaborating participants, which seems to take a life of its own in the interpersonal field between subject and object. This third entity was explored between participants in a corresponding dyad, often revealed through an unconscious symmetry.

The introduction of inter-subjectivity into psychoanalysis has produced many important effects and has been understood in a variety of ways (Benjamin 2004). The precursors of this perception on inter-subjectivity lie with the developmentally oriented thinkers Winnicott (1971) and Stern (1985). While different in their own ways, they nevertheless try to specify the process by which we become able to grasp the other as having a separate yet similar mind.

In this view the relational psychoanalytic encounter is seen as mutually co-constructed between two or more active participants, with the subjectivities of all contributing to the form and content of the dialogue that emerges between them (Ogden 1994; McLaughlin 1991; Hoffman 1992). The emphasis on the importance of performative enactments in the aesthetic context of this project attempts to keep the lens focused squarely on the point of contact between the participants and on the form of transactions that emerge between them. Descriptions acknowledge the active contributions of individual partners to the co-construction of the performative enactment.

3.4 After the Subject

“*Who Comes After the Subject?*” the title of a 1991 collection of essays edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy, reflects the apprehension felt by many contemporary thinkers concerning the standing of the modern subject (in the ontological and epistemological sense). Cadava’s work is an insightful reminder of the changes through which the very concept of a subject of consciousness has gone since the 1960s. The modern concept of the ‘subject,’ as it is positioned, for example, in the philosophies of Descartes, Locke, and Kant, has informed liberal explanations of the self, of ethical and political autonomy and responsibility, and universal human rights. This concept, which is by no means unequivocal, is subjected to a radical questioning in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Rosalind Krauss (2010) asserts that this questioning has occurred, most notably, in the context of poststructuralist thought in which the prevailing definitions of subjectivity and authorship has been subjected to a ‘deconstructive’ re-appraisal. Because authorship represents the heightened achievements of the subject, the status of authorship was vulnerable to attack by the advanced guard of the poststructuralist critique of the centred subject, mounted throughout the later part of

the twentieth century. It could be argued that this attack on subjectivity was no less so in the 'Anglo-American,' or 'analytic,' tradition, as well as in the fields of cognitive neuroscience and psychology. In any case, it is not clear that the subjects of rational, intentional, action, of political rights and freedoms, and of ethical normativity, have survived this interrogation intact. It is undoubtedly, at least in part, because of the ethical and political implications of this development that the question 'who comes after the subject?' is asked with a certain sense of exigency. The most notorious of these challenges to subjectivity and authorship was Roland Barthes essay "The Death of the Author" (1968) in which Barthes would show what he intended by the "birth of the reader" to which "death of the author" would give rise. As he explained,

A text is made of multiple writings drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination (Barthes 1977, p.148).

The connotations of Barthes's concept *death of the author* have impacted greatly on the idea of authorship in the work produced for this PhD. If the organisation of a work can no longer be made tenable by its point of origin, it must now be sought in the counter point of its engagement and its reception. Barthes' ideas evoke references to the subject, enmeshed in the process and affects of textuality.

3.5 Performativity situated as a Material ontology

Within this PhD research the material ontology of the artwork is considered to be both performative and relational. Material elements are deliberated in relation to each other with the artworks and installation, as the sum of its parts, opening to an associative potential. This section of the literature review engages ontological theories of generative performance, drawing from the watershed publications in *Artforum* magazine by Michael Fried (1967) and Robert Morris (1966) initiating ideas about artworks as event types that generate either durational, situated viewing or real instantaneous experience of enactment. In doing so their discussion introduces the consequences of theatricality within sculptural and installation practice.

3.5 (i) Theatricality

In seeking to define more succinctly the terms and definitions of performativity, performance and theatricality this literature review draws on the seminal debate generated between Michael Fried's essay "Art and Objecthood" (1967) and Robert Morris's response, which focuses on the delineations between the terms "*presence* and *presentness*". For Fried the viewer's presence in relation to an artwork and the gallery space, translates as a form of stage presences where the viewer is turned into the subject of what Fried disparages as literalist art (minimalism). If the

viewer's involvement is all that matters, then the artwork becomes increasingly redundant. As a result, Fried insisted Morris's "theatrical" sculpture was in conflict "not simply with modernist painting, but with art as such." If art was to survive this incursion, Fried insisted, it must "defeat theater."⁸ Opposing the indefinite *duration*, of "*literalist art*". Fried posits the idea of *presentness*, which in contrast defines this condition of participation in ways similar with the idea of *gestalt*. Fried insisted that modern art is characterised by "a kind of *instantaneousness*" in which "*at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest.*"⁹ To establish this reading, Fried needed to create a dichotomy between the theatrical "presence" in *literalist art* and the instantaneous "*presentness*" of high modernist art.

For Fried, "*literalist art*" is pitted against the viewer's body in a theatrical situation: the artwork becomes simply a prop on a stage (the gallery) used by actors (the viewer) and, as a result, destroys the autonomy of the artwork. In contrast Fried wanted to maintain high modern art's insistence of quintessence in which the work's mere object-ness is "neutralized" and "negated."¹⁰ Morris on the other hand sought ways to emphasis the sculpture as object by the endorsement of the fabrication of "the simpler forms that create strong *gestalt* sensations."¹¹

In contrast, Fried offered a dialectical opposition by insisting on art's capacity for "*presentness*": a sudden, fleeting transcendent experience transporting viewers to a mystical plane of existence. The opposition between "presence" and "presentness" is the hinge upon which Fried's argument turns. To delineate his position, Fried suggested "presentness" is "perpetual creation of itself." "Presentness" which is tautologically linked with "grace" is a manifestation of transcendence, and must be re-enacted perpetually:

It is this continuous presentness, amounting, as it were, to the perpetual creation of itself a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it"¹²

For Fried, late modern art offers escape from the limitations of theatre by transcending the spectator's body and situation. For Morris, Minimalism and therefore installation practices reveals the hidden logic and syntax of the participant /viewer experience. The spectator, in Fried's analysis, need not interpret the meaning of a work of art, since the work's formal properties are one and the same with its meaning. Fried's project is it at one and the same time the extinguisher of the subject of presence and restorer of the subject of present-ness.

This research negates the description, theatricality, which arises in part as a reaction to entrenched domination of the term performativity, a description that has now achieved a degree of

⁸ Fried, M "Art and Objecthood," P167.

⁹ Fried, M "Art and Objecthood," P167.

¹⁰ Fried, M "An Introduction to My Art Criticism," *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: U Chicago, 1998) P41-42.

¹¹ Morris, R "Notes on Sculpture, Part 1," P6.

¹² Fried M "Art and Objecthood," P167.

critical authority in the field (Von Hantelmann. 2014). Historically the notion of performativity in visual art practice has been employed in anti-theatrical discourse to suggest ideas of inauthenticity and deception. It is argued that contemporary theatricality in participatory visual art practices is critically formed by this struggle (Morgan and Wood, 2007).

According to Von Hantelmann performativity brings into view the appearance of effect in art, both in a given spatial and discursive context and in relation to a viewer or a public (Von Hantelmann, 2014). It recognises the reality-producing dimension of artwork. The notion of the performative in relation to art points to a shift from what an artwork depicts and represents to the effects and experiences that it produces. In principle, the performative triggers a methodological shift in how the artwork is viewed and in the way in which it produces meaning. Understood in this way, it offers a challenging change of perspective.

3.5 (ii) David Davies on the Performative Ontology of Art

Of particular significance to my research are the ontological theories of generative performance as presented by David Davies (2004) who points out that artworks are not simply products of performance, rather an artwork is a performance in itself. For Davies an artwork is viewed firstly as a process completed by the product. When speaking of performance he is really speaking about action, not to be confused with performance art. Davies extends this performative ontological discussion further in his thesis *Art as Performance* (2004) claiming that art is an action type whereby artistic content is enacted and articulated through materials. In Davies account

the product of an artist's manipulation of a vehicular medium will then be the vehicle whereby a particular artistic statement is articulated.....The vehicle may, as in the case of Picasso's *Guernica*, be a physical object, or as in the case of Coleridge's *Kubla Kahn*, a linguistic structure-type, or as arguably in the case of Duchamp's *Fountain*, an action of a particular kind. (Davies 2004, p59).

Davies main contention is that an artwork is a performance generated through a series of actions carried out by the artist in the execution of an artwork. His main conception is that "an artwork is a performance which articulates a content through a vehicle via an artistic medium" (Davies 2004, p 253). Davies' theory is an effective focal point in locating the ontology of performative and participatory art practices in this research. Davis's theoretical anchor allows me to reflect on the extent to which my own practice negotiates spaces for performativity and participation to occur.

3.6 Radical Performativity

I acknowledge the work of Barbra Bolt (2008), who in "*A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts*" defends arts performative ontology when she argues that the subjectivity of the artist cannot exist before the repetitive practice of art. Through practice, the artist comes into being. She

contends that art practice is performative in that it enacts or produces 'art' as an effect. Artists' engage with, re-iterate and question the 'norms' of 'art' existing in the socio-cultural context at a particular historical juncture. Similarly, art practice conceals the conventions of which it is a repetition. The re-iteration that operates in an artist's practice produces a 'naturalized' effect, which we come to label as an artist's style (Bolt 2008).

Bolt's work on performative, materialist ontology is informed by Martin Heidegger's theory of art. Bolt argues that it is in the fluidity of art practice, where the artist responds bodily, with hands and eyes, to the encounter with the materials of practice, that visual art produces real material effects. According to Bolt art does not merely represent, it performs radically, through the praxis of encounter. In the process Bolt posits performativity as 'real material effects'. She examines the way 'representation' has been constructed in twentieth-century thought, and argues that Heideggerian 'truth' and 'real material effects' result from the privileging of perception over knowledge. Bolt's asserts that the referent can be rehabilitated in Western thought and traced in 'real material effects'. She argues that 'representation' is an unstable process occurring within and outside signification, and that this very instability enables us to confidently predict that all art produces 'real material effects', or in other words, Heideggerian 'truth' (Bolt 2004).

3.7 Performativity as iteration within temporal process.

All artworks create various degrees of aesthetic experience. But from the beginning of post structuralism, an integral part of the artwork's conception has been the formation and shaping of occurrences and events. Central to the theoretical question being examined in this research is the ontological issue related to the subject/object and event dichotomy and its authorship.

Numerous theorists have explored the idea that works of art ought be categorised as event or performative types as opposed to the products that may result from such activities or as discrete objects. Collingwood (1938), Dewey (1934) and Croce (1946) are early influential examples. In a review of Dewey's aesthetics, Croce suggests familiar ideas to be found in Dewey's work. One of these ideas is that there are no artistic things, but only an artistic doing, an artistic producing (Croce 1946). Similarly Jeffrey Maitland (1975) suggestion that the work of art is a "doing", and that a work is a "performative presence" provided a versatile reference, in this research for ways performativity may be instituted to enhance artistic process. Denis Dutton states that, "As performances, works of art represent the ways in which artists solve problems, overcome obstacles, make do with available materials." (1979. p 305).

A useful dissertation by Gregory Currie (1989) proposes that all artworks be appropriately classed as action types. According to Currie art works are types of events. Currie states that the artist does not create the work of art. Nor does the artist discover it. Rather the artist can discover a pre-existing artistic structure, but the work is an action type that the artist "performs" in so doing. Currie explains that the heuristic path is the "way in which the artist arrived at the final

product.”(Currie1989, p 9). Neither a specific agent nor a particular time is essential to the action type that is the work of art: someone else could discover the same structure at a different time yet instantiate the same work.¹³ Through the work of Currie, Maitland, Croce and Dutton I have gained measurable clarification of performative, ontological procedures as they may apply to my art practice in this research project. Their writing has been helpful in focusing an interrogative procedure in my work.

Drawing from Alain Badiou in *Being and Event* (2005) an individual’s relationship to the present, changes upon the unintended manifestation of an event and its acknowledgment by the subject allied to it.¹⁴ The event is thus the initial spark for new subjective process and novel relationships of the individual to the world. For Badiou, the subject is a mode by which a body enters into subjective formation with regards to the production of the present. The subject represents not the individual but what the individual is ultimately capable of becoming. Through engagement with questions of subjective formation and events ontology the work of Alain Badiou has contributed to my understanding of performativity and its temporal foundations.

Žižek’s writing is particularly relevant to this research as it deals with the archetypal point of disturbance between, the “real” and “symbolic” orders, best signified by the traumatic event (Žižek, 1999) There are several theories of trauma and affect but the one this study is most concerned with elaborating is Freud’s concept of “*nachtraglichkeit*” or as it is frequently translated, repressed memory and deferred action (Freud,1966). For expansion of Freud’s psychoanalytical theory of repression into aesthetic concerns, I turn in this study to Foster’s discussion on the relation between pre-war and post-war avant-gardes. According to Foster the model of deferred action when applied to the historical avant-garde is a process of repression that responds and attempts to work through the initial unresolved trauma of modernity (Foster, 1996). Foster argues that the avant-garde returns to us, relocated by innovative practice in the present. Through application of Freudian analysis to contemporary discourses of ‘repression and return’ the writings of Foster and Žižek have helped me in this research to examine and disclose discursive practices in the subjective, psychoanalytic framing of performativity. This has been undertaken through the provisional blurring of boundaries between self, other and event.

3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion this review of literature is largely preoccupied with the philosophical underpinning of contemporary performative theory. The research draws upon relational-psychoanalytical, ontological and performative theory, linked to post-structural thought and explores its implications for trans-disciplinary art practice.

¹³ Citation from Livingston, Paisley, "History of the Ontology of Art", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/art-ontology-history/>>.

¹⁴ According to Badiou subjectivity is not only formed as a consequence of an event but is dependent on its own affective conditions as a whole a bodily experience. This bodily experience is what will determine the path, procedure, existence and presentation into a new reality according to the form the subject takes.

The review of literature approaches performative events as a function of multiple, interacting forces within a field in which every part affects the whole. Three major themes have steered this review of literature. They include performativity as inter-subjective and participatory experience. Secondly, performativity situated as a material ontology. Thirdly, performativity positioned as iteration within temporal process. They have generated discussion about self-concept in relation to others, the question of single authorship and 'self' as a unified and predetermined category, the performativity of lived experience, the inter-subjective, psychological dimensions inherent within performative exchange, the ontological experiences of subject-object relations and its significance as an event dichotomy.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter articulates the research methodology that sustained the practice and process of production through interrelated, trans-disciplinary frames. It sets out the parameters of a performative paradigm of research in and through trans-disciplinary art practice. The methodology reflects the theoretical framework and approaches to knowledge via participatory practice outlined in the previous chapter. The methodology sustains an approach for participatory practice within a context of a performative ontology, whilst interrogating the meanings and implications of this approach.

Practice-led research in this project has proven to be malleable and porous in both concept and method. The practice draws from various resources in the act of investigating and creating significance out of events and situations that have involved participatory and performative engagement. The practice-led research methodology draws upon perspectives developed over a sustained period of personal involvement in the visual arts. It has done this in ways that shape the production and presentation texts, objects, images, and artifacts about performative and participatory practices.

Ontological and performative theoretical methods are used to underpin the practice-led methodology used in this project. The ontological and performative perspectives are used to consider the prospect of epistemological uncertainty at the core of performative and participatory practices in art. At the center of this methodological framework is the concept of spatial and temporal porosity. The research brings these principles of interpretation to practical project outcomes drawn from research conducted across various domains including the studio environment, the gallery, online interactive networks and the museum.

The project necessarily employs a multi-method approach to practice-led research. These multiple forms of presentation and diverse practices are grounded in the production of four experimental workshops conducted throughout the first four years of the PhD. Four distinct project outcomes, linked by a web of associations and thematic subject matter, explore performative and participatory practices in art. This chain of association culminates in the final examination exhibition for this PhD research project.

Within this context, discussions about practice-led research involve epistemological and methodological implications in that knowledge is produced through the performativity of practice, and the performativity is a methodology for participatory art practices. The four projects are more deeply explored at each stage, resulting in a nuanced understanding of participatory and performative practice. While the four projects are distinct bodies of work, each based on specific contexts, it is the emerging method that allows for critical reflection and collective action that is of most concern here.

The findings of the project are presented in three complementary ways. The first is a practical component comprising an exhibition of creative work in the form of cross media, composite installation. The second takes the form of the dissertation that contains explanation and analysis of the research process. The third is widespread documentation of the research project in the form of a durable record.

4.2 Practice-led research

Practice-led research, with its emphasis on studio practice and the aesthetics of the research experience has been endorsed by a host of writings providing a stimulating field of discussion. Graeme Sullivan's work on art's practice as research (2005) joins a range of acclamations for practice led research in the arts, including Carol Gray and Julian Malins work on visualizing research (2004) with forerunners in qualitative research originating within art education Beittel(1973); Eisner (1991); Zurmuehlen (1990) and in other fields of education and social science including Barone & Eisner, (1997); Cole & Knowles (2001); Diamond & Mullen(1999); Pink(2001); Grierson and Mansfield(2003).

Sullivan's text was among the first in a series of publications to be written by an art educator; it joins *autoethnography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry* (Irwin and de Crosson, 2004),. These texts are distinctive in their interpretation of the connection between artistic practice and research, and their identification of the situation of the researcher as artist.

The position that Sullivan articulates rests on the premise that "the imaginative and intellectual work undertaken by artists is a form of research" (p. 223). Works of art are made through a process, which in every significant respect, mirrors processes of inquiry in other fields; they result in products that embody those processes through which information was generated, analysed, and interpreted. He envisions the studio experience in particular, as both a theoretical and practical source, and sees the theorising that occurs within this process - the constant questioning and experimentation - as basic to the project of understanding as it is to the practices of the visual arts. Sullivan submits that artists are involved daily in research practice; that works of art are essentially theoretical statements, interpretations of lived experience, on par with philosophical tracts, or with research studies as they are more traditionally conceived.

4.3 The Performative

Claims have been made for a performative research paradigm, as a development of, and distinguishable from, qualitative research. Where quantitative research is based on the scientific method and qualitative research is based on multiple methods performative research is practice-led and uses multiple methods (Haseman 2006).

Deliberations of creative practice-led research within performative practice draw attention to the issue of autonomy of practice-led research as opposed to the use of established qualitative research methods. How important is it for creative outputs within performative contexts to be of a high independent nature? If the quality of independent practice-led methodology is the key criterion, then by what criteria do we judge the quality of independent practice-led methodology in performative art practice? To illustrate the difficulties posed by practice-led research, Brad Haseman (2006) makes a convincing case for the consideration of a third major paradigm in research, which he names performative research:

In this third category of research alongside quantitative (symbolic numbers) and qualitative (symbolic words) – the symbolic data works performatively. It not only expresses the research, but in that expression becomes the research itself...When research findings are presented as such utterances, they too perform an action and are most appropriately named Performative research. It is not qualitative research; it is itself (Haseman 2006, p7).

Haseman suggests that in performative inquiry, practice-led research is a useful research strategy. He uses the same definitions offered by Gray and Malins (2004), which contend that in practice-led research the research question, occurs within the context of the practice and the methods employed. Hasmean however goes on to show that these particular methods can be supported by qualitative research methods even though they may be employed somewhat differently than their normal qualitative context

From the onset it is clear that performative research will move beyond current qualitative research practices for, in order to do its work, new strategies and methods have to be invented. The new strategies and methods are dictated by the phenomenon being investigated and the recognition that the current repertoire of qualitative methodological tools – particularly discursive prove – will not accommodate the surplus of emotional and cognitive operations and outputs thrown up by the practitioner (Haseman 2006, p7).

In his justification of performativity as a viable research methodology Haseman argues that whilst qualitative research methods such as action research, grounded theory, reflective practice and participant-observation have informed practice-led research, he suggests that distinctive, interpretative methods arising out of creative arts practice, necessitate a move towards a new research paradigm. He has termed this paradigm 'performative research'. Haseman's work has been important in championing a performative paradigm and claiming it for the creative arts. However, as Barbra Bolt asserts before we make claims for a performative model for the creative arts, there are a number of imperatives that need to be addressed.

Firstly there is a need to define the terms of a performative model in relation to the existing theories of performativity. Secondly, like the qualitative researchers before them, the creative arts need to carefully mark out the territory of a performative paradigm and differentiate it from the established research orthodoxies by refining its protocols and procedures. We need to define its concepts, methodologies and interpretive methods and assess whether a performative paradigm really can hold its own within the broader field of research (Bolt 2008, p1).

A performative paradigm potentially offers the creative arts a fundamental way of distinguishing its research from other models of knowledge. Performativity can be conceived as a methodological model of how things – identities and other discursive effects – come into being. Arts research in this instance is performative, in the sense that it helps enact the tangible. Such enactments have been studied comprehensively by a number of cross-disciplinary scholars.¹⁵ Performativity is not only conceived of as a theory, but also a deconstructive practice, which aims to bring out alternative, discursively produced effects. Thus, performativity opens up discursively produced effects as sites of political contest.¹⁶ The turn of phrase ‘practicing performativity’ is meant to underline the assertive and interventionist possibilities of a performative research methodology.

The discussion that follows seeks to position the methodological objectives of artworks as inter-subjective and ontological events unfolding in time through the philosophical perspective of three different theorists: Walter Benjamin on spatial and temporal porosity; Gilles Deleuze, on how art is a matter of capturing forces as opposed to inventing forms; and Martin Heidegger’s enterprise of positing art as a temporal event of disclosure.

