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Rationales of Documentation in British Live Art Since the 1990s: the
Pragmatic, Memorial and Holistic

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RATIONALES OF DOCUMENTATION IN BRITISH LIVE ART SINCE THE
1990S: THE PRAGMATIC, MEMORIAL AND HOLISTIC

SUMMARY

This thesis investigates rationales behind Live Art documentation, by examining the work of British artists working under the banner of 'Live Art' since the 1990s. My aim has been to write an account of Live Art's history and major themes that incorporates primary research, analysis and criticism of recent research on documentation. Works by Live Artists are not discussed chronologically, but so that they might function as points of departure for discussions about Live Art's relationship to documentation and its relevance as a contemporary cultural form.

The thesis starts with an introduction setting out definitions of Live Art and documentation and contextualising Live Art's relationship to Performance Art.

The rationales for documenting Live Art are grouped into three categories: documentation as pragmatic, documentation as memorial and documentation as holistic. The main text is divided into three parts, each Part discusses issues relating to one of the above categories.

Part 1 addresses practical reasons why artists working under the banner of Live Art document their work. The section includes an exploration of the infrastructure for the development of Live Art in the UK as well as an analysis of the market for Live Art and its documentation.

Part 2 interrogates perspectives from the discipline of performance studies on the relationship between live action and documentation, exploring how these issues have been interpreted in Live Art's history. In particular, this section will assess how writers and artists have approached discussion of Live Art in oral and written form.

Part 3 proposes models of rethinking documentation based on works by British Live Artists that develop documentation in tandem to live action and enjoy a privileged relationship to technology.

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Introduction

The fundamental purpose of this thesis is to explore reasons why British Live Artists have documented their work since the 1990s and what meaning this documentation holds for artists, producers, audience and researchers who engage with the reproduction and reception of Live Art practice. Presenting an account of the diversity of practice in British Live Art working from the 1990s to the present day, this thesis considers the history and theorisation of Live Art in equal measure, taking a set of themes commonly found in discourse on contemporary Live Art practice and examining their assumptions about documentation.

As a contemporary art practice centred around artists, the dissemination of Live Art is concentrated in individuals, being distributed through oral transmission as much as it is conveyed through texts and objects. In this context, knowledge about Live Art can be viewed as a key motivating factor in the production of documentation, which has a direct impact on curators and programmers who work to present Live Art.

Starting off with a definition of Live Art, followed by a definition of documentation, I will identify what is unique about documentation in the context of research and practice of Live Art. Through this, I wish to argue that documentation is embedded and integral to the practice of Live Art in the UK. The first part of the thesis looks at practical ways in which Live Art is incorporating documentation and the reasons for Live Artists' increased interest in documentation. The second part looks at the idea of documentation as memory, in particular focussing on how documentation is 'written' into Live Art history, imbuing documents with authority and authenticity. In the final part of the thesis I consider the processes by which documentation is embedded, both purposefully and involuntarily, into the action and ideology of Live Art, with particular attention to the role of technology in performance and Live Art practice.

By examining that which is considered the counterpart of the 'live' of Live Art, namely, its documentation, I wish to show that beyond its practical uses, documentation is a crucial part of Live Art's identity. I propose that Live Artists today are incorporating into their practice the changes in sensibility and relationships to technology precipitated by digital culture, with documentation emerging in tandem with the performative, 'live' action as a result. Like all artforms and art-making practices, Live Art is a product of its ideological and technological context. Live Art's specific historical moment has marked it in terms of the uses and possibilities of new media today, the ubiquity of consumerist culture and a post-avant-garde relationship to institutionalised narratives of art.

Live Art, existing somewhere between the fringes and an established order of performance, has often described itself as valuing the encounter between artist and audience, that is frequently but not exclusively articulated in the 'live' setting. I wish to assert that conscious engagement with the problematic issue of documentation is one of the characteristics that sets Live Art apart from its predecessor Performance Art. I assert that for Live Art, a young and vibrant interdisciplinary artform that draws on a spectrum of more established artistic practices including theatre, sculpture and music, the production, reproduction and reception of documentation is significant in practical and artistic terms. As well as significantly hastening access to the artform, Live Art's concern for documentation questions the primacy of live performance as a dominant mode of practice and suggests an interdependence between documentation and live action. Live Artists are thus seen as actively participating in ascribing value to documentation, playing with audience expectations about documentation, to reflect on how their practice is presented in the broader context of contemporary art practice and cultural history.

Since its emergence as a distinct artform in the early 1990s, Britain has led the world in development of Live Art, producing numerous pioneering artists, nurturing a delicate, yet sophisticated nationwide infrastructure that supports heterogeneous approaches to innovation in creation, production and presentation. Within the last ten years, discourse to foster growth and understanding of Live Art has similarly been championed by British arts organisations oriented towards the artform and research projects within British Higher Education Institutions. These factors contribute to the significance of documentation to the practice and reception of British Live Art since the 1990s.

Whilst this study does not aim to be a comprehensive survey of how Live Artists engage with documentation, it will seek to bring together existing literature and primary research about this thematic to explore how documentation connects artist and audience by virtue of being embedded into the processes of Live Art production.

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Text Formats, Referencing Styles And Conventions

Harvard referencing conventions are used throughout the text. Where quotations are taken from a previously published source, they are disclosed using the author-date system. All long quotes from published sources are single-spaced and reduced in font size. Quotations that lack a source citation are always taken from my own interviews. Long quotations from my own interviews are single-spaced. The author's voice within

the context of these interviews appears in italics. All long quotations from my own interviews are single-spaced but not reduced in font size to reflect their importance in informing my thesis.

Guide Through The Text

I will outline my methodology, including my involvement with Live Art practice in a pre-history to the thesis, which will also contain a survey of key writers dealing with issues around performance and documentation, in addition to an evaluation of the importance of documentation to my knowledge as a Live Art researcher and curator.

The Pragmatic

The first Part of the thesis will examine the pragmatic reasons why Live Artists document their work. Following a definition of Live Art and summary of how the artform emerged from other artistic disciplines, I will look at the context of documentation in Live Art. In particular, I will consider the dissemination channels for Live Art documentation as well as issues of ownership and responsibility for documentation. The significant role of documentation in professional development for Live Artists will also be examined. Indeed, documentation has become an essential tool in the development and professionalisation of Live Art, for individual artists and advocacy of the sector as a whole. To conclude the first section, I will then discuss the role of documentation in the economics of Live Art. As Live Art has continued to grow within the context of a burgeoning UK contemporary art scene, it has begun to develop a relationship to visual art markets and collections. Growth in these areas - for those artists and organisations whose practice allows them to explore 'entrepreneurial' methods of supporting work - points to how Live Art activity can be sustained in a number of ways, beyond the financial support of grant-making organisations.

The Memorial

The second Part of the thesis further explores the notion of a Live Art history, examining memory as a reason for the documentation of Live Art performance. Beginning with an explication of ways in which artists and writers engaging with Live Art have imagined the relationship between Live Art and writing, I go on to look at the value of immaterial means of documentation, such as oral accounts and gossip, whose viral rate of distribution accounts for the dominant way in which audiences engage with Live Art. This Part will also consider salient themes in performance studies, such as the issues of liveness and presence, which continue to be contested notions for

researchers in this field. The second Part of the thesis will conclude by exploring how Live Art engages with notions of commodification through its documentation.

The Holistic

Asserting that live action and documentation are inextricably linked within the practice of Live Art, the final Part scrutinises how Live Art interacts with and is effected by technology. By exploring the resurgence of interest in re-enactments and repetition I examine cycles of how Live Art documentation is consumed. Discussing how documentation is often produced as a by-product of performance, and the notion of Live Art practice (rather than objects), I will explore some examples of work that utilise both lo- and hi-tech means. This Part of the thesis will also entail a discussion of how aesthetic theories from analytic and continental philosophy can contribute to a model of how to approach the experience of appreciating Live Art documentation.

Methodology

My research initially started off as an empirical enquiry into how Live Artists approached documentation and how it effected their practice. Instead of examining documentation solely from the perspective of the audience or researchers, I wished to investigate some of the ways in which artists incorporate documentation into the process of making Live Art. Therefore I saw my primary constituency as the Live Artists working within the artform.

My primary research consisted of a series of 25 interviews with British Live Artists, a list of which can be found in Appendix One. I initially selected these artists with advice from Lois Keidan and Daniel Brine, directors of the Live Art Development Agency, leading UK organisation for the promotion of Live Art. The Live Art Development Agency produced a comprehensive list of contact details for Live Artists on their database who would potentially be amenable to an interview - some of whom I was familiar with and others who were completely unknown to me. They then informed me about each of the artists whose practice I was unfamiliar with in a face-to-face briefing session. Keidan and Brine also advised me on the best method to approach artists and suggested other organisations and individuals working in the infrastructure of Live Art who would be willing and articulate interviewees.

Research assumptions

The suggestions made by the Live Art Development Agency were necessarily influenced by my research assumptions, which I had outlined when I introduced myself to the Agency. I informed them that I wished to interview a cross-section of artists who had begun their careers in diverse disciplines but were now working under the banner of Live Art. I also wanted to contact a range of artists at different stages of their artistic careers. That many Live Artists came to Live Art through disciplines such as theatre, visual arts, music, writing and dance formed an important basis for my investigation. I wanted to test the theory that artists from different backgrounds approach documentation from differing perspectives. For instance, I wanted to confirm my assumption that an artist from a dance background would most likely be influenced by perspectives on notation within dance discourse. I had developed this hypothesis through my general research into Live Art, by assessing artists' biographies and the types of documentation they produced. Although I did not believe that every Live Artist would necessarily conform to the documentation stereotype associated to their artistic discipline, I wanted to claim that a majority of Live Artists who came from visual arts

and sculpture backgrounds would continue to hold an interest in object-making as a method for documenting work and that practitioners who started their careers within theatre would probably place more value on the live event and consequently devote less consideration to the production of documentation. However, I quickly rejected this initial research assumption as I considered it flawed for a number of reasons. Firstly, the theory I was wishing to test assumed that Live Artists always worked in a different artistic discipline prior to their engagement with Live Art; moreover, it assumed that artists from similar artistic disciplines would automatically agree on an identical approach to documentation methods and products; further, the theory took an uncritical attitude to the possibility that Live Artists, like any artists, are not fully conscious of the influences on their work. Once I embarked in my interviewing, it became clear that although a vocal minority of Live Artists shun the term 'Live Art' as a positive and affirmative phrase to describe their work, there is also a sizeable minority, in the main consisting of younger emerging artists, who identify with Live Art as their originary artistic discipline, therefore, I realised that Live Art had also to be considered an originary artistic discipline itself. I also discerned that approaches to documentation in Live Art depended on a number of factors that went beyond disciplinary affiliations. Aside from this having a denigrating effect on efficacy of the data I was receiving, I also found that my sample of primary data would be too small to support my general assumptions about the influence of a 'disciplinary origin' on an artist's attitude towards Live Art documentation. I consequently surmised that this methodology would fail to provide conclusive results. In this section of the thesis I will expand on the various problems with my initial research assumptions and how I developed an appropriate methodology for my subject.

The Interview

I decided upon the interview as my main method of primary research for a number of reasons. The detailed questions and structure of the interviews would allow for qualitative, as well as quantitative, data about Live Artists working in the UK. I had developed considerable interview experience and technique through my work as an arts documentary programme maker for London art radio station, Resonance FM – where my primary engagement with contemporary artists was through interviewing them.

I sought to design an interview structure that would result in both qualitative and quantitative data about the types of documentation Live Artists produced and why they produced them. With the help of community research trainer and consultant Giovanna

Speciale, I formulated a set of interview questions to put to the artists. Speciale delivered a personalised training session highlighting examples of good practice and the ethics of interviewing. My approach to the interview process was particularly influenced by ethnographer Norman K Denzin's text *The Research Act* (1977), which states that the constituent elements of the interview are: observer, respondent, situation, rules (1977: 133).

The initial interview format I created fell into what Denzin terms the 'scheduled standardised interview' (1977: 123-128), where the interviewer asks questions in a specific order, according to a schedule of questions. This method is based on the assumption that all interviewees will receive similar stimuli and therefore will give comparable data. Whilst this format is useful in acquiring quantitative data from large samples (such as a census), its value does not lie in articulating qualitative data from a smaller sample. On realising this, I aimed to make the interviews less structured and more exploratory, combining the schedule standardised interview (SSI) with the non-schedule standardised (unstructured schedule interview – USI). Of the two interview types, Macoby and Macoby suggest that 'the unstructured, nonstandardised interview is best suited for exploratory studies, while the structured, schedule interview is best suited for hypothesis testing and rigorous qualification of results' (cited in Denzin, 1977: 127). This shift to the USI format would allow interviewees time to discuss examples from their own experiences without dismissing the value of asking specific questions. When I began my project I had a hypothesis that I wanted to test and so built interview questions around this hypothesis. I quickly came to realise that the richness and meaning of the territory lay in the qualitative narratives, rather than the quantitative data, of performance experiences. The unstructured schedule interview therefore allowed me to continue to gather quantitative data and at the same time open up space for exploratory study.

Taking advice from the Live Art Development Agency, I aimed to conduct my interviews face-to-face wherever possible and I managed to exceed my target of conducting 80% of my interviews through face-to-face meetings. Although transcribing oral interviews is highly labour-intensive, I decided on this method as not only would face-to-face meetings help the informants engage with the interview process for an undisturbed period of time but it also allowed me to engage with the artists in a more dynamic way. In the introductory email inviting them to take part in the research I clearly stated that the interview would take at least 45 minutes, ensuring that informants would understand how long to clear their schedules if they wished to

participate. I wrote to more than forty Live Artists over a three-month period to ask if they would be willing to be interviewed for my research and more than 60% of them accepted. Those who refused did so for a number of reasons, some artists cited lack of time during my allocated research period, others were in the process of clarifying their documentation strategies and did not want to engage with research on the topic until they had further time to consider documentation in their artistic practice.

The interview questions were divided into six sections – dealing with training, approaches to documentation, documentation made, exhibiting documentation, selling documentation and the relationship between technology and documentation. I deliberately combined open and extremely specific questions in order to encourage learning and information gathering on my part. These included asking artists to identify and rank the functions of documentation for their practice; to formulate a response to a quote from Peggy Phelan's essay the 'Ontology of Performance: representation without reproduction' (1993: 146-66) and describe how their present work within the Live Art context relates to any artistic disciplines they were previously involved in (see Appendix Two for a complete list of questions). I asked to visit artists in their studios or home working environment whenever it was appropriate. This way, I would be able to learn about the importance of documentation to Live Art by talking to them but also being able to observe an artist's behaviour within their working environment affords another source for the research to draw upon, as discussed by Agar (1980: 108). Despite their short length, the interviews I conducted were central to my research, as they capture both a snapshot of Live Art history and my experience of Live Art. Examining answers from the interviews I conducted, I decided instead to appraise the rationales for documenting Live Art themselves and use the artists I had interviewed as examples.

Denzin describes the interview's complex of power and informational relationship as a relatively new type of 'encounter' in society. As such there are few explicit rules outlining the relationship between observer and interviewee and how this relationship should be conducted. Further, he notes that there develops between observer and interviewee a 'fiction of equality' (1977: 136) where both parties suspend some power relations such that the 'transaction can be seen as equal', even if this is not the case. This condition is echoed by Erving Goffman who claims that in the presence of the observer, interviewees or participants follow a 'division of definitional labour' to collectively project a 'working consensus' about their situation (1959: 8-10). Both Denzin and Goffman acknowledge that the interview is usually predicated on one party

(the interviewee) being more expert than the other, however, the observer – as one who goes on to contextualise the interview - can be said to have the advantage over the interviewee. This issue of the asymmetrical relationship between interviewer and interviewee, as well as other methodological issues relating to interviews, is further discussed by Denzin (1977), Goodall (1994) and Ellis (2008).

Ethnography

On realising that my key research hypothesis was flawed, I undertook to reposition my research as an ethnographic study, described by Clifford Geertz as 'thick description' (1975: 10) and by Harold Goodall as 'basically, representing in words what you have lived through as a person when your stated purpose was to study a culture' (1994: xxiii). I therefore decided to enrich my knowledge of the Live Art community through participant observation. In addition to conducting interviews, I attended performances, symposia and professional development events that were co-ordinated by or for Live Artists. The aim of this 'participant observation' was to learn more about how documentation was conducted and thought about within the environment of Live Art practice and its infrastructure. As Agar states 'observation is critical in enriching our ability to give accounts of events' (Agar, 1980: 109). He suggests a tripartite way in which to think of the informal ethnographic study, as the recording of events, the searching for 'common principles' or themes and the adaptation of these specific understandings for broader function (1980: 115-6). This is useful to me as it summarises the approach that I have taken in my research through a combination of primary research and curatorial practice, broadly underpinned by ethnographic principles, coupled with an investigation of existing literature to develop a theory about Live Art documentation that can be applied to a wide constituency of Live Art practitioners.

Of the types of participant that Denzin describes, I am *not* a) the complete participant, who does not tell the community that they are being observed, *nor am I*, b) the observer as participant, whose observations are made in one visit, but rather my project involved me coming in as, c) the participant as observer who 'makes his presence as an investigator known and attempts to form a series of relationships with the subjects such that they serve both as respondents and informants' (1977: 190). Denzin notes that the community may at first act in a hostile manner towards the researcher, however, when the respondents ask why they have been chosen, the researcher will at that point start to 'teach them how to act towards him' (1977:191). For me, the interview process with Live Artists established a first point of contact with them

that allowed me to develop my research and my relationship to Live Art. Through the interviews, this tight-knit community of practitioners therefore became aware of my research interests. At this point, when trust is beginning to develop between the respondents and researcher, Denzin states that the observer becomes accepted as a 'categorical member' of the community.

I established and have maintained my relationships with key informants throughout the research process, particularly:

Lois Keidan and Daniel Brine, Live Art Development Agency¹ – personal communications started 15 July 2005

Mark Waugh, curator and writer, previously Live Art Officer for Arts Council England National office – personal communications started 2 Dec 2005

Lucy Panesar, Live Artist – personal communications started 4 November 2005

Hannah Crosson, previously of New Work Network and Inbetween Time festival – personal communications started 8 June 2006

Contact with these individuals over a sustained period enabled me to gain perspective on the state of Live Art, and learn about the diversity of ways in which Live Artists work between the live experience and audience.

My Experience As Documentation

Denzin's analysis of the qualities of different sociological research methods is especially useful to me as he asserts the positive role of participant observation, and he accepts that we write ourselves into any study. Like other theorists who have rejected the analytic claims of ethnography, Denzin feels the need to implicate the self in the 'messy' research process, stating that our 'research practices are performative, pedagogical and political. Through our writing and our talk, we enact the worlds we study, these performances are 'messy and pedagogical' (2006: 422).

Therefore autoethnography, a method that uses writing as documentation to present performative research, serves as an useful corollary to the research question I am undertaking. According to writers like Denzin (2006) and Goodall (1994), autoethnography itself considers it necessary for the researcher-subject to be a conscious part of the research outputs. Autoethnographic approaches such as the one I have taken in this thesis, are becoming increasingly significant as a critique of the

¹ Brine left the Live Art Development Agency in 2008 to become the Director of Performance Space, Sydney and returned to the UK in 2011 taking up the position of Director of The Junction, Cambridge.

inability of conventional academic prose to adequately represent and articulate the complexities of social interactions and their relationships.

Whilst formulating interview questions I had already become involved in Live Art as an audience member and curator. My approach to the research subject is linked to the relationship with Live Art that came about as a result of my co-Directorship of the interdisciplinary art series Rational Rec. Founded by myself, visual artist Russell Martin and composer/new music ensemble director Matthew Shlomowitz, Rational Rec incorporates new music, Live Art, artist's moving image work, visual art and cultural debate in a stimulating yet sociable setting. Between October 2005 and July 2008 Rational Rec produced over 30 events, commissioning over 90 artworks, mainly at Bethnal Green Working Men's Club in East London, as well as producing sell-out evenings at venues including the Whitechapel Gallery (2006), Southbank Centre (2007) and Wiltons Music Hall (as part of the Spitalfields Festival, 2008).

Commissioned artists included composer Michael Finnissy, filmmaker Emily Richardson, visual artist Shane Waltener, and Live Artists including Marcia Farquhar and Ansuman Biswas – the latter of whom curated an evening without electricity, which is discussed in Part Two. Commissioning Live Art within an interdisciplinary context was significant to Rational Rec as it brought Live Art in closer relation to other artistic disciplines, broadened its audience and fostered my involvement in the Live Art sector.

Additionally, from 2007-08 I took part in the Connecting the Activators project for Live Artist-producers, supported by New Work Network and the Cultural Leadership Programme. The programme, structured around a short-term action learning set, had several outcomes. Firstly, the self-directed structure of the programme asked that participants alternated roles, acting in the capacity of both artist/recipient and curator – this experience was vital in allowing me to consider the relationship between curator and Live Artist. Further, collaborating with peers to determine the methodology of the programme, such as negotiating parameters for evaluation of the group, gave me an opportunity to reflect upon and articulate the complexities of making, presenting and historicising Live Art as dynamic work that often operates in a contested political sphere. Finally, by identifying myself as an artist in the project, I had the opportunity to become more familiar with artist's making processes.

Denzin states that the observer often finds it hard not to go 'native' (1977: 191) and to maintain relationships with respondents on a purely professional level. During the course of the project I became known to the community of Live Artists as a curator, as

well as a researcher, in the field. On the occasions where I worked with an interviewed artist on a curatorial basis, we did not discuss perspectives about documentation beyond the pragmatics of documenting a specific performance. Moreover, in this instance, I would ensure that the artist took the lead on decision-making about the types and form of documentation they considered appropriate for the work.

Whilst the interviews I undertook focussed on the process of making, I also examined the role of the Live Art curator. My engagement as a curator and researcher started from the documentation of Live Art, as the site where most audiences meet the work. In this thesis, I therefore wanted to reflect on my experience as a curator and audience member, exploring how to mediate between artist and audience of live action. The curator's personal relationship to documentation, as an individual who has to produce documentation and puts this into public domain through marketing, is different from that of the researcher. I have considered curating an important part of my research because the curator situates themselves between the artist and audience. Moreover, curating is concerned with proximity to the artist's practice, showing it in the best light and interpreting it to make it more accessible to the audience. Curator Jonathan Watkins asserts that curating a 'necessary, if insufficient, medium through which the communication between art and its audience takes place' (cited in O'Neill, 2007: 21). Curating therefore interrogates how the artist creates ways for the audience to take part in a continued relationship with the artwork, in the case of Live Art, by initiating ways to prolong the transitory character of the event. By creating and facilitating a legacy for the work, curatorial activity itself participates in an act of documentation. My decision to examine documentation by participating in curatorial activity is a direct attempt to address the relationship between the various nodes of production, reproduction and consumption within the realm of Live Art, that connects both Live Artists and audiences. In these ways, the role of the curator echoes the concerns about documentation that both artist and audience may have.

Triangulation

Methods are theoretically informed, but they have to be methodologically sensitive to issues of internal and external validity. Therefore we have to combine multiple methods in what's called triangulation. That's the short story of [Denzin's] *The Research Act* (Ellis, Bochner, Denzin et al, 2008: 258).

According to Denzin, the deficiencies of a specific data source can be compensated through triangulation, in other words, by a 'combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena' (1977: 297). As well as helping to overcome the prejudices of the individual researcher, Denzin suggests that the practice of triangulation as a

research method, allows for the development of a diversity of different lines of action. In this project I have engaged with methodological triangulation in the following ways: participant observation (field method – becoming a day-to-day member of the community of study), interviewing and life histories (using any type of document/history written by members of a group to study a group of people).

This thesis is therefore made up of primary research, theoretical concerns within Live Art and performance studies, and is also a documentation of my experiences of Live Art. As I will go on to illustrate, it is based on research that has been put into practice and has effected cultural practice within the artform. Through this project I have developed awareness of documentation strategies and perspectives amongst a peer community of Live Art practitioners. I have also enabled public institutions to better understand how documentation functions in the context of Live Art and in consideration of the audience. I therefore aim to show that through a combination of technical means impacting on the production of Live Art, pragmatic concerns connected with the discipline and a change in the discourse about Live Art, documentation is increasingly embedded into performance and can be a material for further interpretation by audience, curators and other Live Artists.

Key Writers

Since I started my research, Live Art publishing has undergone an explosion, supporting the development of performative culture, renewed discourse surrounding Live Art ideology, bringing a broad spectrum of methodologies and support from heterogeneous pockets of the cultural sector. Although documentation has always been significant to the small number of researchers and curators working in the fields of performance and Live Art, writing about documentation's place within the artform seldom goes beyond interpretation of specific performances or providing a history of the artform with which to validate its position in the broader history of contemporary artistic practice. For many Live Artists, documentation remains a purely pragmatic tool, undertaken primarily to promote or archive one's work, rather than a means by which to explore their practice. However, an increasing minority of artists working within Live Art understand the role of documentation to be more complex than its obvious practical benefits. This change in attitudes towards documentation of Live Art within researchers, curators and artists alike is the result of a number of contributing factors, namely, key researchers adapting their perspectives on documentation, the rise of digital culture, the diversification of intellectual property classifications, the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of contemporary art, the ubiquitous nature of the category 'performance', as well as an increased awareness of the performative within contemporary culture.

We can segment literature that touches upon the relationship between documentation and performance into two broad categories. The overwhelming majority of these publications do not consider this thematic as their primary concern, however, they are notable for their contribution to our understanding of the role of documentation in performance:

1. Publications that focus on interpretations of a body of work by specific artists or with a focus on a few case study performances, often produced by artists themselves, such as Morgan (1996), Friedman (1998), Levy (1998), Cummings & Lewandowska (2000), Celant (2001), Newman & Williamson (2001), Hill & Paris (2006), Pearson (2006), Grayson & van Mourik Broekman (2007), Brine & Minton (2008).
2. Publications that aim towards an exposition of the historical narrative of performance and theorising trends in performance practice and studies, often engaging with perspectives from other academic disciplines in order to read

performance outside the conventional context of the performing and visual arts. For instance, Goldberg (1988, 2001), Sayre (1989), Birringer (1991, 1998), Carr (1993), Carlson (1996), Auslander (1997c), Heathfield (1997, 2000, 2004), Jones (1998, 2000), Ferguson (1998), Buskirk (2003), Giannachi (2004), Lehmann (2006), Reason (2006).

The diversity of publications in the first category, which are centred around the work of specific artists, has bloomed with the rise of artist books as a simultaneously literary and artistic genre. Whilst digital consumption of art increases, the artist book as a printed, physical object has also experienced a resurgence, aided by the technological modifications to print-on-demand platforms such as *Lulu*², that facilitates accessible dissemination of printed matter, and the theoretical exploration of the boundaries between print and digital publishing³. Whilst I will engage with these artist-led texts to illustrate specific examples, texts in the second category will be the primary concern of this study.

Many of the texts falling into the second category have now become accepted as authoritative within performance studies (although they may present contradictory narratives). For instance, publications by writers including Carr (1993) and Goldberg (1988, 2001) have enabled artists who work with performance to participate in mainstream narratives of art history. These surveys of performance in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century have been gaining validity as testimony to the position of performative artforms within the broader cultural realm. As well as presenting case studies of work by performance artists, these texts, particularly the histories written by Carlson (1996), Jones (1998, 2000) and Buskirk (2003), have also outlined significant theoretical themes within the field. Historically, the products of performance studies have focussed on the representation and explication of marginalised subjects within performance, in an attempt to interpret the visceral imagery and often shocking performative actions undertaken by artists working within this field. Writers on performance such as Richard Schechner (1990), Patrice Pavis (1996) and Baz Kershaw (1996), have worked to bring to wider public consciousness the complex political and social propositions made through the work of 'minority' artists such as

² <http://www.lulu.com/> [Accessed 26 March 2012]

³ Artists working with the book as an artistic form and utilising both print and digital publishing is evidenced by the growth of activity dedicated to artist's books such as independent projects in the UK (AND Publishing, Unrealised Projects, Critical Writing Collective), bookshops (Banner Repeater, Art Words, Luminous Books, X Marks the Bokship) and events (Publish and Be Damned, London Art Book Fair, Self Publish and Be Happy).

Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Linda Montano, Yoko Ono. Drawing on disciplines such as psychoanalysis, anthropology and philosophy, performance studies' exposition of key issues surrounding the relationship between performance and identity has facilitated lucid understanding of how performance can be perceived within social terms. Without disregarding the value of the research in this field, my study wishes to concentrate on how the relationship between Live Artist and audience is mediated through the relationship between performance and documentation. I have chosen to focus on the nexus between live action and documentation not only because documentation was my predominant encounter with performance, but also because the majority of existing accounts of Live Art practice prioritise the live event, rather than assessing documentation as a research project into how audiences understand and interpret live action.

One of the few voices working under the rubric of performances studies who has articulated a clear perspective about the symbolic, empirical, persuasive and relational capacities of the performance document is Philip Auslander. As early as 1992, Auslander has been critiquing the primacy of the paradigm of 'liveness' in performance, by adopting philosophies as diverse as the ontology of music and its recording practice, to Donna Haraway's cyborgian aesthetics. His classic treatment of these issues is outlined in *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (1999), which remains a highly influential text within performance studies. Much of his writing (2004a, 2004b, 2006a, 2006b) has been on musical performance and its relation to various modes of reproduction, which has positively contributed to the research field of performance studies, opening out the analysis of live performance to the theses of a discipline that has worked through issues relating to its ontology.

In his essay 'Liveness - Performance And The Anxiety Of Simulation' (1996), he sets out his rejection of the 'binary logic' of the live and mediatized, which often dominates discourse surrounding documentation and performance (1996: 198). Appropriating language from Baudrillard, Auslander affirms that notions of 'liveness' in contemporary culture already incorporate the idea of mediation. He further considers that discussion about this subject in performance studies is itself highly political and dramatised. Auslander claims that the documentary and the performative are more entangled than academics writing about performance often admit, asserting that the fact of documenting and its concomitant act of witnessing is central to the notion of performance: 'the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such' (2006b: 5). This action provides a reflection for the performative action,

allowing the performance to identify itself as productive and additive rather than consuming, giving it a subject to which it can orient itself.

The corollary to Auslander's conception of performance and documentation is presented by one of the most renowned writers on performance, Peggy Phelan, who articulates the vitality of liveness in a powerful form through her essay 'The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction' in *Unmarked – The Politics of Performance* (1993). This essay, which has been a key reference point for the development of performance studies, has provided a marker for writers, academics, and practitioners alike to situate their understandings of the way that performance relates to documentation. Undoubtedly prioritising the live experience, Phelan's staunch position is predicated in contrast to what she views as the static, non-subjective character of visual art. Focussing her critique of documentation on the written form, Phelan states that the rules of the document 'thereby alter the event itself' (1993: 148), although arguably this notion of how media translation effects a work could easily apply to criticism of any artistic practice. Her desire to recuperate the interaction between audience and artist in the 'here and now' is based on her proposition that there is an irresolvable, qualitative difference between the live and mediated. According to Phelan,

the labour to write about performance (and thus to 'preserve' it) is also a labour that fundamentally alters the event. It does no good, however, to simply refuse to write about performance because of this inescapable transformation. The challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for writing is to re-mark again the performative possibilities of writing itself (1993: 148).

Whilst Phelan's provocative claims have been reiterated by numerous artists and researchers within Live Art, they have similarly suffered from a misinterpretation that consciously emphasises the *anti*-documentary sentiment in her statement. Indeed, she wishes to highlight the problematic nature of 'making static' that which asserts its uniqueness by being 'live'. For writers such as Peggy Phelan (1993) and Gavin Butt (2005), it is therefore also the project of performance studies to explore the boundaries of what JL Austin has termed the 'performative utterance' in relation to performative practices such as Live Art (Butt, 2005: 10). Whilst this often manifests as an examination of the subject positions implicated in Live Art, the performative utterance is also of importance to enable growth, innovation in methodologies and the making of new claims in this relatively new field of study. In this way, the performative utterance and the personal reflection upon experience are therefore significant to this thesis as they enable me to examine issues relating to documentation and performance specifically in relation to Live Art. Phelan's text and the diverse influences it has had upon the field of performance studies will be explored further in Part Two of this study.

Nick Kaye's writing has been significant to my understanding contemporary performance, especially so as a writer focussing on the work of British Live Artists. Examining the physical site of performance as a means to understand production and reception, Kaye postulates a notion of trace or documentation through participation in a locatable space. Further, Kaye develops Phelan's propositions about performance as a form of political and creative resistance, giving an insight into why performance studies often aims to be autonomous from the performance document. He says,

where performance art arises as a challenge to the 'object' in art, 'documentation' invariably presents itself as threatening to reinstate those stabilities and terms this very move toward 'performance' challenges. Similarly, where performance sites itself between vocabularies, disrupts expectations or stresses the 'liveness' of the event, it can be understood as evading precisely the kinds of determinations a documentation's re-presentation of what did happen implicitly lays to claim (1994: 6).

Naming an alliance between the notion of archive and authority, documents of Live Art can therefore be said to contradict the ephemerality and polyvocality many theorists see as fundamental to the activity of performance art. For Kaye, although documentation may refer to a specific performance, the tangibility of documentation is ontologically at odds with the attitude of ephemerality to which performance aspires. Kaye gives us an insight into why performance studies resists the power of the document. In other words, for him, the perception that Live Art 'subverts' the validity of performance documents is a key component of Live Art. In this analysis, the document is allied to archival authority and is thus contrary to what is trying to be achieved through the liminal nature of Live Art. The discourse of this thesis goes beyond Kaye's perspective, which I consider advocates a univocal function for documentation. Instead, I wish to assert that Live Art attempts to generate a conversation between documentation and live action, achieving this by experimenting with performance formats and techniques, as well as diversity of form, and content of documentation. Kaye's insights on writing about performance will be explored further in Part Two.

Art historian Amelia Jones has also crucially informed this study, particularly in terms of her claim that 'being there' (at a performance) does not necessarily give one a 'privileged relationship to the historical "truth" of performance' (1997: 11). Although Jones states that she was often present at seminal performances, like Auslander, she recognises the power and necessity for documentation of performance in a world where (physical and social) mediation as a means of consuming cultural artefacts is normalised. Indeed, it is the interface between the notions of technological object and body subject that interest me most about Jones' approach.

I will return to Jones' understanding of documentation and presence, particularly in Part Two. At this point, I wish to draw attention to the position taken by Amelia Jones in *Body Art* (1998), which plays out the dual thematics of identity and production of performance in performance studies. Jones consistently positions her writing as a feminist narrating art history and attempting to recalibrate and recuperate contemporary aesthetics from the assumed default position of masculinist rhetoric, stating,

the phrase 'the personal is political' can be seen as a verbal rendition of the recognition by feminist artists that all bodily experience carries an inescapably social aspect, and that all political engagement has an unavoidably bodily component. In this sense, almost any body artist can be said to enact the personal as political - whether consciously and progressively or not (2000: 33).

Moreover, Jones states that body art is interobjective (taking Vivian Sobchack's phrase), suggesting that it engenders a relatedness between persons and also between things in the world (1997: 18),

the work I have discussed... ultimately points to an expansion of the phenomenological relation to a technophenomenological relation that intertwines intersubjectivity with interobjectivity; we are enworlded via the envelopment of our bodies in space, the touch of our hands on a keyboard, the stroke of our gaze on the video screen (1998: 239).

From her perspective, rather than performance merely reinforcing attitudes towards an increasingly technologised world, Jones suggests that performance's relationship to technology is a way of working through these issues, and rethinking contemporary modes of subjectivity (1998: 204-05), in the sense that the specific gendered, sexed, classed, ethnic, located performance confronts a social situatedness head-on. Jones makes an implicit critique of narratives of technologised performance that sees itself as an identity-less, transcendent electronic avatar, championing a discourse about performance that explicitly recognises the entwined nature of liveness and mediation.

In that it is one of the few texts that foregrounds the relationship between documentation and performance, my understanding of documentation is broadly influenced by Matthew Reason's *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance*. Reason defines his interest in all things that 'allow performance to be known, discussed and seen (in a modified "representational" form) beyond the moment of its creation' (2006: 3). Expounding the positions held by Phelan and Auslander, and tracing how these have developed since the mid 1990s, Reason proposes that transience and disappearance are the twin poles of performance, stating that, 'the discourse of documentation continually re-inscribes perceptions of ephemerality; the act of documentation marks and brings into being the fact of disappearance' (2006: 27). Presenting case studies of works from the Live Art

canon (including an examination of Forced Entertainment's work) that explore documentation from technical, legal and art historical viewpoints, Reason details a comprehensive discussion of the different media for performance 'representation'. In these ways, his text sets a precedent for this thesis, which we will return to at various points. Reason puts forward useful explanations about how performance is represented and maintains that documentation - as the objects that give performance a voice (2006: 238) - should be at the centre of discourse on the performing arts. For him, the focus lies exclusively in examining live *qua* non-technologised performance, whereas this thesis will explore how documentation is embedded in Live Art practice. In other words, I am interested in how Live Art simultaneously upholds what Reason terms the 'promise' of performance (2006:19) yet also operates with recording technologies that are otherwise understood as mediating the 'live'. In contrast to his highly instructive albeit equivocal text, I wish to propose documentation of Live Art as a creative source material that allows us to prolong the notion of performance.

As a counterpoint to Matthew Reason, Gabriella Giannachi's *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction* (2004) directs its attention primarily towards theatrical experiments with technology, exploring the work of a number of Live Artists, including the work of Forced Entertainment, Blast Theory, Stelarc and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. Her summation of key concepts in new media such as the virtual, telepresence and online textual environments are perceptive and valuable in understanding how performance works with computers. Analysing the development of cyborg performance with reference to key texts by Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles, Giannachi states,

Cyborgs are intertextual and metatextual hybrids of human and machine. One cyborg does not necessarily correspond to either one body or one agency. Moreover, cyborgs are flexible, incomplete and fragmentary creatures. (2004:47).

Giannachi's reading of the cyborg which focuses on the work of Orlan and Stelarc as case studies, leads us to assert that the contemporary interconnected nature of technology and the human annuls the distinction between human and machine: the cyborgian condition is where the 'body becomes a palimpsest of society' (2004:48). Giannachi discusses *The Reincarnation of St Orlan*, a series of works started in 1990 whereby the French artist Orlan had plastic surgery performed on her face so that it would incorporate features of iconic women from cultural history, such as the forehead of Michelangelo's *Mona Lisa* and the chin of Botticelli's *Venus*. The artist's decision to appropriate these characteristics as her own are based on the symbolic power those cultural artefacts have, rather than objectively reiterating the beauty of these women. Giannachi concludes that performances such as Orlan's reinforce the statement that 'we are, of course, *already* cyborgs' (2004: 49). In our various attempts to overcome

death and the fragmented, social body this is a position that enables us to reflect more closely on the nature of being human. The themes Giannachi touches upon will be explored in Part Three of this study.

Another text, situated in the discipline of new media art, that has been extremely useful to me is Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook's *Rethinking Curating – Art After New Media* (2010). Due to the often interactive nature of new media art, Graham and Cook's understanding of how technology is employed in relation to the audience is insightful for this study. They claim that,

the skills that curators need to host real participative systems can come from the experience of socially engaged art, but also from an understanding of the specific dynamics of new media systems (2010: 139).

Graham and Cook embrace approaches from diverse artforms in an omnivorous, yet discerning text. Moreover, they ask that although new media studies is a relatively young discipline, new media art should be viewed on its own terms. Both of these statements can equally be applied to Live Art practice, and this thesis. Performance is dealt with only intermittently in Graham and Cook's volume, which concentrates on the proliferation of new media art as an artform that works primarily with the computer and online media. However, *Rethinking Curating* is notable in the literature as being a key text that brings together multiple perspectives about the practice of curating outside the dominant paradigm of the more conventional visual arts. Graham and Cook seek to clarify and also challenge the efficacy of contemporary curatorial paradigms, examining the multiple institutional contexts in which curators work, explaining the roles taken on by curators of new media art (2010: 156-8), an artform that has little infrastructure in terms of building-based arts organisations. Their text is therefore significant for Live Art, which to date has rarely engaged with curatorial activity as a creative discourse, and similarly depends heavily on support from building-based arts organisations, a subject which is touched on in Part Three.

