# The Theatre of Photography: Dialogues

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## Abstract

Taking as a starting point the opposition of this journal's title, this introduction takes the form of a dialogue that is also an encounter between photography and theatre, a vantage point from which conceptual frameworks can be challenged and even collapsed. In the domains of photography and of theatre, much is made of artifice, authenticity, likeness, and liveness. Photography criticism has often emphasized the possibility or impossibility of veracity, the truthfulness or deceptiveness of photographs, with performance seemingly offering one escape route. Theatre, from the conceptualization of naturalism from the end of the nineteenth century to the challenge posed to it by performance art, has, despite itself being constituted of an eclectic technological representational apparatus, been seen to struggle with media, sometimes seeking refuge outside it. This introductory dialogue seeks to cast light on the various meeting points of the Theatre of Photography, then further explored in the co-written duologues in this volume.

**Keywords:** intermediality, visual translation; medium/specificity, mediation, liveness, performativity, apparatus

> Just as the graphophone can multiply without limit the music of the concert hall, the singer, and the orchestra, so, it seemed, would the photoplay reproduce theatre performance without end. Of course, the substitute could not be equal to the original [ … ], different not only as a photograph is compared with a painting, but different as a photograph is compared with the original man. [ … ] But while this movement to reproduce stage performance went on, elements were superadded which the technique of the camera allowed but which would hardly be possible in a theatre. [ … ] And from here it was only a step to the performance of actions which could not be carried out in nature at all.
>
> —Hugo Münsterberg *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*

## 1. Intermedial translation

(WL) The question of what is "essential" or "specific" to a given medium has been addressed in many ways since the reflections of Hugo Münsterberg on the nature of *The Photoplay* quoted above. One hundred years later, they still stand out because they characterize important conditions of how theatre and photography are brought together, not only as a reproduction of theatre performance, but as something that was added by the camera eye – a new way of looking at both theatre and the world.

Our dialogues on "The Theatre of Photography" focus on those intersections between photography and theatre, taking their multiple encounters as an opportunity to rethink the often overused or misconceived concepts of "performance" in order to consider an exchange of ideas between photography and theatre by asking what we can learn from their close association. In the context of this journal, we are aiming to cross-reference some of those intermedial terminologies that may have slipped into different usage in either discourse, attempting to *transcribe* them from one context into another in order to find out how nomenclature may be shared in a wider framework.

Barbara Cassin stresses in her *Dictionary of Untranslatables* that the term "to translate" refers to a passing from one language into another (from Latin: "traducere") as a way of leading-across that describes a passage or a transmission (Cassin 2014, 1139). We are interested in this sense of "bringing one to the other" as means of *visual translation*, potentially arriving at a hybrid construction that is less a "thirdness" between the fields, but aims at thinking about their dialectical encounters where theatre can include photography, and vice versa – just as theatre can be still and photographs can convey a sense of movement. Our approach therefore includes how both may function as contexts or methodologies for each other, which goes beyond conventional distinctions between "staged photography" (as constructions to be photographed) and "theatre photography" (as documents of a performance).

Therefore we are interested in acts of translation between different media, translating from event into image, remediating from the position of photography into theatre, and back into former or different media states, as practices of rewriting their intermedial and interdisciplinary aspects. In addition to the key concepts of the performative, the theatrical, and the photographic, other terms – like the framed and the staged, the pro-photographic and the non-diegetic, the event and the institution – kept coming into play, alongside ideas around gesture, stage, apparatus, situation, documentation, construction, re/enactment, and re/presentation.

Hoping to eventually arrive at a dictionary of photo-theatric terms in context, we were keen to extend our dialogue to others to discuss the relational gap of theatre and photography from their perspectives.[1] Starting from several network meetings with interested collaborators, we are delighted to publish five essays by other pairs of theatre-photography-authors who were willing to engage in the proposed experiment of co-writing that took various forms, and became not only a methodology for different approaches to writing but also for thinking about the relationship of photography and theatre.

(JA) Our task here is to frame or stage a series of dialogues, of which this is a preliminary example. Of course, this might resemble a dialogue between theatre and photography, but – although we as scholars might represent theatre studies and photography studies – we are not seeking necessarily to assume these institutional or disciplinary roles, to occupy invested positions, reinforcing the stability or knowability of each field, but rather we aim to use the dialogical form to explore some of the notions that each of our disciplines brings to bear on the subject of authenticity and artificiality and to use this form to posit how the encounter of photography and theatre might challenge some of the notions at play in both disciplines, and might offer a nuanced form of interdisciplinarity.

In considering intermediality with or within theatre, certain questions arise as to whether theatre is a medium, and to what extent, and as to whether

theatre mediates and is mediated. Indeed, there is no certainty that we can even speak with confidence of theatre and media, since theatre is surely a medium, an instance of media. Such an idea seems credible; certainly, if we follow McLuhan's broad notion of media as "extensions," we are likely to consider theatre a means of communication, a communicative technology, a vector, distributing and circulating. As such, theatre would need to be defined in terms of its particularities in comparison with other forms of media, perhaps with newer ones, like photography?