Walter Benjamin’s essay “Naples”(1928) written with Asja Lacis introduces the central concept of porosity understood in both spatial and temporal terms. For Benjamin the city of Naples is spatially porous in its mingling of private and public space; the home spills into the street, each private attitude or act is permeated by streams of communal life. Similarly the city has no temporal fixity; instead an interpenetration of day and night, street and home, where the borders of both are porous. They assert that the city is in a continual process of transformation: “Porosity is the inexhaustible law of life in this city, reappearing everywhere”. He explains further: “The stamp of the definitive is avoided”, giving rise to “the passion for improvisation”. In Naples, porosity and transience manifest: “Balcony, courtyard, window, gateway, staircase, roof are at the same time stage and boxes.” Nothing ever seems fixed so that you cannot tell if the architecture is in the process of being built or in decay and ruination because “the stamp of the definitive is avoided”.¹⁷ The terms of porosity as Benjamin locates them are loaded with assumptions. The concept of porosity has been utilized for this PhD research methodology with regards to the arbitrary

¹⁵ John Law has theorized the performativity of research practices in the social sciences (Law, 2004).

¹⁶ In research on gender and sexuality, this point has been most influentially argued by Judith Butler (1990, 1993).

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis (1924/1978: 165-66).

divisions that operate between material object and performance, systems of display and spatial content and author and subject. Facilitating the transformation of one sphere of operation into another in a process of improvisation and flux. Within this research project the physical environment of the artwork is regarded as a porous structure, characterised by dialectics between fluctuation and instability, between uncertainty and order, appropriate to a malleable performative methodology. Porous structures are those that do not resist change or the interaction of various functions. Such configurations are able to accommodate the complexity of human interaction and the changing patterns of behavior. The research draws from this argument. Adopting a methodological framework, fashioned from Benjamin's description of Naples as a porous city, it allows an approach to porosity within the operational spaces of performativity in order to resist fixed or designated purposes or functionality.

The concept of *porosity* aligns to Deleuze: "in art, it is not a matter of...inventing forms, but of capturing forces" (Deleuze 2004: p.56). This notion of encapsulating forces, positions the process within an artwork without any specific source or objective, which never comes to rest at an end point or even state. According to Deleuze these forces interact constantly, creating a dynamic world-in-flux rather than a collection of stable entities. When material process is approached as an encapsulated force, a particular orientation opens for a re-consideration of what practice and methodology might constitute, in ways that expand their definition beyond the privileged of an individual "maker-author" who transforms matter (Cheah 1996: p.129). The methodology of this project sustains an operational framework, which orientates process and materiality into spaces that resist pre-assigned determinations. Thus, any means-end relationship is disrupted through the very process and approaches of the research itself and this disruption becomes a methodological force within the productive process.

Following the above analysis, the concept of enactment becomes relevant. Enactment then becomes a methodology in the project. Drawing on Elizabeth Grierson's (2015) reading of Heidegger, the notion of the artworks ontological *enactment* "situates artworks not as aesthetic objects-made intelligible only through human perceptions of consciousness or as social forces of production (as in Hegel), but as events of disclosure of the world in us and us in the world. Artworks in their own time enact a kind of revealing process" (Grierson 2015: p 561). The notion of putting art to work as "events of disclosure" animates the performative methodology in this research.

Heidegger's proposition opens to the suggestion that an artwork operates in and through its event-ness as a strategy of forming meaning in the temporality of its occurrence.

"For Heidegger this event-ness works as a form of disclosure of the "being" of the artwork (its ontology), not as an appearance or a representation of some external entity that may be made intelligible by our consciousness; nor to be understood via any aesthetic judgment,

attitude or experience. If an artwork is set to work in time and place, then is it possible for this to have any pedagogical affect?"(Grierson 2015: p 565).

Throughout the process of making it would appear that Heidegger's theoretical approach is underpinned by the favoring of perception over knowledge. Privileging the ontological uncertainty over the fixture of the artwork's meaning. Barbra Bolt appears to have come to similar conclusions when she says that Heidegger privileges non-representational truth over representational truth (Bolt 2004:p121).

The methodology of performative enactment structures the subject's engagement in a network of relations. This approach is elaborated through Barbara Bolt's reading of Heidegger, whereby the subject is positioned in a way that challenges traditional "relations of mastery". Drawing from Heidegger, Bolt discusses a relationship of "co-responsibility and indebtedness" and "in a reversal of the causal chain of means and ends...artist, object, materials and processes are posited as co-responsible for the emergence of art...for the bringing forth of something into appearance" (Bolt 2004: p.52). This argument resonates with the approaches to practice taken within this PhD, which has involved the generation of situations in which subjects are co-produced in the process of relational engagements. This approach has relevance for considering the expansion of performative practice in art, by encompassing collaboration, participation, and the multiple practices of viewing.

4.4 Project Overview.

1: Currents: Experimental Workshops and exhibitions in four parts.

2: Durational Performance Ontology in three parts

Part one: Act of suspension – (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously).

Part two: Black Noise - (Cast of Absence).

Part three: Infinite recursion – (Back and forth along the Abyss).

3: 3rd – (Album of Dialogical Exchange)

4: Instruction / Enactment – (Or what little Hans did next)

In conjunction with the Freud Museum London

The methodological process for this research explored performative theory through examples of participatory praxis in which process creates a collective environment. Participants in this environment meet in an informal workshop context to engage in shared activity that aims to open-up space for creative action. This setting provides the focus of the experimental workshops. As

with the process of research itself, the recruitment of participants in a collectively engaged art project was often followed by moments of group production followed by a period of editing by the participants when they reflected on what had transpired. Then the edited material was sometimes presented back to the participants to elicit further discussion. While there was an interest in opening up the project to the influence of others, my role as the artist/researcher was generally to facilitate the process and presentation of the project. As artist/researcher I remained the one responsible for overseeing, documenting and editing the project outcomes. The project descriptions are my undivided views as the artist /researcher. While the *Currents workshops* have been the result of discursive exchange and collaboration with many different participants, supporters and individuals, I as the art/researcher remain the sole initiator of these methodological descriptions. The material and ideas collectively generated throughout the process were constantly reworked and reconsidered. While others were involved in the events, it was I as the art/researcher who had access to critical reflections and re-interpretation of an otherwise collective process.

4.5 Contexts and Starting Point: The Currents Workshops

The methodological focus of this research project centres on the *Currents workshops*. They were designed to facilitate the collaborative and participatory approaches followed throughout all the other undertakings produced in this PhD. This included the *Performative Sculpture* projects, the *3rd Album of dialogical exchange* project and the work produced in conjunction with the Freud Museum in London. My intention is not to elaborate on these projects in this section, rather expand them independently in continuing chapter of this dissertation.

The *Currents workshops* set out to displace the idea of an individual artist studio by including engagement with over fifty other participants with varying degrees of participation. The *Currents workshops* were conducted consecutively throughout the first four years of this project. The workshops took place in the studios of Footscray Community Art Centre in Melbourne's west, approximately eight kilometres from Melbourne's central business district. The FCAC has been in operation for the past forty years and is a world-recognised facilitator of participatory, collaborative and community based art practices across genre including theatre, music and visual arts. It is the site of many international research conferences including most recently in 2014 the Spectres of Evaluation- rethinking: Art/Community /Value presented by the Centre of Cultural Partnerships, University of Melbourne. FCAC has been refurbished recently to include a state of the art performance theatre, IT lab, visual art studios, two project spaces, video facilities, sound recording facilities, conference and meeting rooms. Along with the existing Gabriel gallery there is now the more recently established Roslyn Smorgan gallery.

The research methodologies structuring this PhD remained responsive to the research context by situating the project within the FCAC complex. This extended to the use of visual art studios for

the purpose of engaging practice as individual creative activity as well as participatory group engagement. This also included the facilitating of pedagogical activities and associated undertakings such as curating, critical writing and presenting exhibition outcomes. Practice as a collaborative activity involved other practitioners and participants in making and disseminating as well as negotiating the co-construction of new work.

Each three-hour workshop took place over twenty-eight sessions, which were delivered over an eight-month period. The *Currents workshops* were structures to remain project based, and to produce an individual exhibition outcome at the end of each workshop program. All of the exhibitions were held at the Roslyn Smorgon Gallery.

The *Currents workshops* were located within an arts industry setting outside of higher educational contexts. By situating the *Currents workshops* within an arts industry context, it allowed the sufficient autonomy and self-determination necessary to explore and navigate the terrain of performativity within the context of experimentation. This is not to say that the *Currents workshops*, whilst practice-led, were not designed and motivated by the clear desire to engage in forms of critical pedagogy and exchange as an extension of research into contemporary participatory art practices. Nevertheless the position from which critical pedagogy occurs should also be the subject of critique. Thus an ethos of criticality informs the entire workshops program.



Image. Robert Mangion. Footscray Community Art Center. Melbourne. 2013

4.6 Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy was examined as an extension of research into contemporary participatory art practices. The pedagogical approach was part of the ongoing research interest into participatory, collaborative and transformative practice. A method of generative process and critical thinking emerges throughout the four *Currents projects*.

Within the *Currents* program, critical pedagogy and systems theory were sustainable methodological tools for the critique of evaluation of the cultural domain in relation to participatory arts practice. In part the *Currents* program was initiated to examine the variety of ways in which evaluation itself could be questioned and decontextualized through relational and participatory practice. Critical praxis within the *Currents* program contended with issues of theoretical concern. Four key interconnected discourses of particular relevance here are *The Domain of Creativity* (1990) by Russian theorist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Ignorant School Master* (1998) by French philosopher Jacques Rancière, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) by Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire, and *Border Crossings* (1992) by educational and cultural theorist Henry Giroux.

For Csikszentmihalyi creative value is an operative process mediated between the individual, the artistic field and the cultural domain. His deductions show that it is not possible to even think of creative evaluation, let alone measure it, without taking into account the parameters of the cultural symbol system or domain in which creativity takes place. He infers that the social roles and norms of the field regulate the resultant creative activity. Within Csikszentmihalyi's systems theory model lays the possibilities for systemic interjection and cultural resistance. The key pedagogical discourses and practice of Henri Giroux involved the combination of post-structuralism and cultural studies within the project of promoting radical democracy. Giroux presented his shift as a "border crossing" that involved transformative, trans-disciplinary perspectives, which overcame the punitive abstractions and separations of fields like education, social theory and art. In his critique *Public Pedagogy and the Politics of Neo-liberalism: making the political more pedagogical* (2004) Giroux appeals for a form of pedagogy that establishes a type of agency in public and institutional spheres offering points of resistance to neo-liberal configurations of the 'entrepreneurial self'.

What interest Jacques Rancière on the other hand is the presumption of equality of intelligence between teacher and student; the point being not to prove that all intelligence is equal, but to see what can be achieved under this hypothesis. For Rancière this presumption is more specifically a methodology and not a goal. Equality is continually verified by being put into practice. Paulo Freire argues for a revision of education away from a market driven model of learning, in which teachers deposit information into pupils to produce manageable, productive subjects under an authoritarian social apparatus. Instead he develops the idea of a participatory problem posing education on which students are critical co-investigators in dialogue with their teacher. One of Freire's key concept centres

on a critical consciousness that allows people to understand their social reality, to enter the historical process and act with agency.

Issues of critical pedagogy formulated by these theorists were of utmost significance to my research. They form a keystone for enunciating the origins of critical pedagogy. However the process of framing concepts of performativity as a method of participatory exchange raised questions about the presumed ideological framework of criticality and pedagogy. The inference being, cultural democracy and emancipation dictate a particular kind of critical pedagogy and participation.

Elizabeth Ellsworth has also pointed to a predicament with the term 'critical' as it becomes a code word that veils the political agenda. While participatory art projects may claim to be critical, the question of how power relations have shifted in practice deserves attention (Ellsworth 1989). The task within the *Currents workshop* was to avoid the presumption that critical pedagogy refers to a universal version of critical knowledge and practice, based on "freedom from oppression". As Ellsworth points out whose version of freedom are we following when we practice 'critical pedagogy'? (Ellsworth 1989, p.305).

The critical pedagogical methods used within the *Currents workshops*, served to question or rebut single meaning, single authorship, and 'self' as a unified and preordained category. Contesting the idea of of an already existing subjective agency that freely chooses to act, rather the project considers the subject's formation through performative processes. According to Butler (1997) subjectivities are not pre-existing or self determined acts of agency lying dormant, rather subjectivity is formed through the performative act itself. The projects developed out of the *Currents workshops* were open enough for participants to rework their own subjective responses and influence the direction of the workshops. In the process questions were raised about the presumed ideological framework of criticality, pedagogy, culture, democracy and emancipation.

Becky Flores refers to Peter McLaren (1988) who stressed that in order to develop critical pedagogy, it is crucial to consider the premise of "a social critique of ideology" in order to avoid "reproduc[ing] the very structures it is seeking to displace" (McLaren 1988, p.177). Political theorist Chantel Mouffe, for example, argues for political philosophy's role in proposing different interpretations of justice, equality and liberty, rather than tasking itself with their 'true meanings' (Mouffe 1993, p.115). Projects that set out to be critical may hide an implicit agenda of how the instigators think the world should be, and expect a certain critical outlook reaffirming that agenda. Flores reminds us that "empowerment is trapped within its own ideological framework where the only question that is begging is empowerment on whose terms?" (Flores 2004). Throughout the duration of the *Currents workshops* I have come to understand critical pedagogy as an analytical practice through which to ask such questions and develop a critique of the ideologies and conditions, which frame that practice.

4.6 Aims and Objectives

My aim in this project was to design, develop and map a series of experimental workshops, in order to

provide a platform for experimental and participatory engagement. This was developed in order to critically interrogate processes of performative enactments as a method of artistic development. The common element shared by these experimental participatory practices is that they evince space and time as constructed situations. Such situations work with elements of critical thinking, dialogical exchange, material exploration, performative enactments, and collaborative interaction.

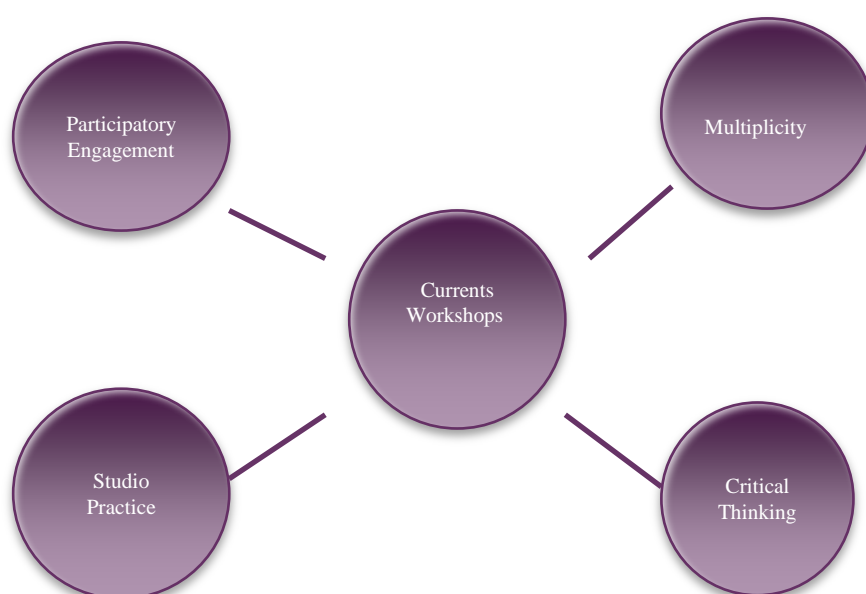
In order to achieve this aim, the *Currents workshops* were constructed to produce, test, trial and pilot various approaches to participatory engagement, followed by documentation and data analysis of the experimental workshops. The core objectives of the *Currents workshops* was to facilitate

- Participatory and performative exchange.
- Critical thinking.
- Experimental studio engagement.

Inter-subjective exchange and experiential knowledge are vital to the development of this objective. The four reoccurring principles that governed the objectives of the *Currents workshops* were

- Multiplicity
- Participatory exchange
- Critical thinking
- Experimental studio engagement

Together these four principles offered a concise and lucid way of capturing the disposition and the constituents of the workshops' participatory and pedagogical objectives. As such these four elements became methodological principles, capable of embodying the values of this methodological framework for participatory and performative engagement. For analytical purposes the four principles are presented separately. In practice, each principle was recursive and co-existed to a greater or lesser degree within each of the other three, each constantly energising and refiguring the other in new and dynamic ways. A brief description follows.



4.7 Multiplicity

Multiplicity as a principle within the *Currents workshops* embraced the variety and paradoxes of participatory and performative exchange engaging with trans-disciplinary process. Embedded here are the ideals of enacting creatively with diversity and with the multi faceted nature of change.

Performativity in practice is an emergent mode of working, a model of how reality comes into being. It is also a deconstructive practice facilitating different emergent meanings over time. This notion of multiplicity is grounded in the notion of 'enactment', linking performativity in a causal chain that is, as co-produced by research methods as by the practices that make up research. The concerns are with complexities, with the multiple ways in which the world is 'textured', in particular those textures that normative social science enquiry tends to miss out on, such as the ephemeral, the indefinite and the irregular (Law, 2004: p 4). The trans-disciplinary process is a practice that is multi-faceted in methodology, multi-purposed in aim, multidisciplinary in content and multiform in outcomes. The multiplicity is sustained by bringing trans-disciplinary frameworks of interpretation to practical project outcomes across various domains including the studio environment, the gallery, online interactive networks and the museum. These trans-disciplinary frameworks engage participatory and inter-subjective exchange in and through artworks as its principle methodology. The research process and its outcomes included a series of performative enactments and cross media installations.

4.7.1 Participatory Engagement

During the *Currents workshops*, participatory engagement was situated within a field of relational influences and conceived as an enmeshed experience. This in turn abetted the subject/participant connection to be considered as an experiential continuum rather than being situated outside these constructed relations. Participatory exchange within the *Currents workshops* reflected the different types of connections, interrelationships, patterns and bridges engendered by participation. This process within the *Currents workshops* helped foster affiliations between diverse practices and discourse to dissolve boundaries and synchronize apparent opposites. Participatory exchange has meant connecting the personal to the political, the emotional and the rational to the physical; it has meant connecting the cognitive to the material and to enactment. This principle has proven to be about navigating pathways through contradictions and inconsistencies. This participatory process locates the subject/participant to a temporality of events. It relates past, present and future to one another by recursive means. This process discloses a subject/participant engaged in a field of material, process-oriented, spatial, temporal and object-based relations. It does not position the subject/participant as a discrete entity apart from the context of engagement, but instead locates it in the midst of a process-oriented dynamic. The process itself constructs the meaning.

It is the contention of this project, that engaging performativity as dialogical process, within participatory modes of practice, to enable a multi-variant voice emanating from participatory exchange. This process places emphases upon the activity of making mediated from a network of dialogical

exchanges between participants. Making is explored as a process of structuring relations between groups of people in collective encounters. In this process, performativity is considered a 'web' within which collaborative relations are activated and developed, and in which practice is positioned as an activity implicitly dialogic and responsive. This situation has emerged consistently throughout the *Currents workshops* and during this doctorate research. Four examples are highlighted in which performativity has been engaged as a collective activity and in which the question of authorship shifts and expands to include collaborative relationships. These projects include *Black Noise/ Cast of Absence; Act of Permanent Suspension; Infinite Recursion/ Back and Forth Along the Abyss*; and *3rd Album of Dialogical Exchange*.

4.7.2 Critical Thinking

Drawing from Delia Bradshaw's notions of critical intelligence, critical thinking as a methodology throughout the *Currents workshops* enabled the incessant construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of understanding between the participants. It encouraged a practical and reflexive approach to critical process (Grierson, 2009 pp159-160). Critical thinking came in many forms including emotional, intuitive, interpersonal, spatial, symbolic, and physical intelligence as well as factual and analytical and linguistic intelligence.

A key approach of this methodological context was recognition of the multi-faceted nature of critical thinking. This encouraged connections around different approaches to the processes of engaging and making while also revealing the possibilities and limitations of each. It encouraged the capacity for reflexivity and self-knowledge (noting the self is multiple). The fundamental skills of critical thinking were to question and analyse. Critical analysis encompasses the cycle of framing focused questions, making value based judgments and taking justifiable action and risk. Critical thinking means being clear and explicit about the values embedded in decisions and actions (Bradshaw, 1999: p24). Each of the *Currents workshops* explored the complexity and in some cases contradictions that surround their assigned project objectives and ensuing concept. Each of the *Currents workshops* evolved as an experiment in collectively deciding who, what and how the research and practice for each project would unfold. There was an ongoing process of the group constantly rethinking and questioning their role, process and the dynamism of the project itself.

4.7.3 Studio Practice

Experimental studio engagement throughout the *Currents workshops* focused upon collaborative action and exchange formed within inter-relations between authors/participants/collaborators. The situation had occurred numerous times during this PhD research in which performative practice was engaged as a collective action in which the question of authorship shifts and expands to include collaborative relationships. These actions refer to the co-constructed nature of the

subject/object/authors/participants/collaborators relationship within relational, rather than autonomous contexts. The project has experimented with performative practice beyond the established definition of the artist as author who simply transforms materials. Instead it set out to decentralise the subject/author position, within a field of relational events and participatory exchanges.

A facility for effective action, reflection, change and agency was convened out of experimental studio practice and inter-subjective exchange. Each of the four *Currents workshops* and consequent work produced had surveyed the role inter-subjectivity plays within participatory art practice. Through these concepts relational events were regarded as a function of temporal, interacting forces within a field in which every part affects the whole. The projects explored performativity as a practice, which embrace the viewer, events and the viewing field. These are all embodied within inter-subjective experience. Inter-subjectivity is a component of performativity based on the view that personal psychological experience is interactive and continually embedded in relationships and exchange. The *Currents workshops* explored how inter-subjective actions such as dialogical exchange operate within participatory contexts to influence creative process. This process required an awareness of the interactions associated with participatory engagement and understanding of the complex connections between personal engagement and the broader social network generated out of participatory engagement.