This thesis contributes to the state of research on the topic in the following ways: In the absence of theoretical texts about curating Live Art, this thesis views curatorial activity as a mediation between the Live Artist and the audience, therefore as a continuation *qua* documentation of performance. Building on the claims put forward by the texts of those discussed above, and others, this study evaluates existing theories about the relationship between performance and documentation, and applies them specifically to the artform of Live Art. Drawing upon primary research and participant observation together with my experience as a curator of Live Art, this thesis proposes that the documents of Live Art are understood as multi-vocal objects vital for both

artists and audience. Through its examination of the infrastructure, production processes and ideologies that underpin Live Art, this study outlines how documentation is utilised by artists, and suggests how it can also be interpreted by audiences and curators. By articulating definitions and examples of Live Art practice based on knowledge and concrete experience, this thesis intends to understand the issue of documentation from the perspective of Live Art practice, which this writer believes will bolster understanding of the artform.

Pre-history

In this section of the thesis I would like to discuss issues relating to four artists: Marina Abramović, Dick Higgins, Rudolf Schwarzkogler and Gina Pane. Prior to learning about Live Art, I became interested in these artists and the ways they engaged with the relationship between live action and documentation. I will present these case studies in terms of introducing some of the ideas and themes which I will later go on to discuss in the main part of the study.

Whilst these artists can be viewed as precursors to Live Artists who are concerned with documentation, it is not my primary intention to comprehensively cover the disciplinary lineages from which Live Art derives. For instance, although issues around theatricality will arise in my text about Marina Abramović's work, the theatrical foundations of Live Art documentation are covered elsewhere by Reason (2006), Schechner (2002) and Carlson (1998).

Marina Abramović

Having been born too late, it is only through documentation that I could experience those seminal works by Marina Abramović from the 1970s, such as the infamous *Rhythm 0* (1974), where the artist narrowly escaped injury (or worse) when a fight broke out between two factions within the audience, one group of whom were happy to guide Abramović's hands so that she would pull the trigger of a gun on herself and another who called for the performance to stop (fig. 1). Precisely six hours after the performance started, the artist ended it by walking towards the public (Danieri, 2002: 29-30).



Figure 1 Marina Abramović. *Rhythm 0*. Galleria Studio Morra, Naples, 1974. Marina Abramović.

During a family holiday whose main focus was on extracting unusual photo

opportunities at the Military Tattoo, I accidentally stepped into an exhibition of work by Marina Abramović at Edinburgh's Fruitmarket Gallery (1995). Lured by the gallery's contemporary façade as a means to escape from the bustling streets, the exhibition I saw there consisted mainly of her work from the late 1980s and early 1990s, including the sculptural *Inner Sky* (1991) and *Shoes For Departure* (1991) – requiring the audience to remove their outdoor footwear and step inside heavy amethyst crystal sculpted shoes. By inviting the audience to perform with these objects, I was able to make a link between myself, the artist and the histories of the places in Brazil and India where these long-lived stones and crystals had come from. Standing barefoot in the gallery, in the few split seconds between leaving my shoes and entering Abramović's, I enjoyed the slightly absurd and disorientating knowledge that I would soon be – if only metaphorically - transported elsewhere. Beyond admiration for these beautiful bold objects that had been carved out from mountains, their forms hiding all but a semblance of human intervention, I was attracted to the literal, physical connection with the artist and a particular site that is contained in these objects. Although separated by time and space, by interacting with these shoes, I was convinced that Abramović and I had both shared an aesthetic experience - I felt like I was reviving a ritual of an archaeological object (I will return to theme of archaeology in Part Two). It was only afterwards that I saw the tiered video installation *Cleaning the Mirror I & II* (1995) and became aware of the relationship between these pieces and performances by the artist.

Stepping into the bookshop, I realised that the works I had just experienced were going to have a profound influence on me and hesitantly enquired about the exhibition catalogue. By the time the package arrived in the Saturday morning post several months later, I had almost completely forgotten the experience. On slowly and nonchalantly unwrapping the catalogue from its wrapping, I discovered images of an artistic practice that put patterns of lived action under microscopic analysis. I did not yet realise the significance of those images in the history of performance art, however, I recognised that these works embodied something entirely different to what I had previously understood as art. The combination of dramatic images and descriptions of transformative works enlightened me to an alternative structure of artistic practice drawing on the everyday, fusing this with ritualistic, visceral action. That art could situate itself somewhere between theatre, everyday life and the physical object opened up a fascinating horizon. Through the use of materiality, Abramović's work showed that art could fuse performance and the use everyday materials to illustrate and instantiate complex and abstract ideas. By placing the object or document in the gallery, the trace

of this action is literally made accessible, suggesting the audience's co-participation in the work.

The incident at the Fruitmarket Gallery was an early 'epiphany' for me, use to the language of ethnography (Bochner, 1984: 595), a personal experience that significantly transformed my understanding of what constitutes art and how an audience comes into contact with it. Abramović's *Shoes for Departure* as objects, seemed so 'alive' to me, due to my belief in the performative provenance attached to them. By allowing the audience to place themselves inside the objects, they facilitated a proximity of experience between artist and audience that I had previously not encountered in relation to an aesthetic object. Yet, the intimate feeling of a sharing with the artist (through contact with the objects) is a parallel to the fiction of the exhibition 'display' context. In other words, whilst Abramović's aesthetic objects appear to assertively challenge the gallery conventions of 'no touching', they also perpetuate the fetishisation of these objects as inaccessible and authentic only to a specific production history. The ambivalence of the historically specific, physical trace of an artist's unique performance and its circulation as currency within the context of commodified contemporary culture therefore became significant to me.

Her work is cited as a central reference point for scholars and practitioners engaging with contemporary performative practice, lending itself to a wide variety of readings, such as feminist, political, anthropological and psychoanalytic readings, as well as from the perspective of sculpture, video and theatre. The discipline and self-belief she articulated through her courageous ideas and actions suggested a (super)heroic ideal of the artist, going far beyond Kant (1790) or Schopenhauer's (1819) notions of 'genius'. In *The Lovers* (1988), where Abramović and long-time collaborator Ulay walked from opposite ends of the Great Wall of China, only to end their relationship when they met in the middle, Abramović explored desire, belonging and commitment. Without any knowledge of her influence, Abramović's sculptures managed to destabilise expectations on several levels - her distinctiveness as a strong woman, who often literally put herself in danger in the name of art, seduced me, I admit. This matter of seduction is important to the notion of documentation as it appears and is created in Live Art. These highly convincing traces of performance by Abramović have gained a place as distinct art historical markers, which later artists have emulated, critiqued, modified, transformed and contested.

The series of works entitled *Nightsea Crossing* (1981-87) marks a shift from the

constant movement and activity that characterise earlier collaborations, such as the early *Relation* series, for instance, in *Relation in Space* (1976), which was first performed at the Venice Biennale. In this latter piece, the artists, both naked, increasingly ran faster towards one another for over an hour in a gallery space, repeatedly hitting each other's chests as a result). *Nightsea Crossing* was conceived after making contact with Aboriginal tribes including the Pintubi people whilst travelling in the central Australian deserts (1980-1), and meeting Tibetan Buddhists during a trip to India (1982). Consisting of twenty-two international performances, performed for periods of seven hours, the most important activity of *Nightsea Crossing* is being still. The work brings up the concept of repetition under the guise of a performance 'series'. By inviting a Buddhist monk to meet a Pintubi tribe member to collectively participate in a performance, Abramović highlights the question of how other individuals and non-artists can become 'authorised' to participate in the work so that its identity is enriched. The artist's decision to create a hermetic, portable world for the performances (by manufacturing a set of furniture that accompanied them on international journeys) is also indicative of the artist's approach to physical accompaniments to performance. Perhaps unsurprisingly, critics often discuss the series in relation to Buddhist philosophies of time (Celant, 2001: 184). Abramović's works as parables of equivalence and exchange are palpably relevant to a late capitalist society struggling to make sense of an increasingly compressing temporality, yet they were also highly personal – Abramović was the performer but a performer as Abramović, executing performances that did not require entrance into the stuffy confines of the theatre's black box. Through this work, the artist therefore instigates a concern for issues that are significant to the practice of Live Art today, for instance, each iteration simulates a (theatre) set of minimal components that enable action to take place – which can be said to have a relationship to Station House Opera's 'breeze block performances', which include *A Split Second in Time* (1985-90) and *Salisbury Proverbs* (1997). Moreover, *Nightsea Crossing* explores the mechanics and rationales of 'non-expert' performers participating in an authored work, a concern that is so central to participatory performance practice, particularly relevant to those working with communities such as FrenchMottershead and Lucy Panesar. The notion of audience dialogue is explored by Live Artists in diverse ways, for instance, in work showcased by the Birmingham festival *Fierce!* and in the 'half quiz show, half therapy' format of Joshua Sofaer's work *Getting to Know You* (2008).

Rudolf Schwarzkogler

Considered by Hermann Nitsch a significant participant in Viennese Actionism,

Schwarzkogler's death was notoriously misrepresented by Robert Hughes (1972) in *Time Magazine* and Henry M Sayre (1989: 2) as a consequence of wounding himself during a performance. It was not Schwarzkogler but close collaborator and artist Heinz Cibulka depicted in the photos and the visual effect of decapitating one's genitals was achieved with prosthetics. Talking about the signification and ideology behind Schwarzkogler's work is problematic, largely due to his participation in the Viennese Actionist movement and the controversy this movement has caused in discussions of Twentieth Century art history. For instance, whilst she discusses Actionism's desire to explode the representational language of art, employing a sophisticated understanding of the Actionist's specific cultural context, Susan Broadhurst mistakenly refers to Schwarzkogler's 'penile self-mutilation' (1999: 100), almost 10 years after Kristine Stiles and other commentators such as Phyllis Rosenzweig correctly identified Heinz Cibulka as the performer in Schwarzkogler's Actions.

Schwarzkogler's private performances comment on transvestism, hospitals and often use cosmetics to produce a series of rich pictorial tableaux. Rather than the temporal dramas concerning other Viennese artists, Schwarzkogler's *Actions* have been said to, embody a belief in art as a means for personal and social redemption....That detached, controlled use of the body and the idea of art as a residue of performance – which together



Figure 2 Rudolf Schwarzkogler. 3rd Action. Private residence, Vienna, Austria, 1965. Ludwig Hoffenreich.

make his work seem so striking in its contemporaneity – resonate with many photography-based and performance-oriented works by artists...today (Rosenzweig, 1996: 3).

3rd Action, probably the most well-documented of Schwarzkogler's works (fig. 2), was documented at various stages by photographer Ludwig Hoffenreich, who like Cibulka, had previously collaborated on Schwarzkogler's *Actions*.

Schwarzkogler's decision not to film his *Actions*, choosing to record them all in black and white photographs is indicative of the importance of photography to his work. Indeed, Hubert Klocker claims, 'in [Schwarzkogler's] view, the performative work could only be regarded as complete in the context

of a dialectical approach to photography' (1988: 184), although ironically, very few prints were produced during his lifetime and most of the existing prints were edited, 'cropped and enlarged according to decisions made by Edith Adams, Brus and Nitsch; they based their judgments on the few images Schwarzkogler had edited and their general knowledge of his work' (Rosenzweig, 1996: 4).

Schwarzkogler 'staged' the complicated *Actions* for a small private audience. Works by Otto Muehl and Gunter Brus were also not performed for public audiences. Whilst Muehl and Brus elected for private performances to be documented on film for fear of arrest, the reasons for Schwarzkogler choosing to undertake private performances are slightly different, whose practice focussed less on the explicitly carnivorous and aggressive themes of Actionism. The Actions are cathartic in their juxtaposition of disparate objects – the placement of these vindicates the constriction of their original contexts (whilst also referring to these), the Actions therefore allow everyday objects to participate in play. Not only the material, textural differences but also the original contexts of the objects are animated in this way. The careful manipulation and staging of the photograph mimics the preparatory aspect of rehearsal. A sense of quiet-ness pervades the photos; assisted by the style of printing which draws attention to the contrast of body smeared in white stage paint set against dark objects. Although not palpable, it is evident that the performer is in some discomfort. The photos mirror the exaggerated poses and movements made by mime artists, indeed the photo's interruption of the performance moment can be likened to the mime artist's freeze-frame pose – however, for Schwarzkogler, the performance only takes place to enable its documentation, or photographic capture. The few remaining sketches of the Actions (Green, 1999) by Schwarzkogler show that they were undoubtedly executed with precise directions: one imagines the room to be a hive of activity with Ludwig Hoffenreich frantically setting up the camera at a right angle, Edith Adams, Nitsch and perhaps Brus hanging around in the background and of course the artist directing, pulling the ball of string away from the tripod, gathering up the razor blades and arranging a bed of card for Cibulka to lay down on. The images are poignant, in that Schwarzkogler considers this symbolic language to be the necessary end point of art production. Schwarzkogler's method of creating and executing Actions houses a conflict of control and abandon. This is suggested by Nitsch's comment that 'Schwarzkogler never wanted to create depictions, he wanted to communicate arranged occurrences' (Nitsch, cited in Green, 1999: 182-3). The meticulous manner in which the artist planned (and subsequently destroyed evidence of planning) the Actions is somewhat at odds with the fact that they were physically performed. Indeed,

Green (1999) acknowledges that plans exist for a number of Actions that he did not execute. This notion of arranged occurrences suggests that the execution of the Action would, in itself, bring forth aesthetic possibilities not reckoned in the original conception of the work. If this is the case, the performance must happen, if only *for* the purpose of its documentation.

For Broadhurst, the pursuit of catharsis through 'intersemiotic signifiatory practice... one which includes but also goes beyond language' (1999: 13) is deemed the essence of the work produced by the Viennese Actionists. This, in combination with the tension generated by their conventional use of representational media yet excessively expressive methods, constitutes their deconstructive power. The recurring tropes of the suffering body as victim, and the distortion and purging of the body are utilised as part of an attempt to come to terms with suppressed drives and desires through an aesthetic affirmation of the affiliation between mind and matter. Distinguishing this 'liminal' performance from 'traditional avant-garde performance' (1999: 168), Broadhurst asserts that due to their allegedly uncritical incorporation of representational media, their complicity with mainstream modes of representation put the Viennese Actionists in constant danger of appropriation by dominant ideologies. The extreme, 'momentary' (1999: 101) nature of their art demanded the abolition of mediation and performance as a necessary aesthetic corollary. Other critics, such as Kristine Stiles, view this conscious collusion in the failure of representational languages as an out-dated reiteration of modernist ideologies (Stiles, 1990: 37).

It is perhaps slightly ironic that Actionism's aesthetic of existential protest demands the performative act, yet its artists chose (either as a means of questioning art's parameters, or out of necessity) to present their work in mediated form. In some ways, the limiting of Actionism's reception to documentation lessens the potential of the privileged perspectives associated with live performance. Despite the inclusion of certain members of Actionism in mainstream visual art exhibitions and showcases (especially the work of Hermann Nitsch) there is a specific social and historical post-war discourse through which Actionist art production has been and continues to be read. The stark character of Schwarzkogler's images, their hidden histories and mythical production processes are problematic, they seem too immediate, although presented in a mediated form. The ability to transfer and retain the performative to the documented sphere is fundamental to the issues that these artists wished to deal with. Indeed, Klocker suggests that the friction between Actionism's radical symbolism and their outward conformity to standard use of representational media constitutes their

deconstruction (cited in Broadhurst, 1999: 103). For instance, photography as signifying for Schwarzkogler's Actions 'freed the artist from leaving an autonomous work behind; at the same time questioning the work's identity and legitimation' (Broadhurst, 1999: 102), which resulted in an interrogation of the function of documentation for performance. In these ways, Schwarzkogler's *Actions* are significant for the discussion of the function of the photograph as witness, which appears in Live Art through the work of artists such as Hayley Newman, discussed in Part Two.

Dick Higgins

For many artists in the post-war era, the idea of performance as a means to literally participate and present themselves to their audiences became a more important discourse than purely working with and creating objects. Influenced by earlier Twentieth Century art movements, including Dada and Cabaret Voltaire, what Lippard termed the *Dematerialisation of the Art Object* (1973), in her book of the same name, indicated the rise of 'happenings', 'actions' and 'interventions'.

Whilst performance art has clear roots in theatre and the visual arts, the musical discipline also played a significant role in radical performance, with American composer John Cage and his collaborator, dance artist Merce Cunningham, inspiring a younger generation of artists. One of those was Dick Higgins, an active and respected figure within the East Coast Fluxus group, who had studied composition with Cage at Black Mountain College. Higgins produced paintings, poetry, performances, music and essays, perhaps most significantly, elaborating the Fluxus concept of 'Intermedia' (Higgins: 1966). In March 1962, Higgins created a work called *Danger Music #12*, part of the *Danger Music* series, which solely comprised of the instruction to: 'Write a thousand symphonies'. The following year, the artist elaborated how the composition of a thousand symphonies would be achieved,

notations are made by machine-gunning music paper with the standard ensemble indicated on it. The fragments are gathered together, without regard to whether they are torn, shattered, shredded or merely punctured, and the conductor attaches them to unshot pieces of paper, as many to a sheet as seems appropriate, and as many sheets as necessary in the opinion of the conductor. These sheets are now Xeroxed and distributed among the performers (1967: 99).

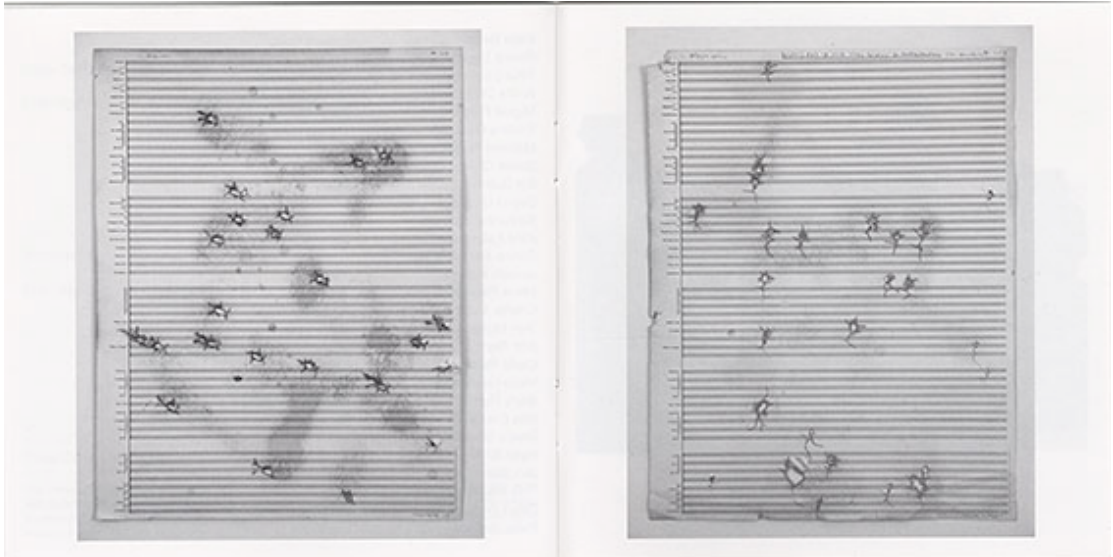


Figure 3. Dick Higgins. *Thousand Symphonies*. 1963.

Thousand Symphonies (fig. 3) and the work of Dick Higgins is broadly understood as located in a visual art context. Extrapolating from his statement of 1967, however, it is clear that despite the not-specifically-musical 'composition' (sic) of the work, he also had in mind its eventual musical performance. Dick Higgins uses this term in his commentary, *The Thousand Symphonies: Their Story* (1968: 102). The 'composition' was eventually carried out in November 1968, when Higgins directed Captain Toby of the South Brunswick Police to shoot one thousand pieces of manuscript paper with a 9mm MP40 Schmeisser submachine gun. This action took place at the South Brunswick Police Rifle Range, Jamesburg, New Jersey, in the presence of the artists Alison Knowles, Milan Knizak, Geoffrey Hendricks, John Goodyear and musician Philip Corner. The collection of papers forming *Thousand Symphonies* was exhibited as part of the 'Gun Show' at Douglass Art Gallery and nine of the *Thousand Symphonies* were performed at Douglass College on 9 December 1968, conducted by Philip Corner with a volunteer orchestra. However, it was not until October 2003 that the work received its first concert performance, again conducted by Philip Corner, with an orchestra made up of musicians from Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University and members of New York's Downtown Ensemble as part of the celebration of Happenings and Fluxus titled *Critical Mass*⁴.

Higgins' playful claim that he conceived of *Thousand Symphonies* as an enjoyable activity to distract American police from criminalising teenagers (2003: 102), coupled

⁴ The work has subsequently been recorded under the direction of Philip Corner for commercial release in 2009 by the Italian label Alga Marghen.

with the numerous actions and objects⁵ associated with the *Thousand Symphonies* could be interpreted as an example of Live Art practice before the term was coined. Around the same time, Nam June Paik began to combine his musical expertise with new technologies, working with portable video cameras (Rees, 1999: 87), to take on the television's gaze and initiate one of the first instances of the genre 'Video Art'. As with Higgins, Paik's satirical approach pointed towards an 'intermedial' relationship between performance and technology – a characteristic which has continued to have resonances with the emergence of Live Art,

the uniform rejection of culture traditionally associated with the historic avant-garde has been given over to a nuanced and complex system of affirmation (the paintings) and rejection (the ready-mades that display them). Thus Fluxus cannot be defined as an avant-garde in Bürger's institutional sense, nor as a strictly neo-avant-garde in the pejorative sense of the term. (Higgins, 1999: 52)

There is a part of Fluxus art that has always received some kind of official sanction, even as an officially unofficial art. Never forget that the very first Fluxus-titled concert in Germany took place in a museum in Wiesbaden! (Higgins, 1999: 55)

As well as the Fluxus impetus to continue the avant-garde's disruption of boundaries between art and everyday life, Live Art also takes on the Fluxus attitude towards institutionalisation of art. Both Fluxus and Live Art are artforms that refuse to fit neatly into preconceived classification structures, yet they strive for popularity beyond a high culture audience; they work within the conventional institutions of art, yet wish to express dissent with these institutions and society's traditions. Similarly, in his analysis of Fluxus ideology, Andreas Huyssen asserts that Fluxus was not necessarily an avant-garde in the traditional sense, particularly with regards to its politicisation. Despite this, he recognises that Fluxus continued a moment of difference and liberation from the 'sterilising, dehistoricising and decontextualising' tendency of 'musealisation' (1993: 144) which was a dominant perspective for cultural production during the 1960s.

As both aesthetics and technical developments have forced music to reassess the relationship between the performance and score, the musical work therefore suggests an alternative perspective on the dichotomy of the live and the mediated. The currency of this comparison for discourse about performance documentation as well as current debates about the ideas of 'live' and 'mediated' will be explored further in Parts Two and Three of this thesis.

⁵ For instance, there exists the machine-gunned pieces of manuscript paper; subsequently spray-painted onto clean sheets of manuscript paper to form the musical score; the film and photographs documenting how the scores were produced; a 'rusty milk can' that held the manuscript paper at the event, and a sound recording of the musical performance at Douglass College (Higgins, 2003: 102).

Gina Pane

The configurations, colours and subjects featured in Gina Pane's performance documentation seemed surprisingly familiar the first time I encountered them. Her superimposition of photographs combined with performance plans and scribbled notes conforms to the stereotype of an artist's scrapbook, an aesthetic that can be said to reinforce the Romantic, Nineteenth Century notion of the obsessive creator, for whom cultural production is the most significant activity in life. Indeed, the serial presentation of her performance documentation emphasises the processual nature of art production and, specifically, performance.

Pane's attitude towards documentation, clearly influenced by that of Robert Smithson, maps out how an event was reached by presenting icons that tell of its various stages. Although the viewer is not explicitly steered through the performance's progression, the documentation retains a level of seriality.



Figure 4 Gina Pane. *Azione Sentimentale*. Gallery Diagramma, Milan, 1973. Françoise Masson

Azione Sentimentale (fig. 4) was performed in front of a public audience, at Gallery Diagramma, Milan in November 1973 and is probably the most familiar piece from Gina Pane's diverse oeuvre. Its official documentation consists of a montage of 7 photographs, taken by Pane's chosen photographer Françoise Masson. Its symbolism and use of physical wounding is characteristic of the 'Actions' or body art works Pane

made in the 1970s. A number of critics claim that Pane 'uses her body as a tool' (Bernard Blistène, op.cit. *Gina Pane*, 2002: 14) to comment on social and political events, particularly the Vietnam War and the role of the woman in contemporary society. However, notwithstanding the obvious references and potential readings of her work through psychoanalytic and feminist theory, Pane demonstrated a definite aesthetic concern for the continued representation of her art.

Collage is a technique usually associated with actively obfuscating temporal continuity, deconstructing social and cultural contexts of performance and unsettling notions of aesthetic unity and organicity; presenting a highly charged *impression* of the performance. By contrast, Pane's desire for order is reflected in the grid-like composition of *Azione Sentimentale*'s montage – the photograph's physical (rectangularity) and denotational integrity is always preserved. In its framing of her body, the document fosters an understanding of the relationship between physical cuts and photographic close-ups, of one part of the bodily performance to the freeze-frame representation of her actions as image. When we look, we are not faced with a direct questioning of temporal sequence. Various accounts and readings of the *Azione Sentimentale* focus on Pane's imagery as dealing with explicitly feminist concerns. Although this must be a consideration when understanding this work, her obsession and genuine attention to documentation - not only in this piece but throughout her career (land art pieces as questioning artifice/nature of landscape similar to Smithson's preoccupations with sites and non-sites) - implies another, more formal and perhaps universal concern with memory of experience through material means. It is as if the impossibility of relaying the totality of the live performance experience is accepted and these photographs can but signify for an experience that can only be 'completed' through imagination.

Consciously aware of the continued life of her work through its photographic representation, the medium of representation in Pane's work is not interrupted. It navigates deconstruction of the event by a different path, circumventing the rips that allow present reality to appear in other forms of collage. Instead, the illusion of unified coherence problematises how we situate *Azione Sentimentale* in an actual world. By questioning the social and historical conditions under which this performance could take place (i.e. 'why could/would this happen today?'), this hermetic world retrospectively refers to the history and development of contemporary performance. Like Schwarzkogler, it is evident that the images that now signify *Azione Sentimentale* were carefully planned in collaboration with Masson, for their intensity. Moreover, the

documentation shares with Schwarzkogler's, a dialectic between static image of documentation and bodily movement of performance. However, unlike the Viennese artist's *Actions*, Pane's performance was executed before a public audience and conceived as a multi-media performance. From inspecting the montage, we know that the performance involved a complex sequence of movements – the artist draws concentric circles around herself, she repeatedly cuts her arm and palm with a razor blade – and Pane drew diagrams for Masson to indicate which moments she wanted to be caught by the camera (Blistene, Collier and Foster, cited in *Gina Pane*, 2002: 20). The motion of these actions as captured by the photographs does not suggest speed, but perhaps the images were conceived so that we cannot be certain of the speed of movement. As Gina Pane is concerned with both the social implications and aesthetic propositions of her work, *Azione Sentimentale* questions the importance of knowledge of art's provenance to appreciating art and the relevance of viewing documents of performance art with an aesthetic approach.

Looking at the stark images of Gina Pane's *Azione Sentimentale*, I am acutely aware of the process of acceptance and rejection they have undergone prior to my inspection. The part of this process with which I am primarily concerned is not that of the book or publishing editor's role in selecting the most aesthetically pregnant, acceptable or symbolmatic photograph, rather, one imagines the numerous decisions made before and during the performance by the artist and her photographer. Her images are premeditated, poses may have been held a second longer to facilitate being captured on record, precise instructions on which images to be documented are given by the artist. As Pane depends on the photograph to disseminate her work, these images are as important as the live action itself, moreover, as objects, they are not just traces of performance but are highly constructed works and they are exchanged on the art market as such.

This discussion of Abramović, Schwarzkogler, Higgins and Pane attempts to bring attention to the ways in which artists working with performance have historically explored documentation in their work, tendencies that we see played out in the practices of Live Art. In particular, it has highlighted the significance of photography as an extremely useful media for the documentation and representation of performance. For these artists photography is an accessible, relatively low-cost medium and highly malleable for expressive purposes. These qualities continue to make photography a popular documentary media that Live Artists use today.

As seen in the discussion of Dick Higgins, exploring the musical discipline can serve an insightful perspective into performance and Live Art today, affording a different purview of the accepted histories of the relationship between performance and documentation. Similarly, the method of working with a documenturg to produce images, as was used by Gina Pane, points to the contemporary tendency in Live Art where documentation develops in parallel to performance. Both of these tropes will be examined further in Part Three.

Whilst these artists engage with Lucy Lippard's notion of the dematerialisation of the art object (1973), their employment of documentation can be viewed as a concomitant *rematerialisation* of the object, in the form of documentation. For Schwarzkogler, the documentation appears as the public endpoint of a process that takes place in private, for Pane it is the highly choreographed representation of a performance. Crucially, by producing objects that can partake in the practice of collecting, these artists facilitate a continued dialogue with the institutions of art history.

Part One: The Pragmatic

The purpose of this Part is to discuss practical reasons why artists working under the banner of Live Art document their work. With the exception of a few such as Robin Deacon who says, ‘nine times out of ten, I don’t watch what I record: I have tapes of performances from three years ago that I am yet to watch’⁶, the majority of Live Artists I interviewed have found documentation crucial to the development and appraisal of their work. Documentation provides a physical means of reflecting on a work from an alternative subjective outlook, offering a means for the artist to interrogate their assumptions about how a work was experienced by the audience. Beginning with definitions of Live Art and documentation in the context of this artform, I discuss the ways in which Live Artists use documentation, looking at documentation’s positive effects on the dissemination of work and examining how artists use documentation as a means to remember, evaluate and assess past practice. We will also see that documentation continues to be crucially important for Live Artists’ relationships with funders, programmers and promoters, who almost always require documentation as evidence of an artist’s practice. Documentation is further important to help raise the public profile and consciousness of the artform – indeed Ansuman Biswas and Mukul Patel (both of British Asian origin) assert that documentation helps their families understand what they do, translating the unfamiliar realm of Live Art into something recognisable. The (still young) discipline of Live Art continues to construct its histories and institutions, therefore the role of documentation as both iterative and consequent of this situation will be the content of the next section, including a duet of discussions on responsibility and documentation. I consider how – as Live Art becomes more established – artists working within the field are working with professional documenters to record their practice, focussing on an interview with Franko B. I will then explore some of the pragmatic reasons for not documenting Live Art practice. This part will also look at ways in which documentation has contributed to professionalisation within Live Art, for individual artists and the sector as a whole. I will then go on to discuss some issues arising from the emerging market for Live Art. Documentation has both artistic and non-artistic purposes, enabling Live Artists to reflect on and provide evidence of their work when it is required.

⁶ Unless otherwise stated, quotes from Live Artists throughout the text derive from the interviews I conducted from July to October 2005. See Appendix One for details.

Defining Live Art Characteristics

Sofaer's *What is Live Art?* (2002) states,

Live Art offers a haven to artists whose work does not comply with the strictures of traditional designations and gives those practices legitimacy within contemporary culture.

Donning a demure navy suit, the artist earnestly addresses the camera on a busy central London street to deliver his five minute 'infotainment' piece. We intermittently glimpse passers-by giggling, but brush this off as a reaction to the presence of the video camera. Ending with Sofaer turning away from the camera to walk down the road, the viewer then notices the cause of laughter – that the seat of the artist's pants have been cut away from the suit and trimmed with red piping, showing off the artist's bare flesh (fig. 5).



Figure 5 Joshua Sofaer. Still from *What is Live Art?* Oxford Street, London, 2002. Joshua Sofaer.

Since shown at numerous international symposia and festivals, and broadcast on Channel 4, Sofaer's short performance to camera has become a potent and succinct enunciation of Live Art's values and playful attitude. Its appropriation of popular media channels, tongue-in-cheek tone and non-object centred status are characteristic of Live Art. Sofaer's short piece provides a useful lens through which we can examine Live Art's identity.

This work by Sofaer, a Live Artist and writer, raises a number of points central to the definition of Live Art. Namely, that Live Art is concerned with:

- a live encounter with the audience
- working at the margins of artistic disciplines
- engagement with issues of documentation and commodification
- the artist – rather than institution, venue, interpreter or text - as central to Live Art practice.

Through its use of the 'infotainment' genre, a clever balance of technical language and witty delivery executed on Oxford Street, *What is Live Art?* aims to disregard the distinction between high and popular culture audiences. Live Art itself echoes this aim,

seeing itself as an 'inter' site, able to explore play, celebration, critical debate, rewriting the expression of that which was previously considered too awkward, trivial, dangerous or inconsequential as a subject matter for art making. The spectacular aspect of performing, where a space is marked off and the temporality and spatial boundedness of everyday experience is bracketed, calls upon the realms of ritual, liminal performance from which Live Art derives. Live Art offers artists opportunities to explore and reflect back the anxieties, prejudices and fears that typify contemporary life, as well as asking questions about the extraordinary, mundane, taboo and seemingly inconsequential, sometimes appropriating unexpected means - such as market research techniques (in the work of Lucy Panesar) or baking (Bobby Baker) - to do so. As an interdisciplinary practice, Live Art draws on numerous histories across artistic disciplines from dance (such as Rachel Gomme) to sound (Ansuman Biswas), theatre (Anthony Howell), visual art (Hayley Newman), moving image (Ambient TV), creative writing (Tim Etchells) and activism (Vacuum Cleaner); challenging current models of audience engagement, and utilising the strengths and idiosyncrasies of various media, Live Art understands its relations to and need to work with other artistic disciplines. Moreover, Live Art takes the principle of 'inter' not only to refer to 'interdisciplinary' but more generally to mean working between what is usually posited. The artist's choice of location for *What is Live Art?* also highlights Live Art's way of being 'inter', as an itinerant practice, situated between the conventional spaces for art making.

Sofaer is an example of an established Live Artist who has worked with diverse locations ranging from private residences in *Tours of People's Houses*, Wunderbar Festival, 2009 (where he worked with members of the public from Newcastle to devise 45min tours of their homes for the festival audience), to a Central Birmingham street for *Name in Lights*, Fierce Festival, 2007 (a gigantic Hollywood-style sign made up of hundreds of light bulbs spelling out the name of a person nominated by the public which was erected for 1 month) and routes mapped out in cities by participants in his *Scavengers* participatory performance (participants race around a city to solve 'art clues' and win a cash prize). Whilst *Scavengers* has taken place at a number of international locations, supported by institutions including Tate Modern (2005), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2006) and the City Art Centre, Edinburgh (2008), Live Art also embraces less prestigious sites with similar enthusiasm, as appropriate to the work. For instance, Richard DeDomenici adopted the Edinburgh Royal Mile for his *Pedestrian Congestion Charge* performance (2005), whereas Lois Weaver's performances as Tammy Whynot, a Country and Western singer turned lesbian performance artist took place in clubs in Downtown New York. As an artistic practice

that does not focus primarily on objects, Live Art thrives equally within working men's clubs, on street corners and in shops as it does in libraries, galleries, theatres and museums.

Whilst the development of policies, working groups and the infrastructure for Live Art aims to legitimise Live Art as a thriving artform, the language it uses to articulate these policies still harbours some resistance to integration into official cultural canons. Lois Keidan, Director of the Live Art Development Agency notes, 'Live Art cannot be held in any cultural boundary or place' (Keidan, 2004; 8). Despite Live Art's participation in projects supported by national institutions, including a high profile season at the Tate Modern in 2003 titled *Live Culture* - featuring lectures and performances by internationally profiled artists such as Mexican activist Guillermo Gómez-Peña and award-winning UK performance company Forced Entertainment – Live Art continues to assert the importance of retaining autonomy and working alongside but not within 'institutional frameworks that are unable to support itinerant, cross-platform approaches' (Keidan, 2004; 3). To say that Live Art is not interested in having a voice in institutional contexts would be too easy. Similar to the Institutional Critique of work by Hans Haacke and Daniel Buren, Live Art's relationship to the historical avant-garde lies in its adaptation and contribution to the growing boundaries of the contemporary art market, as well as a continued interrogation of the everyday as a category for artistic experimentation and subject of aesthetic reflection. As artist Andrea Fraser states, 'there is, of course an "outside" of the institution, but it has not fixed, substantive characteristics. It is only what, at any given moment, does not exist as an object of artistic discourses and practices' (Fraser, 2006; 130). On the one hand, Live Art challenges the hegemonic perspectives of contemporary art institutions who have traditionally found little space to include marginalised, ephemeral practices of those who are not white-middle-class males, by cultivating platforms for the presentation of such work, even if only temporarily. At the same time, Live Art is happy to be sited in more ad-hoc spaces with less financial support and infrastructure, spaces that (arguably) are not as loaded with institutional connotations as the museum or theatre.

The image of the peripatetic performer in *What is Live Art?* without a fixed venue also informs the notion of Live Art's mobility and emphasises its value in artists, as an artist-centred and artist-led artform. Live Art is an artistic strategy that considers artists as its core asset, as generators of ideas, pioneers in devising presentation formats and visionary in engaging audiences. Albeit an arena of artistic work where its advocates regularly attest to its manifold practice, form, content and ideology, what artists working

under the banner of Live Art can be said to share is an experimental attitude towards the making, presentation and dissemination of work. For these reasons, support for Live Art by Arts Council England and the development organisations for Live Art has been focussed on supporting *artists* in their professional development, curatorial opportunities and practical resources – the effects of these on a burgeoning tendency towards documentation will be discussed below.

As the public become unwitting characters in the drama, themselves performing for the camera, *What is Live Art?* refers to Live Art's close relationship with its audience. Going beyond the categories of 'participatory' or 'socially engaged' work, Live Art implicates the audience, making them central to the unfolding of the work. Live Art frequently, if not inevitably, asks that the audience trust the direction of the performative journey on which they are being taken, whether that is physically, mentally or psychologically. Such a 'suspension of disbelief' can be linked to the historical relationship between performance and ritual, as expounded by Victor Turner in *Anthropology of Performance* (1986). A recurrent theme of Live Art practice is to encourage an intimate, non-confrontational context, which can be aided by a number of tactics, such as sign-posting dangerous or difficult subject matters, prior to or during the performance. From a marketing perspective, the audiences for Live Art and contemporary classical or 'new music' are similar in that they are frequently characterised as willing to take a risk on an unfamiliar performer or event because it 'looked interesting' (Whitehouse, 2005). In this respect, the Live Art audience is privileged, as the experience of risk is often explicitly communicated at the outset and collectively shared.