These ideas provided a scaffold for thinking about material process and form as being about experience instead of concrete objects. Engaging performativity as material ontology has meant expanding the idea of engagement between the art object, its display and how it performs its presence in relation to the viewer. The work carried out during *Currents workshops* investigated the relationship of the artworks materiality, through the idea of event-ness as a form of disclosure of being. Important to this notion are Martin Heidegger's ideas of positing art as a temporal event of disclosure. Grierson (2015) through her reading of Heidegger, states that

artworks in their own time enact a kind of revealing process: They reveal a human and community historical sense of what matters to it now....By setting aesthetics to work in the world via Heidegger's ontological account, there may be an activation of questions to do with relations between place and being that may act as a form of pedagogical procedure for learning about living at a fundamental level of being human (Grierson 2015 p 561).

The subject comes to be realised, through a series of temporal episodes. For Heidegger the subject is a mode by which a body enters into subjective formation in relation to place, objects and events.

The project maintains that performativity needs to be thought of as durational, by which the present gesture enacted by the subject is always an iteration or repetition of preceding events. Many works conducted during this doctorate research have involved iterative situations, conceived within specific temporal frameworks both as studio experimentation and public presentation and exhibition. Process is

presented as an operational component of the project not simply as a means to an end. The series of projects in the *Currents workshops* reveal this approach through installations and collaborations that engage continuous changes generating and sustaining forms of interchange within the work process. This keeps the practice and resultant production open and unfolding in a complexity of relations. It favors forms of practice occupied with multiplicity in relations of collaborative exchange, dialogues, studio experiments and writing.

4.8 Performativity as Pedagogies of engagement and Collective activity

The *Currents workshops* engaged and constructed processes of dialogue and engagement between individuals in collective encounters. My role throughout the duration of the *Currents workshops* alternated between the following:

- Artist/participant /observer
- Project coordinator
- Curator of the resultant exhibitions.

The methodology applicable to collective activity focused upon the positioning of engagement in a network of relations between participants, collaborators and authors. Within this context, material process is evoked in and through dialogical exchange, to active collaborative relations. Dialogical exchange of ideas gives rise to creative responses. Questions of authorship shift and expand across processes of collaborative exchange. Discursive practice and knowledge formation within this context constantly undergo transformation, as new experiences are exchanged among participants. A feature of the *Currents workshops* was that they be seen as the exploration of interchangeable ontological fields of:

- Art object – subject
- Performance - event
- Artist – participant
- Author – interpreter.

These fields were construed as overlapping in an assembly of influences within a generative research context. By this process authorship becomes a condition for exploration, within an interactive and collaborative context. Thus, authorship is viewed as an uncertainty rather than a bounded fact, and as such it opens to new possibilities of idea and execution. The *Currents workshops* attempted to be open enough for participants to rework their subjective interpretations and thereby influence the direction of the research/projects.

4.9 Research Tools

The research tools used in the *Currents workshops* and in turn all other research outcomes in this PhD included video equipment, cameras, editing facilities, photography, digital printing and photocopying, reflective journal and research diary, sketch book, visualization and observation processes.

4.9.1 Video equipment

Video equipment such as cameras, memory cards, camera shank, lighting and playback equipment and access to editing facilities enabled the capture of dynamic information relevant to the research project issues, including instantaneous interchange, movement and sound, and emergent characteristics of ambient temperaments and so on.. The advantage of using video as a medium is that in its raw state it is ideal for capturing more objective data including subtle things that may unconsciously filter out of perception. It is also a good analytical tool especially when combined with editing facilities allowing play and replay capacity for scrutinsation of each frame. Four video works were produced as part of this research project they include 1: Act of Suspension – (*Derived by Chance Altered Continuously*); 2: Black Noise - (*Cast of Absence*); 3: Infinite recursion – (*Back and forth along the Abyss*); 4: Instruction / Enactment – (*Or what little Hans did next*) In conjunction with the Freud Museum London.

4.9.2 Photography

Photography was used extensively throughout the research process as a way of capturing static images of performative work, interactive situations and object interaction. Providing evidence of specific, meaningful characteristics related to key developments in the research. Within this project the practice led research was supplemented by the use of photography in many ways including the acquisition of visual data, the collation of visual information, the analysis of visual data and presentation of research findings. The three types of cameras included a Nikon D5200 SLR digital camera, a Panasonic DMC-TZ 10 LUMIX, and Canon EOS - SLR 100D digital camera. Each of these has a video capture facility and various sound recording capacities. The advantage of using digital cameras is that they are relatively easy to use and they can present complex and realistic detail.

4.9.3 Sketchbook

A number of sketchbooks were used for the exploration of ideas and subsequent reflections and analysis of data throughout the duration of this research project. The sketchbooks include a range of visual notes and other contextual reflections on the forms of engagement and process encountered throughout the project. They were particularly useful for capturing and storing a range of visual ideas, data and information but not necessarily in chronological order. Their main function was to encourage visual thinking in the form of thumbnail sketches and rough drawing. They also had an instrumental function in the way they facilitated diagrammatic mind mapping linking concepts to practice.

4.9.4 Reflective journal

A reflective journal was maintained research diary throughout the duration of this research. While more structured and resolute than a sketchbook it acted as a purposeful research tool and method for collating data, and a decisive way of ordering information as well as helping to reveal and reconnoiter various models of practice. The reflective journal in and of itself, is a store or a repository for a range of information in a range of media such as photograph, drawing, montage, writing and collage which is added to and consulted on a regular basis. Within the context of this research project the reflective journal or research diary was used to help capture the dynamic and reflexive nature of practice.

4.9.5 Sculptural Models

Spatial experimentation was an aid to the exploration of object and spatial ideas and subsequent analysis of data throughout the duration of this research project .The 3D models include a range of maquettes, materials, objects, notes and other contextual reflections on the 3D forms of engagement and installation processes relating to the project. The models were particularly useful for capturing and storing a range of visual ideas, data and information focused toward more resolved constructions of objects and viewing contexts. Their main function was to encourage visual thinking in the form of spatial and three-dimensional configurations. They also had an instrumental function in the way they facilitated conceptual linkages between material concepts and participatory practices. The 3D materials and processes included paper, card, metal, plastic, MDF board, string, marble and a range of modeling and constructivist techniques.

4.10 Outcomes: The making of the Project

The practice led methodology emanated from two operational platforms: a series of experimental workshops and a number trans-disciplinary art projects. The latter arise from the former, which incorporate performance, sculptural and visual representations. These two platforms established a range of situations to examine the project's core theme of participation and interactive exchange.

The engagement of participants throughout the *Currents workshops* often included moments of group discussion followed by creative production then followed by a period of editing where each individual reflect on their own engagement. Then the edited material would be presented back to the group to elicit further discussion. Critical reflection was the core work of the group who co-edited their findings in the format of developmental journals; there was a feedback loop which involved discussing the issues, doing research through observations and practical workshops to find out more about these issues and then distilling these reflections in the journals followed by more discussions and research. This is a heuristic methodological process, evincing through generative experimentation and recognition of participatory engagement as a critical practice.

The practice-led approach taken throughout the *Currents workshops* was informed by a set of action research principles as defined by Winter (1989). These principles were particularly useful for this study in that they encourage collaborative exchange and reflective critique. The values of collaborative exchange within action research assume that each person's ideas are equally significant as potential resources for creating copious categories of responses, negotiated among the participants. Reflective critique permits deliberation on issues of relational causality, dialectical and inter-subjective exchange. It makes explicit the interpretations, biases and assumptions upon which beliefs are formed. In this way, practical accounts gave rise to theoretical considerations.

Participatory action research draws on notions of enablement through critical reflection. This process involves participants in co-production from start to finish and aims to effect change in the situations being researched (Kemmis and McTaggart in Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Within the *Currents workshops* the 'participant' is considered an actor / agent within the generative process and their expertise, specialities and critical knowledge are considered to be no less relevant than the artist/ researcher who may have initiated the research or project. Participatory action research processes are relevant to performative methodology as they introduce an inter-subjective process, involving seeing things from multiple points of view.¹⁸

Following the studio and workshop experimentations, the focus shifted to a range of presentation ideas such as installation spaces and constructed viewing situations. There was analysis of how a viewing audience might respond to and interact with the presentations. These considerations extended to experimentation with a relational gestalt through strategies involving situational events with the placement of disparate objects, such as photographs, sculptural materials, wall writing, film, and audio pieces within composite installation settings. When making compositional choices information relating to the affiliation between subject, actions and art objects became relevant.. A number of experiments were undertaken to trial these theoretical ideas in practice. An important part of the research process has been a period of encapsulating and editing the material generated through the practice. In some instances a camera acts as a fly on the wall, objectively documenting without interference, allowing analysis of the uninterrupted footage.

Out of these presentations and exhibitions, value has been found in analytical descriptions of the relational praxis employed throughout the *Currents workshops* and the implications for the final outcomes of this study.

4.11 Conclusion

The methodological frameworks presented in this section have explored the potential of performativity as conceptual tools for examining participation in art. They have emphasized the importance of recognizing the different ways in which performativity may be theorised, and the very different effects that performativity is capable of generating. What remained constant is that performativity is thought of

¹⁸ For further elaboration see Kemmis and McTaggart in Denzin & Lincoln 2000

as a citational practice, enabling subjects and their performances. Of particular significance to this research are the ontological concepts of generative performance and subjective formation. Judith Butler and her work on performativity in relation to subjective formation has informed these aspects. The research shows that performativity is intrinsically connected to iterative practices, which both authorise and negate subjects and their performances. Engaging performativity as material ontology connected to a temporal and spatial unfolding also needs to be thought of as performative. These concepts have driven the discussion entwined throughout this section.

This chapter advances the idea that creative processes in participatory art practice can be articulated in relationship to performativity in which the forms of practice mark a shift toward a de-centered maker-author-subject relationship. This method of participatory and performative exchange serves to question or rebut single authorship and 'self' as a unified and preordained category. Butler has contested the idea of an already existing subjective agency that freely chooses to act; rather the subject is formed through the performative process (Butler 1997).

Equally important are the ideas of Martin Heidegger's enterprise of positing art as a temporal event of disclosure in which the subject comes to be realised, through a series of temporal episodes. For Heidegger the subject is a mode by which a body enters into subjective formation in relation to events in time.

It is the contention of this project that practice-led research, within participatory modes of practice, need to enable the multi-variant voice emanating from participatory exchange. This enablement may then open to a more comprehensive articulation of a performative research culture. Echoing Barbra Bolt the aim of a performative paradigm may not be to find correlations, but rather to acknowledge and chart the fissures and transfers that are initiated by creative productions. The work of art therefore is not just the process, performance or event, but is also the effect of the artwork in the material, affective and discursive realms of interpretation.

Chapter five:

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the parameters for project descriptions and analysis by providing an overview of research projects undertaken throughout this doctorate research. It does so by presenting the project outcomes drawing upon core project themes within trans-disciplinary fields including performative process, participatory engagement, ontological and relational psychoanalytic frames of references. Each project description is followed by an analytical interpretation. Project findings and conclusion are later addressed in the subsequent chapters. This doctorate research examines how performative experience may be determined in and through participatory art practice. The research investigates its key questions to do with the performative ontology of artworks and participatory practice in art, through a series of experimental workshops, with myself as artist/participant. The research addresses the following questions:

- *How may a performative art practice extend associations with relational psychoanalytical theory?*
- *How may a performative art practice reveal the ontological experiences of subject-object relations?*

To answer these questions, the research has engaged participatory and performative exchange in and through a series of experimental workshops and art projects as its principle methodology. The research positions performativity as a central operational process, working across three key intersecting approaches; 1: Performativity as inter-subjective exchange; 2: Performativity as material ontology; 3: Performativity as causal and temporal process.

In order to expand definitions and understandings of a performative paradigm, the research has drawn from psychoanalytic and ontological perspectives to find out how, and to what extent a performative ontological experience may be possible in and through participatory art. It has investigated this by analysing art historical models of post formalist and dematerialised practice, critical literature linking performativity and relational psychoanalytic theory, and methods of performative ontology and psychoanalysis. From this, the research situates my own trans-disciplinary arts practice as a substantive site of enquiry. One of the driving aims of this project is to investigate ways of presenting aspects of performative ontology in and through artistic inquiry.

5.2 Project overview.

1: Currents: Experimental Workshops and exhibitions in four parts.

2: Durational Performance Ontology in three parts

Part one: Act of suspension – (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously).

Part two: Black Noise - (Cast of Absence).

Part three: Infinite recursion – (Back and forth along the Abyss).

3: 3rd – (*Album of Dialogical Exchange*)

4: Instruction/Enactment (*Or what little Hans did next*) in conjunction with the Freud Museum London.

The entire art project developed for this doctoral research emanated from the *Currents experimental workshops*. A pedagogic art methodology was devised early in this study, along with associated processes and procedures, which were prevalent in the praxis of both the production of artwork and in their attendant critical frameworks. This is not to suggest that this doctorate research project has adopted education as a theme, on the contrary, it is to assert that performative and participatory engagement may be situated and operate as an expanded pedagogical praxis.

The intentions here are to critically define, reflect upon and ultimately situate this move toward a pedagogical art model as a practice-led research methodology. This methodological approach draws from Irit Rogoff (2008) to suggest that there is certain porosity between terms like “education”, “self-organised pedagogy”, “research” and “knowledge production”, so much so that the radical strands at the intersection between art and pedagogy are made to blur. The literature on pedagogical art models tends to deal with the differences between art and education as discourse.¹⁹ For Rogoff, both art and education revolve around Foucault’s notion of “parrhesia” or “free, blatant public speech”. She argues that an educational turn in art and curating, might be “the moment when we attend to the production and articulation of truths – not truth as correct, as provable, as fact, but truth as that which collects around it, subjectivities that are neither gathered nor reflected by other utterances.”²⁰ Rogoff’s theories are crucial in proposing an uncertainty at the core of pedagogical notions of truth. Likewise this doctorate asserts that practice-led research needs to account for an epistemological uncertainty as central to the practice of participatory art as it is applied to a pedagogical art model.

This epistemological uncertainty also involves ontological aspects in the performance of identity and the presentation of “self” through inter-subjective encounters. This method of participatory and performative exchange serves to question or rebut single authorship and ‘self’ as a unified and preordained category. It is the contention of this project that participatory modes of practice, need to enable the multi-variant voice emanating from participatory exchange. This enablement may then open to a more comprehensive articulation of a performative research culture.

5.3 Project One

Currents: Experimental Workshops

¹⁹ Here I refer to Clare Bishop in *Artificial Hells* (2012) and in particular the chapter *Pedagogic Projects: ‘How do you bring a classroom to life as if it were a work of art?’* p.141

²⁰ Irit Rogoff, ‘Turning’, *e- flux journal*, 0, November 2008, available at www.e-flux.com.

- Currents 10 - *DUAL 2010-2011*
- Currents 11 - *PART OBJECT 2011-2012*
- Currents 12 - *RELATIONAL CAUSALITY 2012 - 2013*
- Currents 13 - *VISCERAL AFFECT 2013 - 2014*

The *Currents workshops* were conducted throughout the first four years of this research. They involved over fifty participants with varying degrees of engagement. *The Currents workshops* took place in the studios of FCAC in Melbourne's west. Each three hour workshop had a duration of twenty-eight sessions delivered over an eight month period. The works produced throughout the workshop were curated into a major exhibition at the end of each annual program. All of the exhibitions were held at the Roslyn Smorgon Gallery.



Image. Robert Mangion. Currents 11 workshop view: 2011-12

The aims of the *Currents workshops* were to provide a platform for experimental and participatory engagement. The *Currents workshops* fostered dialogical exchange, risk-taking and the creation of an informed and sustainable art praxis while building a community in support of participants and their artistic goals. What these experimental, participatory practices had in common is that they occupied space and time as constructed situations. These constructed situations work with elements such as dialogical exchange, instructions, enactments, performance and interaction. The core objective of the *Currents workshops* was to facilitate.

- Participatory exchange,
- Critical thinking
- Experimental studio engagement.



Image. Robert Mangion. Currents 10: Dual, 2011. Performance still.

The *Currents* workshops were structured to engage and construct forms of experimentation, dialogue and group action. This gesture towards participation, dialogue and collaboration fostered within the *Currents workshops* was equivalent to creating space that would activate inter-subjective exchange. This inter-subjective exchange was aided by the experience of collective participation. It was envisaged that participants within the *Currents workshops* would be adept enough to define their individual social, aesthetic and political reality within a collective context. Similar to what Claire Bishop describes as “an aesthetic of participation that derives legitimacy from a (desired) causal relationship between the experience of a work of art and individual/collective agency” (Bishop, 2006 p12).



Image. Robert Mangion. Currents 13 workshop view: 2013 - 14

My role throughout the duration of the workshops alternated between

- Artist/participant /observer
- Project coordinator
- Curator of the *Currents* exhibitions.

The *Currents workshops* were committed to challenging participants to think conceptually and work creatively, experimenting in cross media form, including digital media and online connectivity, film and installation, painting, drawing, performance, photography, sculpture, sound, text art, dialogue and video.

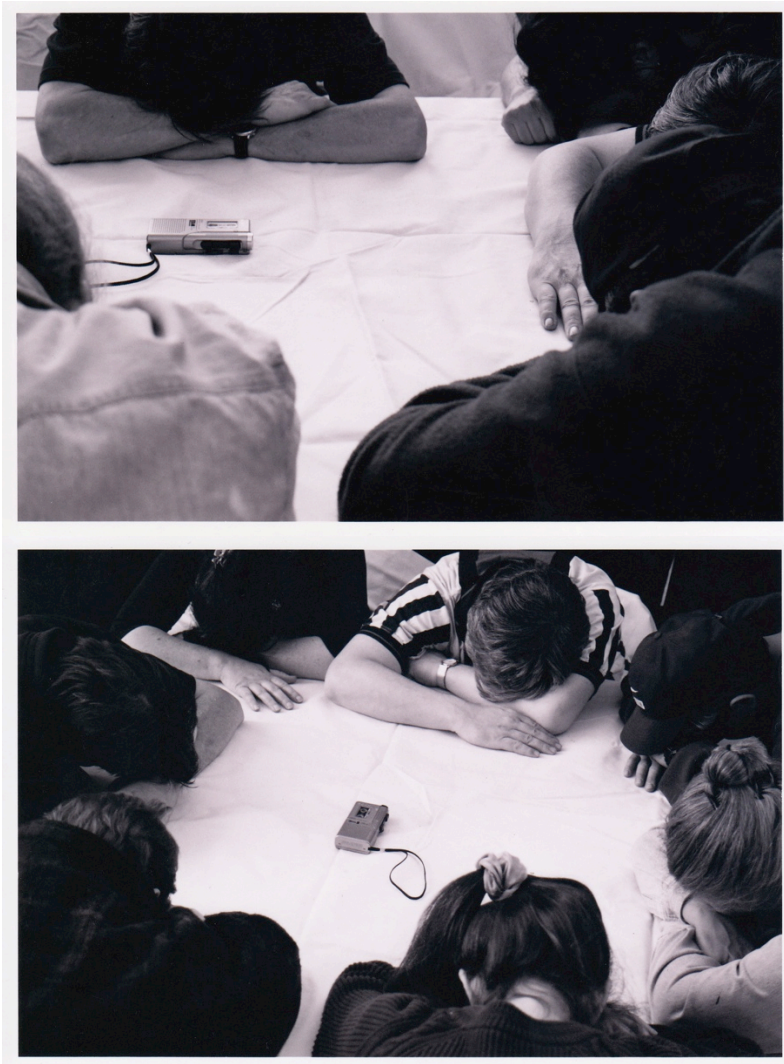


Image. Robert Mangion. Currents 10 Workshop view: 2010 -11

Discursive practice and knowledge formation within this context were undergoing constant transformation, as new experiences were exchanged among participants, through a process of dialogue and presentation. The outcomes of these presentations and exhibitions fed into analytical descriptions of the relational praxis used throughout the *Currents workshops* and the implications for final outcomes of this research project.



Image. Sarah Haynes. Currents 13 workshop view: 2013 – 14

A key feature of the *Currents* workshops is that they are seen as the exploration of interchangeable fields including:

- Art object – subject
- Performance - event
- Artist – participant
- Author – interpreter.



Image. Robert Mangion. Currents 13 workshop view: 2013 - 14

These fields were construed as overlapping in an assemblage of influences within a generative research context. By this interpretation authorship becomes a condition for exploration within an interactive and collaborative context. Thus, authorship is viewed as a question rather than a fact, and, as such, it opens to new possibilities of idea and execution. In describing the nature of authorship within participatory arts practices, Bishop suggests:

the gesture of relinquishing some or all authorial control is conventionally regarded as more egalitarian and democratic than the creation of a work by a single artist, while shared production is also seen to entail the aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability (Bishop 2006 p12).

Within the *Currents workshop* authorship was understood to both emerge from, and to produce, a more invigorated and non-hierarchical creative model of participatory engagement. The *Currents workshops* facilitated the exchange of these overlapping fields of artist/participant- object/subject-performance/event and author/interpreter, through the construction of performative situations. Guy Debord outlined his theory of 'constructed situations' in *Towards a Situationist International* (1957).²¹ His perception of participatory events called for an art that would create situations rather than reproduce already existing conditions. His notion of constructed situations, in which the audience is an active participant, has been an ongoing point of reference for contemporary artists working with participatory events as their favored materials.

Nicolas Bourriaud's collection of theoretical essays *Relational Aesthetics* (1998), are frequently cited as having catalysed much debate around the status of contemporary relational and participation in art. In parallel with this debate, and perhaps addressing the sense of unrealised political potential in the work that Bourriaud describes, a subsequent generation of artists have begun to engage more directly with specific social constituencies, and to intervene critically in participatory forms of creative engagement. One such form, prevalent in this doctorate research has been the engagement with pedagogic artistic practice. Working on this basis, two lines of thought (with corresponding strategies) seem to have emerged. One posits the space afforded by pedagogical arts practice as facilitating participatory encounters and dialogical exchange as sites in which to articulate forms of pedagogical arts practice, led by artists, away from the gaze of academic bureaucrats, but also from the work and spaces in which education (and, hence, struggles within the many fields engaged by education) take place. The implication here is that arts practitioners working within pedagogical arts practices are in a better position to experiment with or at least imagine alternative models than those encumbered by instrumentalised demands of education.

²¹ Debord, Guy, Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale, Internationale lettriste, Paris, July 1957; trans. 'Towards a Situationist International', in Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents, ed. Tom McDonough, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2002, 44–50

5.3.1 Currents 10 Workshop: DUEL (2010 – 2011)

5.3.1(i) Theme

Themes explored in the *Currents 10 Workshop: Duel* were based on the concept of the *parallax gap* as it is posited by Slavoj Žižek (2009). Readings of the parallax gap can be defined as the perceptual displacement of an object, caused by a change in observational position. Žižek is interested in the "parallax gap" separating two points of view between which no fusion or conciliation is possible: "the occurrence of an insurmountable parallax gap, the confrontation of two closely linked perspectives between which no neutral common ground is possible" (Žižek 2009 p. 4)

The parallax gap is contingent upon a "Möbius strip" consisting of two surface levels that can never meet, which links these incompatible perspectives. For Žižek there is no rapport between the two levels, no shared space. Although they are closely connected even identical in a way, they are on opposing sides of a Möbius strip. The way Žižek locates such gaps so ubiquitously was of particular interest to the formation of ideas informing the *Currents 10 Workshop: Duel*. This included the parallax of the subject and the unconscious in Freudian psychoanalysis, mediated between interpretations of the formation of the unconscious and theories of drives. In *The Parallax View*, Žižek, focuses on three main modes of parallax: the ontological parallax, the one that conditions access to material reality; the scientific parallax, the irreducible gap between the phenomenal experience of reality and its scientific explanation, and the political parallax, the social antipathy that allows for no common ground to be formulated. The participants in the *Current 10 workshop* program explored ideas and processes and experimented with notions of the parallax gap in order to generate various participatory encounters that allowed for a range of performative ontological situations to be conceived.

5.3.1(ii) Pedagogical Process

A series of stages in these workshops drew upon the project's main contention examining the disparity separating two or more viewing events and related to the "parallax gap" as a performative ontology. This involved negotiating a position between an open-ended experimental processes and maintaining a framework for participation and exchange. This process of working involved three key approaches: Firstly, open discussions that fostered participatory exchange, among the *Currents 10* participants, examining the role inter-subjectivity plays within manifold structures of participatory art practice. Secondly, the theoretical examination of ideas to extrapolate concepts related to the "parallax gap" as a performative ontology as it may be evolved through practice. Thirdly experimentation with mediums in order to engage a performative approach to the artwork in and through process and material. The approaches taken to investigate the curatorial premise of *Duel* include the exploration of *parallel existence*, *unintentional process*, *involuntary memory*, *reversed logic* and the central connection they may share within temporal and spatial exchanges.

During the *Currents 10 workshops* we discussed the underpinning themes: field theory, events ontology, relational psychoanalysis and post conceptual art practice. These generative conceptual domains bolstered a critical framework for collective engagement and allowed the group to talk about difficult subjects within the context of experimentation as a buffer zone.

As a facilitation method, this approach revealed the diverse expectations and uncertainties of individuals in the group about their own position with discursive practice and knowledge formation, seen through the lens of participatory engagement. Individual ideologies and points of view were allowed to collide as participants of the *Currents workshops* were encouraged to individually and collectively inhabit different subjective positions. Encapsulating these differences became a crucial aspect to the development of the project as it was not about coming up with a shared vision of the project, but that any outcome is based on the diverse attitudes which holds the outcome to account. The *Currents 10 workshop* adopted a paradoxical position, perceived as an actual social process, while at the same time asserting that this whole process is art. Rather than using performative strategies to bring about social interaction as an outcome of the workshop process, the application of performative strategies realised works of art in themselves. To facilitate this goal, author/interpreter and the subject/object positions enacted between the *Currents 10* participants were located within an interchangeable field of relational events. Through this performative approach the project sought to discover the ontological connections between inter-subjective, intuitive and material processes through participatory engagement in the workshops. The project approached performative events as a function of multiple, interacting forces within a field in which every part affects the whole.

5.3.1(iii) Experimentation with Medium

The participants in the *Currents 10 workshops* experimented with works that employed a variety of mediums, including video, digital photography, cross media assemblage, found objects and sculptural installation. They experimented with viewing environments where the composite arrangements of objects are set up in order to engage shifts in perceptual experience. The artworks developed throughout the *Current 10* workshops experimented with the disparity contained within inter-relational processes. When viewed within installation contexts the objects would facilitate generative performance that the viewer involuntarily enacts. Throughout the workshop process, engagement with participatory practices raised many questions among the workshop participants. In particular, does foregrounding the social context of the artwork, enveloped within pedagogic art methodology cause the total abolition of the artwork's autonomy? This in turn raised a number of other related issues. For example, is participatory art automatically bound to the occurrences of its environment and audience, or can it be seen as an autonomous work of art that transcends its context? Because of the complex dynamic between the subject and the social in an pedagogic art context, critical discussions of relational experience was key to the undoing the boundary between relational and non-relational forms of art. This pursuit was complex, multifaceted and worthy of greater consideration.

5.3.1(iv) Outcomes

The participants in the *Currents 10-workshop* program presented works at the Roslyn Smorgon gallery in an exhibition entitled *Duel*. Exploring procedures that generate modes of interaction between objects, situations and re-presentations, and the properties in artworks and events surrounding them, may be the cause of, or affect another outcome over time.

The project investigated composite art installation and the connections between two or more viewing events that have the capacity to form relational associations. Within relational contexts, various associations are made in the viewing process linking images and objects and words in a chain of signifying connections. Here experimentation with relational causation in strategies that involve the placement of disparate or unlike objects such as photographs, sculptural objects, wall writing, film, and audio pieces within installation settings, constituted in a textual field of proximity. In the exhibition the viewer is positioned as participant within a textual field, enacting an unfolding associated with objects, space and occupation.



Image. Robert Mangion. Currents 10 Duel installation view: 2011

5.3.2 Currents 11 Workshop: PART OBJECT (2011 – 2012)

5.3.2(i) Theme

The *Currents 11* workshops *Part Object* sought to identify and explore phenomenology as a viewing event demonstrated through digital photography, performative video, sculptural and cross media

installation. The participants in *Currents 11* workshop program constructed individual viewing situations within the Roslyn Smorgon gallery, by comparing relational perception and the involvement of the viewer through the development of art objects dependent on the spectators' physical vectors for their aesthetic experience. Established through studio practice and installation procedures, their research explored modes of production, mediated between art objects, situations and representations. This approach was articulated within the 2011 *Currents workshop* program through a convergence of personal experience, practice based research, examples of recent art history, and theoretical discourse.



Image. Robert Mangion. Installation view *Currents 11: Part Object* 2012

Individual thematic investigations had explored the two-fold nature of the relational viewing experience. The works of Merleau Ponty and Melanie Klein have been referenced throughout this project with the view that phenomenological and relational events are a function of multiple, interacting forces within a field in which every part affects the whole. No event occurs in isolation. Klein's perceptions of subjectivity relate to "field theory" and "part objects".



Image. Robert Mangion. Installation view. Currents 11: Part Object 2012

Field theory locates the subject in its environment, within a field of objects called “part objects”. Merleau Ponty’s ideas place the viewers body (within aesthetic experience) at the centre of the individual’s intention toward the creation of meaning. *Part Object* explored rationality in art and its affinity towards the participating subject(s). Moreover, it investigated phenomenological experience as a practice in art, which embraces the viewer, relational events and the viewing field.

5.3.3 Currents 12 Workshop: CAUSAL RELATIONS (2012 – 2013)

5.3.3 (i) Theme

The participants in the *Current 12* workshop program presented works that explored *relational causality* to generate various encounters that allowed for a range of transformative actions. The project explored relational exchange and the affinity towards the participating subject(s). Moreover, it investigated relational causality as a practice in art, which embraces the viewer, relational events and the viewing field. This project sought to identify and explore *relational causality* demonstrated through six individual installations developed by the participants in the *Current 12* program. Each artist has worked through a number of individual and diverse concepts, methods and practices throughout the *Current 12* program and includes temporal photography; performative and interactive modes of production; sculpture and cross media installation.



Image. Robert Mangion Current 12: Causal Relations 2013

While the concept of *relational causality* may deal with specific context and participatory spectatorship, it draws from “temporal perceptions” rather than purely “social interactive” standpoints. Temporal and spatial exchanges are used to investigate the perceptual gap between concrete experience and visual representation. The *Currents 12* participants were asked to think, as a starting point how they might individually construct viewing situations within a duration of six weeks. In that time they may have thought of the gallery space as one to be *occupied* and continually *re-engaged* with. By doing so they may be comparing relational perceptions and the trajectories between art objects, events in time and the participating subject.



Image. Sue Marsh Current 12: Causal Relations, production still 2013



Robert Mangion. Installation view. Current 12: Causal Relations 2013

The approaches taken to investigate the curatorial premise of *relational causality* include the exploration of *parallel existence*, *unintentional process*, *involuntary memory*, *reversed logic* and the connection they may share within temporal and spatial exchanges.

5.3.4 Currents 13 Workshop: VISCERAL AFFECT (2013 – 2014)

5.3.4 (i) Themes

Visceral Affect was the last project in a series of four *Currents workshop* programs developed as part of this doctoral research project. Exploring visceral affects as a mode of instinctual response and communication, the participants in *Currents 13* had approached the installation of the exhibition to explore the origins of visceral resonances found in those intensities that pass beneath conscious awareness. A range of mediums including video, sculpture, photography and painting were included, to examine the way pre- conceptual responses to events, actions and circumstances may be the origin and influence of intense subjective formation and consequence outside language.

While themes around trauma are not immediately evident in the narrative components of the artworks presented in the exhibition *Visceral Affect* they are nevertheless informed by a certain affective dynamic, internal to the work. Deciding not to focus on trauma itself as a condition of contemporary subjective formation, instead the focus is placed on the way in which art can situate certain relations to personal and collective encounter that may provoke pre-conceptual or residual responses. As a result the artworks in *Visceral Affect* are not distinguished primarily by their declarative function; that is they do not communicate a direct account of personal traumatic experience as felt by a particular individual. Instead the works are deliberate and formal constructs dealing with manifestations of visceral affect. These include themes related to tension generated between self and other or the operant conditioning controlled through media saturated communication, or the role that destructive memory plays in our ongoing psychological lives.



Image. Robert Mangion. Installation view. Currents 13: Visceral Affect 2014

This led to situating the curatorial framework for the exhibition in ways that reflected various individual processes within relational, individual and social manifestations. Rather than illustrate trauma discourse, the motivation was to shift the conceptual incentives outside of language, embracing instead preverbal responses to experience.

In doing so it was anticipated to move away from defining participatory art practice of this kind in terms of its ability to replicate predefined signs of the post-traumatic subject. Instead the aim was to open up the question of what performativity in art itself might tell us about the visceral affect of memory and trauma manifested through lived experience and subjective formation.



Image. Robert Mangion. Currents 13: Visceral Affect 2014

Current 13 Visceral Affect reveals how performativity and its *affect* can be installed in a range of contexts including the psychological, social, cultural and philosophical, and the space for deliberation among these various fields. The project drew from the writings of Brian Massumi, and that of the more analytically minded Eve Sedgwick, whose work was framed in dialogue with affect psychologist Silvan Tomkins.²²

Current 13 Visceral Affect identified how performativity and affect hinge on claims that are expressed in terms of their independence from cognisant perception and that there is no boundary between the body and its interconnected sign. The body and sign are, functioning and analysable, on ontologically separate planes, as a subject of parallel processes. Massumi declares, there is “duplicity of form”: every form or image is received by an agent “spontaneously and simultaneously in two orders of reality, one local and learned or intentional, the other nonlocal and self-organizing” (203). In other words, humans apprehend the world along two separate but not equal tracks: intention and affect, meaning and sense, perception and experience co-exist but do not merge, the last phrase in these binaries is constantly taken to be “outside consciousness” (200 see also 232).

5.4 Project Two

Durational Performance Ontology

Part one: Act of suspension – (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously).

Part two: Black Noise - (Cast of Absence).

Part three: Infinite Recursion - (Back and forth along the Abyss).

5.4.1 Project Description

The aim of this cluster of three projects was to examine notions of durational performance and choreographed action, in order to extend and locate performative and participatory art within a psychoanalytic and ontological field. The artworks produced in this cluster of projects are not merely artistic products, but the consequence of generative performance that determined them.

The works include various material processes incorporating sculpture, drawing, painting, dialogue and choreographed performance structures recorded on video and photography. Working in collaboration with a choreographer all three projects in *Durational Performance Ontology* initiate a certain collapse that is enacted between the performative and sculptural gesture. The works produced for these projects engaged with the theme of entrapment within circumstances, examining

²² For a critique of the claims of Tomkins and Sedgwick see Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). More recently, Leys has analyzed the basic assumptions, and the evidence, behind both Massumi and Tomkins’s claims about affect in “The Affective Turn: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* 37: 3 (Spring 2011): 434-72

time as a recursive presence and crosses a wide range of references from psychoanalysis to modernist literature and theatre.

5.4.2 Outcomes

Part 1: Act of Permanent Suspension (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14

The performance video work produced in *Act of Permanent Suspension* explores participatory and interactive exchange within the realm of *chance*, *unpredictability* and *change*. The performative work created from this interchange includes

- Collaborative automatic drawings,
- Sculptural objects
- Choreographed performance, recorded on video and photography.



Act of Permanent Suspension. (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14
Still from two track DVD (12min)

5.4.2 (i) Linage

The theme of entrapment within circumstance is pursued across all three durational performance works, in particular *Act of Permanent Suspension*. This theme is examined in relation to Beckett's portrayal of a world drawn out of absurd situations, which inevitably leads to the identification of his writing with *Existentialism*, the *Theater of the Absurd* and *Nihilism*. While works such work as *End Game* and *All That Fall* contain slapstick and dark comedy, his characters are often exaggerated caricatures oblivious to their situation, yet pushed to the boundary of their existence. It may be construed that Beckett's progression from language to silence and light to darkness reflects the author's pessimistic vision, stripping down to base levels.



Act of Permanent Suspension (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14.
Exhibition Still 2014

The work produced for *Act of Permanent Suspension (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously)* draws on Beckettian tendencies, consistent with an artistic practice that established the past as a site of iteration a compulsive reckoning. The work for *Act of Permanent Suspension* developed with an acute awareness of a deliberate impoverishment in the work process and in taking away content and in subtracting form rather than adding to it. Most significantly it draws from Beckett's dramatic sense of the suspension of time and entrapment within the present moment. The characters in Beckett's plays attempt to come to grips with the present but are frustrated by the elusive and perpetual contemporaneous shifting into the past and are unable to validate an illusory future.²³ They are left to fill their endless existence with habitual actions and memories of the past, used to ward off the fear of the infinite void of time and space. Beckett, in his writing, distrusted this dense experience of time. He suggests that "real time" is concrete and limits existence to the trivial markings of a calendar or clock. "All that is enveloped in time and space is endowed with what might be described as an abstract, idea and absolute impermeability."²⁴ Beckett's dramatic works express, the failure of the human conscious to exist, completely and presently, in the real time and space. "Moments of time cannot add up to infinity; they can only stretch on and on in-finity."²⁵ In *Act of Permanent Suspension* the inability to reach an end point is accounted for in part to the perpetual, time-based modality of performativity. Time and the bodies/objects occupying it are moving towards an un-seeable end point that is continually

²³ For a more comprehensive account of contemporaneity, see for example, Terry Smith, 'Introduction: The Contemporaneity Question,' in Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor and Nancy Condee eds., *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity and Contemporaneity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008).

²⁴ Beckett, Samuel, *Proust*, New York, Grove Press, 1957. Print.

²⁵ Cohn, Ruby. *Just Play: Beckett's Theater*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980. Print. Pg. 42

shifting. The work produced in *Act of Permanent Suspension* is derived from chance occurrences, altered continuously and moving relentlessly towards some tenuously receding end point.

Two historic performance artworks that have influenced the conception of *Act of Permanent Suspension* include *Three Relationship Studies* (1970) by Vito Acconci and *Slow Angle Walk* (1967-68) by Bruce Nauman. For nearly an hour in *Slow Angle Walk* Bruce Nauman repeats a laborious sequence of body movements inspired by the work of Samuel Beckett that describe similarly repetitive and meaningless activities. Hands clasped behind his back, he kicks one leg up at a right angle to his body, pivots forty-five degrees, falls forward hard with a thumping noise, extends the rear leg again at a right angle behind, and begins the sequence again. Occasionally he walks off-screen completely while the sound of his footsteps continues on the sound tracks.

In *Three Relationship Studies*, Acconci explores the dynamics of the artist's interaction with or manipulation of another. Each study involves a form of mirroring. In *Shadow Play*, Acconci spars with his own shadow image, aggressively confronting himself as other. In *Imitations*, Acconci attempts to mirror another man's gestures and actions. Likewise *Act of Permanent Suspension* draws on elements of repetition and mimetic gesture to explore the relationship between self and its image. In this case, the work centred on the association of *subject* with its *object* of contemplation-its manipulation, and the way the subject-object relation, shadows or mirrors each other through performative enactment in recursive time and space.

5.4.2 (ii) Mapping Space through Drawing

Mapping space through drawing involved sets of transactions, recorded through dual, automatic drawing process. The initial aim of drawing was to map out choreographed movement across a space. This action quickly assumed a life of its own manifested in a dual state of juncture and negation.



Image. Robert Mangion. *Act of Permanent Suspension*. (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14.
Still from gallery experimentation with drawing.

5.4.2 (iii) Mapping Space through Movement

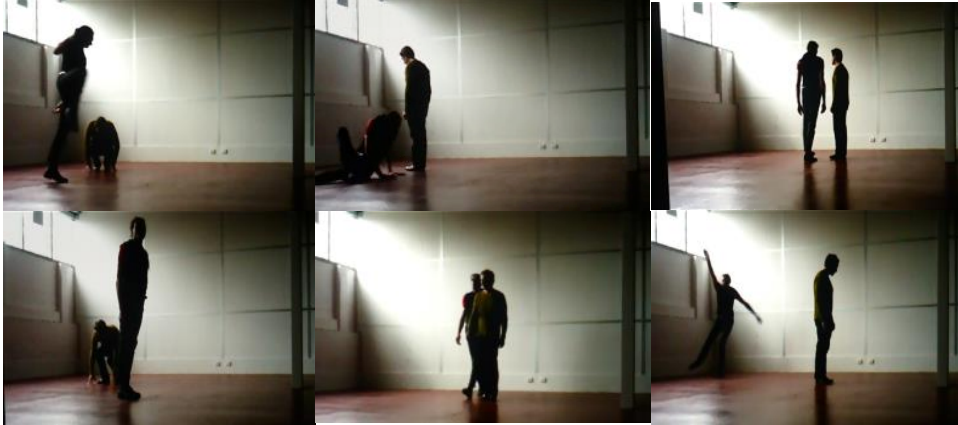


Image. Robert Mangion. Act of Permanent Suspension. (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14.
Video Still from workshop experiments with performance.

Unfolding actions form a psychological trace of *mimetic transactions* between the two participants and the intervention of space over a sustained period of time, suspending time in the present.

5.4.2 (iii) The Sculptural Object as Indexical trace.



Image. Christos Linou. Act of Permanent Suspension. (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14.
Still from workshop experiments.

The drawings were followed by experimentation with performative gesture and sculptural objects, placed indiscriminately throughout the studio space. Performance enactments signified transactions between body gesture and sculptural objects. The sculptural objects in this work are scaled first and foremost to a body located in a particular space. They are conceived as clastic *and evolving* form. A clastic work consists of individual units that can be lifted and placed in space indiscriminately.



Image Grace Mangion. Act of Permanent Suspension. (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14.
Photographic still from gallery performance.

5.4.2 (iii) Forming

The task of forming is embedded within sets of enactments, shifting the focus of attention away from object specific-ness, to forming as a performative process, integral to the work. Shape and process are indexically determined through contexts of transference. Moving from single mind motivations to inter-subjective, relational interactions and exchange. The work draws on Robert Morris in his influential 1966 article, *Notes on Sculpture*, Morris elucidated that the traditional concerns of painting have been with structure or shape and the literal qualities of the support, which were the result of painting's long preoccupation with "illusionism."²⁶



Image. Grace Mangion. Act of Permanent Suspension. (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14.
Photographic still from gallery performance.

²⁶ His disparity with illusionism was an attempt to set three dimensional objects apart from the lingering effects of paintings attempt to copy reality.

According to Morris shape in sculpture is not the sum of the material properties of the object and is not synonymous with its compositional form but is the structure of our perceptual engagement with it. Implying that the objects identified, as sculpture is not determined by techniques, materials subject matter or style, etc. but the form of experience it makes possible (Morris 1968).