As interactive art and Live Art both advocate a relationship between artist and audience predicated on proximity and in contrast to the conventional 'act of remaining passive while watching' (Howell, 1999: 197) which dominates the theatre and the visual arts, the terms of interactive art may be useful to outlining the parameters of Live Art. At the beginning of November 2005, on the recommendation of Live Artist and educator Mine Kaylan, I took part in a workshop at the Chisenhale Gallery London, as part of a project called 'Architecture of Interaction'. Initiated by Amsterdam-based artist Yvonne Dröge Wendel, the core project group comprised of six European artists and theorists - Lino Hellings and Klaas Kuitenbrouwer from the Netherlands, Mine Kaylan and Anna Best from the UK, and Austrian-based artist Nikolaus Gansterer – and aimed at developing a communicatory toolbox to examine the parameters that make up interactive art. The term 'interactive' art as defined in the discussions and subsequent

publication, applies to work within fields as diverse as dance, visual art, spoken word, digital art and drama – ‘interactive art’ is a broad interdisciplinary principle applicable to work that consciously considers the form, context of presentation and the contribution of meaning by others, what Wendel terms the ‘critical triad’ (cited in Maas, 2007: 10). The Architecture of Interaction project vocabulary includes the use of ‘maker’ and ‘others’, is carefully chosen by the artists involved as they are deemed *not* specific to particular artistic disciplines. As the project’s aim is to enable comparisons between interactive art from various traditions, having non-specific, flexible and adaptable frames of reference is a particularly useful characteristic. Many of the examples that were designated ‘interactive’ art by the ‘Architecture of Interaction’ project also shared characteristics of Live Art practice, in this way, the project’s ‘models’ could be modified and shaped in the context of Live Art. Through its consideration of ‘engagement’ with the audience, Live Art often proposes relationships between the ‘maker’ (artist) and ‘others’ (audiences) that would otherwise be deemed impractical, outlandish or ‘unsellable’ in other disciplines. The ‘basic model’ (fig. 6) sketches out the relationships between a work (‘moment of publication’) and its ‘others’ (Maas, 2007: 57)

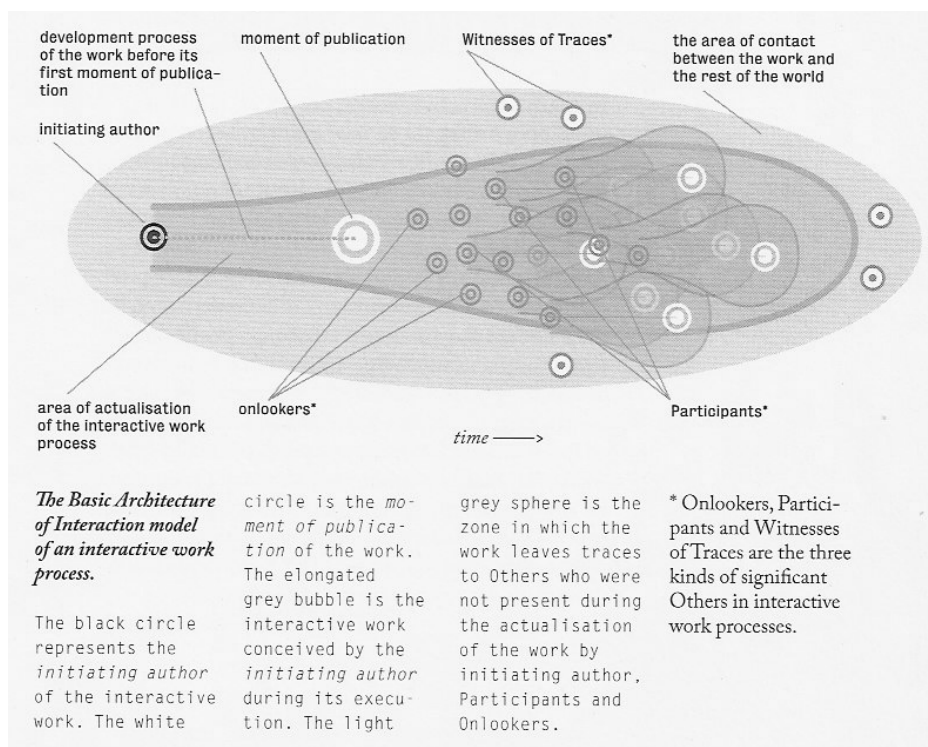


Figure 6 Architecture of Interaction. Basic Model. 2005. Creative Commons Licence

Going beyond proposing a model of how interactive art is produced, the ‘basic model’ outlines the trajectory of the work’s journey in to the world and the ‘others’ who are able to participate in its knowledge. The initiating author (or authors) bring the work towards a moment of publication; those who are not participating are considered ‘onlookers’,

'participants' are involved in moving the work into a secondary stage of development, a process which produces another set of onlookers. At the same time, 'traces' (material or immaterial) are produced which evidence the work (Maas, 2007: 36). What's striking about the 'basic model' is the number of ways the work is disseminated, both through tangible 'official' traces and also through participants who inadvertently discuss the experience of the work with others such as friends and colleagues, these ideas and their relationship to Live Art will be discussed further in Part Two (section Gossip and Myth).

Taking the Architecture of Interaction model as illustrative of interactive art, one can argue that Live Art shares many properties with 'interactive' art, save the pattern of alternating response between audience and maker. Live Art is specifically similar to 'interactive art' in its diversity and concern for documentation channels, its youthfulness as a discipline and its consideration of the audience as necessary to the work. The Architecture of Interaction's basic model of interactive art can thus be useful for exploring the production of Live Art because it does not require an audience member to be present at the moment of making ('publishing') for them to be a relevant 'onlooker'. Moreover, this model of interactive art produces itself as multiple versions at different points in time. As was touched on in my review of key writers relating to performance and documentation, according to the early writings by Peggy Phelan (1993), Adrian Heathfield (1997) and Patrice Pavis (1996), the place of documentation of performance is to support and provide evidence of a performative act, which is considered the originary, from which a document proceeds. Documentation in this context proceeds from the live action and cannot exist or come into being independently. Throughout this thesis I wish not only to assert the importance of documentation in understanding Live Art but also to further claim that in some instances, Live Art develops live performative action and documentation in parallel, building on Philip Auslander's statements (1999) on the originary of performance and recording.

On the opening page of the *Live Art Vision Paper* (2004: 1) Lois Keidan, Director of the Live Art Development Agency writes,

the term Live Art is not a description of a singular artform or discipline, but a cultural strategy to include experimental processes and practices that might otherwise be excluded from established curatorial, cultural and critical frameworks. Live Art is a strategy to embrace ways of working that do not sit easily within received structures and boundaries, and to empower artists who choose to operate across, in between and at the edges of more traditional artistic forms.

That a 'Vision Paper' for this artform was written 5 years after the initiation of the Live Art Development Agency and at least 10 years since the term Live Art had emerged, is

symptomatic of the fleet-of-foot, mobile character of Live Art practices and their ability to respond to the challenges and opportunities that have arisen in contemporary art practice. For instance, the drive by major arts institutions in the UK, ranging from the British Museum to the National Theatre, to increase their audiences has manifested in a multiplication of public programmes and evening events, formats that easily provide temporary platforms for Live Art. Live Art has been able to exploit such opportunities to raise its own profile and that of its practitioners. One might choose instead to view the emergence of a Live Art strategy as indicative of the artform's precarious identity and the inability of institutions to locate where it sits in the broader spectrum of performing arts.

As a curator, my practice has benefited from this move by institutions to develop 'Lates' programmes, having been invited to curate events including a Friday Night Late at Whitechapel Gallery (2006), an evening at the Queen Elizabeth Hall (2007) and one of the Late at Tate monthly events, Tate Britain (2010). I have also led a workshop about the representation of performance in the museum for a Late at Tate event (2011). Live Art has been a major component in these programmes, due to a number of factors, including Live Art's ability to engage with its audience, as well as a growing familiarity of Live Art's languages by what Arts Council England calls the 'urban arts eclectic' audience segment⁷ - identified as the target audience for these events. Perhaps most importantly for the receiving institutions, Live Artists are able to create works that require few technical specifications and are so lightweight that they appear to emerge almost seamlessly from the gallery/foyer walls. The qualities of Live Art cited here are valued by arts institutions particularly those in receipt of public funding or grants from charitable sources who are increasingly faced by targets that require them to demonstrate growth of audience numbers and positive feedback from new audiences. As an artform that is staggeringly diverse in approach and material, Live Art is able to play to these requirements, however, such a situation has necessarily spawned the development of a body of Live Art works that have been designed with the specific parameters of the museum evening programme in mind.

⁷ In their research on audience segmentation 'Audience Insights', Arts Council England segments the English adult population into 13 segments, from the 'highly engaged' to the 'not currently engaged'. The 'urban arts eclectic' segment, which makes up approximately 5% of the population is the segment indicating highest levels of engagement and experimentation. See <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-data/arts-audiences/arts-based-segmentation-research/13-segments/> [Accessed 26 March 2012]

Live Art can be defined as an artist-led interdisciplinary artform that draws on narratives and techniques from a number of disciplines including Performance Art. It relates to the historical avant-gardes in its attempts to find sustainable ways to continue the investigation of everyday life as a subject for art practice, positioning itself alongside the institutions of art, whilst upholding the right to work 'outside' it. Whilst Live Art does not primarily derive its cultural value from the circulation of art objects, as is central to the contemporary visual arts, Live Art increasingly pushes the boundaries of ephemeral art practice, engaging with objects to reflect on its own artform development, to increase access, visibility and as a consequence of emerging in an era of digital technologies.

Live Art – A Proper Name

I have explored some of the origins of Live Art through my discussion of how I became acquainted with the discipline and the history of performative action. Readers requiring a comprehensive historical survey of the influences upon the development of Live Art are advised to refer to texts such as those written by Rose Lee Goldberg (1998, 2001), Adrian Heathfield (2004) and Marvin Carlson (1996) on the history of contemporary performance and how the development of experimental performance has led to the rise of Live Art.

This section will instead expose the shift from the international terminology of Performance Art towards the UK-centric phrase Live Art, and the effects this has had on artists working under the rubric of Live Art. Usage of the term 'Live Art' to describe emerging trends in performance that defied existing boundaries started in Britain in the early 1980s, when the subscription notice for an early issue of Performance Magazine states,

the Performance Magazine is the first accessible guide to the new live art activities happening in galleries, small theatre, streets and fields all over Britain. Published bi-monthly, written by people active in the field it challenges your attitudes to spectacle and entertainment, while providing a running report on all recent developments in experimental theatre, performance art, video and new music (LeFrenais, 1980: 31).

This was partially motivated by the attempt to differentiate the art featured in the magazine (characterised by the live encounter with an audience), from immobile objects hanging on gallery walls – a rhetorical positing of (a)live Vs dead art. By issue 12 (1981), the Performance Magazine had added to its title the strap line 'The Regular Review of Live Art in the UK'. However, there is little evidence to suggest that Performance Magazine in the early 1980s intends to categorically deem 'Live Art' as a distinct discipline from Performance Art. The phrase is not uniformly capitalised in issues dated from the early 1980s, is often treated as interchangeable with the term

Performance Art and is not backed up by editorial exposition defining Live Art. The capitalisation of the magazine's strap line in 1981 can therefore be interpreted as initially incidental. It is only in the early 1990s, when the Arts Council of England began to utilise the phrase in internal documents to its Regularly Funded Organisations (Keidan, 2005) that the phrase 'Live Art' can be considered as indicative of what George Dickie would describe as a new 'system' of art (1974: 33).

Performance Art's continued focus on body practices, highly theatrical, spectacular presentation and foregrounding of the celebrity artist is in sharp contrast to the ways that I have described Live Art above. The attempts of British artists to distance themselves from this characterisation, coupled with a desire to actively ascribe value to documentation and commodification is what sets Live Art apart from Performance Art. Aside from the UK, this mantle has been enthusiastically taken up by artists internationally, notably in China (Brine & Yang, 2005), where artists have embraced Live Art as an artform that connects radical action to everyday bodily practice within an institutionalised art context. One of the significant developments for the context of Live Art in China has been an embracing of the commodification of performance by both artists and institutions (Brine & Yang, 2005: 14).

Since the 1990s, the phrase 'Live Art' has been as an assertive, affirmative term for artists and a growing number of art organisations: I therefore capitalise these words, indicating the phrase attaining the status of a proper name. Despite its acceptance by contemporary art discourse as an artform in its own right, the institutional nature of Live Art's definition is nevertheless still problematic for some artists I interviewed during my research, often believing that their practice had been wrongly appropriated and associated with the artform. Joshua Sofaer is in a minority of artists who wholeheartedly accept the term 'Live Artist' to describe their practice. In contrast to this, Live Artists I interviewed have stated,

Liz Aggiss: Its not that I've said I work under the term 'Live Art', it's just that [my work] doesn't fit anywhere else. I suppose that's what has happened for a lot of Live Artists....You end up in a category because that's the only place where you'll receive funding....Our work is acceptable within Live Art, because its unacceptable elsewhere.

Matt Adams, Blast Theory: I never use it [the term 'Live Art']. I would never, ever, ever have described ourselves as that. But I'm perfectly happy if people describe us in that way. There are all kinds of people who I respect tremendously who work in that field.

Ansuman Biswas: In a way nothing falls outside Live Art, the whole notion of it is 'everything is possible' and everything is grist to the mill. So my meditation practice, which falls outside every practice *in the world*, or which gets categorised as a spiritual

thing, or religion (which it isn't), through Live Art I've been able to understand this as a science or performance, a practical philosophy or a technique.

Rose English: When people ask me what I do, I say I make shows. Sometimes those shows are huge, large-scale complex works that take 3-5 years to make and sometimes they are improvised pieces that are ready in an instant. That's the best way for me to describe myself, although the term Performance Artist is better known now.

Rona Lee: I was very uncomfortable with the emphasis in a lot of performance and Live Art on a very expressionistic use of the body and also the fact that work was often being shown within a circuit of performance festivals to people who were largely of the same persuasion. I found it quite ghettoised. This is not to say that there aren't interesting people who are making work in that sector and there are people who have been very supportive to me, including curators.

Lone Twin: We fell into the world of Live Art. If we were working in mainland Europe we might be booked as theatre, not Live Art. Thinking about ourselves as Live Artists was not a purposive strategy. We never made a formal decision about what our work is. We find ourselves working within 'Live Art' as that's the term given by the parties interested in this type of work in this country.

There are recurring motifs of 'not fitting into other genre definitions', 'working outside conventional boundaries' and 'being designated Live Art primarily within the British performing arts context' in accounts by these and other voices. Artists are, nevertheless, generally positive about the elasticity of the term. Live Art provides an umbrella under which artists can operate, without prescribing a specific kind of product or use of media but rather emphasising, above all, a broad-brush of approaches and ways of working. The terms 'Performance Art' and 'Live Art' are therefore not used interchangeably in this thesis. The term 'Live Art' is used in an institutional context, where an artist's practice has been validated by organisations connected to, and who define the field of 'Live Art'. Throughout this study, the term is avoided with reference to work made by artists working outside a UK context, prior to 1990.

Conditions For Live Art

Prescribing the conditions for Live Art is problematised by the artform's highly mobile character and dislike for definitions. Taking into account the above characteristics of Live Art, one may deem a work a work of Live Art if it fulfils all of the following conditions:

- It is produced by an artist predicating a performative relationship to their audience
- It is produced by an artist who actively engages with the relationship between the function and effects of documentation in relation to live action

- It is concerned with the conditions of contemporary, everyday life and thereby aligns itself, however loosely, to the legacy of avant-garde art practice
- It is produced after 1990.

Defining Documentation

From CCTV to administrative reporting mechanisms and the concern for transparency and accountability in public life, it increasingly seems that documentation, in the broadest sense, is an integral part of the contemporary information society, where knowledge is deemed the key driver of production (Lyotard, 1984: 5). Documentation's claim as evidence that an action took place is central to its symbolic value. Although we are conscious that such proof can be faked, our obsession with evidence of what we have done means we still value it as a resource that should be accessible and freely available. Derived from the Latin 'to teach' (docere) and 'proof' (documentum), the use of the word 'document' implies validity, legitimation or vindication of an event or process. As recording and playback technologies become increasingly accessible, their products (documents) are normalised in everyday activity. Referring to the notion of the Mystic Pad (Wunderblock), in *Archive Fever*, Derrida suggests that the machines of archiving increasingly resemble the way that memory itself is structured, to the extent that they might replace the materialisation of memory in paper or wax (1996: 14). Sophisticated modern communication systems often present individuals with the notion that a memory can simply be archived and committed to the machine. Communications theorists, such as Manuel Castells, suggest that these technologies will effect society's values, dramatically modifying how we relate to other people and objects (Castells, 2000: 357). The pervasive nature of recording and playback technologies shift our perceptions about documentation.

In the cultural context of Live Art, the document has the capacity to unite absent audience with artist and vice versa. The documentary motivation manifests itself in a plethora of outcomes that can take divergent forms, produced by any number of methods and aimed at different audiences – from the artist to researcher to passer-by. Documentation can be classified in many ways, considering when documents were made, who authored them, the method used to represent the live action and what senses they appeal to, assuming that the media technologies used to produce documentation each refer to a sensory organ with its own history of perceptive understanding (McLuhan, 1964).

In order to make some sense of the multitude of documentation forms, one might consider splitting them into sub-categories. For instance, one can examine documentation according to the capabilities of the media used to produce them – for instance: how well is it able to capture durationality? This question is useful for distinguishing the characteristics of photographic and moving image technologies, however, it is not so useful with regards to other documentation forms such as writing or objects arising from performances. Other questions for creating a taxonomy of documentation types may include, considering the temporal relation between documentation and the work's original presentation – in other words, is it produced before, during or after the performance? – and exploring the extent to which the documentation aims to give a realistic and accurate representation of the original presentation. The onset of 'documentation fever' has prompted a number of attempts to reassess documentation's significance to performance (Auslander, 2006; Maas, 2007; Reason, 2006).

We can think of the documentation of Live Art as participating in the following dichotomies:

Intangible	Object-based
Denotational	Connotational
Inscriptional	Prescriptional
Mimetic	Allegorical
Time-based	Spatially-based
Produced during live performance	Specially created after the performance
Produced by artist	Produced by another
Sanctioned by artist	Unauthorised by artist

Documentation of Live Art can participate in these categories in multiple ways, for instance, a posed photo of Franko B, is an instance of a mimetic, spatially-based document created after the performance, sanctioned by the artist (as Franko B works with preferred photographers). Likewise, documentation that aims at realistically denoting the performance would include objects that signify for part of the performance, such as plates in Bobby Baker's *Table Occasions* (1998). Photos, props, moving image footage and sound recordings could also be included in this category. By contrast, documentation can question the very possibility of accurately conveying aspects of the live event through tangible objects. Such documents would consciously reflect the ephemeral nature of performance, manifesting in ways such as oral histories, critical and performative texts and gossip. While the former class of

documentation types extrapolates elements of the performance to signify for its totality, participants in the latter category explicitly allegorise performance, highlighting the inadequacy of documentation to substitute attendance at the performance.

This attempt to classify documentation types raises a number of problems – most notably, it assumes that all Live Artists approach documentation in the same way, denying this as a source for creative play. In my primary research I found that professional development, promotion and self-reflection were cited as the key reasons given by Live Artists for documenting their work. Here is a sample of responses Live Artists gave when I asked them to rank the reasons for documenting their work in order of importance:

Bobby Baker:

1. Self-reflection.
2. Art-historical reasons – potential publication/critical assessment of the work.
3. Collecting evidence of work for self-validation or self-justification.
4. Funding and bureaucracy.
5. Educational - to enable students and researchers access to the work.

Robin Deacon:

1. Habit.
2. Sometimes good images (especially still images) can mask a bad performance.
3. Maybe its ego – I'm often struck that it's quite strange that I've got hundreds of images of myself not only stored away, but also on my website.
4. As a tool for self-promotion.

Special Guests:

1. We record our devising process whilst in the rehearsal room as there will always be moments that are forgotten or glossed over.
2. So that we remember what we actually did during a show – we often improvise within predetermined structures.
3. It also allows you to see what's happening when you're offstage and recognise things that may have gone unnoticed.
4. So that people can learn about previous works and 'experience' it in some form, especially if it's from an earlier point in history.
5. So that programmers can see our work (in some form) and programme us.
6. We use high quality stills to market our shows, publicise the work and increase our visibility as a company.

Strange Names Collective:

1. Being able to look back, understand, and critique the work.
2. Being able to see the development of work from one project to another.
3. To help develop new ideas.
4. As a means of showing the work to funders and programmers.
5. For posterity.

Reckless Sleepers:

1. So that there is a record of something.
2. Communicating the work to others.

3. Educational values.
4. Evidence to support the development of new pieces, or the presentation of existing work.
5. For promotional purposes.

Liz Aggiss:

1. Posterity.
2. Personal research and development as an artist.
3. Looking back at your own archive, you see your future from your past.
4. For people who are studying the practice to formulate arguments and provide evidence for theoretical and academic practice.

The types of documentation of Live Art I will consider in this thesis are:

mimetic inscriptional devices including moving image formats (film and video)⁸; photography (both film and digital); descriptive devices such as written texts, publications and gossip; sound recordings; objects attributed by the artist as associated to production of the work; which can include drawings, sketches and props.

Documentation's Special Relationship to Live Art

In *Art and the Aesthetic – An Institutional Analysis*, Dickie asserts that, 'there cannot be an instance of creativity without an artefact of some kind being produced' (1974: 49). This claim that, institutionally speaking, there must be an object or artefact upon which one confers the status 'work of art' poses a dilemma for Live Art. Live Art is articulated through multifarious forms, this enables a flexible understanding of the term but makes defining a notion of artefactuality for Live Art practice problematic. The diversity of approaches to documentation in Live Art practice, can be seen as a reflection of the unorthodox, inclusive and tolerant philosophy of Live Art. This heterogeneous artform lacks a consensus about the *form* of documentation of performative action whilst its ephemeral nature demands from all of its participants a shared understanding of documentation's importance. That Live Artists have continued to pursue multiple approaches to documentation suggests the absence of an 'ideal' form for the documentation of Live Art. However, this difference has enabled the products of Live Art documentation to enter contemporary culture in unexpected ways. Referring to writer Amelia Jones' perspective of the document as supplementary to performance, Auslander has otherwise suggested that the document is, 'an access point to the reality of the performance' (2006b: 2), imbuing it with a degree of authenticity. As will be discussed throughout this study, documentation is increasingly a fundamental concern for Live Artists as a creative means to prolong and develop their work.

⁸ The term 'video' here follows Sean Cubitt's use (1991: 1), where video refers to audiovisual recording technology in general and not just to VHS tapes.

The diversity of dissemination channels is often embraced and played with by Live Artists. An artist who (perhaps unexpectedly) does so is Bobby Baker, whose performances confront head-on the British stereotypes of obsessive-compulsive, middle-class, middle-aged housewives. Press releases for the production *Box Story* (2002) would drop through my letterbox and I would toss them away disdainfully, muttering that this rambling maternal persona, reminiscent of Supergran from 1980s Saturday morning children's TV, was not the type of Live Art I wanted to experience. I was disturbed by the photo of her painfully cheery face balancing an oversized cardboard box between her shoulders - she had an expression of relieved accomplishment that I considered exaggerated, cringingly banal, vulgar even. Being too close, corporeal and engaged in an actual relationship with its audience, these works were far from the performances discussed in the Prehistory of this study, which are full of symbolic gestures alluding to abstract ideas, unattainable principles and epic tales. Indeed Baker's press images conveyed such a negative impression that I started to develop a compulsion not to see her work, until I had videotapes of them thrust onto me during a trip to the Live Art Archive, when it was still based in Nottingham Trent University in 2005. Sitting in the dark of a small yellow booth, I was disturbingly transfixed by the fuzzy VHS tapes showing Bobby Baker on stage - stepping only on chairs - to perform *Table Occasions* (fig. 7) at the National Review of Live Art in 1998 (further discussion of the seminal Glasgow-based National Review of Live Art festival will be provided later on in this Part).



Figure 7 Bobby Baker. Table Occasions. Promotional flyer, 1997. Daily Life Ltd

As she climbed atop the creaking dining table laid with increasingly wrinkled white linen, soup bowls and ladles, making vaguely flustered small-talk about her next-door neighbours to imaginary guests who did not like green vegetables, the performance only got more absurd. These futile attempts to please her guests caused moments from British TV comedy to flash through my mind - *The Good Life*, *Black Books*, *The Fast Show*, *Smack the Pony* – Baker and these shared a proud diligence and virtuous duty to ‘carry on. Or else’. The sympathetically sardonic tone of voice Baker spoke with and its Beckettian undertones further increased in the audience a sense of guilt-induced mania. Baker’s disarmingly accurate portrait of British housewives utilises the tools of slapstick to deliver satirical frenzy, leaving a tablecloth stained with green soup, red wine and memories as the trace of her performance.

Bobby Baker’s performance presented to me a facet of Live Art that although intelligently constructed, did not seem contrived in its humour and its connection to avant-garde practice. Moreover, her performances ask the audience to challenge our perceptions of creative artifice and craft – the end result of *Table Occasions* is proof that the production of documentation in Live Art does not have to conform to a formalist and serious process, after all, the only thing left to show for it is a messy tablecloth. Baker’s work also creates an uncertainty about where the aesthetic experience lies - we are unsure if the messy tablecloth is just an accidental by-product or if this object is the artwork. Indeed, at the 10th anniversary party for New Work Network, Baker framed her performance, which started off as a white sheet on the floor, as a documentation of the relationships between individuals in the network. The performance, and the sheet, ended with patterns made by all manner of kitchen condiments and the comment from Baker that relationships are often ‘messy’. By identifying her performance as the making of a representation *qua* art object, Baker asks us to consider the ‘mess’ as an object with aesthetic value, which in turn validates the performance trace as a significant, rather than secondary, component of the work.

Starting her artistic life as a painter, in the early 1970s Baker started experimenting with cake-making as sculpture, finding it to be a witty, rebellious, ephemeral, yet pathetic means to informally intervene in the live moment. After a break of almost 10 years to concentrate on her family, Baker went back to performance with *Drawing on a Mother’s Experience* (1988), which toured the UK, and is described by Elaine Aston as a ‘Jackson-Pollock-style food painting’ (2002: 130). Throughout her career, Baker’s performances have sought to deconstruct familiar social spaces, revealing the ludicrous aspects of everyday life. By subtle manipulation she presents to the audience

the unchallenged customs of the housewife's role, illustrating the absurdity of social conventions and highlighting the complexity of psychological pressures on women in contemporary society. Putting familiar objects such as kitchen utensils (*Kitchen Show*, 1991) and cans of food into play (*How to Shop*, 1993), Baker imagines parallel lives for these objects, ones that diverge from the conventional stories and ideas associated to the history of women in Western society. As they often seek to examine (and test the possible prolongation of) story-telling rituals, centred on a live setting, her performances may be seen to privilege the physicality of the relationship between artist and spectator. It may therefore seem odd for me to discuss dissemination channels and the importance of documentation to Live Artists in relation to Bobby Baker's work. However, on visiting her London home, I realised that Baker's practice was made up of more than those choreographed performances – her studio, situated at the end of her garden, was filled with sketches and drawings that she proudly showed me, whilst recounting the importance of documentation to her work, beyond the necessity of funding and archiving purposes. Baker, instead of viewing the work strictly as consisting of the live moment, has asserted that the transmission of her work significantly takes place through one of any number of media. Since the early 1990s, the artist has been interested in exploring other ways of disseminating the ideas behind her work, working closely with photographer Andrew Whittuck.

For instance, in addition to a live production, a book, video and TV version of *Kitchen Show* (1991) were also produced. The relationship between the form and content of Baker's work has particularly come to the fore in *How to Live* (2004), a complex production examining psycho-therapeutic knowledge, featuring Baker as psychologist, an assistant and her patient - a pea on a string. Anticipating that the complex version of the work would not be replicated again, Baker insisted on the use of digital documentation for *How to Live*'s first run, in order to professionally record the work and procure future bookings. Daily Life Ltd (the disability-led organisation through which Baker produces her work) created a gamut of outputs that run parallel to the live performance, including a *How to Live* website, DVD, radio show and postcards. As a mental health services user herself, Baker's assertive deployment, mirroring and appropriation of the therapeutic empire's marketing tools was a significant aspect of the work. Baker describes her approach to documentation as,

Getting a nugget, a kernel of ideas to [the audience] by using the most elegant and efficient way of communicating something, without compromising the nature of the work.

Baker's use of the word 'kernel' is telling, implying that documentation's ability to communicate something about a work is better than nothing. Our simultaneously glutinous yet cavalier regard for information is put into perspective by LeMahieu's comment that for listeners of the early gramophone, 'listening to Caruso for two minutes through surface noise was better than no Caruso at all' (LeMahieu, 1988: 81).

It is clear from Baker's statements that the notion of communicating the concept of a work to the audience, through the use of numerous media, is a key aim.

Documentation of her work is therefore oriented towards this goal, whilst other Live Artists view documentation primarily as a means for them, as artists, to remember and reconstruct their work. The notion of documentation as a means to remember what happened at a performance was deemed highly significant to many of the Live Artists I interviewed. In this context, documentation is an aid to memory, showing the live action from a different angle, moreover, the document is also able to fix that which is unstable or fluid, which is particularly useful to artists who depend on improvisation in their performances.

During the early 1980s, Rose English tape recorded her shows, which were improvised monologues. These recordings which not only became a way to remember what she had said on the previous night, but also helped validate her work to promoters who were believed that the shows were fully scripted,

I said they were written but in fact they were improvised – I wouldn't have got the booking if I said they were improvised so I said 'I refer to my script' - I really just had to listen every day before the next evening's performance, I'd listen to the tape and transcribe it. It was a very important process that I'd go through and then I just decided to keep the tapes.

English originally tape recorded her shows in an effort to improve them as she knew it was a strategy used by stand-up comedians. Although she did not intend the tapes to become more than records of specific events, she was asked to transcribe them for a book on her work so that, if desired, they could be potentially recreated. For English, this almost incidental documentation of her performances has resulted in the development and fixing of the work, an act which is now able to facilitate its further performance. In this sense, one might suggest that the printed transcription of her show functions in a similar way to the musical score. The correspondences between Live Art documentation and the musical score will be discussed further in Part Three (section Correspondence to Music).

The increasing number of Live Artists entering UK academia to teach practical or theoretical courses about performance within Performance, Theatre or Drama Departments - artists such as Jordan McKenzie (Kingston University), Lois Weaver (Queen Mary, University of London), Mine Kaylan (University of Brighton) and Paul Clarke (University of Bristol) - will surely colour the understanding of what Live Art is for younger artists. Similarly, a pool of researchers devoted to the study of Live Art is developing, including Adrian Heathfield, Gavin Butt, Dee Heddon and Dominic Johnson, who are introducing new approaches to writing about Live Art (to be discussed more in Part Two, section Live Art and Writing).

Less rich (both artistically and financially), less accessible and less widely known would be the state of Live Art without documentation. As an artist-based practice, often working without tangible products, dissemination of Live Art's ideas and works by any means, is fundamental to its history and growth. The reasons for documenting live action are numerous, for instance - documentation allows artists to reflect upon their practice, offering a means to catalogue their work, provide evidence for funders or record an event that might otherwise be forgotten. Documentation therefore acts as a vital tool for professional development. Moreover, documentation enables the circulation of ideas between artists and audiences, facilitating a development of the artform from grassroots level through to institutional acknowledgment. Through documentation, artists and researchers are able to participate in discourse and current knowledge about Live Art. Further to the way in which documentation is embedded in much live action within the context of Live Art, documentation is necessary to the survival of Live Art. As an artist-centred practice, the artform needs archives and histories to drive its dissemination and development.

Documentation is further important to the development and continuation of Live Art as the curator or programmer acts as an archivist of artistic practice. The pre-eminent example of 'archive fever' in contemporary visual art practice is curator Hans Ulrich-Obrist's zeal for accumulating and appropriating as much as possible of contemporary cultural history, manifesting in the form of marathon discussion events, copious interviews and publications, as well as his work as a commissioner and curator of contemporary visual art. Without documentation of this practice, the curator is reliant solely on live experiences for their research about Live Artists, which marginalises those who cannot access live presentations of work due to financial, social or geographical reasons. Amelia Jones is a notable example of an academic whose writing about performance engages with this issue to explore how we can critique and

analyse performances that we did not attend (1997). Since up-to-date knowledge of practice is vital to the curation of Live Art (and indeed all curatorial practice), documentation is vital to the development and continuation of the artform within a wider art historical discourse.

Those Who Are Responsible For Documentation

According to Ansuman Biswas, the curator should bear responsibility for producing documentation of the performance because,

although its actually very helpful to the artist....the artist usually has the work to think about. I would have thought the documentation is part of the producing and the epiphenomenon of the work that the [curator is] thinking about.

In contrast to Biswas, Live Artist Hayley Newman states,

communities tend to document themselves and I think it very much comes out of that: institutions don't do it, so you do it. For example, the Barbican gig [*Karaoke Record Cutting*, 2005], it wasn't the Barbican documenting that, it was me, I paid for someone to document it. I see it as part of my responsibility. In fact, institutionally they don't necessarily see the value of it...I think there's a kind of value system in funding that means that most of the time, they're really like £100 gigs, so no-one really bothers. But if you've got an institution funding you with a lot of money, they're going to bother documenting the work. I think that my work definitely comes out of a DIY politic that is about your own, its keeping control.

The difference of opinion taken by these two Live Artists, who are at comparable stages of their career (both established and able to command commissions from major institutions), illustrates that although Live Artists wish to engage with documentation as part of their practice, in practical terms documentation is wrapped up in a complex ecology of ownership around the work.

Since there is no predetermined form of documentation for Live Art works, artists working in this field need to be self-motivated, generating a personal documentation and archiving strategy that suits their specific needs. A key consideration for such a strategy is to understand how they would like to use the documentation after it is produced, whether this is for marketing purposes or for a personal archive. Indeed, a Live Artist might decide that a piece should be documented by more than one media, say photographs capturing the visual look of the show and post-performance vox pops documenting audience reactions. When framed within different contexts or adapted towards the target audience, the photographs could be used for a press review, by a researcher writing about the artist or as a memento sent by the artist's mother to relatives. Similarly, the vox pops could be useful to animate a description of the performance on the artist's website, as a means of self-evaluation or to develop further

work. The onus is upon the artist to negotiate the quality of relationship they want to have with the person documenting their work. Traditionally, the documenter is viewed by the artist as a technician who executes the artist's aims, yet there are a few practitioners who are pioneering an approach that is more pro-active rather than responsive. Arguably, due to their differentiated origins, documentary media carry with them deep-seated value assumptions. For instance, whilst photography is excellent at capturing a snapshot in time, according to the viewpoint of the person behind the camera (Sayre, 1989: 4), it is unable to communicate an event's durationality. Rather than seeing this as a deficiency, practitioners in the field are devising compensatory strategies: even if photography can't capture the *development* of motion at least it can perhaps depict the *drama* of motion. The documenter hence is the maker of representations, consciously or unconsciously shaping the recording of a scene or situation to present their view of it. The growing number of practitioners working with artists to collaboratively produce documentation as a creative response to the work is particularly significant to Live Art, as an artform that does not necessarily produce tangible objects. The role of the documenter as a 'profession' in its own right is developing, with individuals like Manuel Vason and Hugo Glendinning leading this practice in terms of lens-based representation of Live Art.

Franko B is a Live Artist who has worked closely with both Glendinning and Vason to document his live practice. Since the late 1990s, especially since the popularisation of digital stills and video cameras, the importance of high quality documentation has become increasingly important to practising Live Artists, particularly to evidence a record of past activity. By becoming involved with the presentation of a performance's afterlife, Franko B aims to take control of the work's presentation,

Now only Hugo Glendinning is working with me. When Hugo takes photos of a performance there's another 20 people taking photos, which I don't have any deal with – I don't know who they are. I assume that these people see themselves as artists and that their practice is to take photographs of other people's work. The performance is not their work, but the document becomes their work. It's their document of your work. It's a fine line because sometimes it can become a collaboration, sometimes it's a straight 'my job is to photograph you – I'm the technician'. But Hugo is somebody who brings something, he's very good at what he does. I don't have to tell Hugo where to be or what to do, I let him do it....

In almost all of his live performances, Franko B wishes to ensure that only the photographers he has sanctioned are taking photos, in an attempt to control how and where the images will be circulated, and also to maintain an intimacy between artist and audience.

One might assert that documentation of live action by audience members is unavoidable today. In an age where mobile phones have photo, video and sound recording capacities, aiming to limit documentation is something of a futile aspiration. The gap in quality between professional/artist sanctioned and informal documentation is being closed by documentation, often produced by the artist's 'prosumer' colleagues. However, since this category of documentation is often produced gratis, the quality, rigour and access to this documentation cannot be consistently guaranteed. Indeed, for Franko, it is the production of documentation by art college students and photographers who work with photo agencies that causes the most anxiety,

When the press agencies come and contact me when I do something big, they ask me if they can come and photograph my work. I say 'no' because I cannot tell them who to not sell the work to, because it is a photographic agency and they'll sell it to anyone who wants to buy it. In a lot of cases, places where I go, there are students, or people who want to take photos and – this means they can sell these photos to *News of the World* or *Bizarre* magazine, entities which I can't control. The thing I can't control is not about making money or [being] commercial....some people don't have a problem with this.

For his performance *I Miss You!* (2002) at the *Live Culture* series, Tate Modern (2003) however, Franko inverted this control of documentation. With *Marsyas* (Anish Kapoor's massive *Unilever* commissioned sculpture for the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern) as a backdrop, the audience sit on the floor on either side of a long white column of cloth, bordered by fluorescent strip lights. The artist is naked, covered in white paint. As he walks slowly and purposefully up and down this catwalk, the audience notices that he is cut in several places. This controlled bloodletting results in patches across his body - the prints that his feet make at either end of the catwalk indicate the performative boundaries of the space. The theatricality of *I Miss You!* is palpable, the work's exploration of an individual's visual identity is doubly sanguine, bleeding yet assured. In this context, the artist actively considers documentation as a framing device for the performance, encouraging the audience to also participate in this act. Franko states that *I Miss You!* 'needs' a photographer, however, the Tate were concerned about misuse or misrepresentation of the work which could potentially portray the institution in a negative context. The Tate therefore asked Franko to agree that anyone who wanted to take photos would sign a contract with the Tate stating 'that people are not allowed to say bad things [sic] about the Tate'.

Whilst documentation as sanctioned by the artist is often absent from the historical archives of Live Artists, the professional and financial importance of producing documentation is well understood by most Live Artists today. For Franko B, the

ownership of performance's documents is very clear – whilst the action itself is the property of the artist, the image produced by the documenter is the work of the individual who records the artist's work. Perhaps as a result of this clarity and his reputation within contemporary art, Franko B is able to command respect for his views on this matter.

Irresponsible Documentation - Pragmatic Reasons For Not Documenting

Live Artists cite a number of reasons as to why their work is not documented, for instance, because they felt it was not a priority with respect to the work itself or because they could not envisage documentation that was appropriate to the work. Rose English emphasises that often, the lack of documentation is the consequence of not having enough time or financial and human resources access to adequately document their work,

I've heard apocryphal stories of how these people would refuse to have documentation, but I've yet to meet one! I think it's just because they couldn't get it together! I think it was just too much trouble. They were too poor, they didn't have a camera or a friend with a camera, it wasn't the main thing on their minds. They were too busy [making the work].

Further, a number of Live Artists I have interviewed also cite insensitive documentation as a cause to not document. Documenters do not always act as they are told, even if they are clearly directed by the artist – developing an understanding between artist and documenter is often sensitive and complex, particularly with Live Art that continues to anchor itself to the structure and 'liveness' of the event. The creative control afforded to the documenter, described by Franko B above, does not necessarily manifest in a way that appropriately reflects the artist's practice. Rose English states, 'I've generally had a much better experience with people who I've known, and I've just asked them to do something relatively simple and straightforward'. The fear of having one's work misrepresented is multiplied today as technologies enable and encourage the rapid circulation of information today.

For certain Live Artists, particularly those whose work revolves around intimate bodily practice, traditional forms of documentation can seem overly intrusive and improper. Where Live Artists choose to document such works, this is usually done in a post-performance photo call context. Similarly, Live Artists working on a one-to-one basis often do not document their work, either because they consider documentation to interrupt the intimate nature of the one-to-one exchange experience or because the structure of the work makes such documentation unfeasible. In her essay 'Too Close

for Comfort', describing three works by Curious where the audience interacts with the artists on an individual basis, Helen Paris says,

the proximity and nature of the relationship between audience member and performer is challenged. The arc of the experience encompasses discomfort and comfort, nearness and isolation, vulnerability and a sense of being protected, cared for, loved. The intensity of experience in one-to-one performance is felt not just by the audience member but also by the performer (2006: 190).

A counter-example to the proposition that one-to-one performances are rarely documented and successful examples are even more scarce is *You: The City* (1988) by Fiona Templeton. Templeton, ex-Theatre of Mistakes performer, pioneered one-to-one performance with her group, firstly as the 'theatre of privacy' workshop where each member of the group would create a performance for the other members. In the hugely influential piece *You: The City*, the individual audience member is led from one performer to another, in different locations, so that the city becomes a stage. Although it is unable to fully capture the spectrum of experience and the durational sense of the piece, it was documented as a 10 minute piece to camera which managed to convey the disorienting, clandestine setting of the work.

During my attendance at Live Art events I have been frequently surprised by the unabashed zeal with which audience members document live performances. The artist's actions undergo spectacularisation via the miniaturising lens of the mobile phone, and through social networks these mediated representations are captured, connected and shared with others across the globe. Each click of the camera, video camera or sound recorder severs the historical convention of an audience experiencing live action in a specific location and time. Couching the audience's desire to participate in the act of documentation as positive, aside from observing this phenomenon as a product of digital communications marketing, remains problematic. In this context, it could be argued that the way Franko B approaches the audience photographer in *I Miss You!*, is an instance of how Live Art actively considers its documentation at the point of the conception of a piece of work. The artist enables the audience to structure their experience around the act of producing documentation and further, is responsive to patterns of documentation consumption. However, it must be noted that establishing the parameters of propriety for producing documentation must be considered by those documenting on a case-by-case basis. For instance, one cannot imagine that audiences would record their experience with a camera in works such as *Aktion 398* (1998) by Franko B, where the audience is invited to spend two minutes alone with the artist who is painted white with a wound showing and naked except for a plastic collar that is usually worn by animals to prevent them from hurting themselves.

In 2007, at the National Review of Live Art, Glasgow, during a performance of *Jamais Vu* (2005) by Anne Seagrave (fig. 8), I took the opportunity to assume the position of inappropriate documenter. Attendance was by pre-allocated timeslot, I was a few moments late as the performance had already started.



Figure 8 Anne Seagrave. *Jamais Vu*. National Review of Live Art, Tramway, Glasgow, 2007. The Author.

There we were, all bunched up, sitting on the cold floor of the Tramway, constantly shuffling to get a better view as people left and were replaced by others. The performance took place in a small 'white cube' area with three walls that had been specially erected. Caked in paint like a character from Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle*, Seagrave's movements were at once robotic, repetitive and painful. The physical and cyclic nature of the piece highlighted the fact that her body was only partially covered by bits of mirror, leaving her sex exposed. Objects, including wooden signs and mirrors lay around the space, and images tinged with blue, were projected onto the walls and Seagrave's body. Initially I thought that a thin gauze separated artist from audience, such was the mediating effect of the visual world Seagrave had created. As two people left the crowd and another person arrived, I wondered whether this sense of separation, coupled with the 'theme and variation' structure of the work had an effect on how the audience was viewing and consuming the work. *Jamais Vu* has been described by the artist as a 'disguised self-portrait' (Gallasch: 2007) that examines the identity of the fragile female body and the history of Seagrave's work. As more audience members came and went, it was only then that I realised the piece was a performance installation, in other words that it was not expected that I should stay for

the entire duration of an hour. How would I signal a stopping point in my experience with this work? After all, at what point is it appropriate to walk away if someone is crawling towards you, as Seagrave was doing in this performance? Sensing someone with a camera to the side of the space, I moved back myself. I wanted to see how it felt to be the documenter – the person who always really annoyed me by getting in the way and above all, who was not engaged in the live moment itself. I wanted to know how it felt to document in a situation where I usually would have felt awkward about doing so. In order to do so, I adopted the following rationalisation: I was doing this to preserve my memory of this work: I would attempt to obtain a high quality image that represented the work and I would continue to watch the performance until I was ready to document, when I completed the documentation, I would leave the performance. By disconnecting my understanding of the performance as embodied experience, I was able to approach documenting *Jamais Vu* as a visual exercise. Ironically, the image of Seagrave that I produced is badly composed and blurred, as participating in this self-imposed voyeuristic experience meant I could only bear to proceed with the act once I was quite far back, posing as an amateur documenter. In this sense, I had failed my objective task of taking a good image, moreover, using the act of documentation as an excuse to exit the performance had only caused me further embarrassment. As Birringer states, ‘the recording creates another movement’ (1999: 29), not only in its consequent effect of producing images within the non-immersive environment of a flat screen, but furthermore, recording unavoidably invokes a level of surveillance. If recording functions as a means to remember (‘Record’: Middle English via Old French ‘record’: remembrance, Latin ‘recordari’ remember, heart), its status as an emblem of the future may be said to interrupt the specificity of the performance’s present time and place, its now-ness, its liveness. The act of documentation is on the brink of breaking the flow of delicate moments of a performance, enabling the person documenting to distance themselves from the work’s narrative power.

Today we have to resign ourselves to the fact that we are being looked at. However, we do not have to automatically assume the dual disciplinary functions of surveillance (Winokaur, 2004: 287), where ‘discipline’ refers to both institutional knowledge and the notion of controlled, trained behaviour. Regardless of whether the camera does swing round to me, recording seems to produce a ‘fictional authority’ (Winokaur, 2004: 294), making us think that we are being watched at all times, resulting in a continual self-censorship. We sit up straighter, preen a little bit more as we imagine our future self-image, causing a distraction from the unfolding of the current moment.

As with de Certeau's walker (1984: chp. 7), we have the liberty to take a small decision, we can choose to take the path constructed and expected of us, or we can zigzag through the streets and parks. In other words, the pose for the camera can become a subversive or, at least, playful tactic – as when young people respond to a TV crew on the street or in the knowing poses of Cindy Sherman. The action of looking back into the surveying eye becomes an interrogative manoeuvre at once ironic yet also empowering. Catching and holding attention constitutes a spontaneous performance moment that fleetingly redirects the authorship of a recording. Another possible strategy is to turn one's own recording device (mobile phone camera, say) on those recording you. Such mimetic subversion can be employed to diffuse imagined or actual tension, especially in circumstances when the relationship between recording object and subject recorded is understood as entailing an asymmetrical power relation. Issues such as these are taken up in Brian Catling's chilling performances. The first time I encountered his work was in a darkened wood-panelled room in South Hill Park, Bracknell. Without a word he slowly closed all the shutters as if preparing us all for a game of hide-and-seek in a stately home. Shuttered off from the rest of life, the performance took on the atmosphere of a secret event. Holding in front of him life-size wooden cut-outs of a man and woman in an embrace, he slowly moved towards the audience, with mournful grunts. Opening his long trenchcoat, he revealed his wares, which were not watches or jewels but old photos, perhaps the only remains after the other wares had been sold. Catling shuffled forward to show these forlorn photos, as if someone had discarded them or no longer wanted to include them in an archive. Save for aesthetically enjoying them as part of the unfolding of Catling's performance we are not held responsible for them. The lights were suddenly turned out, and the audience was blinded by a flash of light, coming not from a photographer but the artist himself, returning his gaze upon us, the guilty amateurs who never asked if we could take a photo and just assumed it was OK. Within the current economy of circulating ciphers of cultural experience, an audience member at a cultural event is very likely to experience unauthorised documentation at almost any performance they attend. One is powerless to prohibit this documentation taken with mobile phones and digital cameras – unless one engages in a parallel activity of watching out for documenters. Click, click, click, flash, flash, the shadowy figure got more agitated and began to smash up the cameras, the parts hurtling across the floor as he left the room. Silence. As I turned towards the door, a series of flashes attack my eyes, an event caused by the horrific paparazzi headgear that Catling had fashioned for himself. Catling's disconcerting silent performances magically connect the discourse and issues surrounding Live Art documentation with the confrontation of collectively shared fears.

In his performance as part of Rational Rec's event at Wiltons Music Hall in June 2008,



the artist temporarily took on the role of a mentally unstable bag thief (fig. 9). This chthonic performance again documented the audience and immediately destroyed their images, replacing the camera's interceptive function with a trio of rape alarms that he taped onto his face. Their piercing screams resounding around the silent hall, we are forced to reflect on our own voyeurism, our privacy boundaries and inability to action, despite the fact that the status of recording devices as extensions of ourselves asks us not only to watch but also to record.

Figure 9 Brian Catling. Rational Rec, Wiltons Music Hall, London, 2008. Richard Cobelli.

In *Camera Lucida* Barthes describes this self-conscious moment of being photographed, how by posing for the camera - as one might do in performance - one simultaneously plays an alternative subjectivity but as a result of this self-imposture one experiences a loss of the 'authentic' self,

in front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art (1993: 13).

Capturing a mere split-second of action, the camera has an unforgiving attitude towards the representation of the individual, as Barthes worries 'my body never finds its zero degree' (1993:12). Under the direction of a skilled documenter, the documentation of performance looks attractive, perhaps even more so than the visual experience of the event itself. However, such consequent objectification of intimate moments by the camera is problematic for the representation of Live Art, an artform that is anxious about the precarious balance between the live and the mediated. The highly contested dialectic between the live and the mediated as it relates to Live Art documentation will be further discussed in Part Two (section On the Live).

Live Art Documentation as Professionalisation

In addition to being an expectation of many funders, documentation has clearly positively effected the lives of British Live Artists, aiding their professional development and increasing their performances opportunities. The emergence of the artist's website since the mid 1990s is perhaps the most significant location for the presentation of Live

Art documentation (followed by the development of easily reproducible disc storage, such as CD-Rs and DVDs). The importance put on marketing and documentation by both arts education institutions and arts organisations providing artists support, such as Artsadmin's advisory service, has contributed to the proliferation of Live Artists' websites. The issue is perhaps especially relevant to Live Art as it is a predominantly artist-based practice.

In his introduction to *After Criticism*, Gavin Butt suggests that 'the theorist, rather than being remote from that which he or she surveys is... enmeshed in the very, perhaps even "creative", production of the cultural fabric itself' (2005:3). In this way, research and theory are often validated by a theorist's practical involvement within the field of Live Art, making dissemination of performance documentation fundamental to inclusion in official canons. As Live Art develops as an artform and the number of artists increases, emerging artists are encouraged to provide potential audiences, programmers and funders with accessible information about their work. On the whole, the strategy of having a web presence seems to work: almost every Live Artist I interviewed who had a website in 2005 said that they had made contact with a promoter/potential collaborator/research through that means. Indeed, for some artists, propagating their website with information about past work is what constitutes their main rationale for documenting performance.

Robin Deacon explains,

The site itself is perhaps the best indication of my attitude towards documentation, and what motivates me to do it. This is in terms of the fact that I have so much stuff on there (over 130 pages) and I know that much of this is stuff is only of limited interest for most people. Once you get past the blurb, and a few images, I think most people switch off when it comes to websites. But I was viewing it as an archive too – by 2000, I had accumulated so many boxes of photos and performance related nick knacks that it seemed stupid not to try and collate these things. It was like clearing the decks – very useful for looking back on a personal level. I also think the motivation for why you document things changes – on my website, there are images of performances I did in the mid 90's, some stuff I even did in the first year of my degree. There is also an element of embarrassment in this (some of the work has visual representations of myself that I'd rather forget), but I felt I had to put them in, as I didn't want to use the website as a means of re-writing history through the selective use of documentation. I think this idea of full disclosure maybe makes the story of how I got from there to here a lot clearer, and certainly more honest.

Deacon's website has featured descriptions, photos, scripts, videos and reviews of almost all of his works. However, since December 2011 he has removed some of the documentation to past work that he was unhappy with, and posted a short piece about

this 'ingestion of his bad documentation' on his website⁹. Indeed, Deacon's work often takes the notion of documentation as a content, exploring the relationship between presence and absence and incorporating past performances into new works (this will be discussed further in Part Three, section Recycling the Performance). For some artists, documentation provides the opportunity to visually present one's work more dramatically or describe obscure performances in a more positive light, to re-perform history, whilst others remain anxious about making their work available for view at the tap of a mouse, wanting audiences not to prejudge what they do without experiencing it in an environment controlled by the artist. In contrast to this, Robin Deacon has (by and large) approached the artist's website as a comprehensive archive which delivers information about the artist as transparently as possible. Relatively easy to build and democratic in its delivery system, websites can be viewed as the prime location for grassroots documentation of Live Art. An artist's website is the first point of call to get an impression of the work and to become familiar with an artist's aims. In fact, one may suggest that the rise of well-produced websites and their legitimacy correlates to a decrease in demand for formal presentation platforms¹⁰.

Similarly, FrenchMottershead include extensive documentation of their work on their website. They take a unique approach to documentation, embedding documentation into their practice, which has included creating a means to present their projects as a documented miniature. In the early 1990s, FrenchMottershead started creating a set of small objects to represent the live iterations of their works, housing these proxy 'versions' in a presentation box. The box is used by the artists as a 'visual CV' to explain their work to promoters, funders and other interested parties. A key work that is represented in the box is a set of all the 14 editions of the *People Series* (2003-ongoing) (fig. 10).

⁹ http://www.robindeacon.com/chronological_list.htm [Accessed 26 March 2012]

¹⁰ For instance, performance platforms such as the annual Fresh Air at Queen Mary University, London (previously East End Collaborations) and the National Review of Live Art have been significant events for national and international programmers to attend, as arbiters of new British talent. Since the rise of digital culture, the number of programmers and curators at these events has decreased slightly, however, overall attendance has remained strong, due to artists seeing these events as networking and professional development opportunities to meet with peers from across the country.

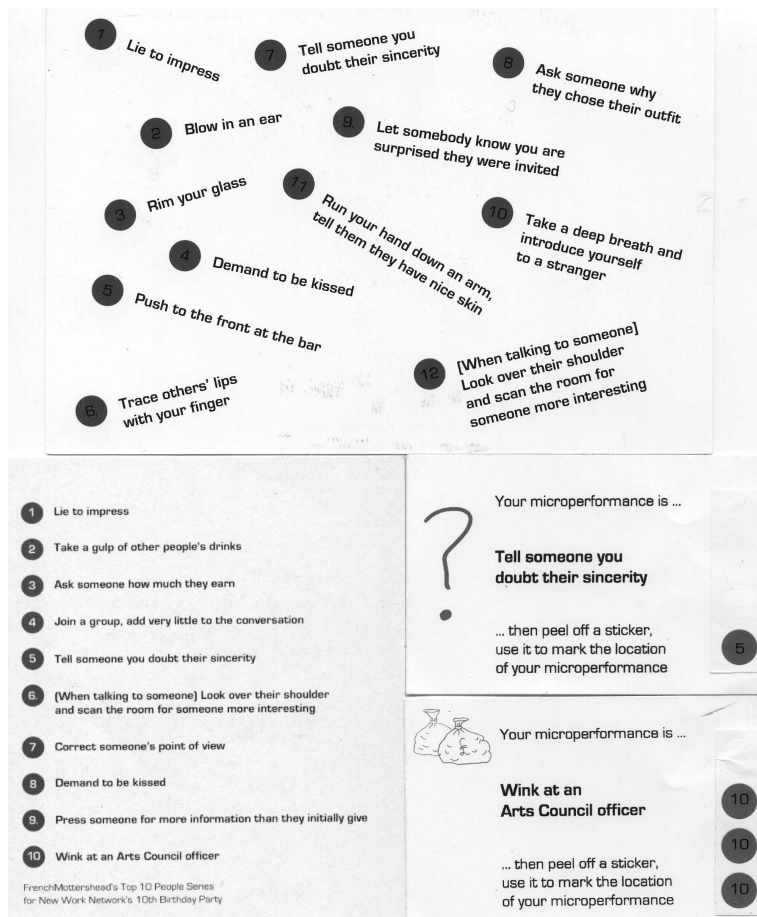


Figure 10 FrenchMottershead. People Series. Collage of documentation, 2003-ongoing. FrenchMottershead

The *People Series* is described by the artists as an 'interactive microperformance game that trades social interaction as a commodity'¹¹. Specially commissioned for festivals and events where people are encouraged to be sociable, each *People Series* edition consists of a set of instructional cards, given out to the audience at random. The audience member sticks one of the numbered stickers to mark the location of each of these microperformances, so that everyone becomes a performer for an event and has the means to document that performance with a small intervention,

The cards themselves are given to people at the performances, aren't they? So where do you think the line is drawn between documentation and the things?

Andrew Mottershead – these are all pictures, they're not the actual things

Rebecca French – they're all the cards in facsimile, you can't actually peel them. So they're very much documentation

¹¹ <http://www.frenchmottershead.com/?m=3&sm=9&p=archive/peopleseries/peopleseries.html>
[Accessed 28 March 2012]

AM – [each set in the presentation box] includes a text that does a bit of contextualising, providing a story of what that event was and how those cards come into being

RF – but there's nothing to stop somebody from going and actually doing that as a performance afterwards. They also still act in that way, and its quite exciting to think that they can have that afterlife.

Do you see these little sets as part of your practice, or is it just part of the documentation? What's the relationship there?

AM – We've spent quite a lot of time thinking about how we embed documentation strategies into the process of the work, or the experience of the work - you stand a better chance of communicating more of a sense of what the work is. There's great opportunity to be creative with documentation, in a suitable way for the work, without it impacting on the work, but adding something. I think that's a better approach than saying it is distant from the live experience. Actually making it part of the experience is a more useful way of thinking about documentation.

RF – When you work for 30 years and you have nothing to show for it - which is a very performance art 'purity of the moment' thing, its quite a brave thing to do, its quite a hard thing. I like having things that I can refer to, as a body of work. I think part of this is [due to] coming from a visual art background, actually being a bit in love with objects. Stuff that you can touch. And videos don't do it, its got to be little boxes. Performance is ephemeral enough already.

Andrew Mottershead's comment that documentation is increasingly being produced as an integral part of FrenchMottershead's work is, I think, reflective of a more substantive trend. French Mottershead are skilled at producing documentation that attractively markets their work. This is symptomatic of their conscious attitude towards commodified practice and is indicative of how a new generation of Live Artists actively participate in a relationship with documentation to promote and disseminate their work, in order to interact with their audience.

British Live Artists working across various concerns and traditions are increasingly adopting forms of engagement that result in the production of documentation. For instance, Yara el-Sherbini examines identity issues with a British Muslim twist to the traditional pub quiz in *Pub Quiz* (2006-ongoing) and in Jenny Edbrooke's *What Goes Up - Must Come Down* (2006), the artist - naked from the waist - sits on a large piece of white paper presenting anecdotes about the vagina and asks assistants to give out props that the audience are invited to throw towards a small bucket at the target area. Though the form of the performance documentation appears to be quite different in these two cases (a quiz team's score card in the former and a pattern of objects related to Edbrooke's vagina in the latter), the fact that this documentation is a direct consequence of the performance implies a quality shared by both works. Indeed, Live

Art documentation can be seen to serve a number of purposes – FrenchMottershead are an excellent example of Live Artists who have played with the content and structure of documentation, devising accessible forms to engender a closer engagement with the audience whilst also generating documentation as professional evidence of the work. The outcomes of Live Art documentation in this context allow a broader dissemination of the work, providing a trace for the audience to reflect upon and discuss, and help an artist obtain further commissions and funding opportunities.

Archives and Institutionalisation of Live Art

In 2003, Arts Council England funded an action research project by Live Art UK, a British consortium of venues, support organisations and promoters who are passionate about presenting and developing Live Art. Whilst a number of the organisations who are part of the network are the UK experts on Live Art, other members of Live Art UK view Live Art as one of the many artforms their organisation works with. In addition to embedding the appreciation for Live Art within wider contemporary culture, specifically as a recognised field of practice associated to Fine Art and Performance Art, Live Art UK tries to buffer against the tendency for interest in Live Art to disappear when an individual leaves a job. This is particularly important because of the lack of venue-based organisations that focus primarily on Live Art. Moreover, the presence of this network is significant because of how Live Art has been historically understood by funding bodies. At the time of writing, activity is currently focussed on networking meetings and advocacy projects within the UK and internationally. Live Art UK pushes for more resources and public consciousness of Live Art through a number of projects. The existence of such a cross-regional and strategic organisation is perhaps an indication that an ‘institutional background for the conferring of the status of objects’ (Dickie, 1974: 33) now exists for Live Art.

One of the key organisations within the Live Art UK network is the Live Art Development Agency - In 2009, the Live Art Development Agency celebrated its 10th birthday. In comparison to the other players in the small field of organisations supporting British Live Art, it is quite young. However, through the visionary leadership of Director Lois Keidan, the seeds for the Agency’s cultivation were sown in 1997, when Keidan left her job as Director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts’ Live Arts programme, taking with her the then Deputy Director of Live Arts, Catherine Ugwu. As with all arms of British Live Art’s infrastructure, people have been a key strength and resource for the Agency, assisting and advising Live Artists about their work as well as providing general resources and advocating for the sector. Since its conception, the

Agency has assertively sketched out clear ground for the definition of Live Art practice. The Agency has curated seasons such as the seminal 'Live Culture' series of events at the Tate Modern in 2003¹², which helped circulate the ethos and examples of Live Art practice to a wider contemporary culture-going audience. Further, it has a hugely useful Study Room, has worked on a number of international performance conferences and numerous projects. Since its inception LADA has co-ordinated professional development programmes for emerging artists (such as Fresh Air and Fresh Tips – an annual information and platform event in London aimed at recent graduates, previously East End Collaborations and Everything You Wanted to Know About Live Art But Were Afraid To Ask), mid-career artists (DIY – a scheme where Live Artists design and deliver a professional development scheme for other Live Artists, and One-to-One bursaries) and senior levels (through high-level advice and information sessions). One-to-One bursary recipient Rona Lee particularly valued the scheme as at the time (2004/2005), she was reassessing the direction and manifestations of her practice, and, 'that scheme is particularly generous in that it doesn't ask you to determine your practice in terms of particular media'. Through its diverse portfolio of work, LADA has positively contributed to the lives of hundreds of Live Artists, helping establish a strong institutional context for those who are interested in such work.

Another member of Live Art UK is Artsadmin, who started out in 1979 as a support structure for artists working with the Roundhouse. Providing practical support (such as producing management reports and doing risk assessments) to a small number of 'managed artists' including Bobby Baker, Station House Opera and Graham Miller, Artsadmin aim to take care of bureaucratic and administrative worries so that artists can maximise their time making work. Like LADA, Artsadmin has also run several bursary schemes, such as a scheme devoted to artists working with digital media and another specifically for research and development. Artsadmin also delivered the Arts Council England-supported deciBel awards (2004, 2006), which seek to address the underrepresentation of African, Asian and Caribbean artists and curators in British contemporary art. One of Artsadmin's bursary recipients, Cindy Oswin, undertook a project documenting experiences of underground theatre in 1960s and 1970s, specifically interviewing artists and attendees to events at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Oswin's research has produced video interviews and a performance lecture where she not only explained the status of performance during the period but also

¹² For details, including videos of panel discussions, artist presentations and performances, see the Tate's website: <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/liveculture/> [Accessed 26 March 2012/September 2008].

recreated works by her peers. Through the comprehensive experience of their 20-strong staff, together with projects such as those by Oswin and Gary Stevens' Performance Lab – an improvisation-based workshop where the artist (who refuses to document) works with people who don't see themselves as performers – Artsadmin embeds the archives of British Live Art into its vital work. Whilst LADA and Artsadmin work together on a number of advocacy and strategic initiatives for Live Art, Artsadmin associates itself with 'interdisciplinary art' projects, a term that it considers wider than Live Art. Furthermore, in contrast to LADA's response to a sectoral, structural need, Artsadmin views its development as reflecting broad interest in contemporary art in general.

A key project of Live Art UK that has significantly contributed to the documentation of British Live Art is the publication of the *Live Art Almanac* (Brine & Minton, 2008) and *Live Art Almanac Vol. 2* (Keidan, Mitchell, Mitchelson et al, 2011) chronicling some of the recent published and previously unpublished writing about British Live Art. In 2006, an open call on the 'Live Art List'¹³ was announced, asking,

what articles have you read, what emails did you receive or forward to a friend, what blogs have you visited, what texts crossed your path? Did they engage you, amuse you, or make you rethink Live Art? If it caught your eye and had something interesting to say then we want to know about it (Brine and Minton, 2008: 6).

One of the pieces included in the first *Live Art Almanac* was a transcript of Live Art activist John Jordan's presentation at the Everything You Wanted to Know About Live Art But Were Afraid to Ask event at Queen Mary, University of London in May 2007. Titled 'Seven Live Art Tips' Jordan advises emerging artists to 'upset the canons – dissolve and expand the definitions of what could and should be and just do what you do' (Jordan, 2007: 61). Such iconoclasm is almost to be expected from the man who founded the Clandestine Insurgency Rebel Clown Army and who has praised The Vacuum Cleaner's *Prayers to Products* (2003) – an intervention where the artist invents prayers to consumer palaces, prostrating himself in front of and inside high street shops and shopping centres around the country (fig. 11), inviting members of the public to join in.

¹³ An electronic email list compiling information and discussion relating to Live Art, Performance Art and New Performance. Available by subscription or at: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/archives/liveart.html [Accessed on 28 November 2008 6 March 2012].



Figure 11 Vacuum Cleaner. Prayers to Products. House of Fraser, Oxford Street, London, 2003. Immo Klink.

I first encountered The Vacuum Cleaner (aka James Leadbetter) at the National Review of Live Art, Glasgow in 2007 when we had both just failed to get into the performance *The Murky World of Latent Heat (Cloud Piece)* (2007), by Nic Green. As it was my first time to the NRLA – the long-running main Live Art showcase in Britain - I was unaware of the queuing etiquettes that regular attendees were accustomed to¹⁴. Wisely advised by Leadbetter, we started a queue for Guillermo Gómez-Peña's *Mapa/Corpo2 – Interactive Rituals for the New Millennium* performance, due to start in about an hour and a half. Smug that we were within the first five people in the queue, we took the opportunity to ponder the NRLA's history¹⁵.

In 2010, the NRLA celebrated 30 years of its core activities of bringing international performers to British audiences, premiering work by established British Live Artists and showcasing work by emerging artists selected by cross-regional team of promoters and Live Art curators. Although there are a number of competing festivals such as the Bristol-based Inbetween Time, Fierce! Festival in Birmingham, Wunderbar in Newcastle, music-centred Futuresonic Festival in Manchester and a multitude of

¹⁴ Audiences for the NRLA buy a ticket to enter the building that gives them access to any performance taking place in the venue. However, availability is strictly limited in a number of halls and a 'one-in-one-out' policy is only enforced for appropriate performances. Being told there is no more availability for a performance is therefore a regular occurrence, almost viewed as an 'authentic' part of the NRLA experience. The frustrating and time-consuming practice of queuing often leads experienced members of the audience to run out from one performance before the applause to join the queue for the next one. Members of the audience have also been detected leaving one performance early to avoid being last in the queue for the proceeding performance in a next-door hall.

¹⁵ We subsequently realised that we were queuing for an unlimited capacity performance.

smaller regional platforms including Fresh!, Platform North East and Rational Rec, the NRLA has been the most significant date in the calendar for artists, programmers, curators and researchers of Live Art in the UK.

The documentation of Live Art performances over the NRLA's history makes a significant contribution to the Live Art Archive, particularly since its relocation from Nottingham Trent University to a new home at University of Bristol. The Live Art Archive's accompanying Record of Live Art Practice consists of numerous materials including flyers, DVDs, photographs and other documentary materials of events such as NRLA from (mainly) British Live Art from 1994 until the present day. Despite its valuable involvement in the development of British Live Art, in 1990, the NRLA's 10th year, Director Nikki Millican stated that, 'The National Review of Live Art receives £40.00 in public subsidies', (National Review of Live Art, 1990: 2) from Glasgow District Council, Strathclyde Regional Council and the Scottish Arts Council. The NRLA's grant receipts have thankfully increased over the last 20 years, with the company receiving £230,000 of 'flexible funding' from Creative Scotland (successor to the Scottish Arts Council) in 2011/12, as well as receiving funds from Glasgow City Council. Sadly, at the time of writing *New Moves International*, the parent company of the National Review of Live Art has ceased activity following a police investigation over financial irregularities¹⁶.

Regarding arts funding, in 1999, Live Art was moved out of the Combined Arts into Visual Arts Department in Arts Council England's *National* office – some of the *Regions* however, decided to retain responsibility for Live Art within the Combined Arts or Visual Arts Departments, decided at the discretion of Heads of Department, and according to the expertise of individual Relationship Managers. Arts Council England has historically held an interest in the archiving of Live Art, and chose the subject to interrogate the fragility and complexity of archiving contemporary artforms. In their study 'Live Art Archive Research – A Report to the Arts Council of England', Goldman-Jacob Associates et al, (1994) found that most Regularly Funded Organisations did not regularly archive their work, recommending that,

documenting past work needs special consideration....Opportunities for people to consider new and different concepts of documentation would be very welcome. Some organisations felt that documentation was an artistic or curatorial activity in its own right, and called for the creation of a new category of professional – the 'documenturg' (Goldman-Jacob Associates et al, 1994: 38)

¹⁶ See <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/police-called-after-scots-arts-company-wound-up.16139975> [Accessed 26 March 2012]

Arts Council England has actively supported the notion of documenting in Live Art, expecting artists and organisations to include documentation as an expenditure line in their budget when making an application for funding and also asking for documentation as part of the supporting material for an application. However, some artists, including Duckie - who have been programming weekly performance events in the Vauxhall Tavern, South London gay nightclub since 1995, and Liz Aggiss – a Brighton-based artist who makes Live Art, dance performance, dance for camera, screen-dance and dance for installation – state that they are not under pressure from funders to provide such documentation. Aggiss claims,

In my experience it's your history, your success, your delivery and the funders who you work with. They don't ask to see that catalogue by any stretch of the imagination, that's not part of the way they've ever worked with us.

Although, this is the case for some Live Artists, it is the exception rather than the rule. From 1999-2001, Arts Council of England ran the National Live Art Publication Fund (1999) in the Visual Arts Department, a scheme that aimed to 'provide artists working in Live Art with the opportunity to publish documentation and writing on their work'. One publication that came out of this scheme was the hugely popular *Guerrilla Performance and Multimedia* (Hill and Paris, 2001). The book is focussed on the practicalities of being a Live Artist, the type of resource that the authors craved, 'when we were starting our careers' (Hill and Paris, 2001: 1). That there is a whole section devoted to 'Documentation and Marketing' (2001: Section 5) is testimony to the significance of documentation for Live Artists. The chapter consists of interviews with a videographer and performance photographer and its content is almost entirely practical, indicative of the fact that although theorists of performance and Live Art continued to contest the meaning of documentation, artists themselves – for the most part – have been investing in and providing documentation for the purposes of funding applications.

Prior to the National Live Art Publication Fund initiative, *Performance Magazine* was an important source of information on Live Art, whose writers included the artists Bobby Baker and Rose English. *Performance Magazine's* special issues belie the interests of Live Art at the time – for instance, issue 40 (March/April 1986) was a special on 'training', featuring two worried looking artists – Marty St James and Anne Wilson - on the front cover ballroom dancing: a deadly serious male in a tux with a shock of dyed blond hair and his uncomfortable female partner robed in a yellow taffeta ball gown and matching tights, white elbow length gloves, silver shoes and sequins about the eyebrows, they hoped to make the heats of the TV series *Come Dancing*. Regular yet ephemeral publications such as *Performance Magazine* are useful advocates for Live

Art practice, however, more permanent, critical and sustainable publishing structures are also required to develop discourse and awareness of the artform.

The now legendary *Performance Magazine* first started in the late 1970s, continuing up to the early 1990s. A complete set of the magazines is part of the Live Art Archive at University of Bristol whose flourishing collection comprises: The Record of Live Art Practice (RLAP), an archive of over 200,000 objects including video documentation as well as promotional materials, reviews and general ephemera relating to Live Art performances from 1960s up to the present day; The National Review of Live Art Archive (NRLA Archive), video collection of performances from the UK's leading Live Art festival; Digital Performance Archive (DPA), a select collection of virtual theatre performances between 1990 and 2000; Arts Council England Live Art and Performance Archive (ACELAP Archive), archive of video documentation of experimental performance supported by the Arts Council during the 1980s and 1990s; The queerupnorth Video Archive (QUN Archive), video archive of Europe's largest LGBT arts festival, including submissions to the festival; The Franko B Archive; The David Hughes Live Art Archive (Incorporating Hybrid, Live Art Magazine and Live Art Listings) personal collection of David Hughes (120 boxes), editor of Live Art Magazine, including video documentation of performances and ephemera.

The Live Art Archive is a valuable resource to those wishing to study Live Art, as well as for those writing the histories of this artform. Aside from ideological debates around the diversity of voices an archive is able to present, in practice critique of the archive is subsumed to the normal business of research and guardianship. The Live Art Archive makes itself accessible through talks and events, participating in Live Art practice such as presentations at discussions at national performance platforms and conferences about Live Art and performing arts archives, thereby enabling the archive to become a collective repository. The archiving tendency is not only motivated by those who wish to write themselves into history but is also perpetuated by a fear of losing narratives, that certain stories will go out of circulation.

The inclusion of David Hughes' archive is interesting in this context, because it shows the passage through which an individual passes in order to become accepted by the archive – those who look after the archive, the archons and those who have the ability/knowledge/authority to make themselves recognised by the archons are able to determine the archive's contents (Derrida, 1996: 2). The apparatus of the archive is only accessed through certain power structures: As editor of Live Art Listings, Hybrid

Magazine and Live Art Magazine, David Hughes is included as a respected individual in British Live Art history. Since he was providing a public platform for artists to present their work and be visible, he thus gained power and respect and it is without a doubt that the Live Art Archive is replenished with the original materials collected in the David Hughes archive.

The British Library National Sound Archive Drama and Literature section is also an important resource for Live Art documentation, as it includes documentation from performances at LIFT, ICA and Barclays New Stages between 1985 to 1995, as well as personal archives from a number of British Live Artists such as Goat Island and Stan's Cafe. Digital resources are also being preserved through a collaborative initiative between the LADA and British Library called The Live Art Collection. This resource, which collects archives of websites is part of the UK Web Archive project which started in 2008. At the time of writing, 79 websites have been archived under The Live Art Collection, including a valuable archive of the now defunct New Moves International website¹⁷.

The archive has, in practical ways, become significant to the development of British Live Art despite the various theoretical debates about its effectiveness. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida suggests that the archive originally refers to a physical place and hermeneutic right presided over by *archons*, the custodians of documents (Derrida, 1996: 2). Its logic, dictated by the *archons*, is necessarily coherent and transparent, suppressing diversity of content for simplicity of order. Critics may suggest that it is this denial of multivocality, coupled with the determination of the 'archive' content and coherence by its technical structure (Derrida, 1996: 16–17), prescribing the totality of that which has been officially sanctioned as acceptable for posterity that writers on performance find problematic. Despite the fact that the institutional apparatus and support structures for Live Art are currently in a much stronger position than they have ever been, it is nevertheless necessary for those engaging with these structures to be mindful and critical of the assumptions underpinning these institutions. As Carole Steedman states (cited in Reason, 2006: 32),

the Archive is made from the selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there...

¹⁷ see <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/ukwa/target/27623481/source/alpha> [Accessed 26 March 2012]

For instance, in an effort to reinstate into Live Art history those practitioners whose work has been marginalised, the Live Art Development Agency Study Room has enthusiastically included and represented artists whose work deals with issues such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability. Projects such as the Agency's *Restock, Rethink, Reflect* (2009-2012), whose explicit purpose is to address Live Art's relationship to cultural identity and difference are to be commended in terms of advocating for the Live Artists invited to participate, however, such concentrated efforts necessarily overlook the work of others. Similarly, the Live Art Archive at the University of Bristol - like almost all archives in a time of public funding cuts - is dependent on donations, in other words, dependent on those who have the inclination and ability to donate. Regardless of what Steedman terms the 'mad fragmentations' and anomalous inclusions in these archives, the fact that they collect together documentation by established British Live Artists can easily be read by the casual user and the general public as validation by the archons of *all* material retained under the umbrella of the archive. Examining the ideological aspect of the 'archive', Derrida states, 'there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity' (Derrida, 1996: 3). In Part Two (section Gossip and Myth), I will discuss the work of Mark McGowan, a Live Artist whose work has been frequently excluded from debates on Live Art and often ridiculed on aforementioned 'Live Art List'¹⁸.

By manipulating memory for the purposes of material collection, the archivolithic principle that participates in an institutionalisation and stockpiling of information, 'accumulation and capitalisation of memory' (Derrida, 1996: 12) highlights the finitude of authority of psychical memory. Not only does the dependence on material memory instigate an universal loss of function and value for psychical memory, it is also said to reiterate the already existing archive structure. This is the conclusion that Rebecca Schneider arrives at. In 2001, Schneider wrote a seminal article 'Performance Remains', taking up the 'archival' trope of performance art documentation. In 2006 she wrote a short piece which was included in the *Live Art Almanac*, a piece that featured a substantially modified position about documentation and the archive. Heavily influenced by Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1996) and Phelan's essay on the ontology of performance (1993), Schneider's earlier article was unrelentingly negative about the significance of documents relating to performance. In particular, she expresses concern over the archive's ideological and technical preference for text and physical objects. Documents are seen as supplementary to performance, their textuality

¹⁸ Exchanges on this e-list are not immediately to the general public but are available by subscription at: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/archives/liveart.html [Accessed 26 March 2012]

rejecting bodily action as meaningful, thus disputing the very concept of performance, which she characterises as consciously marginalising text. The tangibility of documentation is thus for Schneider ontologically at odds with performance's transient character (2001: 101).

Schneider asserts that the 'archive' necessitates a deference to supplementarity and defence of the machinic. Such an attitude to supplementarity in the form of textual material is perceived by Schneider to lead to a hypostatisation of the notion of performance, a notion that is built from embodied actions and oral histories. Posing the question of whether 'the logic of the archive rather demand[s] that performance disappear in favour of discrete remains' (2001: 102), Schneider suggests that the cultural paradigm governing the 'archive' perceives oral histories and memory as less authentic and valid than material or written evidence. This critical position suggests that archive ideology denigrates the capacity of performance as a legitimate and valid cultural expression. For Schneider, memory is an essential aspect of performance history, however, its structure denies it a place in the 'archive',

because oral history and its performance practices are always decidedly repeated, oral historical practices are always reconstructive, always incomplete, never in thrall to the singular or self-same origin that buttresses archontic lineage. In performance as memory, the pristine sameness of an 'original', so valued by the archive, is rendered impossible - or, if you will, mythic (2001: 102).

Suspicious of the principle *and* instances of oral history accounts being included in the 'archive', Schneider views the presentation of such materials as attempts to verify particular narratives of history by attaching empirical evidence, which subsequently lose their autonomous value and submit to the archive's ideology. For her, oral histories take on the function of supplementary evidence to a prescribed narrative or ideology (2001: 103).

In her article included in *The Live Art Almanac*, Schneider reassesses her previous articulations about the documentation of performance, in an effort to 'unthink' them (2007: 117). Although she still considers *most* documentation of performance to be 'a supplement, a stand-in for the event itself, or an instance of its traces or detritus', Schneider now asserts the possibility of performance taking place through certain photographic acts, adopting a stance which has resonances with Philip Auslander's in 'The Performativity of Performance Documentation' (2006).

Economics of Live Art

In contemporary visual art practice, the 'market' can be described as demand for an artist's work outside their personal connections (and ideally outside the artform), which

would indicate acceptance of the work by a wider cultural context. Engagement with the market also entails that parties connected to the work are involved in setting an exchange value for the work, otherwise known as the ‘subscription’ process. In *Taste Buds - How to Cultivate the Art Market* (2004), Hargreaves McIntyre state that the value of an artwork is dependent on numerous factors, but most significantly, depends on the legitimacy given to an artist’s output, judged by their interactions with the institutions of the art world (2004: 74). In the UK, the endorsement of an artist by London-based public galleries and larger regional galleries is vital to market ‘subscription’, as is critical reviews of the artist’s work. By this definition, work created by the majority of Live Artists in the UK is not involved in subscription circles, however, some Live Artists are able to financially exploit the traces of their live work. As is discussed in *Owning Art*, the market for visual art is one of the most unregulated industries in the world (Buck & Greer, 2006: 108) and the research and literature on the topic of the UK visual art market is limited and not always accurate. Much of the work that goes into validating an artist’s cultural capital goes on behind closed doors through word of mouth and unofficial networks.

In his article surveying the aesthetic and social processes implicated in the craft of Trobriand Islands, Alfred Gell discusses the cultural and economic value of art objects. His primary thesis suggests that art objects – as examples of excellently made objects – can be thought of as a component of technology (1992: 43), differentiated from naturally occurring beautiful objects. For Gell, art is a realm of production that uniquely brings to the fore the ‘technical productive activity’ (1992: 60) involved in all human endeavour. I wish to return to Gell’s thesis about the symbolic power of the art object and the processes it embodies in Part Two (section Objects and Commodities in Live Art), and for the time being, I wish to consider his comments on artists’ labour.

One can situate Gell’s comment that ‘artists are not paid for “working” for us’ (1992: 57), within contemporary discourse on the economy of the arts in the UK and the politics of the subsidised art sector. Discussion of these issues within the academic realm has been spearheaded by the book *Why Are Artists Poor?* (2002) by Dutch artist and economist Hans Abbing, and the resurgence of interest in work by social theorists such as Maurizio Lazzarato on issues of immaterial labour (1996). The trope of art as an afflicted pursuit is summarised by Abbing’s list of longstanding myths about the arts (2002: 31) including,

- 14 Money and commerce devalue art.
- 15 Artistic quality can only exist if it independent of costs and demand.

16 Artists have to suffer.

Of these, Abbing states, 'these widely shared beliefs can also be called myths, because people don't believe that they need verification' (2002: 30).