The work produced in *Act of Permanent Suspension* position of the *art object* within the context of its experiential production: that is to say, to make objects that reflect their performative unfoldment. The artwork produced is concerned with the performative conditions in which it is enacted and unfolded, which further heightens the central concept of a performative, event ontology disseminated in and through the work generated in *Act of Permanent Suspension*.

5.4.2(v) Continual Modification of the Exhibition Space

Performance and sculptural interventions, determine the continual reshaping of the installation space throughout the duration of the exhibition.



Image. Grace Mangion. *Act of Permanent Suspension*. (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) 2013-14. Photographic still from gallery performance.

Act of Permanent Suspension (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously) was presented at D11 gallery in Melbourne from the 22 of November to 6 of December 2014. The duration of the exhibition was treated as a continual occupation and modification of the exhibition viewing space. The idea sustained throughout the project was that the artwork itself is a durational event, rooted in elements of chance, indeterminacy and causal change. At the heart of the event ontology resonating with the *Act of Permanent Suspension* was the need to recognise the vectors that connect subject to object within an interactive field that supported the performative event. This interactive field was conceived

as a medium supporting the work. This work was anchored in an ontological relationship between sculptural objects and mimetic gestures in order to investigate links between the concrete and the apparitional, between the object-hood and subject-hood in performative exchange. Sculptural objects were juxtaposed within interplay of choreographed abstract movement in order to investigate the phenomenological vector lines that connect the subject to the horizontal field through the enactment of an event. By continually engaging the space over a sustained period of time, changes occurred to the substance and meaning of the event. The fundamental characteristic of this experience was the manifestation of immediacy within the instantaneous of the performative enactment as it unfolded.

5.4.2 (vi) Act of Permanent Suspension (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously)

Project Analysis

In *Act of Permanent Suspension (Derived by Chance Altered Continuously)* the artwork is brought into existence through the actions (performance) of two collaborating individuals. The idea sustained throughout the project is that the artwork itself is a durational performance, rooted in elements of chance and indeterminacy and inevitably causal and indeterminate. The work was focused on making form inter-subjectively available, the goal of articulating an artistic approach to indeterminacy, enters into the very identity of the artwork.

The specter of the 1967 debate between Michael Fried and Robert Morris on the critical views of performance, theatre and installation have preoccupied this doctoral research project from its inception.²⁷ Among the significant contributions made to the debate was Fried's assertion that minimalist artworks were essentially a kind of theatre, they elicited a response which in essence was theatrical. What is meant is that the positioning of the sculptural object in this way brings about an overt engagement of the viewer over and above the artistic qualities of the art object. A minimalist work deliberately places as much emphasis as possible on the relationship between the artwork and the viewer, which in practice meant between the work and the gallery space in which it was encountered (the space of installation) and the embodied and mobile human subject, whose experience of that relationship existed in the present tense registration of all three factors, object, space and viewer.

In contrast Morris discussed the role of the *gestalt* in Minimal Art. For Morris, the metaphoric meanings of his objects disappeared in favour of a phenomenological experience they engender. The artist was interested in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and wrote frequently of the "*gestalt*" experienced by the viewer in the encounter with the object. By stripping the objects of any representational or metaphoric traces, Morris sought to intensify the spectator's experience of the pure form that could be "bracketed" or cleansed of extrinsic suggestions.

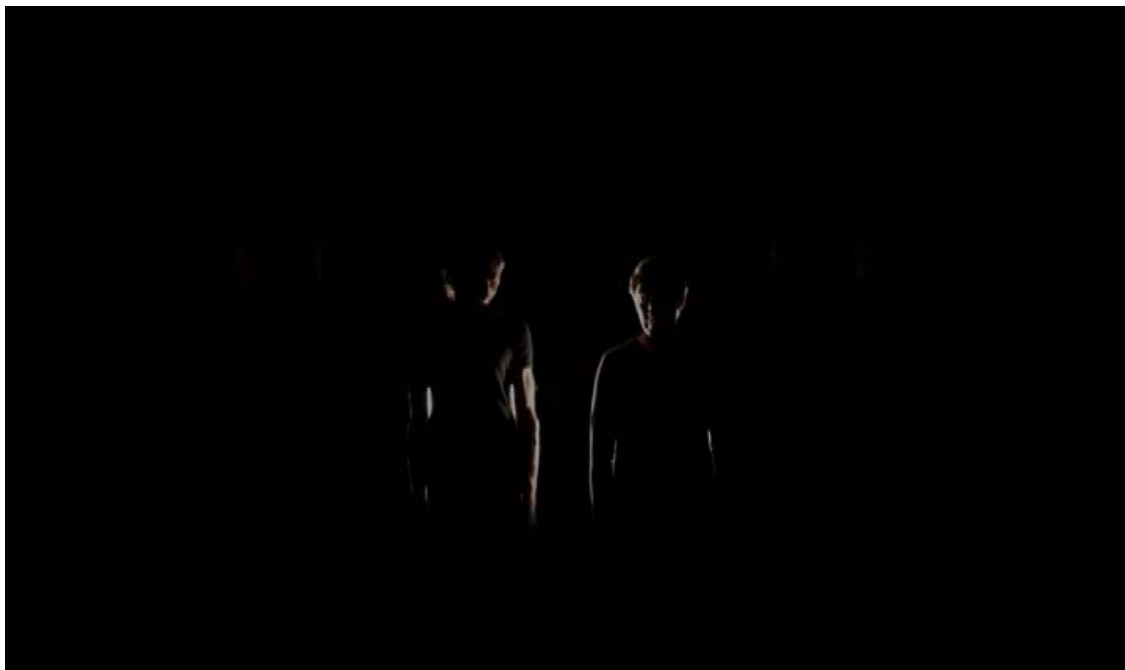
²⁷ For further elaboration see Michael Fried's essay "Art and Objecthood" 1967 which was immediately followed by Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture 1-3," *Artforum* 4:6 (1966): 42-4; 5:2 (1966): 20-3; 5:10 (1967). Rpt. in : *Art in Theory 1900-2000* , ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 828-35.

The work produced in *Act of Permanent Suspension* was positioned within the context of its performative unfoldment. Materials do not determine the works meaning as such, rather the dynamics of its occupancy of space over time, lays at the heart of the work. The vectors that connect the subject-object relationship within durational fields, abandon the inner logic of the event itself. The work invests in the idea that this durational field be articulated as a medium instead of its materiality.

5.4.3 Part 2: Black Noise (Cast of Absence) 2013-14

The work produced in *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)*, explores interactive exchange, through dialogical performance-based work, video and composite art installation. *Black Noise* is a fourteen-minute performative work represented as a video installation, depicting an interior of a large darkened room with undefined dimensions.

The video work includes dialogical exchange between two participants that dislocates physical boundaries. The voices are transferred equally between the two participating subjects in a process of disembodied abstraction; the *speech act* in *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* is reconstituted as both material and conceptual conduit.

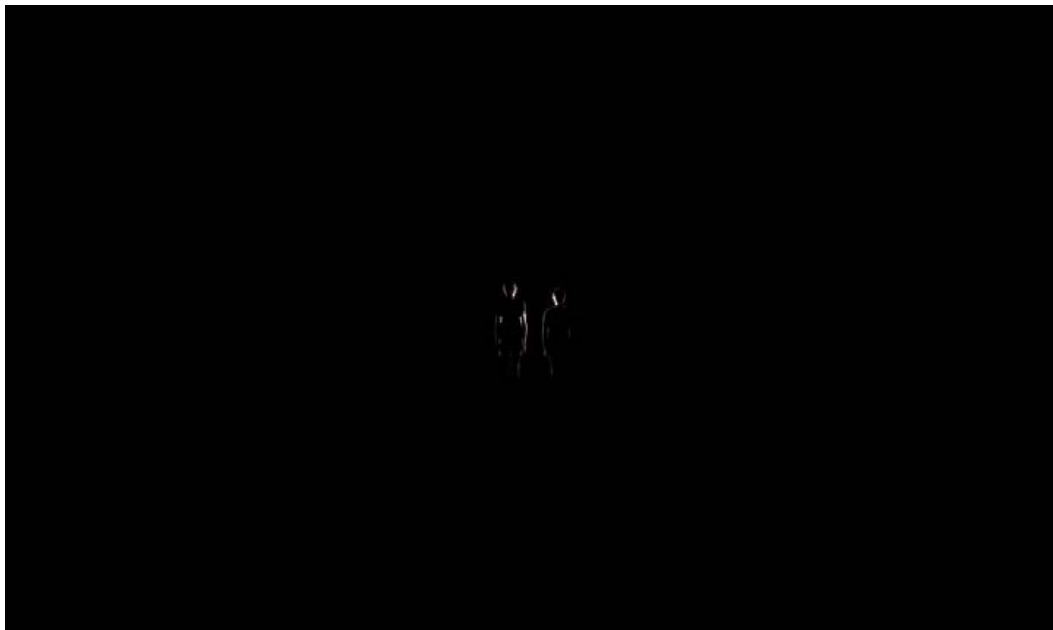


Black Noise (Cast of absence) 2013 - 14
Robert Mangion with Christos Linou
Still from one track DVD (12min)

5.4.3 (i) Project Description

The theme of *entrapment within circumstance* is pursued in the project with assertions that the subject is not a unified entity; rather it exists as a lack or void. The work seeks to express forms of abstraction in the shape of pre-conscious expression, evoking an intrinsic absence at the core of subjectivity. For Lacan the term “lack” designates first and foremost a lack of being, what is desired is being it self (Evans 1996). Situated at the core of Lacan’s notion subjectivity is the concept of the void. The work produced for *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* explores concepts related to the individual’s transference from the symbolic order to the real. For Lacan any attempt to access the void that exists at the core of the unconscious self, ultimately means the vacating of language and representation. This theme is examined in this work through forms of dialogical aesthetics, performance video and composite installation.

Language is viewed as occupying the realm of transference and immateriality, being presented as performance or sculptural object. The video installation “Black Noise “ explores the physical and spatial qualities of the voice, moving beyond language into immateriality and disembodiment.



Black Noise (Cast of absence) 2013 - 14

Robert Mangion with Christos Linou

Still from one track DVD (12min)

In an establishing long shot, two characters first appear side by side, as mere specks of light, connoting a spectral appearance in an expansive field of blackened space suggestive of an ontological void. The video work combines a dialogical exchange between two participants. The work explores the spatial qualities of the voice, moving through transference into disembodiment and re-presented as performance. “*Black Noise*” is a video depicting an interior of a large darkened room with undefined dimensions. Audible voice sounds are heard saying, “*I’m in the*

dark here" - "*shall we tell them*" - "*not yet*" - "*we are here*"- "*not yet*" exchanged indiscriminately between the two figures and repeated continuously in ascending and descending cadence.

The video runs for fourteen minutes and depicts the spectral appearance of two partial figures floating back and forth against the background of an ontological void. The two figures are seen within a large blackened space creating impressions of undefined deminsions.

Black Noise attempts to convey a feeling of entrapment through the individual artists impossibility of escaping their spatial confines. While time and space are manifestly distinct from one another, they nevertheless run together in a strange compression in this work. The setting, for example, does not change from the first to the last moment in the video and if the artist are positioned further and closer to the surface of the screen, they always come back to the same space. The images on the screen depict three phases of immobility. These images of three different phases of immobility in space are conceived as successive stages of a spatial paradigm in which the concept of the body as that which occupies space, the phenomenological notion of the body grounded in the world, and the metaphysics of presence are integrated in an ironical way.

The verbal exchange between the two participants is characterised by its indeterminacy. The dialogical exchange forms the basis of an inter-subjective speech act focused around the binary concepts of "empathy" and "negation". The speech act, recited between the two participants inaugurates a psychological exchange that is both durational and performative.

In essence what takes place is a rehearsal for a performance that is permanently suspended. *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* was first conceived as a rehearsal piece for a chamber play to be conducted in the cellar of Freud Museum in Maresfield Gardens in London. The work is at once rehearsal for a chamber play that never takes place and at the same time very much a metaphor for the inner space on the mind. Susan Sontag compared the inner space of the mind with form in theatre, in which we visually imagine in pictures and objects and it is these pictures and objects that allow us to evoke other spectral entities (Sontag 2003). Performative experience can act as an object. Pictures and objects can therefor be thought of as pulsations of forces, not just solid volumes. The split between the object and the performative experience is a misleading dichotomy because it is impossible to pretend that performativity is not material, it emerges from the body and must manifest itself in some way. Equally it is arbitrary to describe the object only in essentialist or materialist terms because there is no object without reference to the mind and ideas it relates to.

The word rehearsal has strong connotations of repetition. The question posed by *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* is what is being repeated when the performance has not yet begun? The sense of waiting bears down upon the work; waiting in the sense of expectancy; waiting in a sense of being in search of the performance; waiting as being repeated; waiting as the condition of being in waiting to emerge; waiting as looking for being ready for when the audience arrives but has not

yet arrived; waiting in readiness to grasp the moment when it arrives; a grasping that must be repeated until the performance opens. What is indeterminable about the rehearsal space is its time. The time taken to traverse the rehearsal space is the performance in *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)*. The time to which the work refers in this suspended rehearsal space is that which has not yet occurred and that which is no longer. Beckett incorporates in his plays these philosophical frames and concepts only to subvert their authority and suggest that philosophy and the history of ideas can provide no reliable answers about the human condition (Cohn 1980). *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* attempts to convey a feeling of entrapment through the individual's impossibility of escaping their spatial confines. While time and space are manifestly distinct from one another, they nevertheless run together in a strange compression in this work. The setting, for example, does not change from the first to the last moment in the video and if the artist are positioned further and closer to the surface of the screen, they always come back to the same space.

5.4.3 (ii) Speech Acts

In *Black Noise (Cast of absence)*, the identities of the collaborators are not entirely established, but rather, are formed and transformed through the process of dialogical barter. The subjects are literally produced in and through a series of speech acts. In the process, *Black Noise (Cast of absence)* makes an argument for illogical methods in performative expression. Language and coded behaviour can be obstinate in their lucidity; this work resists overt rationality in favour of indeterminacy.

In this process the collaborating artists explore the gap between empathy and negation, unfolding the potential for destabilisation and other ways of knowing through abstract dialogical form. While the incorporation of speech acts within this dialogical work operates on multiple levels of meaning; it does not imply that meaning is undefined. On the contrary, it can be clearly examined at specific points to contain metaphoric content. At the same time, this does not make the work entirely fixed. Rather, the assumption of indeterminacy that is registered in *Black Noise (Cast of absence)* through formal origination of text is expressed in dialogical form through the open-ended process of performative engagement, which produced unanticipated forms and outcomes.

Speech act: 5

Subject one: "Just one"
Subject two: "No we're going"

Subject one: "Just one"
Subject two: "No we're going"

Subject one: "Just one"
Subject two: "No we're going"

Subject one: "Just one"
Subject two: "No we're going"

Subject one: "Just one"
Subject two: "No we're going"(repeat twenty times)

Speech act: 6

Subject one: "Should we tell then"
Subject two: "Not yet"
Subject one: "We're here"
Subject two: "Not now"
Subject one: "Shouldn't we"
Subject two: "It's late"

Subject one: "Should we tell then"
Subject two: "Not yet"
Subject one: "We're here"
Subject two: "Not now"
Subject one: "Shouldn't we"
Subject two: "It's late" (repeat twenty times)

Speech act: 7

Subject one: "What's the matter"
Subject two: "Say something"
Subject one: "You deaf"
Subject two: "I'm waiting"
Subject one: "Anything"
Subject two: "Nothing"

Subject one: "What's the matter"
Subject two: "Say something"
Subject one: "You deaf"

Image. Robert Mangion.
Script for Speech acts No 5 to 7 - Black Noise 2013-14

5.4.3 (iii) Empathy and Negation

The main experiences of *Black Noise (Cast of absence)* revolve around the related binary concepts of "empathy" and "negation". Empathy is a relationship to others that potentially allows us to experience the world as a discursively integrated subject willing to forgo some sense of autonomy in order to imaginatively inhabit, learn from and be transformed by another subject's material condition and world view. On the other hand *Black Noise (Cast of absence)* negates the logics of empathy in language and speech, in order to transgress the poetic devices of metaphor and syntax into *spatial* material, which mocks our failed attempts to enclose the world into

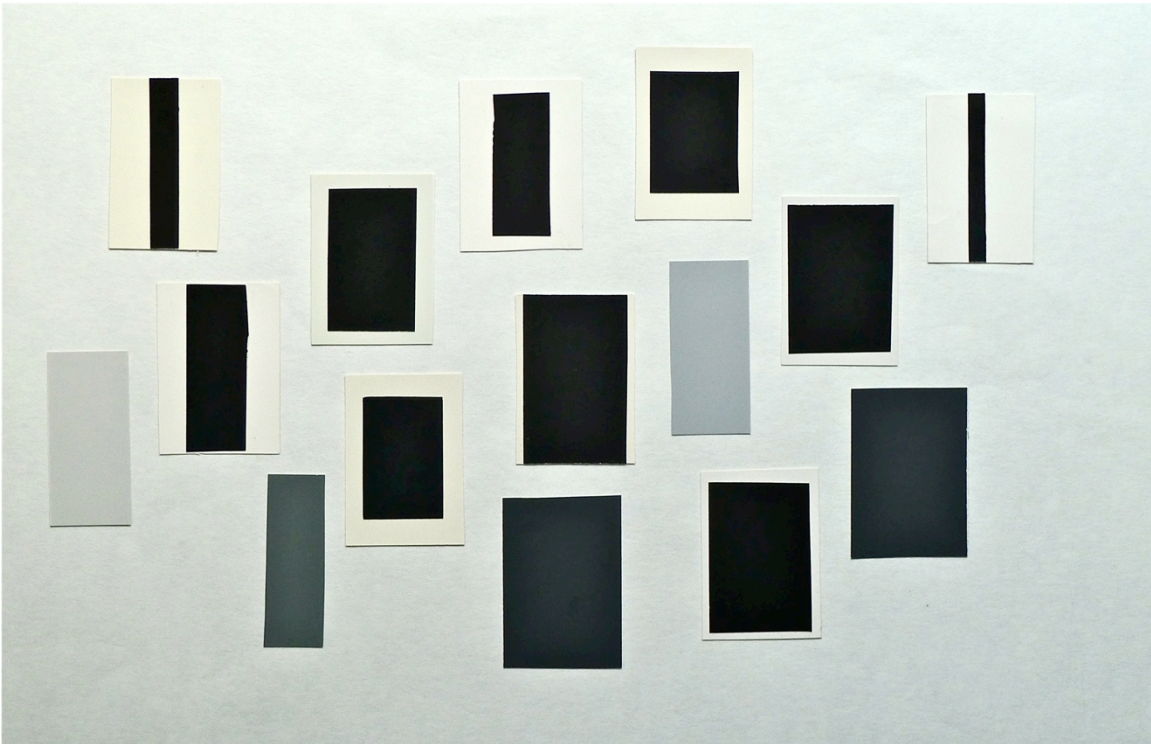
categories and foregone conclusions. The specific function of dialogical discernment is to treat the perceived object of dialogue as an ensemble of provocations to be registered on the unconscious mind of the viewer/participant.

In *Black Noise (Cast of absence)*, the identities of the collaborators are not established, but rather, are formed and transformed through the process of dialogical barter. Their presence is literally produced in and through dialogical exchange. In the process, *Black Noise (Cast of absence)* makes assertions for illogical methods in performative expression. Indicating that language and coded behaviour can be lucid despite its awkwardness. Through its enactment *Black Noise (Cast of absence)* resists overt rationality in favour of indeterminacy. In this process the work explores the interlude between empathy and negation, unfolding the potential for destabilisation and other ways of knowing in the abstract. The dialogical work produced in "*Black Noise (Cast of absence)*" considers the agency of present-ness experienced as a kind of instantaneousness. Abstraction is used as a strategy for resisting overtly theatrical form, one that resists the strict logic of linear narrative.

The video component of *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* is to be viewed within a large blackened space creating impressions of undefined dimensions. Referencing at once an unconscious *mise-en-scène* and a literal container of space focusing the audience inwardly both physically and psychologically. The video installation is accompanied by three series of related artworks produced in conjunction with one another. They include the *Bartleby Suit*, the *Twin Black Template Paintings* and the mixed media installation *Feldene*.

5.4.3 (iiii) Bartleby Suit- Cast of Absence

The *Bartleby Suit* consists of fifteen MDF panels of various sizes primed and painted variably in tones of white, grey and black. Invariably the black centre in each of the panels pronounces, the letter "I" sometimes registered as a gap in the surface of the panel or as a strip of various weight and thicknesses. The title of the work also refers to Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*, a story about an individual's refusal to participate within given social expectations. *Bartleby's* withdrawal from direct engagement in the world facilitates his inevitable and radical alienation from being. This radical withdrawal stands for the elemental pugnacity of breaking out of the symbolic accord and strong hold of social identity. It situates subjectivity as the void at the centre of being.



Robert Mangion. Bartleby Suit - Cast of Absence. Detail. 2013-14
Acrylic on Board. Dimensions variable.

5.4.3(v) Twin Black Template Paintings - Cast of Absence

The pairing of two large canvases forms the core of this work. The two paintings are placed opposite each other within the viewing space. The surface of the template image is painted a more or less homogeneous black; apart from the central shapes, which are painting in deep purple ochre. The remainder of the canvas consists of a slightly off white primed surface. Both paintings are similar in appearance and size with minor variations applied to the painted surface.