Like Abbing, Gell acknowledges that despite today's market-driven circulation of art objects, work by artists nevertheless continues to be viewed within the framework of a gift economy where the economic value of an artwork does not correlate to the value of the labour put into the work by the artist. In that artists today still struggle to have their production financially recognised, one might suggest that the economic conception of the artist has been little effected by the shifts from art's sacral function to its position within modernism, nor has it been bolstered by government funded reports upholding the cultural industries as a key driver of economic activity and tourism in contemporary society. In addition to considering Live Art's value in artistic and financial terms (the market for trading documentation and performance detritus), Live Art producer Richard Kingdom also wishes to reiterate the frequency with which Live Art (and contemporary art in general) are championed as drivers of 'cultural and civic regeneration' (2010: 71).

The issue of immaterial labour and recognition of artists' economic value is crucially important to Live Art, as an artform that does not rely primarily on the production of tangible objects for its circulation. Moreover, Live Art – a form with roots in both the performing and fine arts – is subject to the negative economic factors of both spheres. In his concise summary of the challenges and opportunities for Live Artists to work within the growing economy around Live Art, written for *In Time: A Collection of Live Art Case Studies*, Kingdom asserts,

the uneasiness that many Live Artists have with the commercial exploitation of mainstream performance continually manifests itself in the work's opposition to the identifiable aesthetics of commercialism (2010: p.71).

According to Kingdom, although the cultural sector as a whole needs to develop its understanding of how Live Art economies can work, there is a growing network of artists, curators and programmers working with Live Art who have been keen to grasp Live Art's vibrancy and relevance as a Twenty-First Century artform that is able to articulate the complexities of generating and circulating cultural capital in the contemporary age.

Since discourse about the value of artists' labour is almost always predicated from the standpoint of fine art (the dominant ideology and critical paradigm for consideration of cultural production), within this context, performance is either seen as a off-shoot of theatre – which Michael Fried in his essay 'Art and Objecthood' notoriously termed the

'negation of art' (1967: 126) - or it is misunderstood as an artform in the process of transition, whose eventual aim is to take on a more tangible form. Although for some Live Artists in the UK, working within the theatre context and presenting their work in a format that is familiar to theatre-going audience is appropriate for their individual practice, in general, subsuming Live Art under the umbrella of theatre fundamentally denies the multifarious ways in which Live Art operates with its environment and audience. An implicit assumption of categorising Live Art as theatre is that producers and artists will seek to operate on conventional logistical and economic paradigms built for the theatre – whilst this may work for the 'show'-length works by Forced Entertainment, they are often wholly inappropriate for six-hour long durational pieces like *Quizoola!* (1996). Even though the format of an improvisational structure as is utilised in Forced Entertainment's *Quizoola!* has precursors in the Happenings of the 1950s and 1960s, it may be said that both financially and institutionally, such events have remained largely marginalised until recently. Whilst Bourriaud's critique of Fried (1998: 59) has received attention for seeking to revive the positioning of the audience's relationship to the artwork, a 'relational art' continues to situate itself firmly within the context of the visual art gallery context, whereas Live Art maintains its nomadicism as a fundamental strategy¹⁹. Within the British context, it is only in the last ten years that performance works that challenge the use of space, duration and audience interaction have been introduced into mainstream cultural spaces beyond the stalwart experimental performance festivals such as Inbetween Time, the National Review of Live Art and London International Festival of Theatre. Furthermore, the fact that young, grass-roots artists and small companies such as Forest Fringe and You Me Bum Bum Train are acquiring ongoing support by Arts Council England and are featured in British Council showcases is representative of the growing public and institutional appetite for Live Art.

By and large, the economics of Live Art in the UK operates within the subsidised art sector. Organisations, producers and venues who work with Live Art obtain funding from a limited number of funding sources, namely, Arts Council England, charitable trusts and foundations (such as Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Jerwood Foundation). Higher education is also a significant contributor to the economy of Live Art, with education institutions supporting events and projects about Live Art, employing artists and researchers with special interests in the field or seeking funding for projects through the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Ticket sales, private

¹⁹ The concept of relational aesthetics will be explored further in Part Three, section Experiencing Documentation.

giving and crowdfunding are now being pursued more vigorously, particularly in the light of continued cuts to government spending on the arts and the Coalition government's campaign to increase philanthropy²⁰. Live Art is therefore dependent on support from enthusiastic producers and programmers at subsidised building-based arts organisations, an artform reliant on institutional economics in the first instance. Live Artists can also individually apply for funding from a select number of organisations including Arts Council England. They may also seek occasional public art commissions and cross-subsidise their income from educational work or non-arts related employment. However, the majority of independent performance platforms and 'scratch nights' where Live Artists regularly present their new work give little or no remuneration. Elsewhere in *In Time*, Sonya Dyer comments, the problem of sustainability is a real concern, however. How long can practitioners be expected to run shoestring projects and maintain the rest of their lives – partners, families, rent – if they are not themselves economically privileged? (2010: 15)

Both Live Artists who are established, as well as emerging artists, acknowledge the limited financial recompense of performing live and therefore look to any methods to prolong the event, such as documentation, as a means to further increase their financial and cultural value as an artist, augment their sources of income and encourage awareness of their field of work. Indeed, it is often established artists who have the most to financially gain in this respect. For those who already have a following, a DVD of past performances or a limited print based on an earlier work attracts a ready-made audience, a product that is more appealing to publishers and distributors than the work of an unknown artist.

One of the most significant phenomena in the British contemporary art scene was the establishment of Frieze Art Fair in 2003. The seismic impact of this international art fair's arrival effected cultural activity in a number of ways – Frieze prompted a marked increase of interest in contemporary visual arts from the general public; it hastened the establishment of London as a strong, innovative centre for the production, sale and reception of contemporary visual art, and precipitated a rise in the number of individuals making money from the production of contemporary art. As part of the fair's wider programme, a series of works called *Frieze Projects* is commissioned each year, and as a mobile and relatively flexible genre, performance and Live Art is increasingly employed to activate and engage the public in this context. This has contributed to a

²⁰ Most notably this manifested in Arts Council England's Catalyst Arts Fund, which aims to help cultural organisations access more private funding. See <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-for-funding/strategic-funding/grant-programmes/catalyst-arts/> [Accessed 26 March 2012]

growing awareness of Live Art within a wider culture-attending public. Coupled with the introduction of the Licensing Act (2003) restricting activities such as musical performance involving two or more artists without first obtaining a licence²¹, Live Art (particularly in its subtle and interventionist forms) found an opportunity to determine itself as a financially and logistically viable alternative to music at arts events such as private views. Moreover, the reinstatement of performance within the gallery refers back to visual artists' experiments with performance in the 1960s. This appropriation of Live Art by the gallery has manifested equally in both commercial galleries such as Rokeby in Central London and artist-run spaces like the (now defunct) Fieldgate and Alma Enterprises²², all of whom have featured Live Art performance at private view events in 2008. This marks a palpable shift, within the last six to eight years, from the presentation of the performance document in the gallery context to the presentation of live performance itself. However, it remains to be seen whether this trend will result in Live Artists developing long-standing relationships with galleries, in the form of commissions and gallery representation.

The interest in Live Art from the visual art sector is not necessarily unwelcome, in fact, Lois Keidan has noted (at Everything You Need to Know About Live Art., 2004) that 'making for the markets' is a crucial consideration for any Live Artist who wishes to view their practice professionally, calling for Live Artists to make a distinction between selling a product and selling the performance (the latter being a promotional activity). She further outlined her understanding of the context for valuing Live Art at a symposium in January 2008 initiated by the organisation Collecting Live Art. The symposium attracted artists, art professionals, organisations and collectors, featuring an accompanying performance programme that explained that each performance presented was available for sale and informed the audience of how to enquire about a work if interested in purchasing it. The organisation has gone on to curate performance programmes for art fairs in the UK and internationally. According to Collecting Live Art's research, the market for Live Art has manifested less in collecting of works, instead, the initiative has resulted in a number of private individuals developing continued interest in the commissioning and patronage of Live Art. In terms of Live Art's exchange objects, sales of documentation *qua* work such as photographic prints and editioned videos have attracted the most significant attention of individuals

²¹ The clause relating to live music in small venues under the Licensing Act are undergoing review at time of writing.

²² Alma Enterprises is one of a handful of galleries that consider performance a prominent element of their programme – commissioning a number of durational performance weekend events.

interested in collecting.

In his account of the history of the record's reception, Eisenberg attempts to rationalise how and why we collect cultural objects, suggesting that the penchant for collecting is aligned to the lack of roots that 'we moderns' experience (2005: 18). He asserts that we collect in order to belong and build a history, stating that the fascination for collecting enables one to not only produce history, but connects one time to another. In answer to his rhetorical question 'what is the sense of mimesis, after all?' (2005: 14) he deems that its desire is to make beauty permanent. For Live Art, the question of collecting is becoming more en vogue, as a symptom of and means to ameliorate the cultural capital that Live Art has today – the notion of collecting both reiterates and generates Live Art's cultural capital.

On a small to medium scale, Live Artists are able to benefit from the 'market interest' in Live Art, in some cases experiencing demand for photographic prints of their work, invitations to present their work within a discussion or symposium context, and requests from educational institutions to buy their DVDs or publications. The direct financial returns from selling documentation vary from artist to artist: for instance, Hayley Newman's prints are valued and feature in the Tate collection, whereas Barby Asante receives income from selling documentation of her work priced similarly to commercial film DVDs. Artists benefit from interest in their work both financially but also in terms of raising their profile: Bobby Baker notes that documentation has helped her raise money, whilst Ansuman Biswas articulates his understanding of the market in a more assertive way,

people won't believe you're an artist unless you've got documentation.... If you want to succeed in the art world you have to sell it [creative acts] as art and that's what documentation, I think, is largely for – to keep the machinery of the art world running.

Works by Franko B have been known to sell for €10,000, he states, 'you don't sell documentation for 10,000 euros. It's a work of art. Its framed, it's a very different context'. Evidently the exchange value of Franko B's work is of a different order to that of the majority of British Live Artists, who by and large do not participate in similar-sized economies. Franko B talks of having a 'financial strategy as an artist'. Using the physical traces of his performances as material, Franko B has developed a body of work that is parallel to the extravagant bloody spectacles expected by Live Art audiences. Separating and transforming the document of his live practice into another work has been an important artistic (and financial) strategy. For Franko, the primacy of

painting, sculpture and working with objects is integral to his practice, although it has not always been recognised as such in the UK,

I'm a fine artist. I'm somebody who trained in the fine art areas of painting and sculpture and through that I became a performance artist. But my performance art is not the only thing I do, I also have a studio practice.... they say "Franko is the guy that bleeds", but I don't just bleed.... I started to see my performance as a continuation of painting and sculpture – still doing them alongside my other work. There is no one area that is more important for me, they are part of the world I work in, they're all very important. I make videos, collages, sculpture, I take photos now, I DJ, that's all part of who I am.

At the point in a document's life when the artist is able to reflect on a document's aesthetic qualities, the document attempts to assert an independent identity, wanting to escape from standing for something that previously took place. The artist recognises what they have endowed to the document and, like an adoptive parent, has the liberty to choose whether the document should live its own life and find its own path, or if they will contain and contextualise the document as a record of performance. Out of the many documents comes one image/sound/text with the strength to confront the artist, presenting itself as an uncanny object, suggesting itself as capturing the performance in a way inaccessible to the mere imagination: implying something more than one can imagine, similar to what Barthes termed the 'punctum' (1993: 45). Splitting of performance from the document may or may not occur, after all, all documents are different and unique. In this way, an artist may allow the document's individuation to take place only to re-appropriate it as the starting point for a new work.

Since opting to move away from blood-based live practice and developing new live work such as *Don't Leave Me This Way* (2007), Live Art audiences have become aware that Franko B also works in other media. Franko B states that his painting and sculptural work has a currency with Italian galleries that is as yet to be realised in the UK. An exception is gallerist Guy Hilton, of the Guy Hilton Gallery in East London, who has in his basement a number of Franko B's works including some from the *I Miss You* series. Guy Hilton can be seen as supporting the artist's studio practice, however, the manner in which these works have been collected seems to suggest that Franko B's live practice is still central to general perceptions of his artistic practice as a whole. The financial and artistic value of these works, as far as Guy Hilton is concerned, is derived from their causal provenance as traces of blood-based performances by Franko B, rather than simply because they are made by Franko B, 'an artist who (has been known to) bleed'.

Part One of the thesis has defined Live Art in relation to the issue of documentation and discussed some of the pragmatic rationales that motivate Live Artists to produce documentation. Due to the practical considerations of funding, marketing and wanting to participate in the history of Live Art, documentation making can be viewed as integrated into the everyday lives of Live Artists. As a component of an increasingly professionalised artform, Live Artists view documentation as a means to participate in a community of peers and furthermore enable a different type of engagement with an audience.

Part 2: The Memorial

After having explored the practical reasons for documentation in Live Art practice, we will now turn to the notion of the memorial, which is here a rubric for all that is not instrumentalised, not purposive. In this Part, I will examine the subjective relationships between performances and documentation, what is retained due to the potent effects of documentation. I will explore the relationship between performance and writing, going on to a discussion of authenticity in Live Art documentation, followed by an examination of a performance by Aaron Williamson that serves to highlight the 'risk' implied in Live Art. I will also consider the notion of indexicality as it relates to Live Art performance and documentation and look at the notions of presence and absence, which have dominated much theorisation of performance. The chapter closes with a discussion of the commodity object in Live Art, primarily articulated through a theoretical discussion of objects and performances.

Writing Live Art

Derrida outlines writing as a dangerous supplement and *addition* to speech that calls upon the imagination, denying speech's status as the 'natural expression of thought' (1974: 144). As writing adds a 'technique', something mechanical and manual it is artificial (i.e. the opposition of natural), moreover, writing attempts to present the *absent* speech in instances where the speaker cannot themselves engage in dialogue. Perhaps this is because speech, as opposed to written language, is more difficult to appropriate (since we experience speech through the voice of another). Moreover, whilst the written language is associated with official culture and those who have access to the means of production, the spoken can be said to participate in the laws of the *carnavalesque* (Bakhtin, 1941). Rumour and controversy thrive and survive on the fragile transiency of the spoken word, a result of our capacity to forget, embellish and reinterpret speech. Speech as a mode of interaction dependent on a group of agents being constrained to a specific frame of time/place is in a constant state of becoming. In contrast, writing's receptivity to our repeated gaze is built upon its ideology of unchanging stability and semblance of controlled order.

These problematics are a continued source of debate within performance studies and within discourse about Live Art, explored by writers including Butt (2005), Phelan (1993) and Rugg (2007). Finding an appropriate form and vocabulary that brings forth the richness of both the artist's and the audience's experience that does not fetishise the event or the work is hence a key concern of performance studies. Further this

engagement with performance and Live Art as a valid subject of discourse is important to the artforms involved, facilitating their participation in the academy, enabling these understandings to permeate into broader cultural debate. As the artistic discipline of Live Art and the academic discipline of performance studies have gained momentum, writing that represents and examines Live Art has mushroomed in the last 10 years. The quest to find methods of written documentation that are appropriate and adequate for individual works of Live Art has motivated discourse on the topic across the spectrum of participants involved with the artform (from artists to curators, researchers and audience), as well as resulting in a diversification of documentation formats.

In recent years, interest in Live Art within Higher Education has mushroomed with projects initiated throughout the UK. An example of this is the Performing the Archive: The Future of the Past project (2008-09), conceived by the University of Bristol Theatre Collection's Live Art Archives and Arnolfini Live's archives and partnered with Exeter University Department of Drama. Directed by Paul Clarke, the project's aim was 'to explore how academics and artists can use and re-use documents of past events, to inflect and inspire their own performance practice and their critical thinking or writing'²³. The project explored these issues through a series of events, workshops and research papers, included the convening of a group called the Performance Re-Enactment Society where artists, curators, researchers, audience were invited to re-create and re-interpret historical performances, allowing engagement with their memories of performances and performance documentation in creative ways. This activity was carried out through public workshops and exhibitions such as at the performance symposium, which took place at the exhibition *Pigs of Today are the Hams of Tomorrow* in and around The Slaughterhouse, Royal William Yard, Plymouth (2010).

Another notable research project, Dialogic Evidence (2006-07), exploring the co-existence of performance and documentation was undertaken by Paul Stapleton at Brunel University. One of the primary activities of this project was creating a website called Live Archives which would function as a place for documentation and reflection upon a series of discussion workshops and performances devised by Stapleton. By inviting artists, curators and researchers to comment on the performances Stapleton initiated, as well as posting writing about the process of documenting Live Art, Stapleton instigated an online community engaged in debate about the subject of Live Art documentation. His methodology of creating and reflecting upon events through the

²³ <http://oldproject.arnolfini.org.uk/cgi-bin/wiki/read.cgi?section=PerformingTheArchive&page=Home> [Accessed 26 March 2012]

dynamic means of the web was crucial to engage participants in this often-contested field of study – as a live discussion, the politics of Live Art documentation was played out through the exchanges between interlocutors on the website. Although Stapleton has disseminated his findings at conferences and symposia about performance, the website which was only conceived as a ‘pilot’ project <http://www.livearchives.org> is no longer active.

What these two examples show is the opportunity for Live Art’s relationship towards documentation to be critically examined by academia through a variety of methodologies that might not otherwise be employed in academic activity. Projects such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project Practice as Research in Performance (2001-06) at the Department of Drama, University of Bristol have similarly undoubtedly broadened the scope for including creative methods in research contexts. Whilst expanding the range of ideological perspectives from which one can evaluate the documentation of Live Art, these projects have also challenged the written text as the normative site from which one assesses and interprets the representation of Live Art. Insofar as these projects have engaged the involvement of practitioners from outside academia, the desire of researchers and writers working with Live Art to engage with creative process as a part of their research methodology is illustrative of an understanding of Live Art as an artist and practitioner-centred artform. Artists using performance and live action (including Live Artists) who work within the university have historically normalised documentation as a site for ‘reading’ Live Art, whilst Live Artists working outside academia have considered documentation primarily in instrumental terms for their professional development. From a renewed understanding of documentation from the perspectives of both academics and practitioners, the documentation of Live Art can be understood as a creative space for discourse on memory, action and encounter.

Outside of academia, Live Art UK, the network of UK art organisations concerned with Live Art, instigated a programme to develop new Live Art writers, called Writing from Live Art (2006-08). Mentored by Live Artist, writer and lecturer Joshua Sofaer, the aim of the project was to foster writing about Live Art that went beyond the conventions of short reviews, without drifting into the territory of academic writing. Eight writers participated in the project, the success of which is evidenced by its outcomes, which included residencies at Spill Festival (2007) and the National Review of Live Art (2008), as well as responses to new commissions and performances as far afield as Performa in New York (2007).

Although Live Art no longer has a magazine exclusively dedicated to coverage of the artform (as *Live Art Magazine* used to do), it is regularly featured in publications such as *Total Theatre* and research-focussed journals including *The Drama Review* and *Performance Research*. Live Art also occasionally features in contemporary visual arts publications with broad readership such as *Frieze* and *Art Monthly*, usually in the context of a feature on a major commission or event (i.e. Anna Dezeuze's feature on the Tate Liverpool exhibition *Art, Lies and Performance* featured in *Art Monthly* 273, 2004 or *Frieze*'s coverage of the New York Performa biennale, 2007). One may surmise that Live Art's incrementally growing inclusion under the umbrella of contemporary art media coverage is indicative of its developing profile as an artform, which is no longer exclusively reliant on specialist platforms for discussion and interpretation. Over the duration of this research project, I have noted that the sophistication and critical awareness of discussion of Live Art in the context of contemporary art coverage has increased, and it must be noted that the presence of Live Art in mainstream arts coverage is fruitful to the development of the artform, as it informs artists' approaches to ever-growing audience and celebrates achievements in the sector, strongly advocating for the sector.

From conventional formats such as reviews for magazines and texts for academic journals to instructions for imagined performances, alternative narratives of Live Art history, through to writing that experiments with visual presentation, writing on Live Art has developed in a multiplicity of forms to address the artform's playful, inclusive character. Nick Kaye celebrates the fact that instead of writing straightforward accounts of performance, Live Artists have increasingly taken to documenting their performances by means that demand a performative dimension, such as setting out instructions for re-staging the performance, or a deliberately puzzling text layout, that aims to 'make an event of reading' (Kaye, 1994a: 6).

An early publication that creatively utilised textual documentation of Live Art was the *Shattered Anatomies* collection (Heathfield, Templeton & Quick, 1997) - a number of loose sheets of variously sized paper and objects, housed in a large corrugated cardboard box. Presented like a craft kit, this sophisticated and poetic collection comprises of texts, ranging from performance works that take the form of written instructions by Serbian-born artist Gordana Stanisic and instructions for staging performances by Stelarc, to texts that are closer to the review (reflections on ORLAN's performances), as well as performance detritus in the form of objects from Bobby

Baker's performances. There is no explanation of how to interpret or read the objects contained in the box - instead the reader can perform and experiment with its resources at their leisure. It is not immediately obvious what relation the small book, 'Repeat Forever' by Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment, has to an actual performance. Instead of outlining a narrative, Chicago-based collective Goat Island's collection of acetates 'Here Lyes the Body' visually share more with languages of graphic design than traditional methods of representation in performance documentation. *Shattered Anatomies* questions the adequacy of conventional means of performance documentation, highlighting the representational failure of conventional mimetic approaches to documentation. Kaye (1994a: 7) suggests that Live Artists who engage with documentation without acknowledging its culturally problematic status necessarily give themselves up uncritically to the forces of reproduction. The consequent shift towards performative writing and oral history is seen as allowing space for a 'plurality' of reflections on the performance event and experience, rather than aspiring to an objective presentation of the performance. By privileging prejudice as positive, documentation qua performance writing iterates an alternative vision of a performance.



Figure 12. Joshua Sofaer. *Many Headed Monster*. 2009. Live Art Development Agency

Meanwhile, new publications such as Joshua Sofaer's *Many Headed Monster* (2009) (fig. 12) present Live Art documentation in ever more sophisticated packaging, iterating a precious and privileged space for contemplating this artform. Much like Sofaer's *The Performance Pack* (2004), the publication is a resource for individual and collective reflection upon the relationships between practitioners, presenters and audiences of Live Art, which can be 'performed' as a lecture or workshop. The *Many Headed Monster's* aesthetically pleasing box, with its numerous facsimiled archive postcards reiterates the concept of the limited edition publication. So exaggerated is the objectification and commodification of Live Art in these forms that the issue of viewing the documentation *qua work* is to some extent mitigated - these instances of

documentation are so at odds with fragile live action that one can be sure there is no desire to substitute one for the other.

Richard Layzell's *Enhanced Performance* (Levy, 1998) is another seminal example of performance documentation that has been published in book form. Presented as a catalogue of stories about Layzell's performances from 1969-1998, *Enhanced Performance* feels like an exhibition catalogue where the artist is left to roam free as curator. Of *The Blue Fingers* (1986-88), a residency culminating in performances on the streets of the City of London where the artist made large drawings on the pavement using chalk and crayon wearing a blue suit as an attempt to conform with the City workers he says,

despite my suit – it wasn't quite the right suit – the people who engaged with me, talked to me, asked what I was doing, were not the ones wearing suits. They were the cleaners, the caterers, the vagrants, the security guards. They were friendly, said I was brightening the place up, seemed to enjoy the contact. But I was after the suits and started to approach them deliberately.... As the drawings grew bigger the risk of confrontation increased. I was asked to stop by a security guard. I explained what I was doing and he went away. A second security guard came out from the same building and repeated the request. Again I explained and told him that his company has helped fund the project. A third security guard appeared. It was is [sic] if we were gradually moving up the social scale, maybe this was as high as you could go in security. He was to tell me the full story. A boss had complained, said I was making a mess. Not just any boss but the big boss. He could see me from his window at the top, so I had to stop (Layzell, cited in Levy, 1998: 48-49)

In addition to the requisite images of work, the book includes excerpts from 'preparatory notes/writings' and photographs of cut-up texts used during preparation processes, playing with graphic layouts and fonts to represent sketches and images within the book's margins. By 'performing' with layouts and the conventions of book design, *Enhanced Performance* presents an alternative format for the Live Artist's book that aims to mimic the sketchbook and map the creative process.

Another innovative approach to writing about performance memory and place comes in the form of Mike Pearson's *In Comes I*. Based on the landscape the author experienced whilst growing up in Lincolnshire, the book presents a series of 'excursions' that the reader is encouraged to read whilst visiting the relevant locations – sometimes these detail personal accounts of local history, other excursions are lessons in Fifteenth Century land politics. The book starts with a description of a performance 'Bubbling Tom' in Hibaldstow, North Lincolnshire, involving Pearson giving,

a guided tour – 'a journey, not an object'...of the places I knew at the age of six or seven, walking as if in the couple of years either side of 1955. A site-specific performance 'on my own doorstep', 'in my own backyard', within, and concerning, the landscape of my childhood, site of earliest and formative experiences and sealed in a particular envelope of memory, for in 1957, we moved to the nearby village of Kirton in Lindsey (Pearson, 2006: 22).

Through its manner of apprehending landscape, *'In Comes I'* investigates sites of memory where performance has taken place and provides a guide for audiences to create their own performance.

As a means of creative media, dissemination and potentially a source of income, performative writing is becoming an ever-more popular strategy for Live Artists, particularly those who are adverse to more denotational forms of documentation. Participating in this media allows Live Artists to have their work accessed by an audience who might not be able to attend the performance, with publications such as these featuring in many libraries of UK art colleges and universities. Moreover, the control given by the book format to the artist enables them to explore their own creative response and documentation of their performance. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that Live Art wishes to adopt performative writing as a significant medium for its activity.

Gossip and Myth

The Live Artists I have interviewed and spoken to informally acknowledge their lack of control over oral, non-written accounts of performances. The majority consider gossip and other forms of oral documentation valuable in disseminating their artistic ideas, a value that is recognised despite potential misunderstandings about their work through these forms. The mobility and fluidity of oral accounts is perceived as a positive quality in the context of Live Art, as many artists note that new interpretations and ideas can flourish, particularly when and *if* these accounts filter back to the performer. One may go so far as to posit that Live Artists consciously devise their works in order to resist a singular interpretation. By contrast, more tangible forms of documentation that employ technology to record a performance seem to pose an element of uncertainty for some Live Artists, as they are susceptible to being constantly reproduced without contextual framing, where images – as was discussed in Part One with reference to Franko B – can be easily spectacularised. As Walter Benjamin said in his essay 'Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, 'to an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility' (reprinted 1999: 218). It would seem that this threat of reproducibility is, in part, a corollary of an insatiable appetite for spectacular images and sound-bites in contemporary society. Such an economy of reproduction is seen as deflecting the ownership of performance documentation away from the artist's control into a wider, unspecified domain.

In a report to the Arts Council of England in 1994, on behalf of the Live Art Archive Unit

and Nottingham Trent University, Linda Ludwin Associates wrote,

there is a great deal of material which can only be captured indirectly, through oral history techniques, for example. It is vital to capture this material while those who made and experienced the work are still alive – at the moment they constitute living national treasures of a kind, and structured approach to capturing their knowledge, expertise, anecdotes and opinions should be put into place without delay (Goldman-Jacob Associates et al, 1994: 38).

Although the preservation of oral accounts of Live Art has not received high-level, structured attention in the past, efforts have been made to acknowledge their importance and record them wherever appropriate. For instance, in their increasingly frequent roles as writers and theorists, Live Artists often include an account of their own experiences at a Live Art event as part of a critical text on performance history, or a thematic essay. Joshua Sofaer has taken up the issue of gossip on a number of occasions, stating that,

Of the sorts of documentation [that] can exist in the world, the most common of them is word of mouth, gossip of some sort.... Maybe the most common kind of documentation is a false memory of it.

Similarly, the majority of the Live Artists I interviewed appreciated the value of oral accounts, for instance,

Ansuman Biswas: oral accounts are a very important way to *disseminate* the work. There is an ongoing process that continues to change and grow. Growth is the work itself and I would count word of mouth as part of that process. It's a reaction in the audience, it could be an audience member who may not have been in the performance space itself, but it's the resonances of the work that carry on.

Bobby Baker: I like the mysterious informality of oral accounts, the element of myth-making as ultimately all documentation is a fragmentation of the work or not really true representation. There is something particularly pertinent about myths. I have bumped into old friends, been abroad and met people who say "whenever I'm in a supermarket pushing a trolley I think of that moment in *How to Shop*".

Mole Wetherell of Reckless Sleepers: I've always been interested in the idea that the performance carries on outside of the time that we have set aside to present something and that discussion happens afterwards. You're still thinking about what you have witnessed on the bus home.

Simon Persighetti of Wrights and Sites: Conversations or oral accounts about practice can be seen as a means of sharing outcomes and developing further understanding of the work. Verbal delivery of accounts or manifestoes that stem from practice can become performance and documentation simultaneously. The performance lecture has become a recognised example of this documentary strategy as seen in the work of the Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment, Stelarc, The International Necronautical Society, Lone Twin.

Matt Adams: I would say it is very important to our work. *Kidnap* is the classic example, because *Kidnap* is a work that exists so perfectly as a concept – if you say to someone, "have you heard of Blast Theory? They ran a lottery where the two people who won were kidnapped and they held them for 48 hours in a secret location and they streamed the whole thing onto the web" full stop, then you've given them an incredibly

full account of what we did. And from that simple piece of information there's a tremendous space for you to engage with the work....In that respect, I've met loads of people who go 'oh yeah, I've heard of about that, someone told me about that', so that word of mouth thing is really important.

Lone Twin: A lot of the work existed *only* by that process, because often there was no publicity behind the event, as we wanted people to come across it accidentally. But in a wider sense, around our work, some of the things sound quite outland-ish, it gets mis-remembered or mis-said. That kind of discursive play on the stuff is probably a lot more important for our work.

In its specificity to a time and place, gossip and oral accounts are a relevant and significant form of documenting Live Art. Further, the carnivalesque character of speech, which does not aim to be eternal or universal, instead acknowledging its own limitations can be said to echo Live Art's mobile identity. Moreover, because gossip is the least obtrusive form of documentation in the context of the live action, it is often claimed by artists to be one of the most useful forms.

An artist who has overtly played with myth and documentation as an artistic strategy is Live Artist Mark McGowan. He states that his work aims to make myths and connect to ordinary people, illustrating the emotions that 'we all feel'. Fighting against the ghettoisation of Live Art within the theatrical, club or visual arts contexts, the artist wishes to bring people 'art on the street', stating that window cleaners won't want to visit the art gallery, theatre or arts centre. His work is deeply concerned with engaging the audience in a non-institutional setting, whilst creating a discourse for collective history-making. With his 'lumpen appearance, the simpleton's form of address, spelling mistakes and seemingly prosaic subject matter' (Charlesworth, 2005: 53) McGowan is a (easy) target for derogatory aesthetic judgments about Live Art. His authentically serious and professional manner is at odd with the ridiculous nature of some of his performances, which are consciously provocative, often challenging political correctness. Documentation is the aspect of the work foregrounded by McGowan and the tropes of the media and representation are central to his work. Making frequent references to Peggy Phelan, the artist suggests that you really 'had to be there' but even if you were, don't blink, else you'll miss it.

Taking on the role of Live Art shaman he claims to be able to perform 'extraordinary' feats of ability, all motivated by unbridled belief in himself. An excellent story-teller, the reality of story and event blur into one as McGowan perpetuates the narrative of his work. Pulling a Routemaster bus down the road with his toe in *Big Toe Bus Pull* (2004), keying random cars in Camberwell, South London in his performance *Artist Keys Car*

(2005), offering brown envelopes to workers outside Glasgow City Council during the National Review of Live Art (2007) or performing as an irate taxi driver who despairs of the Coalition Government's policies in a prolific number of You Tube videos (2011-ongoing), McGowan's performances consistently tap into issues that contemporary society finds socially and politically problematic. By situating his work within the context of public space, McGowan pushes the boundaries of what is socially acceptable. The significant themes of ritual and shamanistic practice in performance continue to influence Live Art today, not always in terms of subject matter or specific sacral symbols but rather, through an exploration of the energy of an event and transformative processes. As Live Artists today (such as Richard Dedomenici and Harold Offeh) and historically (Valie Export, Jochen Gertz), bring their performances to the street, they necessarily engage with the histories, legacies of guerrilla performance and have had to address the physical and social parameters of their environmental context.



Figure 12 Mark McGowan. A Canterbury Tale. Waterloo, London, 2005. Stefan Rousseau/PA.

In *Canterbury Tale* (2005-06) (fig. 13), Mark McGowan crawled from London to Canterbury over the Christmas period, with a sign on his back that asked 'Could You Love Me?' During each one of the twelve days of Christmas, the artist performed this work with a rose clenched between his teeth and 18 boxes of chocolates tied around his wrists and ankles. This durational performance, which followed a traditional pilgrimage route made famous by Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, aimed to draw attention to the 'utter misery' and loneliness many people feel during Christmas and caught the attention of international news outlets including the BBC²⁴.

²⁴ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/4585628.stm> [Accessed 26 March 2012]

As if to prove the powerful importance of the mythological narrative in Live Art, he says, 'I'm just making it up. How can I get in underneath all the news stuff?' The event and performance for McGowan is in the story-telling, and its representation as such in the media (particularly TV, which he would much prefer than being featured in *Modern Painters*). McGowan's success in appearing on regional and national TV news is testimony to his unique attitude towards documentation. McGowan's photographs and videos are carefully edited evidence that the performance *did* happen, that the action promised was delivered, yet they are split-second performances made for documentation. With an extremely savvy digestion and re-appropriation of mainstream media techniques, McGowan questions the elite circle of art aficionados, ridiculing the media world but also accepting that his engagement with it enables him to expose his work to a much wider audience. As a caricature of radical performance, McGowan's public success is a barometer of how contemporary society understands Live Art and performance.

By all accounts, McGowan's rationales correspond closely to the definition of Live Art we encountered in Part One, however, many within the Live Art sector have (wilfully or not) misunderstood the spirit of his work. Many fellow Live Artists, researchers, curators and audience have been incensed by his work. McGowan was banned from the Live Art List for a short period of time in late April 2010, when the content of his postings was an issue that dominated correspondences on the list²⁵. Apparently following a complaint to the moderator, and several postings (which included messages from international members) that suggested 'political discussion' was not appropriate for the list, McGowan was banned from posting. When another member of the list reposted the moderator's response to McGowan's original message (showing that McGowan had been banned) many of the list's community were angered, stating they did not want to be associated with a censored discussion space. Members of the list (including myself) engaged in dialogue with the list moderators (who remained anonymous) stating that the list was set up for the purposes of the community, requesting that McGowan be reinstated as a member with the ability post on the list once again.

²⁵ A more detailed account of the incident was written by Manick Govinda, head of Artists Advisory Services, Artsadmin and a member of the Live Art List <http://www.manifestoclub.com/node/560> [Accessed 26 March 2012].

McGowan's status as reviled caricature on the Live Art email list is arguably due to the way his work relates to a notion of simulated performance. Schechner explains, a simulation is neither a pretence nor an imitation. It is replication of ...[sic] itself as another. That makes simulations perfect performatives. A cloned sheep or a U2 song distributed digitally over the internet is not a 'copy' but an 'original' in a theoretically infinite series. Or is it a copy in a theoretically infinite series? (Schechner, 2002: 117). The notion of simulation rejects the proposition of representation, so that the distinction between copy and original is erased. Schechner states that interpreting a simulation as an original is purely a matter of ideology, as structurally there is no difference between them. The real can seem simulated and likewise the simulated can appear as real. The performative may be said to be functioning in those situations where one cannot discern between actual events and their simulation (2002: 120-21). McGowan's work necessarily stirs up emotional responses, part of its explicit aim is to provoke and in this way it does not aim to be liked, or even respected, by those who experience it. However, the Live Art List community's attitude towards his work has changed as a result of the censorship incident. The majority of those commenting on the Live Art List had no personal or direct experience of McGowan's work and therefore depended on the artist's textual and photographic representation of it which purposefully problematised its interpretation. To the extent that his work operates by employing parsimonious information and gossip, McGowan is a successful creative myth-maker, simultaneously undermining and reinstating the document as proof and evidence, and above all, facilitating discussion of Live Art as an artform engaged with social change.

On The Live

Numerous propositions about presence and absence in performance are succinctly summarised in Matthew Reason's book (2006: chp. 1). For Reason, the paradigm of 'disappearance' is one of the central ideas in the discourse of performance studies, Live Art history and of his text, referring to Peggy Phelan's statement in *Unmarked – The Politics of Performance* (1993: 146-66) as 'one of the most prominent and frequently repeated expressions of performance culture' (Reason, 2006: 12). In my interviews with Live Artists, my last question to each of them was to consider the following quote from the beginning of Phelan's essay, in relation to their practice, performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology (Phelan, 1993: 146).

That a number of artists - particularly those involved in the teaching and research of Live Art – recognised the quote within the first sentence illustrates the continuing currency of this topic. For instance,

Tim Etchells: You wouldn't be a group of 6 artists with a management team of three and a half, if you were abiding by that [Phelan's quote]. Its nice, I like it, but I would say, yes, but in the meanwhile we have to do some work.

Joshua Sofaer: Where do we start! Well, I think that that was a gauntlet that Phelan lay down about 10 or 12 years ago, and I think its been incredibly useful, its been useful because it's been battled back and forth between various cultural commentators – I think that debate's a little old, not old, I think that we've moved beyond it, as practitioners we're not making live work *because* it disappears, I think the drive or the imperative to make live work is multi-faceted. I can only speak for myself. But, I think there are very few performance people, a lot of them are critically aware, but very few of them would try to illustrate an academic point or engage with it in terms of their practice.

Franko B: I think people can be too puritan. I try to be free in a way that I can go with a situation – something can become something else. What she says about documentation, that you can never document – I think it's a naïve idea that if you're watching TV or something, that that's a true representation of that framing – especially TV, forget it. Of course if you were there then there was something that happened that your memory was affected by, so when you're thinking of the piece, you're also thinking of the person with the big glasses talking to her friend so...but the experiences are both valid. If you have access to both experience then great, but if you don't I think you shouldn't be so snooty – if you weren't in New York on 7 September 2005 to see Forced Entertainment but you have a chance to see what that performance was like, then what's wrong with that?!

Rona Lee: it's a kind of provocative argument, I'm very interested in what she's talking about in terms of representation and visibility but not so much in that particular strand of her writing. A simple reading of that quote would seem that performance *can* stand outside those economies of representation and I don't think it can. So I don't think that the preservation of something through documentation changes its status as fundamentally as she suggests, I think she's right in that there's a very different relationship to the live work, to the documentation of it. I'm very interested in the haptic, I'm interested in the decisions people make in coming and going from a work, and smell. As I say, perhaps some of the underlying concerns that she has have led me to working on performance for camera specifically and thinking about what that does as being different from working live.

It is clear that Phelan's essay has greatly influenced discussions of the relationship between performance and documentation, some of which are a consequent of misunderstandings about the writer's original intention. Whilst I do not aim to elaborate each of the strands of thought from Phelan's text, I will summarise a few of the positions as they relate to the production and reception of Live Art in its live action and documentation forms. I wish to show that although at first glance this is a highly

contested issue, practitioners and researchers are coming towards a shared understanding of documentation's role in Live Art.

Directing the reader's attention to a vicious opposition between performance and archive, Schneider states,

if we consider performance as a process of disappearance, of an ephemerality read as vanishment (versus material remains), are we limiting ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by our cultural habituation to the logic of the archive? (2001:100). Following Phelan's attack on writing as a form that has the persistent potential to endanger the heterogeneity of performative action, Schneider is concerned that the quest to package performance within the archive erases its unique relationship to (im)materiality. Despite the diversity of ordering principles, functions and forms performance documentation takes and Schneider's acknowledgment that 'too often, the equation of performance with disappearance reiterates performance as self-annihilating' (2001: 101), she can hardly conceive of performance documents outside the *a priori* negatively defined paradigm of the 'archive'. Schneider's perspective on documentation of performance has shifted in recent years, as is evidenced in the *Live Art Almanac* (2007), which will be explored in Part Three.

Another widely encountered claim in performance studies is that in order to fully grasp the meaning and significations of a performance, one really needed to 'be there'.