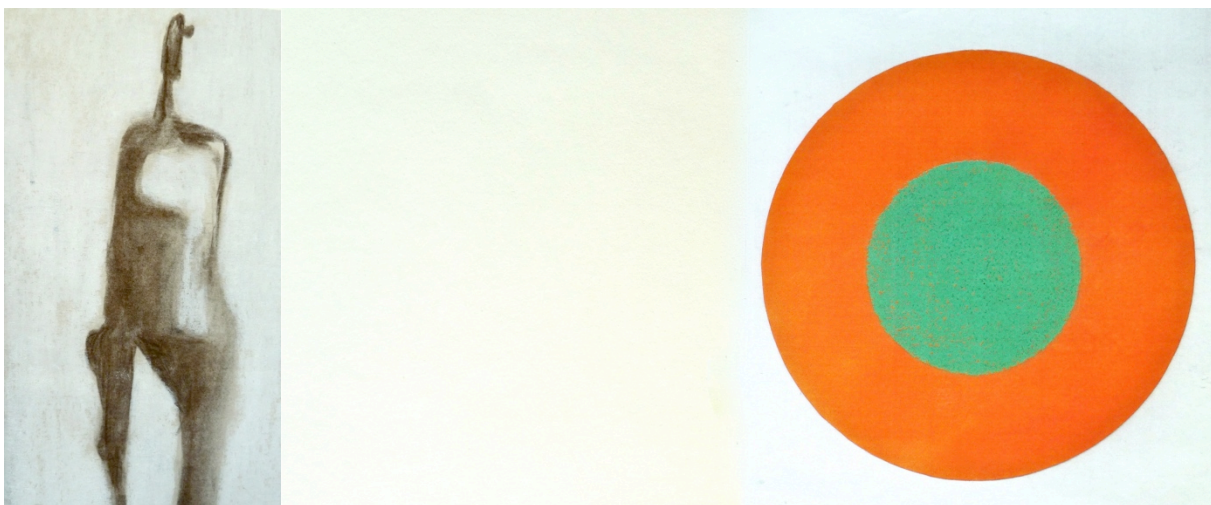
Both paintings incorporate a conspicuously even outline to form a central shape that titles obliquely toward the right hand edge of the canvas. While the initial impression of the paired paintings is a simple division of a smaller white negative space and a larger black set of planes, The twin paintings slowly come to be perceived as a series of permutations, with juxtaposed black and white fields as a constant. The relative size of the two fields that form the black surface is systematically varied. Both paintings span the space between floor and ceiling, taking on a human scale. The function of the paintings large scale can be thought of as conduits for the viewer's absorption into their field of opacity and surface, which prompts the occurrence and subjective relations between object and viewer. By adopting a human scale the paired paintings help enable the viewers temporal relationship to the paintings. Inducing the physical sensation of time situated as an instantaneous event performed by the viewer. The project associates the *Twin Black Template paintings* within temporal processes of unfoldment rather than contextualised as autonomous product like entities.



Robert Mangion. Twin Black Template Paintings - Cast of Absence. 2013-14
Oil on canvas 54cm x 73cm

5.4.3(vi) After Objects Feldene - Cast of Absence

Within this project *After Objects Feldene* performativity is thought of as durational in that the present gesture, enacted by these presentations is an iteration or repetition of preceding events. *After Objects Feldene* recreates and reforms remembered events and objects from specific situations located in the past. Each after object denotes the quest to make present action from past situations. As a consequence repressed temporality and re-constituted materiality figure strongly in these works.



Robert Mangion. After Objects Feldene - Cast of Absence. Detail. 2013-14
Mixed Media Installation. Dimensions variable.



Robert Mangion. After Objects Feldene - Cast of Absence. Detail. 2013-14
Mixed Media Installation. Deminsions variable.

Re-presentation enables the transference of impressions and the trace of presence from one surface to another from one object to another from one place to another. The project draws on patterns of causality, duration and events, based on the psychoanalytic notion of “deferred action” and “return”. Re-presentations of deferred action and return, when applied to newly emergent practices, designate a second order of object one that re-emerges through time, through use, through materiality and through place. This constitutes a form of mimetic transactions responding and attempting to work through the initial unresolved elements of the original. In a philosophical sense the work raises questions about the interstices between representation as being and representation as appearing. These concepts form the foundational deliberations concerning the temporal characteristics of performativity within this project.

5.4.3 (vii) Black Noise (Cast of Absence) Project Analysis

The *Black Square* of Malevich’s Suprematist period hangs large over all four of projects covered in *Black Noise - Cast of Absence*. Slavoj Žižek, references Malevich’s *Black Square* painting as an example in which the confrontation with the self’s own ever-present absence and fictional statues are interpreted. In *Black Square* the exterior of the black shape comes from within the interior of the paintings support, moving out from the centre of the canvas. Malevich posited that the “reductive” condition of painting in the culture of his time was determined by essentialist and de-materialised imperatives. From this reduction stems Malevich’s emphasis on, not only the textural quality of his surfaces and his attention to flat painterly constraints, but also his partiality for the figure of the square and the identification with the ground of the picture.

Rather than being read in purely formalist terms the focus on blackness in the group of works constituting *Black Noise - Cast of Absence* are meant to be read as symbolic of the void at the centre of the unconscious and the vacancy that exists within the subject of which can never be directly known or accessed. For Žižek any attempt to access the void, that is the unconscious, ultimately means to evacuate language and representation. This results in nihilistic breakdown of subjectivity since language and representation bind the subject together. The assumption would be that without a social system by which to organise reality (which is the symbolic order) the subject ceases to exist.

From the onset of creating *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* an outline drawing was produced to delineate sources and references to writers, books, myths, historical events, artworks, artist and other triggers for discerning process and provide clues to the possible analysis of various associated meaning in this work. Taking this list only as a guideline while acknowledging its instability when viewed within a regime of austerity adopted throughout the project. The question posed by the citing of this diagram is precisely how do these annotations illuminate the work?

Clearly the work produced for this project should not be taken simply as a reflection or replication of these listed annotations. They are not sited to induce specific visual correspondences. The list is not intended to establish the reality or veracity of *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)*. Indeed its main function might be to assert that interpretation will always fall short of the many definitive perspectives for the analysis of an artwork, which like many of the relational objects of this PhD research project, continuously change focus depending on circumstance context and the subjectivity of the participants.

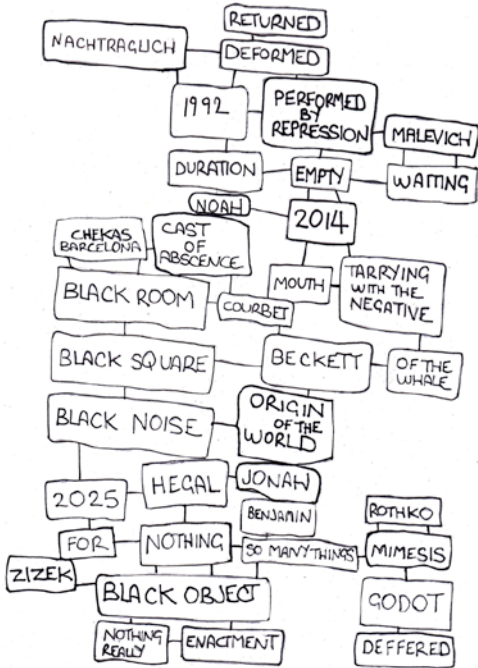


Image. Robert Mangion. List of references for Black Noise (Cast of absence) 2013

Instead it may be more useful to think of the list of references as offering a minute history of the void in conceiving subjectivity. Its function is more significant in layering connections, concepts, sources and references that are at once devoid of hierarchy and that propose instead the conjunction of personal, and historical references. These range from Courbet's "*Origins of the World*" to Žižek's "*Tarrying with the Negative*". The works produced for *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* draws on a varied lexicon of referents related to the void in art and culture, mediated through the semantic articulation of the void in subjectivity. Its palette of darkness is a metaphoric project to reconcile ontological and the psychoanalytic imagination within performative contexts. Any translation of *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* should be first and foremost discerned as a porous structure that absorbs within itself the inter-subjective process of locating the void at the center of *being* situated at the projects core.

Black Noise (Cast of Absence) seeks to exemplify oppositions between the vehicular function of materials and immaterial projections of thought. Accordingly the group of works developed for *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* endeavors to show that aesthetic experience exists both within and beyond direct sense perception toward an ontological and performative un-foldment. The work involves an interpretation of the psychoanalytical demensions of the subject within relational and performative associations in and through its component parts.

The work acts in the tension between vision and language, between presence and the void. Therefor it assumes a double ontological existence insofar as it is a presentation of material and immaterial components. The work situates the psychological and formal properties of the void through dialogical gestures and presentations that sit as close as possible to the limits of absence. Reality wavers as both a subject and object; the ontology of the art object in this work is contingent and essentially unstable. It moves back and forth between absence and presence. The human subject in *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* is declared as an elusive concept; positioned as de-centered and difficult to maintain as a meaningful referent on the bases of language. Indeed in place of an assumed coherent, holistic subject there is instead a fractured display of conflicting discourses and metonymic deferrals. Any attempt to present the subject in this work is always in its absence.²⁸

In conclusion *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* aimed to expand characterisations and understandings of a performative paradigm of practice-led research. It has done this by drawing from psychoanalytic and ontological perspectives to find out how, and to what extent a performative ontological experience may be possible in and through participatory art. The vacated abstract surfaces that these works embody are a form abstract negativity that defers presence indefinitely. Together these elements constitute an ontological event both as instantaneous, as here and now and as returned. The image is always on the edge of disappearing despite the fact that it is also reappearing resuscitated. The work produced for *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* is

²⁸ The subject is the void the nothing behind the façade the failure to be present. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime object of Ideology*, London: Verso 1989, p196

an attempt to engender the physical sensation of time as both instantaneous presence and returned. More specifically by delineating performativity within practices of art that are event and occurrence orientated the subject of the artwork becomes indeterminate. As a result the subject as presented within *Black Noise (Cast of Absence)* fluctuates between presence, semblance and absence.

5.4.4 Part 3: Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)

5.4.4(i) Project Description

The theme of entrapment within circumstance in *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)* is treated as both a physical and mental set of transactions frustrated by deferred action and infinite recursion; being trapped in the present moment. Throughout its conception the work engaged with the legacies of modernism (Constructivism - Formalism) and crosses a range of references from the psychology of cold war politics through to absurdist literature and theatre.



Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss) 2013-14
video still from two-track DVD loop (12min)

The work produced in this project explores the production of sculptural objects and interactive exchange through choreographed enactments recorded on video and photography. It also includes a suit of eight suspended, unmounted fold paintings produced and displayed in conjunction with the video. Likewise the work also incorporates the content of a lecture-performance delivered at the beginning of the project entitled “*Utopian Futures after the Revolution*” and a series of twelve digital performance photographs. The lecture-performance sets out to experiment with art process as a channel for transference and cross-pollination of ideas.

5.4.4 (ii) Video Work: Undecided Recursion (*Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss*)

In a twelve- minute video work, the theme of entrapment within circumstance is treated as both a physical and mental set of casual transactions frustrated by differed action and infinite recursion. The two protagonists in the video are seen hapazardiously manoeuvring across a narrow parapet on which are placed numerous sculptural objects of varying deminsions and materiality. The parapet like platform appears to float above a luminous ground. With minimal movement the action depicts the frustrated attempts to place the remaining objects in an undetermined order within the existing arrangement of sculptural forms. It is unclear which of the pair determines the choreographed action or wether the choreographed movement is the result of chance sequence of events, or a set of probabilities determined by random variables. This action is repeated and reversed so that the same gestures reoccurred again and again, perpetually set in a loop.

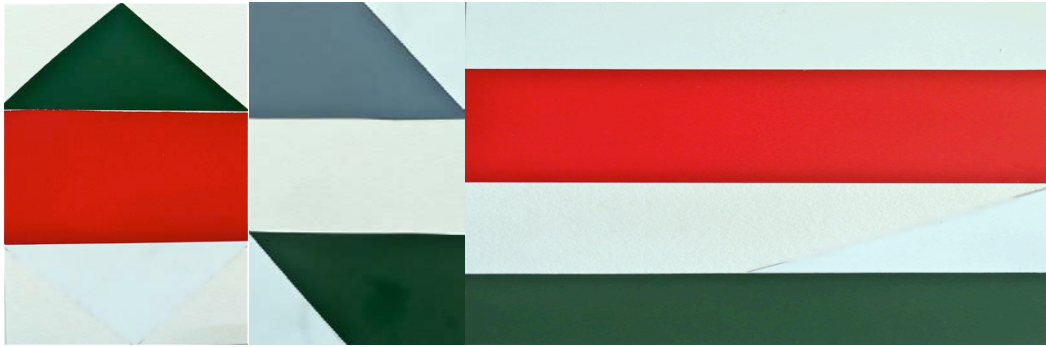


Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss) 2013-14
video still from two-track DVD loop (12min)

The work also engages with the legacies of modernism in particular the collective endeavours of Russian Constructivism. Of particular interest is the work of Lev Vygotsky the Russian psychologist and philosopher usually associated with *Social Constructivism*. Social Constructivism emphasised the effects social contexts have on cognition. Vygotsky's theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition, as he believed strongly that social context plays a central role in the process of "making meaning." (Vygotsky 1978,p.90).

5.4.4 (iii) Stochastic Fold Paintings

Suit of eight suspended and un-mounted fold paintings where produced at the onset of the project are displayed in conjunction with the video. The term stochastic, drawn from music theory, relates to the concept of *probability* and *chance sequence of events*, probability determined by random variables. The folding procedure is an automatist way of separating the canvas into a series of surfaces.



Robert Mangion. Stochastic Fold Paintings - Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss) 2013-14
Acrylic on canvas, deminsions variable

The *Stochastic Fold Paintings* were developed out of a set of preliminary drawings produced as performance scores for *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)*. The performance scores were produced as a preamble to the enactments performed in the video. Working in conjunction to the sculptural objects the performance scores determine the limits of the performative event in relation to the objects. The effect of a reduction of movement is made more definite and repeated until further reduction is impossible; exemplify how the drawing process was used as a means of thinking through stochastic enactment.

5.4.4 (iii) Performance Lecture Series (Things Connected by Assorted Links)

The original concept behind *Things Connected by Assorted Links* was first thought of as a series of performance-lectures presented to a particular audience. The idea of the lecture format, intended as a performed event was first developed in the second year of this doctorate research project. In its original conception the performance lectures were expected to have a continuing reoccurring presence throughout all the proceeding projects developed for this research project.



Robert Mangion. Performance Lecture
Utopian Futures after the Revolution (Steps into the post communal collapse) 2013

They were positioned somewhere between a prelude presentation to the project, a performance and a lecture. However because of their tentative nature they resist definition as any of the above.

In their format and design the performance-lectures display a familiar progression approach that unfold a series of chance encounters in between the events and representations depicted rather than present conclusive facts.

More specifically it seems convenient to associate *Things Connected by Assorted Links* to a presentation format since it comprises both a performance and visual form encompassing a collection of images with accompanying descriptions. However, the term 'presentation' sounds too elaborate for something that reads more like an informal dialogue amongst colleagues in a studio. The dialogue emerges unrestricted by the formality of the lecture format. It lends itself more appropriately to a specific audience such as art colleagues rather than an academic community. Perhaps it is through this informality that we see its closer connection to the model of an open lecture. What brings the lecture closest to the field of a performance however, is the act of intentionally presenting the work to an audience as an artist. It is the artist's presence and the character of the voice that is clearly associated with the speech act. The speech act represents the associations formed throughout the duration of the performance-lecture. It does this by describing how the images are to be read, and by forming connections to key elements in order to apprehend the related narratives. The speech act, whether it is performed or visually presented, acts as the connective medium from one component the project to the next. The performance-lectures were not to be recorded or reproduced on video or photography rather only to be experienced directly. They exist only in the memory of those who experienced them.

5.4.4 (iiii) Things Connected by Assorted Links

Utopian Futures after the Revolution (Steps into the post-communal collapse)

Delivered as part of the *Currents 13 workshops* the performance-lecture *Utopian Futures after the Revolution (Steps into the post communal collapse)* was developed in conjunction with *(Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)*. The performance-lecture sets out to experiment with pedagogical transference as an art process for cross-pollination of ideas. It draws from the concept of the "parallax gap"²⁹ the space separating two events between which no apparent fusion or conciliation is possible, yet nevertheless are linked by a recursive möbius circuit that perpetually connects them. The metaphor of the Möbius strip is used to describe the delivery and content of the performance-lectures.

²⁹ Žižek, S: 2009, *The Parallax View*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

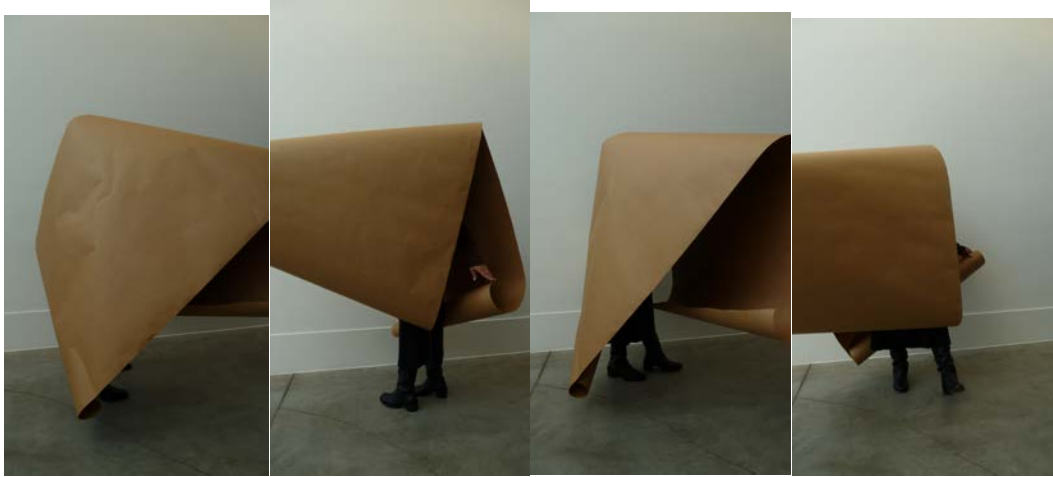


Robert Mangion. Performance Lecture
Utopian Futures after the Revolution (Steps into the post communal collapse) 2013

The performance-lecture engages with the legacies of modernism and explores the different temporality of revolutionary politics and modernist avant-garde art. Revolutionary politics and modernist avant-garde art are presented as two related events, as two sides of the same cultural phenomenon, which paradoxically can never meet. The performance-lectures engaged with various forms of semblance to consider practices that are relational and events orientated. Within the performance-lectures events are presented as passing; rendering experience that encompasses the event that *just was* and the event that *is about to be* as much as the event that *is actually present*.

5.4.4 (v) Response to Performance Lecture

In series of twelve digital performance photographs one of the participants of the *Currents 13 workshops* executed a sculptural performative work in response to the lecture *Utopian Futures after the Revolution (Steps into the post communal collapse)*. The series of photographic artworks draw attention to exchange and deals with how information is passed on and how susceptible translation can be. Instead of describing a process which can only evolve in one way, in a stochastic or random process there are several indeterminacies: Even if the initial starting point is known there are often many directions in which the process may evolve.



Images. Robert Mangion. Response to Performance Lecture: Utopian Futures after the Revolution (Steps into the post communal collapse) 2013. Digital prints

5.4.4 (vi) Lineage

Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Along the Abyss) draws upon the work of Guy de Cointet. Creating artworks where “explaining” was the subject of the work. He drew attention to the very act of pedagogical exchange, to the social element of such exchange. He made drawings and books and at one point around 1973, he began to make performances. He hired models and actresses to read from scripts that he wrote or collaged from high and low sources. The sets of these rather theatrical performances were always minimal. A table, a painting – or what could be called a painting – a chair, some geometrically shaped objects in bright colors. The actresses were always fashionably dressed, with salon hair and high heels.

Of particular interest to *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)* is the operational strategy of the Moscow Conceptualist movement in the Soviet Union. Their installation projects were conceived as situational events occurring across varied domains. At this time communist ideological pressure was in decline in the Soviet Union. At the same time notions of postmodernism were stealing in from the West. Artists such as Ilya Kabakov, Sergei Bugaev, and the "Collective Action group" developed a mode of exhibition known, as the *total installation*.³⁰ The *total installation* was based on an exhibition viewing experience that fosters unmitigated dialogue between artist and audience. In such a method, the notions of viewer, artist and participant are interchangeable. Sustained by the conviction that interaction with such an exhibition context changes the nature of viewing and participation. In doing so the exhibition context sets in motion the interrogation of the object, subject dichotomy.

The *total installation* model is orientated toward the idea that artwork, situation and subjective

³⁰ Kabakov, Ilya, On the “Total” Installation. Ostfildern, Germany: Cantz, 1995, 243-260.

effect are implicitly entwined or co-dependent, and that ignoring this co-dependence supports the erroneous notion of art being impartial to its context. The modus operandi informing the *total installation* model is based on the rejection of hierarchical institutions that assert what is valued as art. Within this model there was no censorship frameworks, no reinterpretation by personally motivated curators and administrators. A direct dialogue between community of participants and artist replaces hierarchical frameworks.

5.4.4 (vii) Project Analysis

The work produced in *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)* integrates elements of the *total installation* modus operandi in the form of stochastic, durational and participatory performance structures. It does this within praxis of transferability, reinterpretation and construction. The artworks developed throughout the project draw attention to the act of exchange as praxis. It deals with the social element of how one person or text informs another, how knowledge is passed on, and how vulnerable translation can be. The work is conceived and viewed as a composite arrangement of forms developed within *domains of proximity*³¹. These *domains of proximity*, whilst porous in character are brought together to form novel and multilayered connections between entities within the exhibition space.

Drawing upon plural ontological deminctions³² the term *domains of proximity* suggests that nothing exists alone, for something to exist it must appear within a particular domain. Therefore the term *domains of proximity* are a useful definition for this project that encompasses a multiplicity of ontological relations. Not only does it refer to spatial or site-oriented elements of the work. But also that the composite elements of the artwork as a whole exist within a domain, and that domain be it a studio, gallery, a performance lecture, a museum, a community center, or a house is a complex situation bustling with material relations, shared covenants, forms of knowledge and practices. Ignoring the relative or contingent relationship between art and its domain of operation supports the myth of art as being self-contained or autonomous from the influences of its context.

The term *domains of proximity* used here to describe the analytical formation applied in *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)*. It encompasses not only the sites of interrelated performative contexts but also the interweaving of parallel chronologies between events that have informed the project. All of the works produced for this project are interdependent and set in motion sequence of interactive events. In the process they attempt to excavate layers of meaning and work through the experience of prior occurrences brought into the contemporaneity of the present. In describing contemporaneity Hal Foster discusses the need to

³¹ I refer here to the proposition put forward by Markus Gabriel 2015 that there is infinity of ontological domains and each is real in its own way and nothing exists outside domains of proximity.

³² Reference is made here to Markus Gabriel and his work on speculative realist ontology.

create a new narrative that, following the psychoanalytical model, would treat neo-avant-garde art concepts in terms of their repeating the unfinished work of the artistic revolutions of the early twentieth century³³.

Thus, notions of contemporaneity in the performative reiteration carried out within *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)* can be seen as that which involves the re-examination of the modern project not as a historical period, nor as an explicit body of materials their to be appropriated, but rather as a transgression of chronology. It's not a matter of quoting history but consciously misquoting it in order to denote its porous temporal structure. This is done in order recover the suppressed elements lying dormant but still dynamic in those histories. But also to explore notions of contemporaneity constituted in ways that expresses the idea of presence, albeit in a loop or recursion. The iterative process used in this project is a combination of performative enablement and a loosening of chronological frames. Referencing Barbra Bolt, the work is experienced as an act of parallel performative occurrences that produces indexical forms of representations where sign and object are intrinsically and causally linked in composite arrangement (Bolt 2004).

At the heart of the artworks composite arrangement exists the necessity to explore ways of understanding "presence" relative to iterative practice within performative engagement. Manifestation of "presence" as a form of contemporaneity becomes central to this project. More specify understandings of contemporaneity as a multiplicity of ways of being in time come into awareness with this research through a field of practice that has many layers of engagement. This has included the performative enactment recorded on video, the enactment of the folded paintings, the performance lectures and the response to the lectures. In particular, awareness of what is it to be in the present moment whilst simultaneously being alert to the "presence" of other kinds of time. The video loop is constituted in ways that expresses notions of presence albeit in a loop or recursion. To investigate these key interrogations, this research engaged participatory and inter-subjective exchange in and through the intermeshing of many creative forms of practice and art forms as its principle methodology. The research practice argues that performativity needs to be thought of as durational, by which the present gesture, enacted by the subject is always an iteration or repetition of preceding events. The work produced in this project disrupts the singularity of performative definitions and brings attention to the ways a performative ontology may alter and fixed definitions of contemporaneity.

Presence in time and the reiteration of performative gestures are key concepts underpinning *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)*. Judith Butler argues that through performativity, the expression of incessant, enduring gestures enacted by the subject are always an iteration or repetition of some preceding act. Suggesting that at no time is there an original prior state or essence of being. The theoretical underpinning of iteration in Butlers work draws

³³ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde and the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 8.

attention to the lack of an essential, 'natural', or ideal category of being—that would exist prior to an iterative appearance within a causal chain of pre-existing sets of representation. Performativity signals an awareness of the way the present gesture, enacted by the subject is always iteration or repetition of preceding acts. (Butler 1990).

The iterational practice in *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)* is essentially comprised by a sense of doubt, hesitation, uncertainty and indecision. The performative enactment is constituted by an essential sense of the need for prolonged reflection and delay. The enactments performed within *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)* appear to postpone decisions in order to permanently suspend finality; present-ness is put forward as a prolonged, even potentially infinite period of delay. In the video *Undecided Recursion (Back and Forth Alongside the Abyss)* performativity is presented as a recursive action without beginning or conclusion, no definite outcome or end point. The two participants depicted in the video are seen carrying objects from one point of the parapet to another, from one situation to another, reversed and then back again but are unable to complete their designated task. The artwork operates as an affect of its *event-ness*, of its *performativity* and of its *instantaneousness*. The effect of this *event-ness*, *performativity* and *instantaneousness* works as a form of indexical representation. In the video the subject's repetitions, mimic the video loop that entraps it. Indexical presentation where sign and object are linked causally proceeds beyond appearance, drawing instead to the performative function of the presentation. The presentation depicted in the video *embodies* its object rather than merely signifying it.

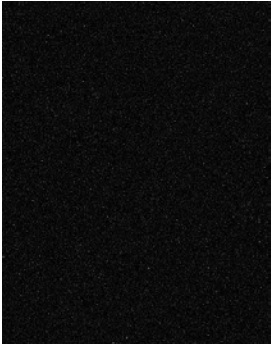
5.5 Project Three 3rd Album of Dialogical Exchange 2013-14



Robert Mangion. 3rd - Album of dialogical exchange sample of cover

3rd - Album of dialogical exchange, is both an artist's book and a new media project involving dialogical and visual exchange between two collaborating participants. The album comprises a series of images, journal notes and extensive dialogical exchange carried out throughout a seven-

month period between 2013 and 2014. The project is developed in seven parts. It aims to initiate a model of subjective formation whereby the subject and the object of relational collaboration constitute each other.



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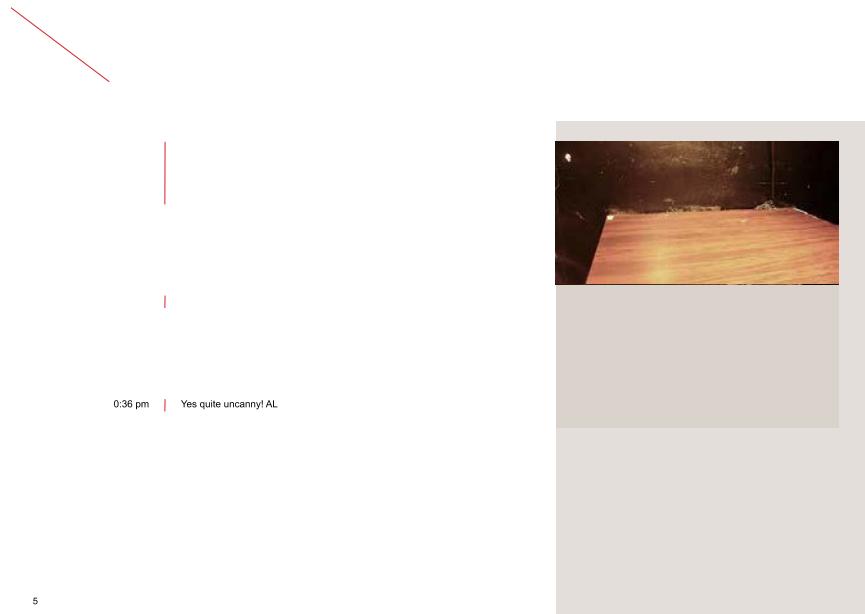
Robert Mangion. 3rd - Album of dialogical exchange sample page

In this context I refer to a “subject” as an entity or person that has a relationship with another entity or person that exists outside of itself called an “object”. A *subject* is an observer and an *object* is a thing observed. The term ‘analytical third’ is used to refer to a third subject consciously and unconsciously co-created by collaborating participants, which seems to take a life of its (Ogden, 1994). Ogden argues that within relational psychoanalysis the “*analytical third*” is both the symbolic acknowledgement of the co-created ‘other’ and the intentional development of active space whereupon both collaborating participants may move in construction of “*thirdness*”. This third subject stands in contrast with the individual subjectivities brought to bear by the collaborating pair.

5.5(i) Project Description

Dialogical exchange between a fellow collaborator, and myself becomes form, firstly within the context of the album and later the installation. *3rd Album of dialogical exchange* was developed as new media exchange project on Facebook and expanded acquiescently in seven parts. Each part has the equivalence of one-month duration. The dialogical exchanges were exactly recorded with dates and times inscribed within the body of the text. The exchanged text was accompanied by digital images created and shared between the collaborating pair. Language in *3rd Album of dialogical exchange* becomes material, acting as a schematic framework for the body of work installed in the gallery. The album contains a narration for the viewing space and the possible encounters between the audience and the forms installed within it. The work was

exhibited at the School of Art Gallery RMIT University in September 2014 as part of the curated exhibition “Museum of Abject Sentimentality”. A second installation of the *3rd Album of dialogical exchange* was shown at the Roslyn Smorgon Gallery in October 2014.



Robert Mangion. 3rd - Album of dialogical exchange sample page

3rd - Album of Dialogical Exchange

5.5 (ii) Project Analysis

3rd - Album of dialogical exchange, contains a cursive script, which becomes a narration for the viewing space and the possible encounters between the audience and the forms installed within it. The album itself acquires a similarly physical presence to the materials initiated in the proposed installation that will accompany it. Dialogical exchange and passages into the symbolic become form, through a temporalized and choreographed treatment of representations within the context of the installation. *3rd Album of dialogical exchange* is research in exchanging dialogue, material, space and representations; it both engages and reflects its conditions of forming and the conditions under which it is viewed. This investigation takes the form of staging encounters with certain figurative representations, temporal situations or architectural locations; subsequently these encounters become groups of objects or spatial propositions that act as prompts to the body of the viewer and its alignment in space.

Drawing on Sarah Koffman (1988) suggestions that the aesthetic process may take the place of the psychoanalytical treatment. Raising questions about who or what is to substitute and inhabit

position of the analyst and analysed in the enactment of the artwork, is it the artist, the participant or the viewer, or some combination based on the relay between them all.

3rd Album of dialogical exchange examines the vicarious nature of relational causality. It initiates a relational model of self-formation and designates dialogical unconscious processes where the subject and the object of relational collaboration constitute each other and thus contain elements of each other.

The work developed for *3rd Album of dialogical exchange* also draws on the work of Luce Irigaray, with particular concern for her examination of language and inter-subjectivity. Irigaray's central philosophical contribution is a transformation of the concept of human subjectivity by way of the thinking of difference, as what Emma Reed Jones (2011) calls a "relational limitation." This concept is at once ontological and ethical, and it describes the way in which Irigaray's work, taken as a continuous whole, transforms philosophical understandings of language, being, and ethics by way of thinking them relationally, combining all of these terms together into understanding of human subjectivity that involves ways of thinking about language and meaning as constitutively shared (Jones 2011).

It is argued that in relational psychoanalysis the analytical third is both the emblematic acknowledgement of the co-created other and the intentional formation of active space whereupon both collaborating participants may move in construction of thirdness. I use the term *analytical third* to refer to a third subject, unconsciously co-created by collaborating participants, which seems to take a life of its own in the interactive field between subject and object. This third subject stands in contrast with the separate individual subjectivities brought to bear by the collaborating participants. Drawing upon Graham Harman's theory of vicarious causation, whereby two entities meet, forming a third entity. Harman outlines concepts of causation, in which entities do not directly connect, but never the less influence one another in a common space "from which both are partly absent." According to Harman relational causation, is inevitably vicarious.

3rd Album of dialogical exchange is research in exchanging dialogue, material, space and representations; it both engages and reflects its conditions of forming and the conditions under which it is viewed. This investigation takes the form of staging encounters with certain figurative representations, temporal situations or architectural locations; subsequently these encounters become groups of objects or spatial propositions that act as prompts to the body of the viewer and its alignment in space.

5.6 Project Four

Instruction/Enactment (OR WHAT LITTLE HANS DID NEXT)



Robert Mangion. Photographic still. Entrance Freud Museum, 20 Maresfield Gardens, London. 2014

The research for this project was conducted in conjunction with the Freud Museum in London and is situated at the philosophical core of all of the other projects produced for this research. It developed as a result of established dialogue with Sophie Leighton curator at the Freud museum and an invitation of a research residency conducted there in May 2014.

The house at 20 Maresfield gardens in London is where Sigmund Freud had lived for a short time after leaving Vienna to escape Nazi persecutions in 1938. However by mid-September 1939, Freud's cancer of the jaw was causing him increasingly severe pain and had been declared to be inoperable. On 21 and 22 of September he was administered doses of morphine that resulted in his death in this house in London on the 23 of September 1939³⁴. The house and its contents are preserved as the Freud Museum. The intended work for my final exhibition is developed from the material generated there. This involves extensive preparatory research of the Freud Museum collection, history and building design.

³⁴ Gay 2006, pp. 650-51



Image. Robert Mangion: Photographic still - The Library 2014 - Part of the Freud Museum Collection

5.6(i) Project Description

The title *Instruction/Enactment (or what little Hans did next)* draws on Freud's case study of "Little Hans" in the publication of *Analysis of a Phobia in a five-year-old boy* (Freud, 1909). The aim of locating this project within the Freud Museum in Maresfield Gardens in London is to examine the allure of "absorption" as embodied by the visit to the home, museum/shrine of the celebrated individual. To what extent does this 'fascination' depend on the delusion formed within such situations?



Image. Robert Mangion: Performance still - Instruction/Enactment #14 2014

In part the project examines psychological transference between subject and object, in a series of miniature performance and video works, drawing on filmed/photographic imagery taken of the Freud Museum. Asking, how can the visitor's reading of the "memorial" be disrupted by a metaphoric act of trespass or by intervention, in the form of adding content (sculptural object, performance, photography, text) or by the metaphoric displacement of treasured object's from one context (the collection) into another (the exhibition). I am interested in a perspective where figure and ground, subject and object relations can be allowed to shift. The artwork evokes cultural and psychic points of slippage and points to the gaps that punctuate its museological format.



Image. Robert Mangion: Performance still - Instruction/Enactment #14 2014

The work is to be shaped as a multifaceted arrangement, of forms bought together within the context of the exhibition space. The assemblage of elements, operate as an unfolding event in time. The viewer is situated as participant, linking their presence to a performative ontology, embedded within the artwork.



Image. Robert Mangion "Tap" 2014. Stills from one track DVD (12min)

5.6 (ii) Project Analysis

The project *Instruction/Enactment (or what little Hans did next)* explores psychological transference within relational contexts. The title *Instruction/Enactment (or what little Hans knew)* draws on Freud's case study of "Little Hans" in the publication of "Analysis of a Phobia in a five-year-old boy" (Freud, 1909). Freud used case study methods to investigate child phobia, however the case study was actually carried out by the boy's father who was a friend and supporter of Freud's work. Freud probably only met the boy once. The father reported to Freud via correspondence and Freud gave directions as how to deal with the situation based on his interpretations of the father's reports. Freud noted that it was the discursive relationship between Hans and his father that allowed the analysis to progress and for the discussions with the boy to be so detailed and so intimate.

This project explored the implied relocation of objects between spaces and examines what this does to them in the process of decontextualizing their situated meaning. The word 'object' resonates throughout the history of psychoanalysis – displaced object, part objects, lost objects, object of affection, impermanent objects, fetish objects, interior objects and object representations. The project *Instruction /Enactment (or what little Hans knew)* investigated the psychological transference of the object as enactments in a series of miniature performance video works drawing on filmed/photographic imagery taken of the Freud museum.

In *Instruction/Enactment (or what little Hans did next)* language is viewed as occupying the realm of unconscious transferal, within a process of semiosis. The focus of this work is the connotative meaning, transferred between enactment, object and interpretant. From a theoretical position, this project attempts to integrate psychoanalytic ideas regarding personality formation with interpersonal (structural) ideas regarding intervention. It investigates the intentional use of countertransference and enactment as an appropriate technique, in establishing interchangeable liaison between artist and participant, expanding upon the interpretative response model advocated by psychoanalysis. The aesthetic approach being described in this project draws from psychoanalysis in that it conceptualizes the mind as being a dialectical process between conscious and unconscious components. It explores the dialectic between suggestion and enactment and states of mind in bodily experiences. Also the therapeutic setting is explored as an aesthetic conduit, emphasising the play between phantasmagoria and reality.

This project attempts to integrate psychoanalytic ideas regarding instruction, intervention and enactments; it investigates the deliberate use of countertransference and representation as an aesthetic technique, in order to establish inter-subjective associations within performative frameworks. The approach being described in this project is located within psychoanalytic frameworks in that it conceptualises subjectivity as being a dialectical process between conscious and unconscious mechanisms. It explores dialectic exchange and focuses on sensations incurred through the process of instruction transference and enactment.

5.7 Conclusion

During the course of this doctoral project the research has evoked participatory exchange by way of performance, dialogue and experimental studio engagement. It has investigated art historical models of post-formalist and dematerialised practice; critical literature linking performativity and relational psychoanalytic theory and methods of performative ontology. This has resulted in new works that engaged numerous participants in various ways. Through a series of experimental workshops, and performative and composite art projects, with my identified role as participant and researcher, the project investigates its key questions to do with the performative ontology of artworks as relational and participatory events. The outcomes of the research manifest as artworks made through the workshops themselves. These include a combination of lens-based images, drawing, sculptural objects, text, performance and a range of technical supports, presented within installation settings. Each artwork and each workshop is considered methodically and examined according to the psychoanalytic and ontological perspectives and questions framing the research.

The outcomes are presented as an exhibition of work that experiments with the viewing environment where composite practice and processes are installed as a chain of events. Throughout all of the research projects the configuration of performativity is crucial. It is seen as a complex condition informing all of the process that includes: modes of encounter, relational psychoanalytic theory, inter-subjective engagement, collaboration, discursivity, materiality and temporal processes. These processes constitute the conditions for exploring composite, participatory art practice as a durational event, through three key focus areas: (1) performativity as inter subjective exchange; (2) performativity as material ontology and (3) performativity as causal and temporal process.

This has resulted in new works that engaged numerous participants in various ways. The project concludes with the assertion that performativity within practice-led research needs to account for an epistemological uncertainty, central to the practice of participatory art. This uncertainty also involves the performance of identity and the presentation of the self through inter-subjective encounters. It is the contentions of this project that performativity within within participatory modes of practice, need to enable the multi-variant voice emanating from participatory exchange.

Chapter six: Project Findings

6.1 Introduction

This PhD research project has set out to demonstrate through practice that a performative model can account for an innovative approach to participatory arts production. It has shown that for participatory engagement in art to establish the credibility of a performative paradigm, it must establish criteria whereby it can interpret and validate its research within the broader research arena. (Bolt 2008)

Throughout this research project, performativity has been viewed not only a theory, but also a constructivist practice to bring about alternative situations for generating participatory engagement. Throughout, a performative paradigm has opened up discursively produced effects as sites of radical contest.³⁵ The expression 'practicing performativity' has underlined the deep-seated and interventionist possibilities in practice. The research has established that the performative act does not describe something but rather it does something in the world.

6.2 Final Exhibition Outcome

In the final exhibition outcomes the gallery space becomes a site for a work that situates the viewer as key participant through movement, duration and unfoldment. The work is a diverse arrangement of parts that experiments with the viewing environment as a chain of events. Throughout this research, performativity has been construed as a complex situation that include, modes of encounter, relational and psychoanalytic systems of engagement, inter-subjective transaction, collaboration, discursive exchange, materiality and temporal processes. This final work continues these investigations through the engagement of the viewer as participant in the work. The viewer/participant's movement generates spatial interventions that navigate the gap between what can be seen, heard and said, and that, which is perceived. These processes constitute the conditions for exploring composite, participatory art practice as a durational event through three key focus areas that include performativity as inter subjective exchange; performativity as material ontology, and performativity as causal and temporal process. Each of these conditions is addressed further within the final exhibition, which draws extensively from the research carried out at the Freud Museum in London.