Justifying this notion of witnessing, Tracey Warr asserts,

witnessing a live performance rather than experiencing the work vicariously by looking at the resulting documentation leaves the viewer with a very different impression (Warr, 2000: 14). The sense of expectation, of not knowing what will happen next, where the performance will lead you (as an audience member) is what makes live action so thrilling. The phenomenological and sensual experience of the live performance negates the requirement of prior knowledge or conceptual understanding of the artwork's context, which can be seen to dominate other contexts, such as the research experience (this will be discussed further in Part Three, section Space for Imagining). It is easier for the viewer to get caught up in the immediacy and viscosity of the event without encountering distractions or barriers to their engagement. The economy of the event, the possibility that something might happen, makes us expect that something *will* happen, is termed by Susan Melrose as the notion of 'the event as streaming' (Melrose, personal communication, 2005). The affect of the event is that something is present and active, it builds itself up as does a snowball. One fragment of the event therefore cannot stand for the whole as performance requires understanding of the entirety of the event. Moreover, Lehmann states that where the artistic value of the work is 'not the "objectively" appraisable work but a process between performers and

audience... then the [artistic value] depends on the experience of the participants itself (2006: 136). Such a view imagines an ideal scenario about the audience's experience at a live performance, insinuating that by being present one is privy to an experience altogether inaccessible to others. In response to this position, one must recognise, that the issue of presence is never quite as simple as being bodily there. Jones considers the problem of not-being-there logistic rather than hermeneutic, remarking that 'neither has a privileged relationship to the historical 'truth' of the performance' (1997: 11). Indeed, Jones' writings are peppered with readings of performances that she did not attend. For her, the resistance of Live Art performances to singular interpretations - as part of the artist's intention, as well as an illustration of diverse readings by an audience - is coupled with the rejection of the concept of an 'authentic' experience of the work. In other words, presence does not mean automatically gaining privileged access to meaning. Since presence is 'no longer the absolutely matricial form of being' (Derrida, 1974), one is unable to posit this position as an unmediated experience of signs. Philip Auslander comments on Phelan's essay 'ontology of performance' saying that although she is interested in discussing the ontology of 'liveness', she fails to discuss the implications of reproductive technologies on the unitary, temporally-bounded performance act,

it interests me that although Phelan discusses performance artist Angelika Festa's *Untitled Dance (with fish and others)* (1987) in the context of her argument on the ontology of performance, she does not specifically address the encroachment of technologies of reproduction on this piece, in which Festa made extensive use of video technology to construct the images Phelan analyses (Auslander, 1996: 197).

Auslander further state that the live is only a 'secondary effect of mediating technologies' (1996: 198), as he considers the concept of live is a historical construct that resulted from these technologies being developed. He clarifies that the notion of live is only in opposition to *recording* technologies rather than the concept of technology per se, which he claims as having existed since humans developed technics (1996: 211).

Another perspective about presence is offered by the essay from 1982 by Chantal Pontbriand, who proposes that performance 'presents, it does not represent' (1982: 155), becoming more 'present' through its interaction with reproducibility, rather than in spite of it. This relationship between live and mediated is investigated in Paul Grimmer's piece *Waiting* (2007):

Through a stable door, in the middle of a high-beamed space hung a deep red curtain, a few feet in front of this the image of a man's bare feet standing on a wooden chair was projected on a vertically-hung plasma screen. I sat down and started to watch, aware that my attention was hovering slightly, I became conscious that the piece

played on several modes of spectatorship. The juxtaposition of blood-red curtains in a converted horse stable and feet balanced on the seat of a chair lent a sense of expectation that I had come too late to the recent unveiling of a long-awaited portrait or that I had stumbled upon the rehearsal of a travelling circus - where lions or tigers would be ordered to sit before performing to an expectant audience. As if practicing, auditioning for the role of a tamed circus animal, the man kept as still as he could. Once in a while, I noticed his toes wiggle slightly, as if in thought. Nevertheless, the legs remained their composure and continued their poise on the chair's surface. Slowly and quietly, I moved across the room towards the suggestive space between curtain and wall. A few minutes earlier, a lady whose high-heeled shoes had announced her approach was stopped from crossing the curtain's threshold by the invigilator. The artist had undoubtedly conveyed the wish to maintain some mystique about the artistic process and also wanted to uphold a barrier between artist and audience. In *Waiting*, there is a clear separation between the spectator's experience and the artist's actions. What would I find behind the curtain? I walked towards the space between curtain and wall, ensuring that I kept a few feet away from the curtain, and found the artist standing barefoot on a chair in shorts and T-shirt with a video camera pointed at his feet. On entering it was not altogether clear whether the artist is present at all. My surprise at the artist's presence in the room was quickly replaced by respect for this action – shown as an installation, I had imagined that the artist's presence was a purely mediated, pre-recorded one.

The staging of the event as if pre-recorded, masks a skilled durational performance. Since it is not the artist's primary aim to demystify the logistics of the piece, *Waiting* can be read as a piece that experiments with the audience's reaction to a category error. If the audience can read this live performance as pre-recorded at first glance, an audience may conversely understand a pre-recorded performance as if it were live. However, *Waiting*, like so many contemporary artworks, resists singular interpretation. Whilst it tests the audience's preconceptions and attitude to engagement with pre-recorded media, *Waiting* is an example of how Live Art liquidates the perceived dichotomy of the live and mediated, of how the live is imbricated in mediation (Auslander, 1999: 53). The physical veiling, red curtain that frames Grimmer's performance can be read as a metaphor for attitudes towards technology within performance studies. Rather than prioritising one or the other, *Waiting* suggests that Live Art is an artform that is concerned with problematising and further examination of the relationship between live and mediated. Moreover, it fundamentally illustrates that Live Art maintains the presence of the performer, whilst playing with the transmission

of their location. Whilst photographs document this notion of the Live Artist's location as evidence of something that has taken place, pieces like *Waiting* can be said to participate in 'telepresence' – where telecommunications are used to create the 'remediated merging of two real locations' (Giannachi, 2004: 10). Telepresence is usually employed to eradicate the perception of distance between two real locations as in technologies such as teleconferencing or Skype, however, curiously in *Waiting*, it is utilised to highlight a symbolic division between backstage area and front of the stage. Even though the piece participates in a contemporary tradition of artists producing time-based works that manipulate the viewing space such as Nam June Paik, and uses familiar media techniques, it was important to my research as instance of relocating time and place in Live Art.

It is perhaps self-evident that Live Art, an artform whose practitioners often believe that the live experience maintains a unique power, is cautious to elevate the regard for the documented and the potential substitution of subjective memory with recorded storage. Heathfield, echoing Phelan, says,

performance, as an ephemeral act, seems to offer little to tell. It disappears fast and leaves the scarcest traces for historical record. You really have to be there, and even then that's not enough; the event itself is hard to fix in consciousness, in memory and in writing.... And just like trauma, the best performance persists in recurrence: it remains unresolved, haunting our memories, documents and critical frameworks (2000: 105).

Similarly, Kittler, following McLuhan, outlines the ways in which various media sublate the heterogeneity of experience to their respective forms,

As soon as optical and acoustical data can be put into some kind of media storage, people no longer need their memory. Its 'liberation' is its end.... If memories and dreams, the dead and the spectres have become technically reproducible, then the hallucinatory power of reading and writing has become obsolete (1997: 40-41).

However, as the desire to propagate Live Art and its history continues to grow, documentation is becoming more necessary to practitioners, theorists, researchers, promoters, curators and audience alike. Rather than relegating the document's function to the accumulation and mechanical storage of live action as data, the tropes of trauma and hallucination that Heathfield and Kittler hit upon can be seen as starting points for creative play. The makers and 'consumers' of Live Art documentation need to recognise the power of what is held within the document, as a cipher. The document as an item in the archive is therefore important today not only as a source of information, but also as a site to potentially activate further creativity in the individual who engages with the document. In this context, the witness (of the live action) is the carrier of an artistic and creative content, what Ansuman Biswas called the work's 'meme'. Referring back to the Architecture of Interaction model and the dissemination of ideas

through word of mouth, the idea of a Live Art work passes onto others who were not there for the live action. How this effects the way Live Artists approach the process of making will be further discussed in Part Three.

In an essay from 2004, Heathfield moves away from Phelan's insistence on the autonomy of performance by acknowledging that performance is dispersed so that 'you are reminded of the impossibility of ever being fully present to oneself, to others or to the artwork' (2004: 9). Furthermore, his actual involvement with performative approaches to the presentation of Live Art documentation, for instance, the *Shattered Anatomies* box set, already lays down a gauntlet for others working in the field of Live Art to explore how documentation makes a valuable contribution to the circulation of knowledge and the development of Live Art practice. Additionally, such participation in documentation is testimony to the consent of 'not being there' as a valid perspective.

Truth and Authority

Photography as a medium for the documentation of performance offers a model through which to consider documentation in general. For Barthes, as for Phelan, the photograph is intimately linked with loss and the passing of a moment of lived experience,

however lifelike we try to make it (and this frenzy to be lifelike can only be our mythic denial of an apprehension of death), Photography is a kind of primitive theatre, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead (1993: 32). Photography promotes a correspondence, it is ontic rather than ontological. Within it, one can identify the truth, even if one cannot discern it (1993: Part Two) – the image allows us to recognise an aspect of the thing represented, without being identical to it. Sontag asserts that the photograph's 'record of the real' (2003: 23), enables it to call itself objective, in relation to eyewitness reports. Through its mechanical recording of history, the photograph itself takes part in the event. Moreover, Elizabeth Edwards notes that photographs 'belong to that class of objects formed specifically to remember' (1999: 332), in that they have an intrinsic relationship to the past. The photograph's power lies not in its image and what it represents but the narrative of its unique context, of how it came to be taken. Edwards highlights the materiality of photography, which she considers to be central to cultural understandings of the photograph, criticising the tendency to treat photographs merely as triggers for another narrative. She asserts the importance of physical handling of photographs, as objects that desire to be touched, caressed as well as looked at (1999: 335), particularly in a digital age. The increasing tendency to store images on digital cameras and computers without reproducing them as physical objects on paper decouples the long-standing material relation of photo as

image and photo as object of exchange. Further, Edwards is interested in the relationships provoked by the material presence of a photo-object. She imagines the photograph as 'positioning individuals *vis à vis* the group, linking past, present and perhaps implying a future' (1999: 339). We can take from Edwards' text the notion of the photograph as a site for the collection of memory, where the 'presence of the living' and the absence of the dead are located. The material object constitutes an intersection between social context and codified, connotative ideologies of social practice (the form of the content) on the one hand, and material production of the artefact within object world on the other (1999: 340).

The well-established discourse on the power of the photograph is revived when discussed in relation to the documentation of Live Art. For instance, Sayre suggests that the use of photography in documentation of performance in 1960s and 1970s has led to the perception of the photograph as participating in a dialectic of presence and absence (1989: 2). In recognition of both the constructive and more pessimistic perspectives on performance documentation, Amelia Jones (1997:15) asserts that photographic documentation is not necessarily proof of performance. As the covers of both *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (Reason, 2006) and *Guerrilla Performance and Multimedia* (Hill & Paris, 2001) attest, with the aid of Photoshop and other photo editing technologies, it is all too easy to modify, airbrush or falsify images. One can easily fake an image's production history to help validate a line of argument. Arguably, Live Art's tendency for mischief, play and destabilising established narratives makes it a particularly susceptible (or vulnerable) field of artistic practice for such fabrications to take place.

In the sense that they respond to the issue of the image's authority, Yves Klein's infamous *Leap Into the Void* and stills from Viennese Actionist Rudolf Schwarzkogler's *Actions* series set a precedent for British artist Hayley Newman's *Connotations* (1998), which have been collected in major institutions, including the Tate. In all these cases, at first glance, the existence of these photos is evidence, proof that someone has witnessed the events depicted. However, there is disappointment on discovering that Klein's dramatic jump and that Schwarzkogler's so-called self-castration did not physically take place. By imagining ourselves in the background of the event photos of *Connotations* (which are often taken in public spaces), we re-ignite an interest in the power of documentation. Hayley Newman's photographs are backdated and given fictitious performance contexts, but nevertheless involved the artist in theatre make-up, posing with a syringe to her mouth. Whilst Klein may be chastised for presenting the

audience a *materially* manipulated image, Schwarzkogler and Newman *literally* created the circumstances under which those photographs were taken. Creating a narrative for the image is therefore a performative act. Schwarzkogler and Newman interrogate the performativity of documentation from different standpoints with their respective actions.

One may state that for legitimization of a performance document to take place, the 'correct' or 'actual' performance must be implicated, in other words, the performance must belong to a specific performance history or narrative. When armed solely with the knowledge that x is a photo of a specific performance event, interpretation of this usually involves imagining the 'moment' captured by the photo as one point in a temporal chain of acts. When considering the photo as performance 'proof' we therefore imagine the chain of actions that connect documentation as 'evidence' of a performance. According to such logic, Hayley Newman's *Connotations* may be understood as paradoxically participating in reality, through their physical existence, yet by participating in a fabricated narrative they present a fictional narrative. *Connotations* can instead be read as rejecting the association of originary and authentic moments as privileged positions, aiming to re-assess the value of these terms. For Newman, both the concepts of the 'fictional' and the 'real' are necessary, driving an exploration of one another, existing as counter-balances against each other. In the exhibition 'Art, Lies and Videotape' (Tate Liverpool, 2003), performance works that play with the fixity of truth were presented, with 'straight' and 'untruthful' works exhibited side by side. The often subtle and underplayed distinction between 'fact or fiction' is discussed in Jean-Paul Martinon's essay (of the same title) (2003). Martinon suggests that what is opened up in the performance document is not the stability of fact or fiction but a question posed by the artist that 'it could be another way' (2003: 46), that what one assumes took place may or may not have done. By suggesting the possibility of uncertainty as a positive and assertive position, a creative space for interpretation is opened up.

A parallel move occurs when we are asked by Barthes to rethink the assumption that fictionality has a deceptive quality with wholly negative connotations. Suggesting that the photograph is able to propose an alternative authenticity, he states,

in front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art. In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographer, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposture (comparable to certain nightmares) (1993:13).

From this we can ascertain that the duplicity of photography is also part of its authenticity *qua* photography – all performances are posed, therefore all documents are posed, such is the nature of engaging with the camera. Referring to both Craig Owens and Barthes, Sayre similarly claims that imposture and the pose are central to photography's fundamental proposition (Sayre, 1989: 52). Taking advantage of the attractive image is a strategy that Live Artists are well aware of when editing documentation for marketing purposes. A parallel condition may be found in sound recording, as observed by Michel Chion, 'natural voices are not only produced but also heard by unconscious comparison with mediated ones, which tend to stand out more' (1994: 104). The phenomenon of attractive documentation that belies a less than attractive live performance harks back to what was described by sound engineers from the 1920s to 1940s as 'phonogeny' (Chion, 1994: 101), the sonic - but now essentially forgotten - counterpart to photogeny. Chion states that this notion is said to take place when the absence of immediate and tangible sound source is replaced by a presence of the technologically enabling medium. In other words, by proposing that one voice is more phonogenic than another, one implicitly claims that the phonogenic voice has an appealing quality that lends it more to reproduction. That we have today discarded the idea of phonogeny is, Chion suggests, indicative of the fact that we are no longer as conscious of the role of 'mediated acoustical reality' (1994: 103) in our listening experiences. Chion's implication that the technical means of reproducing sound is effecting our perception and understanding of a 'live' event, has parallels with Derrida's perception of the machines of archiving increasingly resembling memory (Derrida, 1996: 14). In the case of Live Art, we may consider the technical means of documenting Live Art as a parameter which effects the format and structure of work produced, in the same way that location and project cost are parameters for production. However, it is a testimony to the diverse approaches to Live Art production that Live Art works are both learning from the media that are used to document them and developing discourses beyond these media.

The complex play of conscious performance and mediation reiterates Philip Auslander's assertion that the performance and its documentation are involved in a symbiotic relationship (2006b: 2). This subject is also partially taken up in Rebecca Schneider's short piece 'The Document Performance' (2007). In this text, Schneider seeks to explore the potential of performance as taking place through another medium. Thinking specifically about photography's relationship to performance, Schneider suggests that although many instances of the photograph in Live Art function as a 'stand-in for the event itself, or an instance of its traces or detritus' (2007: 118), the

process of making photographs can itself be thought of as a collaborative process. Schneider recognises that the work done by Manuel Vason in projects like the book *Exposures* (2002) goes beyond the representation of a performance moment. *Exposures* includes images of Aaron Williamson, Doran George, Ernst Fischer, Franko B, Gilles Jobin, Giovanna Maria Casetta, Helena Goldwater, Joshua Sofaer, Kira O'Reilly, Dogoneff, La Ribot, Marisa Carnesky, Mat Fraser, Moti Roti, Oreet Ashery, Robert Pacitti, Ronald Fraser Munroe, Stacy Makishi and Susan Lewis. The photos are the focus of the book, flanked by thin paper reminiscent of tracing paper, referencing protective papers around valuable photographic prints. Each artist has written a short text about their performance-as-photograph, and these are followed by biographies. These are shocking, iconic images of contemporary Live Art. Discussing her contribution to the project, Helena Goldwater says, 'Manuel and I shot these images and the sequence revealed itself. They became performances in themselves, unique to this book, to Manuel and I' (Goldwater, cited in Vason, Keidan & Athey, 2002: iv). Schneider refers to the relationship between Vason and the Live Artists as one of 'interanimation' explaining the term,

Fred Moten has recently used the term to suggest the ways live and media of mechanical and technological reproduction, such as photography, cross-identify, and more radically, cross-constitute and 'improvise' each other (Schneider, 2007: 118). Schneider thus acknowledges that the relationship between the photographer and the Live Artist can go beyond the creation of a 'stand-in for the event itself' (2007: 117), towards collaboration or even, in certain cases, cite photography as the site of performance itself.

Such observations can assist the understanding of documentation within Live Art, particularly for artists who manipulate the reciprocity of the gaze that is offered by interactive technologies. Far from iterating an obscure relationship devoid of authenticity, works such as *Haroldinho* (2003) and *Being Mammy* (2004) by Harold Offeh consciously play with the duplicity of representation and the creation of alternative subjectivities. Reason (2006) outlines a number of ways in which photography relates to performance and the types of photograph that can be taken of performance: photos taken in rehearsal, studio or photo calls are differentiated from photos taken during performances. He also discusses photographs that are choreographed but like Newman's *Connotations*, do not refer to an actual performance (2006:136-42). Moreover, Reason highlights the potential for photography as revelatory – the photograph of the performance often brings us closer to the action than it is possible to experience as an audience member, utilising close-ups or unusual angles to show a facet of the performance that is privileged not on the 'live' but 'reveals the

photograph to be fundamentally transformative, constructed and representational' (2006: 114).

Trust and the Spectre of Documentation

Despite the purported cultural omnivoracy of Live Art audiences, the trust that accompanies risk (which is sometimes intentional, other times a consequence of the performance process) can be as quickly disrupted as it is gained.

I have a particular memory in mind – a performance for whose existence I inadvertently hold some responsibility. During the first season of Rational Rec at the Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, we invited guest curators, one of whom was Ansuman Biswas, who subsequently invited Aaron Williamson to make the closing performance for the evening. That night, all electricity – including the neon green fire exit signs – was extinguished at the Club, as an example of the productive opportunities offered by (temporary) abstinence from fossil fuel dependency, or a social experiment aiming to re-create the candle-lit and nostalgically perceived camaraderie-filled nights of the Blitz. The slightly clandestine speak-easy character of the evening that quickly spread amongst the tapers and small lanterns, was intermittently suspended by ghostly folk songs resounding between small round tables in a total blackout, and modern-day genies playing tablas in the rafters above sweaty punters bringing their hands close to hot lamps, as they squirmed for the right change. I could but listen and imagine the mysterious world being conjured up on the other side of those doors, light-proofed with tin foil. I 'witnessed' the sound of Rhodri Davies' harp and the cheers of the audience, but I was still physically distanced. I felt strangely safe in my visually ignorant state, spatially detached from the performative core. My station at the bottom of the stairs - ordering the audience to wait in an orderly line to get spat at by Helena Goldwater - allowed me to defer taking the psychological leap of becoming receptive, a leap that is crucial when you decide to watch a performance. Instead, I was temporarily happy with experiencing the performance in front of me, indulging in the fetish of repetition, an action carried out again and again, although with different leading characters. Citing organisational duties, I could not afford to engage with the action on the other side of the doors, as this would mean losing control. Which brings us back to trust. Eventually, the audience stops queuing and I venture back into the room after an absence of two and a half hours. The room's interim inhabitants are intoxicated by an intense cocktail of performance, alcohol, and seeing by the light of flickering candles for an unusually long period of time. It is brighter than I expected, audience and performers are less safety-conscious than I'd anticipated, and Aaron Williamson and Simon Raven begin

their performance as the Cattleprods, who describe themselves as 'the world's first synth duo to play without electricity'.

Profoundly deaf, much of Williamson's practice explores the juncture between his decreasing ability to hear and stereotypes of the public discomfort that manifest with this disability. The Cattleprods is not the only musical ensemble with which he performs, Williamson also leads a band called Clippetyclop, a collective of disabled performance and video artists. Identifying their music as 'Country and Deafness', the songs performed are a mosaic of memories of folk and popular songs, coupled with an irreverent lack of technical skill, echoing the inclusive ideology of the Scratch Orchestra's beginnings. Williamson enacts an aural documentation of songs he could previously perform with more melodic and harmonic accuracy. In a Clippetyclop performance to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Beaconsfield gallery in South London (November 2005), I watched Williamson sing and play the guitar, a disturbingly microtonal yet booming voice slightly disembodied from its owner (not quite acousmatic), warmed by the context of tambourines and fiddles, as well as the setting of a hay-filled barn with girls dressed as bees swarming round the space. As lead vocalist of the Cattleprods, Williamson vigorously commanded centre-stage. The spectacle was ridiculous - a drunken, straggly haired, middle-aged man in a frilly shirt singing out of tune and time, accompanied by a synth player who donned sunglasses, clearly intending to signify his lack of vision - one could not distinguish if this was real or fictional - which took on an ironic slant in the context of a room lit only by candles and their glistening shine against empty beer bottles. That the audience were not all aware of Williamson's disability allowed the artist to play with this state of unknowing and the edges of intoxicated, megalomaniacal psychosis, at one moment climbing onto a small wooden pillar then launching himself off it towards the little group who were sitting at the table directly in front of him. Unhurt, still singing but stumbling, he repeats this movement to the left then right, eventually abandoning the pillar, landing on a few beer bottles that crack under his feet. In this performance, Williamson vehemently kicks at the barriers of socially acceptable behaviour, bruising codes of etiquette when his auditory lack fails to notice a glass smashing as he hauls himself back up. However, the glass that smashed signalled a break in the hermetically closed-off space of performance. As a sound exterior to the sonic world of singing, synth and audience reaction, it served as a brokering device between the ideals of risk and experimentation so closely associated with the practices of Live Art and the literal, physical dangers to the audience. The licensee of the Club called a halt to the performance, causing the

gulf between art and praxis – as discussed in the *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Bürger, 1984) - to re-establish itself.

Since the evening aimed at the omission of fossil fuel emissions, cameras – video, digital, on a mobile phone or the battery-operated flashes of those functioning otherwise – were not permitted. I have decided to include this account of Williamson's performance here as this testimony and the accounts of those who were there are all the documentation that exists. My version of the events attempts to bring the reader to the 'present' of the live action, because there is nothing else that exists to verify it. 'You'll just have to take my word for it' – implicit in this phrase is a demand for trust, which is a parallel to the trust that Williamson asks of the spectator, that he will not do anything too irresponsible and nothing that will physically endanger the audience, but his actions may induce some worry. Similarly, the artist assumed that the audience would not secretly film the performance, and I claim that this basis enabled him to escalate the performative tension through increasingly precarious actions. Williamson, a savvy artist whose work utilises media including photography, video and sculpture, as well as performance, is well aware of the potential spectacularisation of such performances when they are recorded and taken out of context. The Guardian's Culture Editor Charlotte Higgins blogged the event and others followed suit. Somewhat typically of controversial performances, there are conflicting accounts of what happened. Perhaps if someone *had* documented it there would be incontrovertible evidence as to what really happened. However, I claim that in front of a conspicuous recording device, this performance would not have taken place.

That which has been captured by a recording device is already edited and modified by the subjectivity of the documenter. This twice-filtered experience is pre-censored and translated so that it works best for its intended audience. It is worth stating that identifying the purpose of the documentation is important to the artist who commissions the product, as well as the person doing the documenting. The artist's disappointment with the resulting documentation often stems from misunderstanding between the commissioning artist and the documenter. If the product is destined to become a promotional video targeted at new audiences, one can expect fast cut-aways, up-tempo music, a clear message about the work's subject matter, all packaged in an attractive spirited short clip. The film trailer is a useful model for such documentation, particularly if made to be consumed electronically on a mobile device. By contrast, a producer or curator will want to have access to documentation that is indicative of how time unfolds throughout the piece, how an audience physically engages with the work

as well as supporting materials detailing the work's conception and execution. In *The Recording Angel*, we may discern the power of the edit to transform live action when Eisenberg states,

fidelity itself is a vexatious concept. A producer might attempt to make a record in Carnegie Hall that, when played back in Carnegie Hall, would fool a blindfolded audience. To do this he would have to remove most of the hall's natural resonance from the recording, lest it multiply itself and muffle the music (2005: 90).

This quote illustrates that the way in which live performance is transformed to make documentation depends on the intended purpose of the document, and the means by which it will be consumed. Moreover, Eisenberg notes that the physical conditions of making a musical recording must be changed in order to create a recording that can meet the audience's expectations of a 'naturalistic' representation of a performance in Carnegie Hall, rather than modifying the recording in post-production. This instance of how documentation influences the presentation of live action clearly calls into question the authenticity of the recording: in order to achieve a 'realistic'-sounding document, aspects of the performance itself are, to an extent, simulated.

The majority of Live Artists I interviewed stated that they use video cameras to record their work. In *Media and Performance Along the Border* (1998), Birringer discusses the various paradoxes of video as a medium – although one cannot manipulate the medium *literally*, electronic editing of video allows flexibility and electronic simulation unavailable to other media. He states that today, 'video has emerged as the most paradigmatic operational venue for the exchange of images from medium to medium' (1998: 146), however, he also recognises its equivocality within the politics of cultural production and consumption. Video neither relegates the spectator to a merely passive, voyeuristic role nor does it emphatically advocate a critical perspective towards contemporary culture. Established patterns of consuming video culture that diminish awareness of its constructed languages and iconography contributes to the redundancy of televisual information. Despite connotations of audience inertia, the televisual viewer engages with the medium's accessibility and post-productive manipulation, which in turn can be said to encourage him to produce his own narrative. Meanwhile, the collagistic, fast edited methods of music videos and news programmes, envisage connections between a myriad of disparate tropes. The viewer's perception of the medium potentially emerges as a form of production – the techniques of material appropriation that infuse mass cultural discourse, as encapsulated in the form of video, highlight the possibility of imitation. Birringer comments on this blurring of divisions between forms of production and reception, giving the example of a student's 're-making' of Madonna's *Vogue* video in response to a Roberto Aparici lecture/workshop

(1998: 149-52). Although parodic, the appropriation tacitly acknowledges its collusion with existing symbolic structures and dominant discourses,

if their appropriation is a form of reception, it is not a critique or an opposition to the Madonna model but a necessarily ambivalent and ghostly simulacrum that responds to the corporate power of Madonna's mass mediated performance by showing how viewers can dislocate the border between sender/receiver and ironically control the 'found images' they are supposed to merely consume (1998: 152).

Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment has commented on the usefulness of video documentation as able to transcribe what happened in a performance, or rehearsal. By using several of their own video cameras (usually in *addition* to any recording being done by the promoters or other third parties) the company is able to determine from which angles they would like to view the performance so that, 'when we pick up the work again, we can study it, remind ourselves what happened and see what works and what doesn't work'. Forced Entertainment also make video documentation available to promoters, the press and other interested parties, but this is of secondary importance. For the artists, video is of more use than photographs, as it is better able to reflect the time-based quality of the company's work. This is something that Catherine Elwes articulates in *Video Art – A Guided Tour*, as she recounts the relationship between performance and video,

they [artists using performance] chose to use video to document their work because it came closest to establishing the time-based facts of an event (2005: 10).

Similarly, Stephen Littman, artist and documenter who has been involved with video recording work of British theatre and performing artists since the early 1980s said of the medium,

I found I had created an awareness in myself of the need and a role for works in many genres to be recorded on video – instead of leaving the record to a book/catalogue and to hearsay and memory.... It is important to set up a sense of place and a watching space that takes the viewer into the world of the event. This could mean a number of options for the documentation that is being undertaken from a straight record without intervention to video-construct the work for the TV viewer who may never have seen the original piece (Littman, 1990: 8).

Not all artists are quite so enthusiastic about the qualities of video documentation. Despite using the medium to present work to promoters, Julian Maynard Smith of Station House Opera states,

I for one find videos of performance unwatchable. I can't see the point of watching a video of a performance.... mainly because performances are not done for documentary reasons.

Although not necessarily as optimistic in this regard as Amelia Jones, Andrew Murphie suggests that performance may be a perfect site to work through the problematics of our changing relationship to technology and the political implications of technologies,

'the body in performance is now challenged to an unprecedented extent by technology. It seems too often destined to have either the codings of information technology (or the beat of House music) forced upon it' (1990: 223). Murphie comes to the conclusion that, whilst he accepts the possibility of performance for the camera, the electronic intervention of video technology on the images and movement symptomatic of performative work, renders it distinctly different to the energy of live performance. In other words, for Murphie it is the involvement of the medium and its inevitable transformation of the real movement into electrical impulse that distinguishes performance from video,

when video becomes the basis for the structure of the whole performance (or when the performance is recorded and played back as a 'performance video'), it is hard to see this project as 'performance' any longer. This is so, even though it may rely, as some recent French dance does, on the (cleverly edited) physicality of the performers. It may be 'Video Art' but the basis for its approach to bodies, object and their interaction is not what we might call 'gravitational languages' but rather electronic languages, the signal and post production techniques (1991: 216-7).

Whilst Murphie's criticism of documentation as having a different energy to live performance makes a familiar point, his specific claim differs from that put forward by apologists for liveness such as Peggy Phelan. Murphie wishes to call into question the electronic operation of video, in contrast to analogue/acoustic recording devices. He wishes to recuperate the concept of the latter as the preferred media to imagine what a performance was like. We will return to the issues around recording technologies that are embedded in the presentation of a Live Art work, in Part Three, section Relationality and Ontogenetics.

Objects and Commodities of Live Art

In an attempt to counter the negative connotations of the 'archive', I wish to situate the documentation of Live Art as part of an archaeology of performance. Derrida affirms that archaeology bypasses the archival model, so that objects from the past are not shrouded, occluded by the shelter of the archive's ideology, but are able to speak unhampered. Ecstatically, he claims, "Stones talk!" In the present....The archaeologist has succeeded in making the archive no longer serve any function. It *comes to efface itself*, it becomes transparent or unessential so as to let the *origin* present itself in person' (1996: 93). This vision of archaeology as an optimistic route for engaging with documentation is certainly appealing as part of a hypothesis that is attempting to cultivate the notion of documentation as an alternative means to interact with Live Art.

Alternatively, the documentation of Live Art can be thought of as an index of the performance - where the role of an index is to *indicate*. The theory of indices,

elaborated by Peirce, centres on the triadic theory of signs, that there is firstly an object, secondly a sign or representamen (which stands for the object), and lastly the effect of the sign upon the interpreter, which is called the interpretant,

there should be three classes of *signs*; for there is a triple connection of *sign*, *thing signified*, *cognition produced in the mind*. There may be a mere relation of reason between the sign and the thing signified; in that case the sign is an *icon*. Or there may be a direct physical connection; in that case, the sign is an *index*. Or there may be a relation which consists in the fact that the mind associates the sign with its object; in that case the sign is a *name* [or symbol] §1.372 (Peirce, cited in Fitzgerald, 1966: 46)

I wish to assert that the documentation of Live Art has an indexical, rather than iconic, relation to performances. Elkins notes the problematic usage of Peirce's theory of signs as it has been generally understood by art history, perhaps because art history has tended to consider Peirce's theory only as signs in relation to objects (2003: 13).

Locating an appropriate role for the theory of signs within an art historical context is speculative at best - as Elkins himself concludes that 'the logic of Peirce is at once solid and watery, and its problem comes from its particular mixture of what he calls the *a priori* and the "empirical"' (2003: 18). Elkins does, however, cite Rosalind Krauss' essays on the index as a rare example that avoids confining the significance of the index to arguments about causality. In 'Notes on the Index' (1987) Krauss remarks on the palpable physical connections between performances and photographs of performance, implying a relationship that goes beyond representation to physical connection. She notices that by capturing only one moment or perspective of performance, photographs participate in a 'paradox of being physically present but temporally remote' (Krauss, 1987: 217). Like the shifters 'I' or 'you' and even pronouns like 'this' or 'that', indices always imply a *particular* speaker, thereby tracing the journey of a specific act or thing rather than referring to the generality of the symbol. Krauss comments,

they are the marks or traces of a particular cause, and that cause is the thing to which they refer, the object they signify. Into the category of the index, we would place physical traces (like footprints), medical symptoms, or the actual referents of the shifters. Cast shadows could also serve as the indexical signs of objects (1987: 198).

Although they divorce the audience from the fullness of performance, the specific temporality of documentation (which in Krauss' example is photography) does not speak of 'being there' but of a 'having been there' as evidence of truth. I would argue that at the very least, documents of Live Art can be seen to have an indexical relationship to their performances. Documents produced during performance are consequent of the performance having taken place and indicate a specific, concrete relation to the performance. The indexical relation is important to documentation of Live Art because it elaborates on the necessity of documentation to performance – that documents have a material relation to performance. Synchronic, visually and audibly dictating the perceiver's experience, the mediated character of documentation may be

criticised as formulating a safe distance from the intensity and temporal specificity of a performance event. Through its participation in the economy of the index, Live Art documentation can stand for the performance itself, as there is a physical relationship between performance and documentation. However, insofar as documentation becomes a sign in itself, Krauss suggests that the 'cause' is no longer present in the sign itself (1987: 217).

Anthropologist Alfred Gell states that artistic activity carries through the technicality of ordinary life, viewing the power of art as stemming from the 'magical' transformation of physical substances. He comes to the assertion that, 'the power of art objects stems from the technical processes they objectively embody' (1992: 211). Gell's focus on the symbolic nature of craftsmanship imbued in art objects, reiterates the importance of provenance and production history, as is discussed by modern conceptions of aesthetics (these will be further examined in Part Three). The notion that the process of art making is central to the artform resonates strongly with the central theory proposed by David Davies in *Art As Performance* (2004). In this book he suggests that all art works, by virtue of engagement in the temporal process of making and the construction of the artwork's unique narrative history, can be considered as comprising a performative act. In artworks where the final outcome is an object, one may consider this object as the documentation and result of a performative process. Approaching the subject from the standpoint of analytic aesthetics, Davies states that 'according to what I shall term the 'performance' theory, artworks are performances' (2004: 81). In this context, the documentation of Live Art may therefore be considered as already integrated and central to the Live Art work, exemplifying how the work has been made and indicating its intentions.

Seremetakis' (1994) discussion of objects as embedded with histories can also be useful as a means of discussing Live Art documents, in that the sensory memories invested in an object can be activated by a perceiver's interaction with an artefact. For instance, a prop used in a performance can be thought of as an object for non-commodified exchange. The commodity object is unable to furnish access to memories, due to its mass-produced status and its dispassionate method of consumption. However, objects can enter the realm of potential sensory exchange if they are 'themselves histories of prior commensal events and emotional exchanges' (1994:11). Gaston Bachelard in his discussion of the house (as a protective and sheltering location), tells of how objects become imbued with meaning over time, we did not dream enough in that house. And since it must be recaptured by means of daydreams, liaison is hard to establish. Our memories are encumbered with facts (1994: 57).

The physical remnants of performance, as produced by artists like Franko B, are able to convey some knowledge about a performance, but Bachelard implies that in order for these trace objects to have meaning, a prior lived experience is necessary. Without this experience, the 'interpretant' (to use Peirce's language) is quite different from the interpretant produced in an individual who has experienced the live performance. If a viewer has not experienced the live performance, the physical object functions as informational, necessarily only presenting a fraction of the aesthetic experience of 'being there'. The memory-containment of the commensal object lies in its participation in a live action and is facilitated by the presence of a witness. Therefore, because of their singular identity, the props used in performance are analogous to wax cylinders – they are all originals with 'no means of mass replication' (Channan, 1995: 5) and therefore have the capacity to contain memory.

This stance is echoed by Baudrillard who states, 'traditional symbolic objects....bore the clear imprint of the conscious or unconscious dynamic of [a real] relationship. They were thus *not arbitrary*' (1994: 218). According to this reading, videos are therefore problematic as they are intangible objects that can be infinitely reproduced and therefore are not capable of acting as such memory-carriers. Instead of physically participating in the event, the video merely carries or contains a mediated version of the event that is relayed on another layer of mediation in reception. Processes of reproduction and the impact these have on the resultant object demand that both object and subject submit to the logic of reproduction, so that the spectator is prohibited from participating in the dialogic encounter of the live (performance) event, physically and psychologically. Further, one can suggest that the nature of the object of documentation in Live Art is dictated by the relationship between the documentation and live action, positioning it precariously between commodity and symbolic object. For instance, if one accepts the proposition that the documentation becomes a sign itself and is therefore free from its production history, it is receptive to being creatively interpreted, however, by doing so, it loses its meaning as a cipher for performance and its relationship to an unique live action and moreover, becomes an object of consumption (Baudrillard, 1994: 218).

Auslander attributes commodity status to the performance document, suggesting that, 'by being recorded and mediatised, performance becomes an accumulative value, a commodity' (1996: 198). On the ingestive aspect of consumption, Phelan remarks that performance art's lack of 'left-overs' (1993: 148) (where documentation is not produced) demands that the audience digest as much as possible. A similar point is

taken up by Joshua Sofaer, who notices that the production of performance art is economically negative, a production that *spends* economically and temporally. Writers on performance repeatedly maintain that the experience of performance is temporal and depends largely on an unfolding tension of continuities and discontinuities, of not knowing what will happen next and at what point. The ability to manipulate and fragment the experience when experiencing a recording of performance can therefore be understood as disrupting the 'flow' of the live. With Live Art documentation, the performance, previously in the control of the artist, is potentially subject to the audience's fixation with the pause button. In this context, myth, gossip and other intangible forms of documentation are so valued by Live Art. As there is no physical object to be exchanged, moreover, these forms are most imprinted with narrative history and personal embodied experience, which, unlike objects, cannot have these qualities extracted from them.

At a time when documentation is increasingly viewed as a companion to performance rather than a representation per se, artists working under the banner of Live Art are keen to reclaim the objects and practices that constitute documentation and the purposes of recording in the context of Live Art. To the extent that it is possible to control, artists are keen for images and snippets of their work to be digested in a considered environment conducive to the work itself. By looking at the function of memory in Live Art documentation, my experiences and memories of Live Art during my research, I have illustrated ways in which articulations by writers on performance have interacted with the work made by artists within the field. The diversity of media and approaches to producing documentation channels is thriving and encouraged, which is contributing to a broadening definition of what can be classed as documentation. Beyond the functional utility of the record of Live Art practice, I have discussed how documentation can also appeal to memory, producing poetic readings in the audience. Whilst there remain pockets of Live Art practitioners and researchers who wish to maintain a privileged notion of performance, where 'performance promises to be the present, promises to be unrepeatable' (Reason: 2006: 19), the terms 'live' and 'mediated' are no longer understood within Live Art as a polar dichotomy. I suggest that the physical manifestation of new approaches to documentation within Live Art have influenced the interpretation of these terms. Indeed, I assert that Live Art is itself an interrogation of how an audience responds to documentation *qua* the legacy of a live performance. Through its concern with documentation, Live Art attempts to challenge existing assumptions about performance, in favour of recommending how

performance functions in a contemporary and digital culture. In Part Three I will discuss these trends further, particularly with respect to the use of technology in Live Art.

Part 3: The Holistic

The notion that performance can never be known or understood but exclusively through the 'live' performance was contrary to my personal experience. Although I had not seen Marina Abramović's historical performances, I had watched videos, poured over books about her and interviews and attended her lecture as part of the Tate 'Live Culture' series (2003). Even if I had not, my intuitive understanding of her work would still have remained. Certainly my knowledge of Abramović's art has changed as a result of consulting these extraneous materials. However, it was the initial exposure to her work that precipitated my interest in literature about her, rather than the other way round. Such a position questions the necessity of contextual information about artists, a concern of both performance studies (where discussion of an artist's identity has been a considerable trope) and also in analytic aesthetics (in the empiricist and non-empiricist debates). Instead, the gestures captured by the images of Abramović which I had initially seen – evidently carefully chosen by the artist and documented for their potential expressive and signifying capacities – demanded that I imagine the live aspect of the work as I experienced the documentation. Such a view that documents are able to spark off an aesthetic experience without requiring one to be bodily present at the event, is taken up by Henry M Sayre's essay in the *Live: Art & Performance* anthology (2004).

The ability of documentation to convey aspects of the 'live' to an audience not present at the event suggests that the performance document goes beyond representation or indexicality. This has spurred me to turn my attention towards the media and processes of documentation production – in many instances technology participates in the performance, like a proxy member of the audience, as well as being part of making the performance documentation. My interest in this simultaneous performance and documentation was fuelled by Adrian Mackenzie's book *Transductions: Bodies at Speed* (2002) where he discusses the concept of ontogenesis, that the identity of a thing is understood through its coming into being. The last Part of this thesis will address these two key issues of the role of technology in Live Art and the function of appreciation in Live Art documentation.

Recycling the Performance

Throughout this study we have examined various functions for documentation in Live Art practice. Part One discussed the notion of documentation as a pragmatic concern for Live Artists, particularly as an effective facilitator of professional development. Whereas, Part Two looked at how documentation, through its involvement in the event

can be a container for memories, for both the Live Artist and the audience, as a means to recall, reflect upon and reinterpret an existing performance. Here, I would like to consider how Live Artists use specially created or existing documentation as the starting material for producing new works.

I wish to begin this discussion by examining an example where the conventional temporal association between documentation and performance is dislocated. The film *Faceless* (2007) by Manu Luksch of Live Art collective Ambient TV, was produced almost entirely from CCTV footage under the Data Protection Act (fig. 14). Over the course of two years, Luksch performed specific actions to CCTV cameras across London and painstakingly obtained the footage, eventually piecing together a narrative that she had developed at the project's conception. In contrast to the activities of the New York-based Surveillance Camera Players, who perform solely live to an audience of CCTV operators and incidentally to the public within coverage areas, in order to create *Faceless*, Luksch's performances to camera are the first step of a production process. (Re)appropriating the right to access one's own data, Luksch collects all the footage she has 'performed' from the various CCTV service providers. Although legally obliged to hand over Luksch's data whenever she made a request, (somewhat predictably) certain CCTV service providers were less than forthcoming in providing data, citing excessive cost and manpower, whilst others went beyond the call of duty.



Figure 14 Manu Luksch. *Faceless*. DVD, 2007. Courtesy: Manu Luksch.

For instance, one CCTV service provider supplied footage as digital stills in hard copy, with the faces of other members of the public cut out *by hand*. As access was granted or denied, Luksch learnt to quickly assess which authorities would provide her data with if she persisted and which organisations would categorically refuse and she modified her narrative according to the footage she received.

Far from perceiving this process of data collection as a superfluous process, Luksch views it as an important ideological action that she can undertake as an artist, saying,

I'm acting out a fictional story but I'm actually much more focussing on this process of collecting the information. The Data Protection Act and also the Human Rights Act says that third parties are entitled to their privacy, so they are blacked out. I take all these restrictions into account....I would say that the documentation is definitely the main part of the piece.

The narrative of *Faceless* is that of a woman who is psychologically and visually alienated from others in society, who remain 'faceless'. As such the film is a critical response to the 'surveillance society', a condition that particularly afflicts the British: according to estimates in 2003 (McCahill & Norris, 2003 cited in Wood, 2006: 23) a CCTV camera exists for every fourteenth member of the UK population. Despite evidence that the presence of CCTV does not significantly impact the reduction of crime or increase safety in coverage zones, the British – in general – welcome the presence of these recording devices. In *Loving Big Brother*, John McGrath is quick to note that contrary to assumptions that contemporary society is suspicious of surveillance technology, we are in fact rather fond of it (2004), a liking that is reflected in the contemporary delight for reality TV. Luksch therefore aims to work with the parameters of surveillance, diligently gathering the documentation of her performance as a tactic to resist her images from existing solely as spectacle for the Other.

The resulting feature length film is challenging from a viewing perspective, as we are not accustomed to viewing such footage for extended periods, particularly in the context of the cinematic screen. John McGrath states that the space mapped in surveillance art is differentiated from conventional representational space,

for surveillance art, the link to daily spatial practice is particularly apparent. We still do not see a surveillance camera in a gallery without thinking of surveillance cameras in the streets. Nor does this relation fall easily into one of representational reference... Disallowing a conceptualisation of our spatial experience, a reduction of our relationship with surveillance to an opinion, surveillance art may impact directly (even viscerally) on our spatial practice, on our behaviour in our spatial environment and on our assent or dissent in relation to that environment's developments (2004: 142).

As a piece specifically made for reproduction, *Faceless* proposes an unusual means of reacting to the recording of a performance. Luksch looks around her at the other blacked out faces within the frame of the film, blurring the boundaries of performance in 'real life' and its simultaneous CCTV recording. Inverting the usually passive relationship to CCTV, in *Faceless* CCTV becomes the unwitting media that the artist has selected to utilise for the purpose of her performance. The film connects the time/place of Luksch's original performance to the space of surveillance, which is later mapped onto the screen-space in its iteration as film. Performance theorist Philip Auslander suggests that the performance that is made with reproducibility in mind is already partially mediated (1996: 211) - to the extent that Luksch performs in order to record so that the live performance is already imprinted with the documentation that is

yet to come. Through the process of recycling, performance documentation becomes creative material for a new work. In this sense, documentation can be said to take place on several levels: firstly, Luksch performs in order to produce a recording, her subtle movements almost unnoticeable in London's busy streets. The written communications exchanged between the artist and authorities holding CCTV footage also form another layer of documentation. The complete film *Faceless* can also be considered a documentation of the process of making a film from CCTV – the documentation is evidence that such an undertaking, such a 'performance', is possible. This latter is perhaps at the crux of a notion of practice that deems projects, rather than objects, as core to Live Art.

Whilst Luksch makes a performance that is presented to the audience as documentation of a fixed media, in *Harry & Me* (2004-05), Robin Deacon searches for documentation of a childhood performance he participated in as a means to map difference between the then and now. Deacon's presentation to the audience takes place as a live reconstruction and improvisation that explores his own memory and aims to investigate why he undertook the original performance. Deacon's approach is indicative of an economy where performance and documentation, enabled by recording technologies, can be part of a productive cycle of consumption and construction. He asserts,

it seemed the success of this performance would hinge on me finding the footage. But when I started writing the performance, I had no idea whether or not this was going to be possible, and so, the first section of the performance is about me trying to find a piece of TV footage – this possibly fruitless search thereby became the subject. It was the documentation of this process - recorded phone calls, letters, that were presented as the performance. Is this a kind of documentation in reverse?

Harry & Me involves the artist investigating how he was made to participate in his school choir to make it look more 'ethnically' diverse for the religious TV programme *Highway* (1989), indeed the issue of whether the choir shown on the programme was representative of the school or whether the choir members could actually sing was debated in the local media. The work starts with a recording of a telephone conversation between Deacon and the school secretary, with Deacon asking her whether the school has a copy of the TV programme because he wishes to reconstruct the performance. When the secretary hangs up the phone (presumably because Deacon states 'my school uniform doesn't fit me anymore. So [the reconstruction is] going to look a bit strange. Because I'm nearly 30 years old now'²⁶). Deacon states that *Harry & Me* is motivated by his exploration of whether he was accepted into the choir

²⁶ See <http://www.robindeacon.com/harryscript.htm> for the full script of *Harry & Me* [Accessed 26 March 2012]

because of his ethnicity or because he could sing. However, as he allows the audience to discover through the course of the performance, this distinction is irrelevant because all members of the choir were miming, the choir having made a recording a few weeks before the programme was made. Deacon uses the footage of the *Highway* programme as a means to bring together his performative past and present. Speaking of the process of making the work, his view has resonances with Luksch's process, that the production, rather than the performance, is of interest in itself,

when Joshua Sofaer writes about Live Art, he describes it as coming into being at the point of contact with the audience. For me though, the more interesting moments still occur in the preliminary stages – the performing (which right now, I enjoy much less than research and writing a piece) can almost be seen as a mere presentation of documentation. It's almost like a 'making of the performance' running concurrently within the performance. Anyway, the point I'm trying to make, is that something like one of the telephone conversations I recorded could also be seen as documentation. So this is where recycled documentation very much became part of a creative process, rather than an end in itself.

Instead of merely inducing a simply reflective attitude to past work, here, documentation is a motivating and structuring aspect of the work. *Harry & Me* problematises the relationship to recording that, as Murphie would put it (1991: 216-7), would jeopardise the verb 'performance'. This work therefore represents a model of Live Art making that works with the artist's own archives and attempts to reconstruct an 'originary' performance to produce a new work.

The notion of recycling performance is therefore also important to the phenomenon of re-enactments, as was discussed in Part One with reference to the Performance Re-enactment Society. Similarly, the topic of re-enactment was the subject of a major international touring exhibition and publication *History Will Repeat Itself* produced by the Hartware MedienKunstVerein (2007). In *We Love You* (2005), Andrea Tarsia, Head of Exhibitions at the Whitechapel Gallery London, discusses the genesis of the Whitechapel Gallery's *Short History of Performance* series, where Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* was re-enacted by a partly clothed performer (cited in Waugh, 2004: 78-80). Tarsia notes that the repetition of historical performance not only attempts to provide a simulation of the original experience, particularly worthwhile for those who were not previously present, but it also recalibrates our understanding of the older performance, whose cultural referents (music/imagery used) take on new significance in a contemporary light.

Despite attempts by artists to utilise it as such, the documentation of Live Art does not function as a score. Even the recent penchant for re-enactment reinforces this distinction, for instance in *Seven Easy Pieces* Marina Abramović re-enacted five

seminal works by her peers (including Joseph Beuys' *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*) – itself a performative documentation of those original performances, pieced together not from photographs and videos but from memories and gossip²⁷. Although these works are re-enacted precisely, they become contemporary remakes or versions of them, rather than instances of them. The contemporary tendency for re-enactment is, however, reflective of an interrogation of documentation and indicative of a desire for economical, sustainable cultural production. By re-assessing past ideas and unpacking the cultural specificity of an event, the re-enactment is a palimpsest that facilitates writing oneself onto existing history. The Live Art community, collectively and as individual artists, researchers, curators and audience, is coming to value the writing of its own history and the possibility for critiquing its development and discourse. Further, the specific use of documentation to generate re-enactments and forms that are reproducible (such as moving image) in Live Art highlights what Nick Kaye has described as the 'ambiguities of *transmission*, of the passage *between* places and times' (2007: 9).

Documentation as by-product

The process of making can – in the above instances - be viewed as the 'event' itself. In this context, the 'show' or performance produced for the public audience within the conventional setting of theatre or gallery, is considered more akin to the presentation of documentation. Whilst this model of Live Art practice suggests that what we might usually term the 'performance' is not originary, other modes of Live Art production embed documentation into their making process, even without the use of complex technology. For example, other Live Artists, using simple means such as tape recorders or paper, produce documentation as a by-product of the live actions of performance. This tendency is recognised by Philip Auslander who states that, 'live performance now often incorporates mediatisation such that the live event itself is a product of reproductive technologies' (1996: 197). In a way similar to FrenchMottershead's use of paper technologies and objects, Lucy Panesar's alter-ego market research consultant Felicity Mukherjee (fig. 15) creates documentation as a fundamental part of her performance. Defining herself as a researcher allows her to develop a relationship with the audience that in itself collects and documents responses, so that the generation of qualitative and quantitative comparisons between audience members is a central aim of her work. Using just clipboards, pens and a few props, Felicity Mukherjee's interactive performances engage in audience dialogue that

²⁷ Abramović's performance was in fact made into a film by Babette Mangolte called *Seven Easy Pieces*.

results in an immediate documentation or ‘take-away’ for those who have participated. For Season Three of Rational Rec (2008), Felicity Mukherjee was commissioned to undertake audience evaluation. Armed with clipboards and a team of professional looking assistants, Mukherjee’s idiosyncratic methods included maps, anatomical tests to determine musicality ratings and quantifying leisure activities in terms of how ‘rational’ they were. The results of her evaluation formed the basis of Rational Rec’s own evaluation report to Arts Council England (July 2008). Mukherjee also produced a 5 minute report on her findings that was included in a 90 minute feature about Rational Rec on BBC Radio 3’s *Hear and Now* (2008).



Figure 15 Felicity Mukherjee (Lucy Panesar). Quantifying Rational Recreation, Rational Rec, Spitalfields Market, London, 2008. Spitalfields Festival, Richard Cobelli.

Consequently employed by a number of arts organisations including Artsadmin and South London Gallery, as Felicity Mukherjee, Panesar’s performance automatically entails documentation, indeed documentation is the character’s reason for being, she plays a role that adopts real-life documentation techniques. Panesar’s process is indicative of a model of Live Art that partners with a site or an organisation in order to create a work that is responsive to the actions and understandings of a specific audience. Considering the notion that market research always implicates a performance, when these documents are shown

independently of Panesar’s performance, one is able to trace the process of making.

In *Call John the Boatman* (2007), Will Hunt enacts a performance of endurance that recalls a Fluxus action fused with Bruce Nauman’s early work (fig. 16). The piece re-imagines the artist as a court jester or performing monkey, using music to deliver entertainment. This vision becomes apparent as the artist is suspended by ropes that allow him to repeatedly dunk his head into a bucket of paint. From this position, Hunt sings and records a song of his own writing on a tape recorder. As he finishes each performance, he takes another breath before immersing himself in paint once more. As

he re-emerges he records the song again, whilst replaying the original tape, which eventually provides a choir of Will Hunts to the background of a new performance. Repeating these actions, the artist struggles with the two tape recorders strapped to his knees, he fights to maintain his normal voice.



Figure 13 William Hunt. Call John the Boatman. Fresh! Fest, South Hill Park, Bracknell, 2007. William Hunt

Hunt's work – intimately bound up with the exhibitionism, diligent practice and the obscure virtuosity of musical performance – relays documentation as part of the live event. The performance is documented on his body with paint and on tape as sound. We only assume that his tapes are blank to begin with, but this presupposition makes us ask how the artist first started practicing the work and the documentary relationship involved. For Hunt, the documentation is an accumulation of the moments of performance that hints at a process of making, without completely demystifying the performance.

Both Hunt and Panesar do not employ hi-tech methods to produce documents as a by-product, challenging the hypothesis that it is Live Artists who engage with new technologies who produce work that automatically records the conditions of the performance. These two performances produce documentation that is formally and aesthetically varied, illustrating that Live Art has at its disposal techniques from all areas of everyday life. In addition to reiterating the embeddedness of documentation in contemporary life, the use of these methods in works such as these reinforces Live Art's link to an avant-garde history.

Relationality and Ontogenetics

It is possible to define the live as a constellation of pedestrian practices: practices that draw us into the immediacy of the encounter before the operations of place would presume to tell us what it is that we are experiencing. The live, then, signals the coming into formation of things (Quick, 2004: 95)

At this point, I would like to explore the relationship between technology and performance in Live Art further, to claim that Live Art's engagement with technological means is at once more subtle and more complex than the narratives of technological determinism suggest.

The history of the contemporary performance's relationship to technology is succinctly discussed in Giannachi's *Virtual Theatres*. Although she does not employ the term 'Live Art' throughout her text, much of the work she refers to, for instance, the work of Forced Entertainment and Stelarc, can be classified as such. Giannachi states that the notion of 'remediation' (2004: 5) is crucial to 'virtual performance', namely performative work that crosses the boundaries of human-computer interactivity. Virtual performance is that which simulates virtual reality or telepresence as concrete and contemporary conditions rather than viewing these technologies as abstract utopian ideas. For Giannachi, the concept of remediation is explored by Marshall McLuhan's recognition that the "content" of any medium is always another medium' (cited in Giannachi, 2004: 4), problematising the simplicity of a model of communication where a message is conveyed between sender and receiver. Under such circumstances, the interpretation of a performative structure must take into account its mediatedness and the flickering between presence and disappearance.

Such a perspective, clearly relates to debates about the role of technology in contemporary life and how one understands the deployment of technology in relation to Live Art. Andrew Feenberg's *Questioning Technology* (1999) provides an overview of the main approaches to technology in cultural studies and the assumptions that ground these perspectives. Describing technological substantivism as arising from a belief in technology as autonomous yet value-laden, indicative of a post-Weberian approach to technology, he states that this position develops themes of capitalist critique articulated by writers of the 'Frankfurt School' (1999: 151). For supporters of technological substantivism, the relations between means and ends are linked by the aims of the economic system, aims that envelop domains of life beyond the economic and technical. This outlook posits that the inherent values of technological development diminish individual freedom, encroach on notions of self-management and demand obedience to an institutional, centralised power. Action is thus dictated by the technical

system, which is seen as a governing power or technocracy. Such a vision of technology as violently instrumental prevents advocates of substantivism from considering technology as neutral. The fatalistic tone of this approach resonates with that of technological determinism. However, it is on the issue of technology's neutrality that they differ. Whereas substantivists recognise the close relationship between the development of society and technical progress, technological determinism refuses to acknowledge such a reference to society. According to Feenberg, advocates of determinism assume that technological 'progress' is goal-oriented, unilinear (1999: 77) and assert that technology determines social adaptation.

Adrian Mackenzie echoes Feenberg's analysis characterising the majority of debates about technology as falling into three broad camps: those who see technology as a monolithic edifice whose main aim is to conspiratorially attack mind, body and temporality (Critical Theory, Virilio, Lyotard); those who see technology as supplementing the human, to the extent that we are unable to critique it, such as Bernard Stiegler who,

regards technicity as a *historically materialised supplement* or prosthesis of the human. As a consequence, technology becomes almost unrepresentable because it subsumes or contaminates the very ground of representation [sic] thought (Mackenzie, 2002: 7). Further Mackenzie states that other writers such as Latour and Haraway view technology as fundamentally embedded into society and life, and make it their project to interrogate the effects and meaning of technology.

It is this third position that I wish to further explore. The discourse about technology developed by new media art is especially relevant here to the relationship between Live Art performance and documentation. Within a culture where hacking and open source technologies and modes of working are gaining cultural capital, technological determinism, in particular, is increasingly viewed as an outdated proposition. Indeed, Creative Commons Licenses are becoming popular with artists working with new media and certain visual artists – for instance, Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska have produced a number of artworks and publications under CC licences, such as *The Value of Things* (2000). Such methods are being employed by Live Artists, for instance, Luksch's reclamation of her personal data in *Faceless* is an instance of cultural production that attempts to resist the arguments made by technological determinism. Amelia Jones also speaks of the trend where artists who work with new technologies engage the network logic of these modes of information exchange (video/TV, the web, CD ROM) to produce themselves (their 'artist's bodies') in ways that make *us* take note of our ever-changing position in the web of

intersubjective couplings and disengagements that constitute the social (Jones, 2000: 43). What is notable about these resistant forms of engagement with technology, is their opposition to technology as what Gilbert Simondon terms 'hypertelic' (Lister & Dovey et al, 2003: 362), in other words, the refusal to simply view technological tools as 'overdetermined to a single function'.

According to Simondon,

the unity, individuality, and specificity of a technical object are those of its characteristics which are consistent and convergent with its genesis. The genesis of the technical object is part of its being (1958: 18).

This suggestion that a tool can be thought of in terms of a multiplicity of uses, according to a specific context serves as a useful point to explore how Live Artists deploy technology in the documentation of Live Art. Further, this definition of a technical object provides another way to approach documentation itself. Adrian Mackenzie relates the 'technical object' to Simondon's notion of 'ontogenesis', the practice of how a thing takes on a form, drawing on the resources of its 'pre-individual' being to become something other (2002: 53). In contrast to both *induction* and *deduction* as styles of thought, Mackenzie advocates thinking transductively, which involves being open to the occurrence of anomalies. Instead of being predicated on existing models or predictions of behaviour, transductive operations are open to new paradigms, questioning relationality. In this way, transductive thought bypasses the norm-deviation paradigm, as it is open to seeing action as potentially creative, leading to another model, opening of a domain. Citing Gilbert Simondon's example of crystal formation as a classic example of transduction, Mackenzie notes that although environmental changes trigger the crystal to form, they do not impose a specific shape, structure or way of being for the formation of the crystal. He states that the process of individuation produces a new individual, namely, the crystal (Mackenzie, 2002: 12). However, it is not the products of transduction that are necessarily important, what counts is the relationality created by the transductive operation.

The concept of transduction can be said to apply to Phillip Warnell's work *Host* (2004), which explores the production of the artist's bodily images through capsule endoscopy (fig. 17). Usually used to examine patients with gastrointestinal conditions, the capsule endoscopy procedure consists of a pill containing a camera and transmitter that takes two photos every second for eight hours. Of his approach to documentation, Warnell states,

I don't do a performance then document it. My performances are as much documentation as performances and increasingly so. If anything, the project I [have been working on], the symposium, I'm struggling to think about what kind of name to

give it, its not a symposium – that’s a horrible word, its not a performance, it’s not a demonstration, its not even my work – its me working in conjunction with people in presentation. Its already a live documentation of a research process...I do want to play with that 1-2-3 (i.e. research, event, documentation) scenario, but its more important than acting as this posthumous coffee-table book where I’ve done 10 performances in the last four years and there’s two pictures of each in the book and I get my mate to write a text about it, and we’re all happy...., but its not a question of ‘I did my performance and I documented it’. I’m simply trying to break that whole process down and I think I’m having a reasonable amount of success with that using a strategy of simultaneous exposure of material.

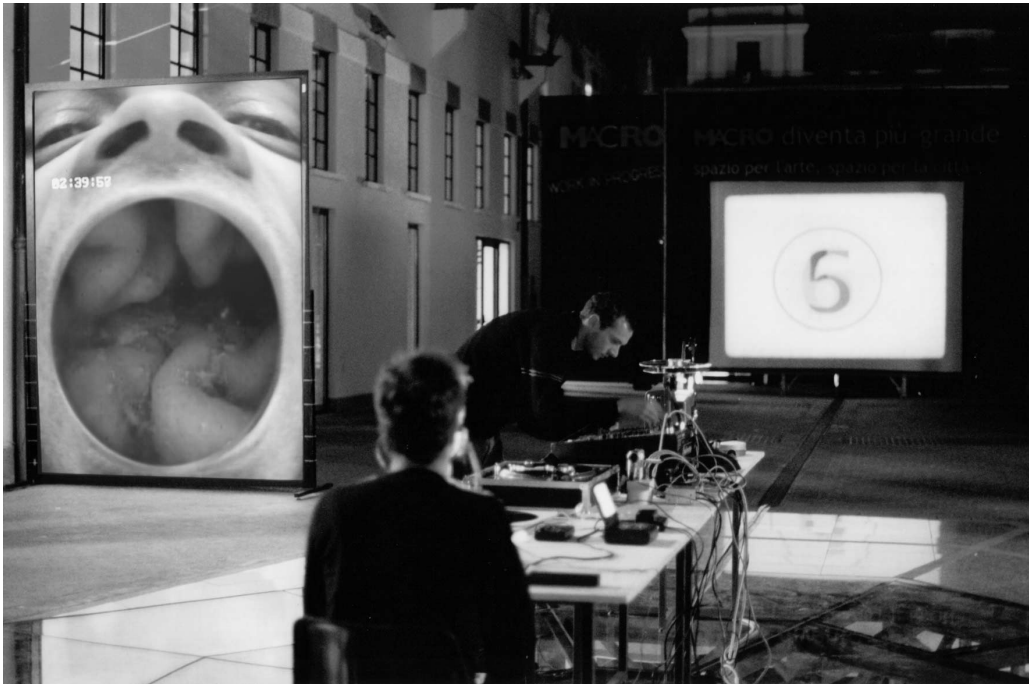


Figure 14 Phil Warnell. Host. MACRO, Rome, Italy, 2004. Stephanie Nava

In *Host*, the footage from the capsule endoscopy forms the raw material for a live performance where images of Warnell’s interior body are controlled by sensors attached to his lips. The audience sees the artist’s face (live) on a five-screen environment juxtaposed with the recorded images of his insides. This juxtaposition of public and private amplifies the flickering relationship between visible and invisible, live and documentary. Warnell also collated the 65,000 images from the capsule endoscopy to create a nine-metre long web object, which documents and represents the transit of the capsule camera from his mouth through his gut and to his bowels. Further, *Host* became the basis of a further work called *Endo-Ecto* (2006), which was made up of a number of performative elements including, the artist undergoing the capsule endoscopy procedure as a live performance for an audience. Through its development of the relation to inner and outer self, rather than a complete focus on the products and purpose of the endoscopic process, *Host* can be said to engender what

Adrian Mackenzie terms a 'transductive' process. Further, the documentary aspect of *Host* can be considered the product of ontogenesis, 'the way something comes to be' (Mackenzie, 2002: 18). By adopting medical technology for a purposive purposelessness (Kant, 1790: §29), Warnell's project can be understood as challenging the functions of technology for documentation in a performative situation. Working in a cross-disciplinary environment, with a process that starts from the studio and is iterated in a number of guises, Warnell's outputs surface as work-in-progress events that reflect the experimental nature of the technology they embrace.

Despite the potentially positive functions for technology in documenting Live Art, it is important to bear in mind the opacity of recording media. Matt Adams of Blast Theory says,

I don't think you can ever say technology is just a functional thing, it comes with a whole agenda and ideology and set of processes and requirements in terms of costs, and skills and collaborations and partners, you know, teams. So technology is always part of the subject of the work as well as the medium for the work. Even for Live Artists who consciously integrate recording technologies into their work, such as the collective Blast Theory, at times the spectre of documentation exerts a pressure upon performer and audience that is alien to performance, especially when an engrossed state of play is vital to the work. As Bogard states, 'to distract something is to *mark* it, and thereby make it vulnerable. A distraction creates a target; it makes a thing *traceable*' (2000: 450). Documentation can distract (or detract) from the performance, since it moves on a different order, wanting to memorialise an action whose identity is at least partly centred on the notion of its own death and contested legitimacy. Moreover, in doing so, documentation can be said to upset the 'presentness' of the event. Recapitulating on the notion of the panoptic, particularly in light of performance's penchant for subverting conventional modes of cultural knowledge, it is perhaps not surprising that artists working under the banner of performance or Live Art are often suspicious of recording devices that operate principally on the look or gaze.

The highly interactive nature of Blast Theory's work draws heavily on theatre and gaming, demanding a high level of engagement from the audience and denying the possibility of assuming a safe subject position as passive audience member.

Discussing one of their most popular and mature works, *Can you See Me Now?* (2001), Matt Adams of Blast Theory says,

it's not a neutral thing for someone to come in and document, it changes the experience dramatically and we've often had fights with the University of Nottingham when they've wanted to video a player playing the game and

we've said 'no' because that person's game is ruined when they've got a person with a camera going like that, or a researcher next to them going 'can I just ask you why have you done that?'

Can You See Me Now? is a multi-player 'game' that invites participants to engage in an



Figure 18 Blast Theory *Can you See me Now?* 2001. Blast Theory

online map of a city to track and virtually 'capture' members of Blast Theory who perform in the streets of the 'real' city (fig. 18). As with much of their work, *Can You See Me Now?* was developed in collaboration with the University of Nottingham's Mixed Reality Lab. Of gaming, Lister & Dovey (et al) state that these forms not only 'exist within the real world, but they also model it (and others)' (2003: 274). By virtue of engaging audience/players in the 'real time' world of the game, *Can You See Me Now?* creates a virtual reality,

however, in overlaying the virtual/screen environment with the presence of performers in the 'real life' city, the piece creates a sense of telepresence.

The technologies employed in the work itself (GPS, satellite systems and 3G mobile phones) imply documentary possibilities, logging the movements of performers and participants, and these can be scrutinised at a later date.

Adams makes a distinction between these digital technologies of recording and the representational conventionality of the video camera. Perhaps this is due to the more abstract character of the former, which represents the work's movements as code or thin lines on a PDA screen, where this code is itself part of the work. From the perspective of performer or gamer, the video or stills camera interrupts the experience of the live event. Yet, video and photography are the most common forms of documentation and are used by almost every Live Artist (with few exceptions) at some point of their career. More likely is the fact that the video camera has no function in terms of the work and its presence would be as an intruder. The recording device appears as another participant at the performance, but one that is neither performer nor audience, thus contravening accepted paradigms of participation within the framework

of gaming. If the video camera recording a player's experience of *Can You See Me Now?* can be viewed as breaking the pact of trust between artist and participant, with the next destinations of that documentation worryingly unbeknownst to the player, video documentation can be said to fracture the fragile artist-participant relationship. The silence that results from *not* recording can encourage both experimentation and the prospect of productive 'failure'.

The use of technology in both Warnell's *Host* and Blast Theory's *Can You See Me Now?* facilitates documentation as developing in tandem with live action. *Host* can be understood as an iterative work, whose manifestations appear as dramatically different, yet participate in and derive from the central idea of capsule endoscopy as an investigation of the inside and outside of the body. Through its participation in online systems, *Can You See Me Now?* can be viewed as a networked or distributed work, where players create their individual pathways through a system built by Blast Theory. Although technology enables documentation and is also an integral component in both these works, the two models of Live Art practice these works illustrate necessarily give rise to differing contexts for understanding their documentation. This simultaneous prolongation of the live and anticipation of the documentation can be expressed using Reason's terms, that the documents of Live Art documentation here stem from the relationality between performance, technology and audience.

Modular Live Art Practice

Aside from the iterative and distributed model of Live Art practice, I wish to suggest that the modular paradigm of Live Art practice is also particularly interesting regarding the production of documentation. As previously stated, Live Art wishes to be considered as a grouping of practices rather than as a media-specific artform. The notion of networks perpetuates Live Art, within that, documentation as a means of transmitting Live Art's symbolic power is a central aim of the artform. As Niki Russell and Hannah Crosson state in *In Time: A Collection of Live Art Case Studies*,

Live Art and interdisciplinary art require the involvement of people in dialogues, conversations and partnerships for the construction of art, critical feedback to develop it, enablers and facilitators that assist in showing the work, and the audience that engage with it. In this environment, collaboration and connection between people is the currency and of key importance, and can be accessed and harnessed through the identification of networks which form loose and often changing structures that bring people together (2010: 57-8)

Through this lens, the notion of 'live' can also be understood as a reference to the 'keeping alive' and representation of human relationships. The concept of the network is particularly useful because it aims to positively connect persons, who cannot be

present together at a specific time, within a community of interest. Such an interpretation transplanted to the structure of the Live Art work is pertinent because rather than privileging a specific moment of action, the notion of a modular or networked Live Art work acknowledges the importance of a number of outputs, which can be articulated in differing locations and times.

Works like the ground-breaking *(be)longing* (2005-8) by the Live Art duo Curious – Helen Paris and Leslie Hill – testify that Live Artists are increasingly developing art projects that consist of a number of outputs in various forms, rather than a singular object, moment or event. Interrogating the issue of where people belong and what they long for, *(be)longing* was a research project that developed into a series of interviews, an exhibition of sound works at the Women's Library in London, a documentary performance lecture, a performance 'show' and a 16mm film. The subjects of the project were Paris and Hill, working with sex workers, particularly trafficked young Africans protected by the NSPCC. I experienced the project three times, the first at Performance Studies International Conference in 2006, again at Artsadmin the following year and I also attended the film's London premiere. The lecture performance at the PSI conference discussed the research process and presented footage of the interviews the artists had undertaken with sex workers. My experience of their 'show' at Artsadmin was of an intimate portrait of two fascinating individuals, both endlessly witty, intelligent and caring, and their histories: Hill looked to the past – 'the myth of return' suffered by immigrants. She described how her journey to White Sands, USA, was thwarted by nuclear missile testing, a circumstance beyond her control and constantly held her guitar, which due to lack of ability she was unable to play, yet it substituted part of her identification with her Southern roots. Paris' story was of escaping, a 'longing house' with vacancies, conceiving of dread as the opposite of longing. Her monologue about the 'other thing' – a tale of being betrayed by her own heart – as it is distracted from her, presented itself as a mournful loss, which was apparent for both Paris and her partner Hill. Although they are partners in work and life, there was barely a look exchanged between them and they never crossed the boundary of the other's marked out performance space, as if they were each part of a different performance. Second and third hand reports of the premiere at the National Review of Live Art proclaimed, 'this isn't Live Art, its experimental theatre', as audiences were confused by the form the work took. The *(be)longing* project is otherwise action research, presenting a portfolio of outcomes which documented a process. As with *Faceless* discussed above, the 'show' at Artsadmin was a distillation of the themes raised by the complex issues Hill and Paris explored. Seen as an event-

sum work consisting of a number of outputs *(be)longing* does not prioritise the live over the mediated – since the work is located in all of these sites. Indeed, even though the Live Art community understood the ‘show’ as the most significant part of *(be)longing*, for Curious, the film they made with the trafficked young women was the culmination of the project. This 12 minute documentary film interviewing the young women about their ideas around belonging was the consequence of years of highly sensitive work, work which often crossed the conventional boundaries of being a Live Artist to mentoring and working with agencies to help the young women build their future lives. In this sense, the film *(be)longing* is a documentation of how the artists and the young women developed a relationship with one another, connecting art practice to the everyday. The artists undertook a long process of collaboration with the subjects of the project in *(be)longing*, using the public presentation platforms to mark and reflect upon the process. Due to the temporal and financial resources it entails, it is necessary to note that genuine collaboration of this type found in *(be)longing* is rare in Live Art and it is therefore a method more usually accessible by established artists of similar status to Curious.

This notion of the composite Live Art work, where a project – and not objects – is produced, can also be applied to *Vauxhall Pleasure* (2004) initiated by Live Artist Anna Best and composer Paul Whitty (fig. 19). Based on the history and music of the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, *Vauxhall Pleasure* describes itself as a ‘multi-part protest piece’ involving over 40 singers - performing music based on songs written by Thomas Arne, the Vauxhall Pleasure Garden composer in residence – at the busy Vauxhall Cross Interchange to passers-by and passing traffic. Sound and video recordings of these performances were made and remixed to produce an audiovisual backdrop for a further instrumental (rather than vocal) performance across the river at the Tate Britain on the same day. The project also manifested as a broadsheet that not only detailed the project’s aims but also documented the history of the Vauxhall Cross Interchange site. As well as presenting documentation of these elements of the project, The *Vauxhall Pleasure* website²⁸ contains research information about the site’s history and correspondence generated through the making process. As the live vocal performances of *Vauxhall Pleasure* were consciously presented to an audience of passers-by, without prior marketing, it was not the intention of the artists for an audience to see all parts of the project. Since live performance is for *Vauxhall Pleasure* not the dominant site for experiencing the work, the documentation of the project is not

²⁸ <http://vauxhallpleasure.annabest.info> [Accessed 26 March 2012]

simply a recording of the project but constitute a central element of the work. As with *Curious' (be)longing*, *Vauxhall Pleasure* attempts to 'rematerialise' the art object, producing tangible outputs that can be experienced by an absent audience.



Figure 15 Anna Best. *Vauxhall Pleasure*. Vauxhall Cross, London, 2004. Anna Best & Paul Whitty.

Rewriting and re-performing older music and places, *Vauxhall Pleasure* can be considered a performance of a documentation, but more crucially, it is a project that disperses its identity as Live Art over a number of distinct outputs.

Correspondence to Music

Established figures within Live Art who have previously worked with music have so far been a minority - Mukul Patel of Ambient TV, Ansuman Biswas and Hayley Newman can thus be viewed as exceptions to this tendency. Here Newman describes her experience of the intersection between Live Art and music,

I was interested in music as a teenager and that was the first thing of the avant-garde that I knew, that was through music, so maybe there's something there that always keeps me with music. But also, circumstantially, in the 1990s in London if you were making performance work you were kind of laughed at a bit, in the art world – it wasn't really that acceptable, because there was kind of either the YBA phenomenon or the artist-led phenomenon. The artist-led organisations were not necessarily focussing on performance, so yeah, in a way, music was a lot more open, people in the music world were actually very open to me coming in and doing stuff so that I think is why I did start doing it: it was about there being some sort of location for the work.

That musical works are executed by performers, usually through the interpretation of a score, is markedly different from the production of Live Art, which is (by and large) performed or directed by the artists themselves. The absence of an agreed role for documentation in Live Art illustrates that the musical score and the documentation of

Live Art do not function in a comparable way. Whilst notation is able to prescribe to a musical performer the quality of pitch, duration, expression, timbre and amplitude of a phrase, to create an instance of the musical work, the document of Live Art can only be descriptive, in terms of its capacity to 'transmit' the work.

Numerous theorists since Kant have expounded music's fleeting and intangible nature, however, due to the development of Western notational systems and an increasing dependence on reproductive techniques for dissemination throughout its history, contemporary philosophies of music now recognise both the textual and ethereal aspects of its ontology. One must note that the identity of the musical work is an issue that has been thoroughly examined by music's practitioners, whilst Live Art – though a growing research field – does not have a similar access to hindsight.

Issues around the identity of the musical work have been a source of debate in the musical discipline for several hundred years, particularly since divisions of labour between composition and performance became increasingly separated, a trend that Lydia Goehr refers to as the legitimisation of the 'work concept' (1997). Whilst the proliferation of new electronic means of disseminating, storing and producing music prompt further questions about the status of a musical work, there is widespread acceptance that musical recordings are representations of musical works. Musicians were far from unanimous in their acceptance of the phonographic invention in 1877 and although the significance of musical recording is still something of a contested territory in the realm of Western art music scholarship, few musicians and composers today (regardless of genre) would today dispute the positive value of musical recordings and reject the opportunity to have 'their' music recorded, produced and distributed by the organisations and figures of their choice. Timothy Day suggests that hostility (within the history of notated music) towards taking recordings as serious objects of study are threefold: technological limitations of discs and reproduction devices until 1950s meant that sound recording was unable to achieve the standards it aspired to; accepting sound recordings as equally valuable as scores or books would imply acknowledging the influence of popular culture and lastly, sound recording collections were often small, difficult to find and non-comprehensive (Day, 2000: 231). All those with vested interests in the realm of notated music were particularly sensitive about the status accorded to the sound recording, partially due to the privileged relationship between composition and performance. The consensus about the significance of recordings has come about surprisingly recently – for instance, gramophone records were not reviewed in *The Musical Times* until 1921 (Day, 2000:

230-31) - almost 40 years after Thomas Edison's first wax cylinders. Indeed, it would appear that the increasingly ocular-centric Twentieth Century did not place a great deal of importance on sound recordings in general, and it was only in 1973 that the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry called on governments of the world to,

acknowledge and encourage the outstanding role played by the sound recording in the diffusion of culture; to recognise the principle that sound recordings are education, scientific and cultural objects, just as are books, newspapers, periodicals and films (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, 1973: 12).

Glenn Gould's controversial denunciation of the one-take recording and preference for a patchwork of best-spliced phrases from numerous takes, undoubtedly influenced changing public and professional attitudes towards the efficacy and potentialities of sound recording techniques. That this revered musician celebrated the technicity of recording may have been considered virtual madness to some, but it also heralded an active and new approach to a technology that had hitherto been perceived by certain members of the mainstream Western art music community as refuting the notational paradigm of this art form. Striving beyond the then normative model of recording as representation of neutral performance, Gould utilised and realised the techniques of sound recording in productive terms. One might state that Gould's approach has the tendency to promote the conflation of the musical 'work' with a specific performance, contributing to the record industry-backed notion of 'authoritative' recordings. This notion seems to be happily embraced by a large market share of listeners, particularly those who consider the participation of certain ensembles, performers and conductors as endowing an 'authentic' stamp to a musical performance. All this aside, the techniques of splicing have become a regulative and normative practice both in western art and popular music recording, albeit in a digital form today, techniques which further provide material for numerous experimental composers such as Luciano Berio, John Cage and Christian Marclay. As Evan Eisenberg states,

a record is a sculpted block of time, repeatable at the owner's whim. That block may have been carved from another time and place (though only live recordings are carved in one piece) and so may be a document or record of its quarry. But a record of music does not record historical time. It records musical time which, though it exists in historical time, is not of it (2005: 37).