6.2(i) Splitting

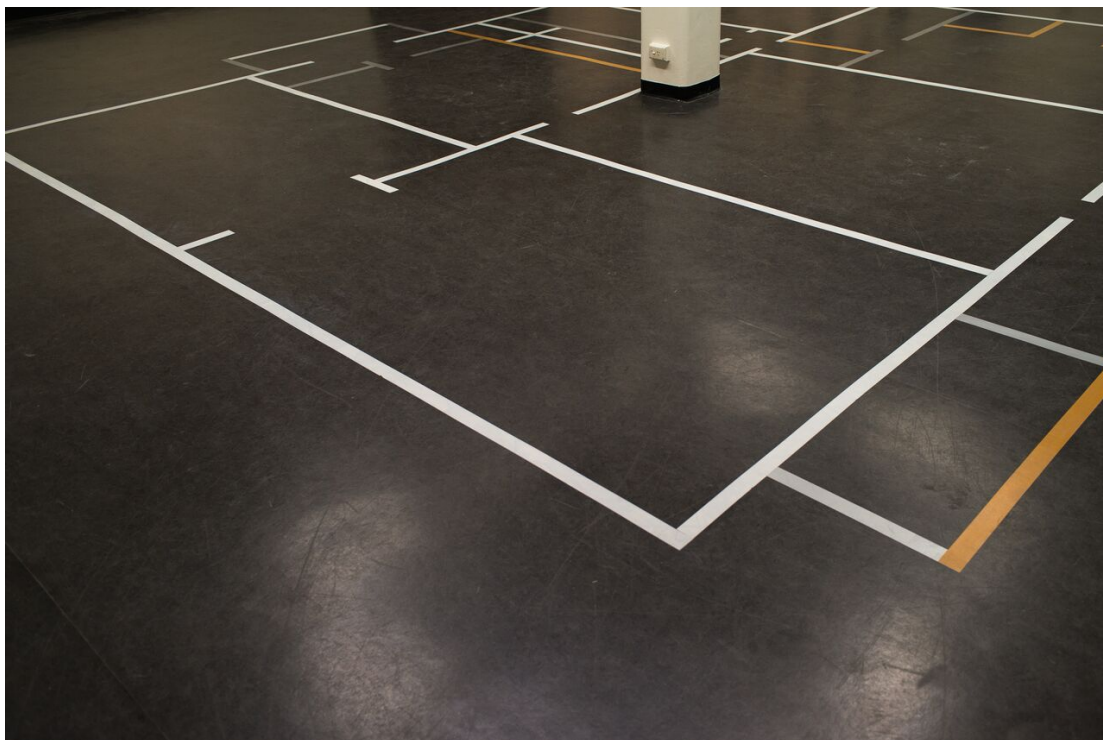
The organising principle for the installation is a metaphoric dyadic "split", of the floor plan of Freud's house in Maresfield Gardens in London. This metaphoric "splitting" of Freud's house is established through a dichotomy of contrasts inherent within the displacement formed in the house as museum and analytical laboratory as modernist theatre and analyst transferals and

³⁵ In research on gender and sexuality, this point has been most influentially argued by Judith Butler (1990, 1993).

analysande reciprocations; subject and object; image and artefact; words and affect; consciousness and unconsciousness. The floor plan is re-conceived as a metaphoric armature and palimpsest of time, memory and return. Drawing from Griselda Pollock's description,

Freud's analytical theatre, full of objects and casts, stand for the shattered incomplete and repressed histories, no longer available in their original unity or vitality. Instead each item is marked by both oblivion and anamnesis, exemplifying in material form the shards of memory and fantasies that analytical sessions will conjure up in the transferenceal presence/present of the analyst with whose partner-ship, some hermeneutic sense of these discontinuous fragments may be rewoven into a tissue of shifting, subjective meaning. (Pollock, 2006, p5)

Movement through discontinuous fragments, woven into spaces of shifting, subjective semblance establish the perceptual conditions for exploring the composite, performative elements in the final artwork produced for this doctoral research. The viewer is positioned as a participant located within a process of unfoldment. The work is objectively present, but then again temporalized as a durational event, which constitutes the performative essence of the artwork.

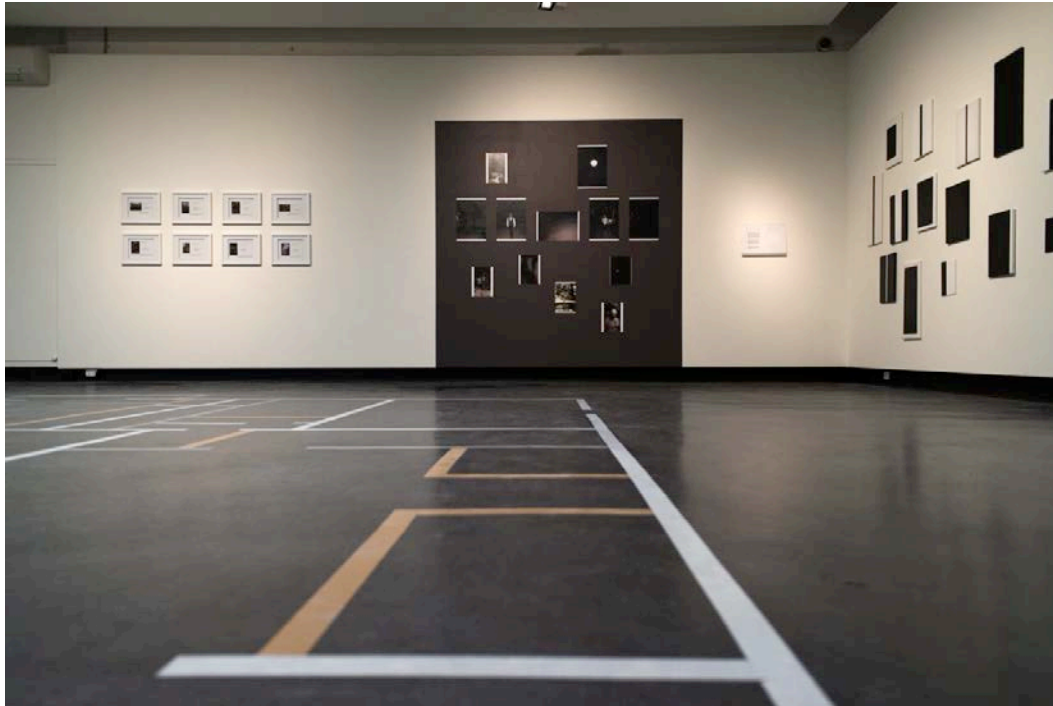


Robert Mangion. Floor Plan (After Subject/Object) 2016. Adhesive cloth tap. Dimensions variable.

A reconstituted floor plan of the Freud Museum in London, repositioned across the gallery floor, transfigures the installation space. It spans across the length and width of the gallery floor affecting the collapse of exteriority of the museum into its correspondent exterior.

The reconstituted floor plan exists in the contradiction between the sense of embodiment that its presence may evoke and its obtrusiveness as an interior “cut” that both separates and divides the viewing space. The space of the reconstituted floor plan slices the gallery’s volume into segmented compartments. Space is reciprocally suppressed and then opened out and subsequently suppressed again in response to the viewer’s movement around the reconstituted floor plan. Through this movement the gallery space itself is experienced as an effect in which the “cut” of the inserted reconstituted floor plan functions. Furthermore because it is the viewer/participant traversing the space, the reconstituted floor plan’s function becomes the activity of the viewer/participant’s perceptual work in the process of generating his or her own performative experience.

Various artworks and media fragments (some reconstituted from previous work developed for this research project) protrude off the reconstituted floor plan and walls of the gallery, such as suspended fabric material, monochrome paintings, text, de-familiarised objects, a set of six archival boxes marked “returned”, three video works, sound elements, a suite of six instruction/enactment digital prints and shelved sculptural objects. Combined they form composite elements, which construct a non-hierarchical visual field, with the artworks presented not as isolated autonomous entities, but rather within a syntax of inter-visual display. There is less interest in the individuality of each component, rather in what happens when different elements interweave and overlay one another. In the process the individual elements bestow significance on one another through a sequence of disclosure as a performative event. As a whole experience, the installation envisages the potential for the activation of a gathering of elements in the way that opens the space to the participant and the participant in turn opens to the space (Grierson 2015). All the elements interconnect and enact a revealing process. The individual elements are analogically linked as a sequence of signs that act as vehicles of perceptual interpretation. They solidify themselves in perception and form what might be called semblances of events passing between mnemonic trace and return (Massumi 2013).



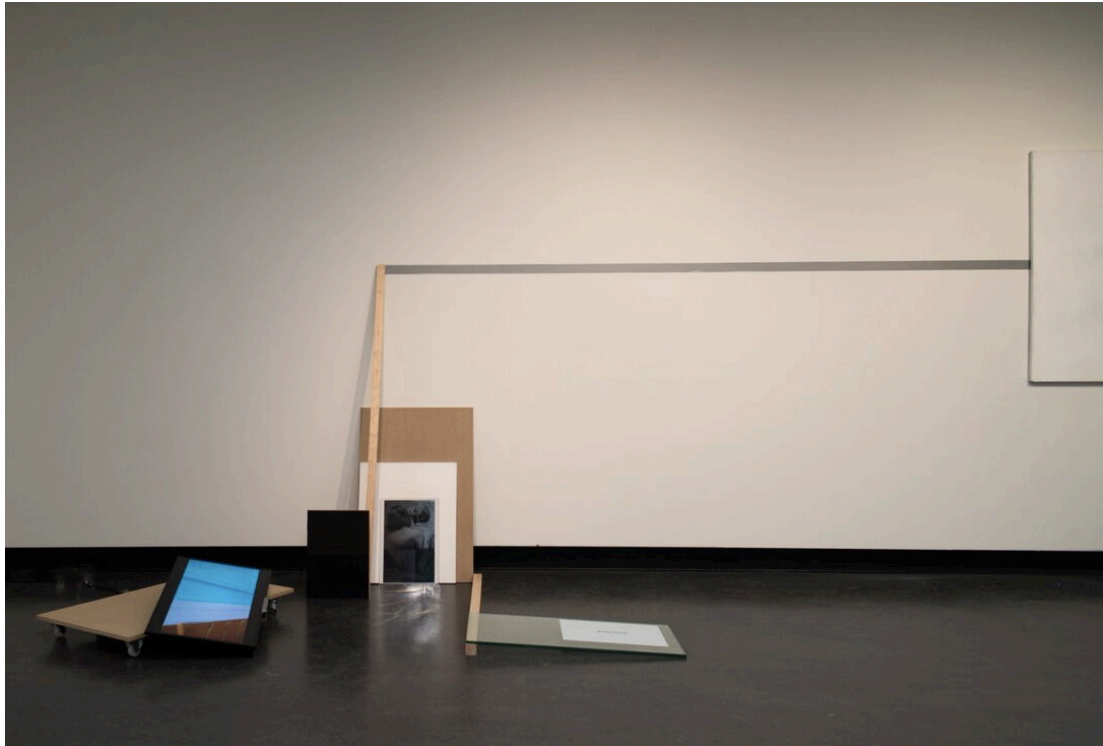
Robert Mangion. Installation view (*After Subject/Object*) 2016. Dimensions variable.

The viewer's movement around the gallery constitutes the experience of the artwork as a perceptual event, which is simultaneously experienced as passing and returned. Massumi refers to the way that the pre-cognitive, ever-shifting, multiplicity of events are taken up and figured as perceptible forms, which he calls semblances. For Massumi semblance within events equates to lived abstraction. An event is something passing yet "perceptually felt, not so much in vision as through vision: as a vision effect. It is a lived abstraction"(Massumi, p.17).

The viewer is positioned as participant, enacting the unfoldment of the works perceptual meaning. A central refrain in the installation is the performative, dyadic act generated between the artwork and viewer/participant. This is manifest, through the artwork's residual layers revealed as a temporal strata, surfacing across the visual field of the installation. The artwork draws attention toward something that is both present and returned. Perception slips into the cracks between these two phenomena and crosses their various layers, beholding the transformation of images into words, words into sculptural object, sculptural object into film and back again. Media becomes a springboard for ideas that side step from one semblance to the next. Things proliferate in time and continually take on new meanings.

The viewer's presence in relation to the artwork within the gallery space, translates as a form of staged occurrence where the viewer/participant is positioned as the subject of the unfoldment and enactment of the artwork. To borrow from Michael Fried the project posits the idea of "presentness", which defines the condition of participation in ways similar with the idea of gestalt. This is characterised by a form of "instantaneousness" in which "at every moment the work itself is

wholly manifest.”³⁶ The meaning of the artwork comes at the moment in which the viewer’s movement around the reconstituted floor plan of Freud’s home in London produces a sensibility of return mediated through two sets of supports turned into a particular gestalt or “frame”.



Robert Mangion. Tap Proof. (After Subject/Object) 2014-16 Mixed-media installation includes MDF, glass, wood, painted panels, text, digital print and video. Dimensions variable.

One invites entry into its midst and inspection of its parts, the other collapses the physical space within the work and re-creates viewing as the function of a thoroughly porous and psychological situation. One viewing frame collapses into the other, suggesting of an open porosity. These viewing frames hold the work together and yet simultaneously points to where they open and fall apart. Within this viewing situation, there can be no assurances to the limits of the aesthetic object. There is no telling where it begins and where it ends. The movement across the reconstituted floor plan initiates conceptions of return through the viewing process, reformulated in memory. Various performative operations are set in motion, made to oscillate between representation and embodiment between materiality and conceptualism, between language and image. Located in the perceptual ensemble they form with their surroundings. This research has constantly accredited the body (of the participant) as a conduit between the emotional and psychological self and the physical world surrounding it. This research has attributed performative and aesthetic gestures in the work produced for this research, which suggests psychological shifts and a reconfiguration of the relationships of space, objects, images and the body. This research has acknowledged that the effects of performativity are multi-dimensional; they may be discursive,

³⁶ Fried, M “Art and Objecthood,” P167.

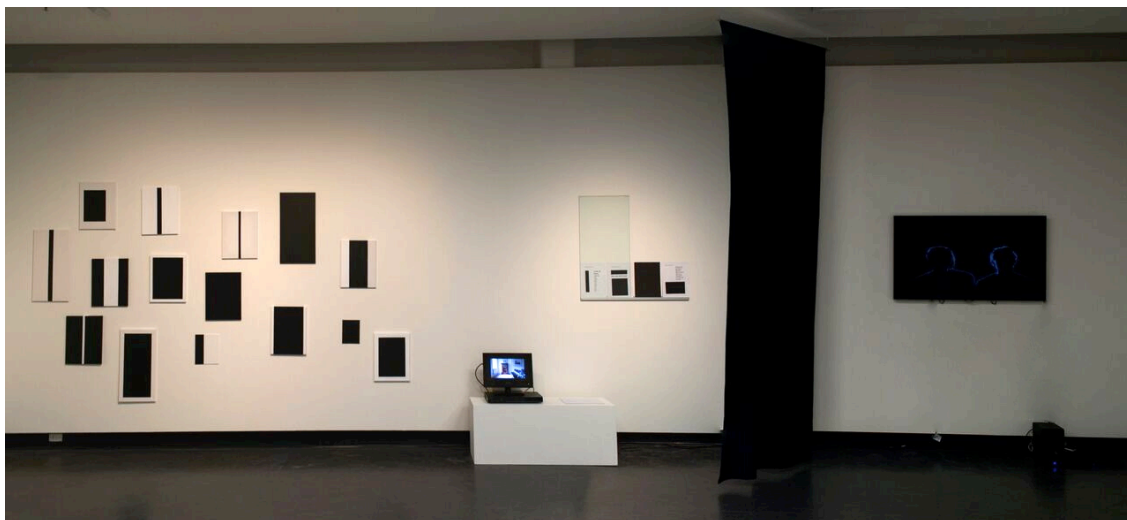
material outcomes and/or affective outcomes. Performative affects are action returned or reiterated. The artwork operates as an affect of its event-ness and as a strategy toward performativity and temporality. This event-ness works as a form of indeterminacy and disclosure of being. The artwork is set to work in time and place, appearing as some external entity that unfolds within consciousness.

6.3 Performativity as an Iterative and Citational practice

Throughout this research the concept of performativity was situated as an iterative and citational practice; used broadly to refer to the way subjectivities are shaped (produced or rehearsed) through performing and speaking. This requires an act of manifestation but also an awareness of the construction and conditions of that act and how its structure affects what is being done or said (Butler 1997). Viewed not as a singular act; performativity involves repetition and return. The research has drawn from Butler who is clear in her claim that performativity is a method of citation and iterative practice involving repetition rather than singularity. For Butler performativity is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. (Butler 1993: p 12)

6.4 Rethinking Subjectivity

The projects initiated throughout this research were designed, to be open enough for participants to rework their own subjective interpretations and influence the direction of the research/projects and give shape to their subjective formation. The research findings confer with Butler's theory of performativity that relates to the formation of the subject, in that there is no subject who precedes the repetition. Only through performance does 'I' come into being. Subjectivities are not pre-existing or self-determined acts of agency lying dormant, waiting to be analysed or awakened by researchers and artists, rather, subjectivity is formed through the performative act itself.



Robert Mangion. Cast of Absence - Black Noise (After Subject/Object) 2013-16 Mixed-media installation includes paint on canvas, glass, text, fabric, sound and video. Dimensions variable.

6.5 Re-iteration and Différance

Performative and participatory practice; have been equated to iterational process throughout this research. The research infers that practice-led research needs to account for an epistemological indecision central to the practice of performative and participatory art. This has also involved ontological aspects in the performance of identity and the presentation of the self through the inter-subjective encounters, serving to refute single authorship and 'self' as a unified and predetermined organisational principle.

It is the contention of these project findings that practice-led research, within participatory modes of practice, enables the multi-variant voice emanating from participatory exchange. This multi-variant voice within performative-based research assumes the mantle of difference or what Derrida would call difference: deferral, interchange and transformation.

Throughout this research, certainties concerning the relationship between language, art object and the subject as participants, were placed at the centre of the deliberations regarding performativity. The research has reflected on the challenges of foreclosure in artistic process and questioned the very possibilities for constructing fixed meaning, ultimately revealing the prerequisites on which performativity in this project is based.

It is the conclusions of these findings that one must get past the idea that form is ever fixed, and that there is such a thing as a stable form. The idea that there is such a thing as fixed form is actually as much an assumption about perception as it is an assumption about art. It assumes that vision is not dynamic that it is a passive, transparent registering of something that is just there, simply and inertly. If vision is stable, then to make art dynamic you have to add movement. But if vision is already dynamic, the question changes. What is left is to make distinctions between kinds of movement, kinds of experiential dynamics, and then ask what difference they make.

6.6 Contributions to Performative Practice

The concept of the performative brings into perspective the contingent and elusive realm of impact and effect that art brings about both situationally that is, in a given spatial and discursive context—and relationally, that is, in relation to a viewer or a public. It recognizes the productive, reality-producing dimension of artworks and brings them into the discourse.

This research has shown that the performative in relation to art points to a shift away from what an artwork depicts and represents to the effects and experiences it produces. In principle, the performative triggers a methodological shift in how we look at any artwork and the way in which it produces meaning. Extending from this, the process-oriented, temporal and provisional aspects of production are also made explicit within performative processes. Performativity as event resists being finalised or resolved. It is not an aim to be achieved; rather it is a mode of operation, an

attitude related to engagement, production, process, theory, reception, writing, and critical dialogue. Performativity as event is therefore a provocation for ways to engage in a particular kind of thinking and making practice

6.7 Conclusion

This research has set out to address the question as to whether creative arts can successfully argue a 'performative paradigm'. It has drawn from foundational work of Austin and his subsequent commentators to define concepts of performativity and demonstrate how procedures within the creative arts are based around repetition. It has been argued that a

performative paradigm would operate according to repetition with difference. It has shown that the interpretive tools of a performative paradigm allow the creative arts to stake its 'truth claims' in terms of the force and effect of a creative production. The aim of a performative paradigm is not to find correspondences but rather to recognise and 'map' the ruptures and movements that are created by creative productions. Here the work of art is not just the artwork/performance or event, but is also the effect of the work in the material, affective and discursive domains. This is where an ontological condition may become apparent.

If, as it has been argued the research process inaugurates movement and transformation through iterability, what are the forms of this transformation and how are they to be interpreted and evaluated in a realm of research? The account of performativity given throughout this research provides an alternative account of how 'the new' emerges through iterative practice. Here, singularity is not the conscious transgressive singular act of the artist, but rather 'singularity' arises in and through re-iteration and citation. This 'pattern' in the practice allow us to begin to recognise the conventions (context of theory, context of practice) and map the ruptures that shift practice. Further, it allows us to understand art as an effect and appreciate what art does in the world.

Central to linking performativity to participatory practice in this research project is not the aesthetic form in which a work presents itself to a public, as in more traditional arts viewing contexts, but the behaviour the work triggers in the viewer. The viewer then becomes a participant in the work. It is the conclusion of these research findings that participatory art needs actions on both sides of the classical dichotomy of object and viewer. The viewing context generated throughout this research project, has encompassed the art object, viewer and participant in a process of reciprocal activation. Through performative exchange the artworks activate the potential to become events within themselves, in a process of disclosure in time. Drawing from Heidegger, the concept of time holds a critical place in revealing event-ness as a form of disclosure of being of the artwork. As Grierson (2015) has shown, an artwork's performative ontology presents not as appearance or representation of some external entity that is made logical to consciousness, but rather the artwork is set to work in time and place, generating infinite ontological affects.

Postscript

Two research questions steered this practice-led research project from its inception. Firstly, how may a performative art practice extend associations with relational psychoanalytical theory? Secondly, how may a performative art practice reveal the participatory and ontological experiences of subject-object relations?

These questions were posited in order to distinguish between performance, which assumes a pre-existing subject and performativity which contests the very notion of subject. The research questions are framed within the fundamental uncertainty at the limits of knowledge and measurement and how the enactment of seeing alters what is seen. This research project has resulted in a compilation of works that reveal layers of unintentionality and open-endedness within a diversity of participatory and performative practices. The work realised in this research equates deduction with perpetuality. They reveal how constructivist experience of presences and not knowing can lead to innate engagement with an array of epistemological subjects and themes from contemporaneity to iteration, from concreteness to transience, from intersubjectivity to semblance.

Throughout, this research project has argued that performativity needs to be thought of as durational, by which the present gesture, enacted by the subject is always an iteration or repetition of preceding events.

This project has sought to expand definitions and understandings of a performative paradigm of practice-led research. It has done this by drawing from psychoanalytic and ontological perspectives to find out how, and to what extent a performative ontological experience may be possible in and through participatory art. The objective of a performative model is to recognise and chart the splits and movements that are created by creative productions. Here the work of art is not just the artwork, performance or event, but is also the influence of the work in the material, affective and discursive domains. From this, the research situated my own trans disciplinary arts practice as a substantive site of enquiry. One of the driving aims of this project was to investigate ways of presenting aspects of performative ontology in and through artistic inquiry.

Between art-object, situations and performativity is a research practice that both explores and affirms participation, processes, and the temporal. It posits performative methods for producing temporal, spatial, material and inter-subjective relations. Throughout the research performativity as an event ontology was not reducible to one frame of reference or consequence; as options emerged they were regenerated through the continuous formation of encounters. This became the methodological thrust of the project in situating performativity as an iterative, artistic and ontological process.

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