We can further understand the documentation of Live Art by reading Roman Ingarden's *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity* (1986) to flesh out ways in which the identity of the musical work and Live Art differ. He describes music as having a 'quasi-temporal' structure that fleetingly occupies a frame of time,

each individual performance of a musical work effectively spreads itself in time in such a way that its separate parts unfold in different time spans.... Having receded, they cease to exist, they sink into the past, from which – if one may so put it – they never return, but rather sink into it more deeply, becoming more and more distant from the ever-renewing present (1986: 16).

According to Ingarden, the musical work is an object that manifests itself through, but is not identical with, its musical performances (1986: 19) - in other words, we are asked to listen beyond the environmental specificity of the performance and the performer's particular style of execution in order to grasp the musical work. He further asserts that although it may not always appear so, the musical work proposes itself as a unified whole, integrating its many musical products and many parts – this is what Ingarden calls the aspect of unity and wholeness in the musical work (1986: 123).

Nelson Goodman's distinction between the autographic and allographic arts in *Languages of Art* (1976) provides another reference point for understanding the role of documentation in Live Art practice. For Goodman, a work is autographic, 'if and only if even the most exact duplication of it does not thereby count as genuine' (1976: 113), thereby identifying the work of art as connected to a specific history of production.

Allographic art, on the other hand refers to the existence of a score or notation that enables the work to be produced by artists other than the one who first brought it into the world. Musical works from the notated tradition are therefore clearly an example of allographic art. Goodman states,

copies of the score may vary in accuracy, but all accurate copies, even if forgeries of Haydn's manuscript, are genuine instances of the score. Performances may vary in correctness and quality and even in 'authenticity' of a more esoteric kind; but all correct performances are equally genuine instances of a work (1976: 112-3).

Goodman is concerned with how to identify a genuine instance of a work, asserting that the score provides an ur-text of a musical work, a proposition based on an understanding of music *qua* music from the Western Art Music tradition, where the score is produced before any performance and that the score is the basis for further instances of the work. Notation is therefore central to Goodman's conception of the allographic work (1976: 121), viewing performance of a musical work as secondary to the score in order to emphasise the paramount importance of the function of notation in allographic works. One can say that according to Goodman, an allographic work is a work where sufficient notation exists to determine the constituent elements of the work and therefore enable the production of future instances of the work. In autographic work, the constituent and contingent elements cannot be (easily) delineated. In other words, the autographic artwork does not presume a specific hierarchy of its parts.

As an artform led by artists as performers of their own work, the work of Live Art is basically autographic, as according to Goodman, the autographic work is authentic when the work is directed by the artist and where the artist is not required to execute the work. Autographic works are artworks where the constituent elements cannot be separated from the work's totality. Conversely, Goodman asserts that it is through the

capacity for a work to be sufficiently articulated in notation that defines it as allographic and that notation is used to identify the constituent elements of an allographic artwork (1976: 113). The work of Live Art can aspire to be allographic if another artist takes on an existing work (i.e. as a re-enactment) or where the work itself is a score (as with French Mottershead's *People Series*). In other words, through the vehicle of re-enactment, an autographic work can be transformed into a pseudo-allographic work.

Through their repetition of durational performances, Forced Entertainment can be seen as elevating the autographic character of Live Art to an allographic one. The stamina required to perform these works makes one question whether they really did it, were they really there for 24 hours?

Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment says,

Once you're doing something more than 3 or 4 times, you're engaged in a problem, in that it won't naturally keep happening nicely or according to some sort of intuition, as it's already becomes like a repeated object and so at that point you have to say 'right, we're rehearsing now'. In a way, you get into what is a theatrical business where you practice things so that you can do them again, but make them look like you're just doing them for the first time. Sometimes we have these pieces like *1000th Night* and *Quizoola!*, which are open improvisational structures that we don't set, we've been doing some of those pieces for almost 10 years now: we just turn up, put the equipment in place and just do it and there's a different attitude in a way to what it means to present a particular piece of work – you don't get into this theatrical economy of rehearsal and repetition and also those pieces tend to be the long ones where you don't have to engage with the dramatic economy of an hour and a half. When we're looking at a theatre space and a piece we're going to tour it tends to be an hour, an hour and a half, we have to ask ourselves 'what is the dramaturgy of this?' It might be very flat, it might be very unexpected, but you're definitely dealing with some sort of journey or other from A to B. In the long pieces where people are free to come and go when they like – some people don't stay for 6 hours, but other people do – you're dealing with time in a different way. In the touring pieces you're dealing with time in a theatrical way, we might be too slow for some people or too fast for others, or there might not be enough architecture, but we're still thinking about those in a way that at least has some relation to theatrical dramaturgy, whereas with the longer pieces, the 6 hour or 24 hour ones, you don't really think about things in that way.

Forced Entertainment's durational works start from loosely structured scripts that the performers improvise upon. These scripts, far from providing exacting instructions for the artists, require them to participate in 'non-matrixed acting' (Michael Kirby, cited in Lehmann, 2006: 135), where in *Quizoola!* the artists are involved in answering and posing questions within a performative context as themselves. In *Quizoola!*, the script provides a prompt and a starting point for the performers that can be read at random. Similarly, although the script does not prescribe it, the performance conventions that have developed since the piece came into being in 1996 allow the performers to ask and answer questions from the audience. Seen in this context, a work like *Quizoola!*

resists Goodman's delineation between the autographic and allographic, whilst the piece is tied to a specific history of artistic practice by the group Forced Entertainment, the structure of the script and accompanying performance conventions allows the possibility of further instances of the work that incorporate improvisation and audience interaction. Goodman's understanding of the distinctions between artforms becomes problematic in an era of highly interdisciplinary artistic practice.

The absence of an agreed role for the document in Live Art not only highlights that the 'whole edifice of Western art music can be said, after a fashion, to be constructed upon and through notation' (Cutler, 2004: 140), it furthermore illustrates the fundamental differences between the function of the musical score and Live Art documentation. In most instances, the work of Live Art cannot be recreated from its documentation as the documentation does not itself aim to prescribe its further instantiations, unlike the complexity of western musical notation. So far, Live Art as an artform has not sought to initiate a method of notation and there seems to be little enthusiasm to embark on such a project. Live Art values the history of production that Goodman demands of autographic arts, authenticity (as a performance of individual identity) is therefore said to reside with the Live Artist. However, Live Artists such as those I have discussed in this study, are also concerned with investigating how new (autographic) works of Live Art can be created through live action and interaction with existing documentation.

Experiencing Documentation

Whilst I have considered the ways in which Live Artists utilise documentation as a means to prolong the live experience and to engage an audience with their work, it is necessary to consider the quality of experience that can be gained by the encounter with the document of Live Art. Theorists such as Phelan (1993), Schneider (2001) and Heathfield (1997, 2000) have problematised the notion of translating Live Art into another form, following on from their viewpoints, the action of (re)producing Live Art would serve to dramatically alter its identity *qua* performance. In this context, the placement of Live Art documentation on gallery walls, in festival screening programmes or online is susceptible to being understood outside of Live Art's framework. The casual viewer does not necessarily know whether the document gives an appropriate representation of the performance, or whether it should be considered and appreciated as an independent piece. If it is the latter, should it be understood in strictly formal terms, with reference to the history of representational art?

In order to explore whether a form of aesthetic competence and common level of

understanding of Live Art is necessary for experiencing documentation I wish to draw on a number of approaches to aesthetic experience, mainly from the tradition of analytic aesthetics. I appropriate the term 'empiricist' to describe the 'common-sense theory of art appreciation' as critiqued by David Davies in *Art as Performance* (2004). Based on the model of appreciation found in Clive Bell's book *Art* (1914), its main predicate is that, 'to properly appreciate a work, it is both necessary and sufficient that one have a direct experiential encounter with an instance of the work' (Davies, 2004: 6).

Like Kant, Clive Bell and Richard Wollheim consider that the work of art provokes in the individual a specific feeling – Bell describes this as an 'aesthetic emotion' (1914: 7), a feeling that one 'receives' from a work of art that is qualitatively different from the feeling of appreciation one obtains from a beautiful naturally occurring object. Despite the fact that Bell's *Art* is almost a century old, it remains a key text in situating aesthetics and art theory. Bell articulates the 'aesthetic emotion' as follows, art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life (1914: 25). In this paragraph Bell admits his allegiance to the autonomous realm of art, an art that has transcendental qualities. In that Bell's ideal art is separate from praxis, he perpetuates the power of the Kantian notion of 'disinterest'. However, in light of the breakdown of essentialism and cultural imperialism, which has revealed such enforced neutrality to be hegemonic construction of a Western European aesthetics, this approach to aesthetic appreciation is highly problematic. Bell discounts the possibility of knowledge of the work being useful to the aesthetic judgment. By his estimation, it is possible to judge art solely by its appearance and avoid all issues of its provenance and its situatedness in the development of the medium, but this would be to misunderstand it as an objective text.

Following on from this, the common-sense theory of art appreciation argues that the experience with an instance of a work is 'sufficient' as the manifest properties of a work are the only stimuli necessary to appreciate it. For instance, Gombrich notes that too much information can hinder our reading of a picture (1959: 185). This internalist theory of aesthetic appreciation asserts that there is no necessity for recourse to writings about the work or practical knowledge of other works in the same medium or style. Writers who adopt this view of art situate artistic value in an object's exhibited/manifest properties, viewing issues of provenance as secondary to the aesthetic experience the work elicits. David Davies states that 'aesthetic empiricism, in

its purest form, is the thesis that the artistic properties of an artwork are given to a receiver in an immediate perceptual encounter with the work – they are, in this sense, its “manifest” properties’ (2004: 28).

Writing from the viewpoint of modernist formalism, Michael Fried states,

theatre and theatricality are at war today, not simply with modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such – and to the extent that the different arts can be described as modernist, with modernist sensibility as such.... *The success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theatre* (Fried 1967: 145). For Fried, when art demands engagement beyond its hermetic surface, it approaches theatre, belying his ocular-centric perspective. The impact of Fried’s provocative claims about minimal art upon contemporary art history cannot be underestimated.

Underpinning his thesis is an aesthetics based on utopian imaginaries rather than one that relates to its political situatedness. Fried’s stark denigration of theatre, predicated on an outmoded understanding of the relationship between artwork and audience inadvertently validates art that embraces a closer relationship to its viewer. By claiming presence for an encounter with art that is wholly analytic, one may recuperate the term ‘absence’ for art that actively attempts to reconnect with its social situation. Fried believes in art that is transcendental and transformational, an art that is able to have a ‘presentness’ without reference to information and context outside of the work. He intends that a successful work of art should be immediately arresting, an immanent form that calls the viewer to its attention without recourse to the parameter of duration. Fried’s rejection of the theatricality of minimal art and his alignment with Clement Greenberg’s Modernist assumptions that artforms should remain separate because of their inherently distinct characteristics, appears to occupy an aesthetic position diametrically opposed to Live Art’s interdisciplinary impetus, its inclusive, participatory nature and its candid attitude towards the social and political conditions of its production.

Arguments *against* the adequacy of empiricist aesthetics have dominated recent analytic debates, particularly since the emergence of critical discussions of modernism and conceptual art. Rationales for non-empiricist aesthetics vary from the institutional, such as George Dickie (1974), to those that replace the aesthetic with Idea as the central category of art, like Timothy Binkley (1977). What binds non-empiricist writers is an affirmation that being familiar with the social and artistic contexts of art production is significant to art appreciation. Dickie asks that the audience has prior experience of the form, or a similar type of work, as this knowledge enables one to independently discern, for example, whether the artist’s intention will be an important factor in

evaluating the work (1973: 171). In his essay *Piece Contra Aesthetics*, Binkley says, 'aesthetics.... mistakes the experience of aesthetic qualities for the substance of art.... art is too culturally dependent to survive in the mere look of things' (1977: 272-3). Proponents of non-empiricist models of art appreciation argue that, particularly for contemporary art, artistic properties are dependent on provenance and non-manifest aspects of art that cannot be rationalised by empiricist accounts.

Taking a position against Greenberg and Fried, in his seminal essay 'Art After Philosophy' (1969), Kosuth articulates his understanding of the aesthetic experience as such,

advance information about the concept of art and about artists' concepts is necessary to the appreciation and understanding of contemporary art. Any and all of the physical attributes (or qualities) of contemporary works if considered separately and/or specifically are irrelevant to that art concept. The art concept (as Judd said, although he didn't mean it in this way) must be considered in its whole. (Kosuth, 1969: 859)

Kosuth iterates the values of formalism, which here manifests as a recapitulation on Nineteenth Century notions of 'art for art's sake' and a continuation of post-Kantian conceptions of aesthetics, an understanding (read: respect) for the limits of each artistic medium. Kosuth requires that the audience understand the artist's intention, indeed, he goes further to suggest that the audience does not bring an active understanding of the context of the work. Instead, his approach to aesthetics asks that the audience familiarise themselves with knowledge about an artwork, as he considers the artistic value of the work resides solely in the ideas produced in the artwork and its ability to influence other artists.

Fried's assault on theatre requires further reflection upon audience conventions, particularly in relation to the contemporary performing arts. The notion of theatricality as Fried understands it can otherwise be viewed as Live Art's positive relationship to avant-garde practice. Through its proximity to everyday life, as Carlson notes, performance, under the influence of poststructuralism, has moved from an 'immanentist aesthetics of presence', which seeks to transcend history and escape temporality, to an 'aesthetics of absence', which accepts contingency and the impingement of the quotidian upon art (Carlson, 1996: 134).

Discussing the conventions of theatre and how these may differ from conventions of appreciation for other arts, Dickie outlines the framing devices or conventions for theatre to take place (the non-aesthetic objects of theatre). Of these he says, none of them, however, is necessary for a knowledgeable theatre-goer to locate the aesthetic object of a play. Aesthetic objects of plays can be presented without these traditional conventions, and if the audience understands the *primary* convention of presentation, then everything can come off all right.... The primary convention is the understanding shared by actors and the audience that they are engaged in a certain kind of formal activity. This convention is what establishes and sustains theatre (1974: 174).

Similarly, Stephen Davies suggests that if the audience is familiar with the conventions of an art form (in this case, music of the notated tradition), the live experience differs only marginally from a mediated one (Davies, 2001: 301). However, the theories put forward by both Davies and Dickie rely on an audience's collective understanding of the divisions between artistic disciplines and are predicated upon artworks that do not fundamentally challenge the differences between artistic disciplines. This position can be interpreted as equivocal in the context of understanding Live Art, an artform that consciously plays with interdisciplinarity to reposition itself in relation to its audience and the broader framework of contemporary art.

In *Performance Studies*, Richard Schechner asserts that the level of interaction between audience and performer in contemporary forms of performance and Live Art is incompatible with classical notions of contemplation and aesthetic appreciation (2002: 41). One may state that Schechner's statement, together with the aporia Fried describes is the starting point for Nicolas Bourriaud's project of Relational Aesthetics (1998). Widely disputed by art writers, most notably Claire Bishop's essay in *October* (2004), Bourriaud's theory has nevertheless become significant to contemporary art theoretical discourse. Formulated around a group of contemporary visual artists including Angela Bulloch, Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno and Gillian Wearing, Relational Aesthetics is informed by postmodernist theories of intertextuality, assuming intimacy between 'producer' and 'consumer', where meaning is collectively made through the intersubjective relations of those who view the work (Bourriaud, 1998: 8). Although I do not concur with Bourriaud's argument that the origin of the term Relational Aesthetics stems from analysis of a select group of artists whose practice he wishes to uphold as a curator, the general principle of his theory (stemming in part from the influence of the internet on contemporary culture) is useful for reflecting on notions of interactivity and aesthetics after Greenberg. Bourriaud's enthusiasm for community-building and collectivity could easily apply to the operations of Performance and Live Art. Even though Live Art does not necessarily aspire to Relational Aesthetics' explicit claims of co-authorship, it intends to involve the audience in a qualitatively more profound relationship to the work. It is necessary to note that the artworks Bourriaud terms relational in his book are by and large, but not exclusively, object-based and I consider this to be one of the crucial ways in which Relational Aesthetics can positively relate to the status of Live Art documentation. Whereas other articulations of interactivity – such as theories of online gaming or witnessing performance (Schneider, 2001) – are based on the temporal unfolding of the audience's experience and individuals physically sharing collective time, Relational Aesthetics postulates that the object itself is a valid

interface of interactivity, without prescribing the time and duration of engagement. This relationship to the object is potentially useful for the understanding of Live Art documentation as it predicates a dynamic conception of interactivity with respect to inanimate objects.

Due to the diverse outputs of Live Art and the multiple approaches that Live Artists take towards the meaning of documentation for their practice, the question of whether an audience member needs to have prior knowledge of the artform poses a dilemma for aesthetics. Stephen Davies (2001: 297) states that one needs to be familiar with similar works and recognise the status of what one is appreciating in order to understand the conventions of an artistic discipline, however, with Live Art documentation 'conventions' are not always entirely clear. As the photograph that one sees in the gallery only tells a partial story about the work, understanding the context of a Live Art work is, in my view, always linked to the artist's intention. In this way, I consider that aesthetic competence is useful to the audience who interprets Live Art documentation. Therefore, my perspective aims to adopt Bell's attitude to the work *in* the process of experiencing it but also asks that the aesthetic encounter is preceded and/or proceeded by a further understanding of its historical/social context. Following Binkley, I assert that in order to grasp a fuller understanding of the work, the audience engages in the intertextual context of constant reference and quotation that pervades Live Art practice. However, this is not to completely discount the enjoyment that one can garner from a document of Live Art. Although documentation cannot necessarily convey the haptic character of live performance, it is able to provide us a window onto a work and a valuable means of engagement with a work. I contend that the significant culmination of experiencing Live Art documentation is not nostalgia for 'not being there' but the potential for the experience to evoke another, creative proposition.

Space for Imagining

The communal activity of experiencing live action connects the audience in a crucial way. Eisenberg states that for music, even in the contemporary context where peer to peer sharing and simultaneous transmissions of musical events are gaining popularity, the live musical performance still functions as a social meeting-point and public ritual (2005: 83). The live experience of performance is undeniably exciting, a physical and visceral occasion that demands our immediate attention. The physical decision to attend a performance implies a commitment to experience that helps counter the distractions that might otherwise face the audience for documentation. Therefore the audience of the live experience is already attuned to the unfolding of a performance,

even if they are unfamiliar with the artist who performs. For Lehmann, the live performance faces stiff competition in an age of mass communication (2006: 136), however, I contend that by being a 'real gathering' (Lehmann, 2006: 17), the live performance continues to attract our curiosity, providing an experience that is singular, under the guise of being specially created and presented to those who witness it as a non-instrumentalised expression. In that performance evokes avant-garde concerns, it sustains the relevance of the avant-garde concept to contemporary artistic practice.

The fantasy of identification with the movement image may exist in the heightened awareness of the dancer/videomaker confronting the (un)consciousness of the dance, but the transfer to the viewer is more complicated, since the screen images are *enclosed memories*. They cannot 'recuperate here... in this moment' whatever high the dancer feels in the leap; the viewer will have to project something (Birringer, 1998: 82).

It would seem, from Birringer's analysis, that the video or film of performance cannot compensate for the live event. For him, the loss of tactile experience, as well as the inability of certain media (such as video and film) to facilitate mimicry of the performance's spatial arrangement, as in virtual reality, is significant. Yet, my point is precisely that the viewer *will* have to project something and that this 'something' is not dissimilar to the interpretative energy that the viewer brings to all encounters with art. In other words, the imagining of the event called for by mediated performance does not diverge from contemporary trends in aesthetic engagement, rather, it draws on the artist's increasing delegation of meaning to the audience that is particularly characteristic of postmodern art. Speaking of the connection that performance makes between what is presented and memory, Henry M Sayre states,

the mind mining our common cultural past to create our common cultural present: this is the space of composition, the space that performance generates. What does performance do other than recreate its own necessity in the imagination of the beholder? The viewer is operator, 'make me again', the performance is saying, 'make me again in your own image' (Sayre, 2004: 44)

In addition to Birringer's suspicion that documentation tends to flatten the fullness of performance, it is also possible that we resist being seduced by documents for fear of them betraying their appearance as a lie. It is difficult for them to touch our lives and they remain for us sources of information if we take on the passive position of consuming them. Speaking of newspapers, Walter Benjamin suggests that, 'another reason for the isolation of information from experience is that the [newspaper] does not enter "tradition"' (1955: 155). If instead of appreciating the documentation of Live Art as information we approach them as we do books, this could open up an opportunity to address documentation as a space for imagining. The volume or lack of contextual information (empiricist and non-empiricist debate) need not necessarily hinder the appreciation of these documents nor our ability to appreciate them if we imagine that

all cultural artefacts are produced within and are the result of a particular context or framework (Davies, 2004: 147). Phelan expresses a similar sentiment, 'performance's challenge to writing is to discover a way for repeated words to become performative utterances, rather than, as [Emile] Benevise warned, constative utterances' (1993: 149). In other words, it is Phelan's desire to see writing reflect the performative nature of the artform with which it attempts to engage. For Phelan, the word is constantly battling against its usage in non-discursive contexts and it is the duty of those who write about performance to ensure that the subject of their discussion is kept alive by letting it go. This position asserts the right to write failure, rather than reproduce performance by another means and therefore the relationship between Live Art and writing has been a crucial topic for performance studies.

Attempting to find a term that straddles the dichotomy between absence and presence, Susan Kozel takes up the term 'telematics' (2007). For Kozel, this notion sketches out a landscape where interaction and engagement do not merely depend on elements that are sensually present (the heard, seen or touched) but also includes the interplay of 'what is revealed and what is concealed' (Kozel, 2007: 86). Telematics can therefore be used to describe connections between apparently disparate actions or knowledge mapped together by the mind and is perhaps an appropriate way to reflect on the way we switch between the live and the virtual. Further, Kozel suggests phenomenology as a cultural strategy for understanding both how technology can help interpret performance and also how performance can be a 'catalyst' for understanding how technology works. In her explanation of how to 'do a phenomenology', she suggests that the potential power of the imagination, whilst of a dissimilar quality to lived experience, is still important,

a simple phenomenology I wrote based on performing in *Telematic Dreaming*, in which I described my experience as a performer in a low-tech 'virtual' environment affected many people who had never encountered synch technologies and who were not performers. What resonated with them, I believe, was that the description of the experience anchored abstracted notions such as the virtual body in concrete terms of shared human experience, such as touch, trust, violence and intimacy. To this day I continue to receive comments on this piece, as if it has taken root in the bodies of those who read it, not all of course, but some. This is a strong feature of resonance: sometimes it glances off, sometimes it reaches the core (Kozel, 2007: 25).

Interpretation and understanding Live Art documentation require imagination: imagination of the fullness of the work's meaning and its potential significations. Nonetheless, the capacity to recognise, relate to and react to aesthetic triggers embedded in the work requires a certain degree of training, for which no formulae or singularly successful method can be explicated. For instance, in Gina Pane's work, the visual symbolic cues of roses, white shirts and bodily gestures intimate a language that

connects historical performance motifs and everyday life that we are asked to decipher and make again.

In terms of curating Live Art documentation, the question remains how to place these objects into a relevant and valid context without destroying their delicate relation to the live event. This dilemma can be interpreted as paralleling the quest of performative writing that Phelan (1993) elaborates. Although curating as a practice has flourished in the last 20 years with an increase in postgraduate courses dedicated to the subject and numerous publications²⁹, the normative model for curatorial activity remains the exhibition within the art museum. Even when Claire Doherty discusses participatory art (Wade, 2000: 103), the production of a work takes place outside the institution and the audience views it when the presentation is 'returned' to the museum space. Graham and Cook situate the curation of new media art requiring 'flexibility in the way it is exhibited' (2010: 185), advocating the proliferation of new media art's inclusion in a variety of structures including festivals, broadcasts, publishing and online, however, these are seen primarily as extensions to the exhibition 'display' paradigm, where the museum remains the dominant setting. In contrast to this, I assert that Live Art documentation often requires the audience to seek it out and *study* it, in other words, it asks for a focussed attention and a considered appreciation. Indeed, the quality of attention that is associated with the study room or library can be an useful metaphor for experiencing Live Art documentation. In the library, one is aware that what one comes across is a distillation of a practice or field of knowledge, rather than the object in its immediate form. Even without being explicitly informed, we can (hopefully) recognise that the object we encounter bears the hallmarks of existing in another form, in other words, that is, as documentation.

The problem of locating Live Art, curatorial speaking, is exacerbated by the lack of physical spaces dedicated to this artform. However, there is also a lack of curatorial models that are appropriate to the presentation of Live Art and its documentation. Since the meaning of Live Art is located not exclusively in an object or action, but rather in the relation between artist and audience, the onus is on curators to facilitate engagement between the work and audiences. By demanding that its audience is less passive and more engaged, Live Art asks for a dialogic relationship with those who encounter it. In instances where the audience has experienced the live performance, documentation functions as a tangible tool that enables the audience to interpret what

²⁹ See *Curating Subjects* (O'Neill, 2007b) for a sophisticated overview of trends in contemporary curatorial practice.

they have experienced. In this context, documents are a place to safely play out the uneasy aspects of the work. The curator's role is to facilitate this type of dialogue with documents, which could take place through mechanisms such as a post-show chat with the artist. By indicating the creative potential of Live Art documents, the curator assists the audience in finding their own pathway to understand these traces of performance. Despite the fact that Live Art, as an autographic art, is concerned with provenance, the Live Artist holds onto authorship by a thin thread once the work goes into the world as documentation, to be read in a number of ways. The documents of Live Art can therefore be understood as multi-purpose objects, functioning as evaluative, reflective, interpretative or creative for Live Artists, audiences and curators.

Conclusion

The work of Live Art is always incognito, playing border politics in a militarized zone of absolute intolerance to simulation....The placelessness at the periphery of our communication is the impossibility of seeing ideas slow into the structured, sculptural forms of concepts. Instead, we are vending melting vendettas within the tropes of academia. (Waugh, 2006: 30-31)

Mark Waugh talks about an economy and search for belonging in the face of an artform that takes presence as a foundation as well as the right to disappear. The documentation of Live Art therefore occupies a space that mediates between the loss of the live and the future interpretative act. Live Art is an artform that *starts* from the premise of the live, appropriating the structure of performance to explore the tension between the dematerialisation and rematerialisation of the object. By participating in documentation, the work of Live Art is more than the formal moment of its public presentation. Through its disruption of media norms, Live Art is inventive in pushing against the causal relationship between performance and documentation. Therefore, I claim that the relationship between performance and documentation is different in Live Art than in other contemporary performance genres. For instance, Manu Luksch's *Faceless* tells of the recycling of documentation and a complex cycle of dependence between documentation and performance; French Mottershead's practice embeds documentation into the forms of the event with the simplest of technologies; Curious' *(be)longing* produces a number of outputs that adopt different forms under the umbrella of an 'event-sum' Live Art project; Phil Warnell appropriates complex medical technology to simultaneously perform and document.

I have found that the reasons why Live Artists document their work are diverse, ranging from the purely practical and financial, to aiding their artistic research and development. Indeed, all of the artists that I interviewed had a clear understanding of the significance documentation had for their practice, which is perhaps indicative of Live Artists who wish to be included in research projects such as these, moreover, it points to a growing awareness of the impact of documentation on the dissemination and visibility of Live Art, particularly as a developing research area.

Live Artists view documentation as an obligatory part of their artistic practice, particularly as a necessary method to promote, market and evidence their work. Further, for artists who have been practicing for a number of years, documentation – as a form of archival practice – is significant for building a comprehensive portfolio of work upon which one can reflect. For instance, established Live Artists like Richard Layzell and Rose English have initiated projects with younger, emerging artists to rethink contemporary methods and forms of archiving. Live Artists also see the production of

documentation as a useful financial strategy. The potential for trading in performance documentation, whether this is on the level of on-demand DVDs or as high-value moving image editions within the context of the fine art market, enables Live Artists to continue making Live Art, allowing them to reimagine their work as tangible rather than exclusively precarious labour.

For artists such as French Mottershead, documentation is inextricably linked to the *process* of making Live Art – the forms that their works take are themselves predicated on the development of documentation in tandem to live action. This situation is multiplied for the increasing number of Live Artists who engage with recording technologies, which are embedding documentation into Live Art's ways of being. Instead of separating documentation from live action, Live Art is thus informed by the notion of mixed reality. Researchers such as Heathfield (2004) and Live Artists including Blast Theory illustrate prime examples of capitalising on the new relationships afforded by technology's involvement with performance. As a means to make material the immaterial work of performance, creative use of documentation by artists is vital to Live Art. Whilst Live Art's interactions with documentation are at odds with performance's ideological rationales for maintaining the moment of live performance, documentation may be said to typify the artform's heritage of ephemeral practice that operates within a post-capitalist cultural context. Far from being an addendum to Live Art practice, Live Artists are increasingly viewing documentation creatively and at the heart of what they do. Further, I have found that older, 'long-sedimented distinctions' (Schneider, 2007: 117) and perspectives about the meaning of performance documentation are beginning to change, partly due to the highly flexible and mobile form that Live Art takes, but also due to the way in which virtual reality and telepresence are increasingly pervading contemporary life, one that implies a mediated experience, almost to the extent that the virtual exchange becomes normalised.

These factors have undoubtedly impacted on those writing about the relationship between performance and documentation, causing them to reflect on other ways of thinking about Live Art documentation, posing models that do not presume a privileged relation to the 'live' event. Philip Auslander's work has been visionary in this respect, as has recent work by Susan Kozel (2007). However, it is Live Artists who are challenging established and blurred boundaries, resisting definitions and creating ever-more complex artistic puzzles for theorists to resolve, who lead the field in terms of offering significance to documentation.

Live Art is an artistic discipline that is constantly having to argue for its right to existence within a contemporary arts ecology that regularly territorialises performative and interdisciplinary practice. Documentation of this artform is therefore vital in valorising Live Art, a young, itinerant artform that is located largely outside institutional spaces for art presentation. The recent proliferation of Live Art documentation has made a substantial contribution to the development of Live Art's profile. Live Art is concerned with consolidating its stake in cultural capital and documentation is a pragmatic means of enabling this artform to be disseminated to a wider audience of artists, writers, researchers, promoters, and audience. Live Art's delicate ecology depends on the enthusiasm of a network of Live Art curators and programmers and their ability to research current practice. Therefore, the accumulation of Live Art documentation has a direct impact on the sustainability of presentation and performance platforms.

Growing interest in Live Art research since the beginning of the Twenty First Century is indicative of public consciousness about the artform, and also evidences the acceptance of Live Art in Higher Education contexts: The Live Art Archive at University of Bristol states that during the period of 2006-2010, six PhD students worked on research projects attached to the Archive. This period, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the National Review of Live Art (2010), the Arnolfini's Performing the Archive project (2008-2009) and the 25th anniversary of Green Room Manchester (2008), also saw usage of the Archive increase by an average of 600%. Since the Live Art Archives greatly improved its online presentation and the physical quality of its holdings, through projects including the digitisation of the valuable National Review of Live Art archives, this resource has become ever more significant for artists and researchers working with Live Art.

Live Art documentation is therefore epistemologically important to the artform. Allowing greater access to Live Art works, documentation impacts on the broader understanding of the artform, informing audiences about Live Art both nationally and internationally. The UK's influence on Live Art is strongly felt at platforms such as the Performance Studies International annual conference, similarly, UK organisations such as the Live Art Development Agency are valued for their advocacy of Live Art, regularly receiving invitations to work with international organisations such as Hong Kong's Asia Art Archive (2010), India's Khoj art fair (2008) and Live In Prague (2007). Audiences have similarly benefited from investment in Live Art documentation and archives. Although lay audiences rarely engage with such specialised sources of knowledge, as digital

culture changes the way we access, interact with and understand information storage, Live Art audiences are independently engaging with documentation via digital means. Such documentation, often presented as viral promotional videos or photos on an artist's website, are carefully crafted for specific purposes. In their specificity, they have limited success in transmitting aspects of works and do not attempt to fully portray or represent the rich experience of live action. In this sense, documentation of Live Art is primarily informational. It is significant as an ontic rather than ontological tool. The document's strength lies not in transforming live performance into a static object nor necessarily in conveying the haptic context of an action in a specific time and space, but rather is valued as a means to make accessible that which would otherwise 'disappear'.

As it so often takes the circulation and accumulation of cultural capital as its subject matter and because of its urge for the audience to develop its vocabulary, Live Art is inherently 'relational' (Bourriaud, 1998). By rejecting formalist notions of aesthetics and art-making, Live Art embraces viewing the work not through an analytic lens but one that considers social, economic and political context, whilst disregarding the limits of artistic disciplines. Constantly wanting the audience to 'complete' its intertextuality through an engagement with further sources, information, archives and documentation are vital to Live Art's development and interpretation in the broader cultural context. This stance towards the social and cultural situation is a corollary of Live Art's function as action, which wishes to communicate to as large an audience as possible – documentation enables this to take place. I believe that the process of making, presenting and subscribing to documentation is a central way that sociality is written into the process of making Live Art.

Through the process of this study I have understood the role of the curator as a mediator between Live Artist and audience. My curatorial engagement with the subject has been facilitated through a coupling of participant observation and research in the field. In this way, the documents I have come across and the performances I have witnessed have been significant to my understanding of the relationship between Live Art and its documentation. My aim to build a relationship with this relational artform led me to interviewing and then becoming a member of the Live Art community, hence my experience as described in this thesis about Live Art documentation is also itself a documentation of current Live Art history.

As archivists of Live Art, documentation of Live Art is especially important to curators working in the field. It is my responsibility, as a curator of Live Art, to provide a framework for the audience to experience Live Art and its documentation in a way that goes beyond information towards imagination. Whilst Live Artists can consider the documentation of their work as source material for new works, as viewers, we should also engage with this context, namely that the documentation of Live Art is open to a number of usages, in addition to understanding it as an aesthetic object. An openness to the multiple readings of documentation can enable documentation to enter lived experience for us, and consequently documentation does not remain a purely aesthetic sign. Documentation is assessed and evaluated through its capacity to effect, in its ability to convey an 'interpretant' (in the language of Peirce). For artists, the interpretant is primarily focussed on dissemination and independent professional development. For the audience, Live Art documentation aims to eradicate the distance between the past and present in order to invoke a form of lived experience that includes but ultimately attempts to go beyond knowledge of the work.

Peggy Phelan highlights metaphor (1993: 150), in contrast to metonymy, as a potentially rich model for writing about performance, an event that is singular and unrepeatable. Indeed, it is through the exploration of metaphor and the development of metaphorical examples that we are able to articulate our understandings of performance, in other words, to think through our experiences with Live Art in an engaged encounter. This does not need to apply solely to live performance – the attitude of metaphorical thought and an autoethnographic approach to Live Art as an artform is what I have wished to foreground in this study, as I consider this approach to be valuable with respect to both documentation and live action. I consider autoethnography, gossip and narrative-making vital ways of engaging with performance and Live Art documentation, as it is through these methods that documentation stops being a sign and instead enters and becomes part of our lived experiences. Documentation (as physical objects) and the curator (as a subject) therefore can be seen to function as mediators between Live Artists and audience in this highly social artform. It is therefore crucial for a curator to be embedded in the process of making Live Art, as this is where the relationship between work with the audience, and the location of legacy is instituted.

Live Art documentation has inherent value for the practice of Live Art because it is able to make intersubjective connections and contribute to the development of a community around Live Art practice. Any mature perspective on documentation in Live Art must

accept that in order for the artform's profile and audience to develop, documentation and live encounters must be the twin pillars of the artform's identity. Far from accelerating the disappearance of Live Art within the context of contemporary culture, Live Art documentation is in fact pivotal to its survival and development as an artform.

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Appendix One

Interviews about documentation and practice with British Live Artists

Conducted between 20 July and 27 October 2005

Matt Adams from Blast Theory, Central London, 5 September 2005

Liz Aggiss, Brighton, 26 August 2005

Bobby Baker, North London, 12 August 2005

Anna Best, South London, 3 October 2005

Ansuman Biswas, North London, 25 July 2005

Robin Deacon, email, 6 September 2005

Rose English, North London, 5 August 2005

Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment, Sheffield, 22 September 2005

Franko B, East London, 20 July 2005

FrenchMottershead, South East London, 27 October 2005

Rona Lee, East London, 16 September 2005

Lottie Leedham and Celia Willis, South London, 12 October 2005

Lone Twin, telephone, 22 August 2005

Julian Maynard Smith of Station House Opera, South London, 27 September 2005

Mem Morrison, Central London, 20 October 2005

Kira O'Reilly, Bristol, 12 September 2005

Hayley Newman, Central London, 28 July 2005

Lucy Panesar, South London, 6 October 2005

Mukul Patel and Manu Luksch of Ambient TV, East London, 22 July 2005

Reckless Sleepers, email, 22 August 2005

Joshua Sofaer, Central London, 20 July 2005

Phil Stanier of Strange Names Collective, email, 4 September 2005

Phil Warnell, East London, 23 August 2005

Peter Wyer of SharpWire, West London, 17 August 2005

Nina Wylie of The Special Guests, email, 26 September 2005

Appendix Two

Semi-structured Interview Questions to British Live Artists

A. Training

1. How would you describe your artistic background and formal training?
2. Does this training influence your current practice as a live artist?
Yes/No (delete as applicable)

If yes, can you describe the relationship between your training and current practice?

What strategies from your training are especially relevant to your current practice?

3. If live or performance art was not your initial practice, can you describe why you shifted your field of practice?

B. Artistic practice and documenting

1. What forms of knowledge or objects would you include under the banner 'documentation'?
2. For the purposes of this interview the term documentation does not extend to oral, non-written accounts. What significance do oral, non-written accounts have for the dissemination of your work?
3. Do you consider the production and/or product of performance documentation part of your artistic practice? In what ways?
4. Thinking back to the last time you documented a performance, what motivated you to do so?
5. Thinking back to the last time you chose *not* to document a performance, what motivated you to do so?

6. Please list the artistic reasons for documenting your work and rank them in order of importance (1= most important)
7. Please list the non-artistic reasons for documenting your work and rank them in order of importance (1= most important)
8. In what ways has performance documentation helped your professional development and career progression?

C. Performances and documentation made

1. How many performances have you made in the last 5 years?
2. Of this number, what percentage have you documented?

D. Exhibiting performance documentation

1. Of those performances documented (Q - C2), what percentage has ever been publicly exhibited, either within the UK or abroad (this includes all exhibition spaces, fairs, conferences, etc)?
2. How would you best describe the client who exhibited your performance documentation?
 - a) Museum
 - b) Public gallery
 - c) Private gallery
 - d) Project space
 - e) Corporate organisation
 - f) Individual
 - g) Other (please specify)
3. Did that exhibition and your contact with the client/institution lead directly to subsequent live performance?
4. If so, how did the contact with the client/institution come about? Who made the initial approach?

E. Selling performance documentation

1. Of those performances documented (Q – C2), what percentage has ever been sold, either within the UK or abroad?
2. How would you best describe the client who bought your performance documentation?
 - h) Museum
 - i) Public gallery
 - j) Private gallery
 - k) Project space
 - l) Corporate organisation
 - m) Individual
 - n) Other (please specify)
3. Did that sale and your contact with the client/institution lead directly to subsequent live performance?
4. If so, how did the contact with the client/institution come about? Who made the initial approach?
5. Please list what you consider the purposes of selling performance documentation and rank them in order of importance (1= most important)

F. Technology and performance documentation

1. What media have you used to document your work?
2. What artistic factors contributed to this choice?
3. What non-artistic factors contributed to this choice?
4. If you have used sound recordings (Mini-Disc, DAT etc) to document your work, what status or importance does this media have?
5. In general, does someone assist you in documenting your performances?

6. If yes, would you consider them
 - a) a documenturg
 - b) someone provided by a promoter
 - c) colleague/friend with equipment
 - d) colleague/friend using equipment you provide

7. In addition to having a functional role of recording performance, does technology have an artistic role in your performances?

8. If yes, could you describe what role it has?

9. 'Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology' - Peggy Phelan (1993: 146).

How would you respond to Phelan's (infamous) remark, with regards to your artistic practice? (in 1-2 paragraphs)

10. If you wish to comment on any other aspect of performance documentation and your practice not discussed above, please use this space to do so.