Part of the task in examining the relationship between media is to resist the urge to posit one as enjoying critical authority or dominance over the others, and to avoid imaging those others as being knowable or pure; a theory of intermedia, examining the relationships between them and their occupying of each other's locations and logics, must also quickly find that the media were always *already* interacting and were never entirely themselves.

(WL) Are we therefore assuming that today's emphasis on interdisciplinarity and the post-medium condition have overturned modernism's conception of medium-specificity? Jan Baetens describes how the paradigm of opposing the spatial construct of the picture with the temporal entity of the text has led to a "literary turn" in the photographic discourse. This had the effect of turning photography's recent understanding of itself as an interdisciplinary discourse back into what is effectively a mono-disciplinary, text-led approach – which not only reintroduces an essential difference between time-led and space-led practices, but also risks undoing the very base of interdisciplinarity.

How then do we approach photography and theatre as a single continuum that allows them to contain each other? Baetens suggests introducing a "meta-interdisciplinary" viewpoint that avoids power relations between disciplines, simply because "disciplinary approaches engaged in interdisciplinary discussions are often not interdisciplinary themselves" (Baetens 2007, 65). This aims to form new relationships as "an attempt to speak

nevertheless" (69–70), relationships that remain plural rather than attempting a total synthesis, and that are able to address specific inter-art phenomena while at the same time allowing some space for contradictions to co-exist.

*Nicky Coutts and Vanessa Ewan take the time to offer a dialogue of temporalities; their essay "Giraffe Time" in the present issue takes place between the photographic time of the camera's shot and the incorporation of sustained and sudden movement in the actor.*

## 2. Medium, Media

(JA) In an interview taking place very near the end of his life, Roland Barthes suggests that his monograph *Camera Lucida* is participating in a "theoretical boom" (Barthes 1993, 1235), with photography, then more than a century old, receiving sudden critical attention. Notable within this "boom" is a recourse to theatre as a means for understanding photography, in Barthes' work, of course, but also in that of the contemporaries he mentions.

Theatre does sometimes seem at odds with certain habitual understandings of a medium, through its hybrid constitution as much as by way of the limitations of its procedures. Certainly, theatre can seem distant from the notion of "the media" (referring to new technologies and/or the "mass media"). In stage performances, from classical to contemporary plays to durational performance art, for example, information is not necessarily efficiently delivered, at least not necessarily to the assembled audience, who will have to wait (for the twist of the denouement, or indeed for Godot) or who, through the dramatic irony of witnessing messages transmitted to the wrong recipient, or too widely, or lost in being relayed, attend the circulation of information. In some stage work, theatre becomes machine, or else seeks to exit the machine; theatre images take shape before audiences used to a glut circulating on screens. In such works, the uncertainty and inefficiency of theatre's modality contrasts with mechanisms of high-speed reporting and near-instant communications; the slow-paced action, or

frozen tableau, and the slow emergence of meaning on stage counter or confound televisual repetition and flow.

Much discussion around theatre in relation to media is organized around the encounter between the two, or it plots theatre's shifts (for the better or for the worse) in contact with technologies (always already "new" ones). Frequently, scholars are concerned with how theatre and performance adapt themselves (by way of appropriation or resistance) when met with media, as in some postdramatic theatre, or immersive performances embracing the fact that the theatre is now one of the only places where mobile telephones cannot be used.

*The One Photo section in this issue concentrates on the theatre photography of Luis Poirot, pointing to the role of the photographer as part of the apparatus of theatre – within a company, an institution, and the cultural landscape of a country.*

(WL) Conceptions of the "photographic" refer to a plurality, describing how there is no such thing as one "photography" but rather many "photographies." These are inherently interdisciplinary and intermedial, made up of many elements that expand its concepts and contribute to its ways of coming-into-being in various photographic cultures – including social, historical, and political circumstances, cultural production, aesthetic discourse or philosophy, in installation and in other forms of dissemination or circulation; be it in different contexts and for different receptions, as a discursive system and as an event, as image and object, process and interpretation, theory and practice, medium or technology, instrument or record, artistic expression or commodity (Tagg 1993, 143). Similar to photography, theatre is not a single medium. It refers to a range of practices and institutional spaces that give the context in which the meaning and the status of a particular photograph or performance can be interpreted. Alongside the "photographic," we are therefore keen to tease out a "theatric" mode with a similar emphasis on intermedial and interdisciplinary aspects.[2]

In the mid-nineteenth century, in the early days of photography and electricity, the neurologist Duchenne de Boulogne – together with the younger brother of the famed Parisian photographer Nadar – managed to photograph fleeting facial anatomy, even though contemporary exposure times would have been far too slow to capture any form of immediacy. But Duchenne overcame these obstacles of time and involuntary body movement by using low-voltage current to activate the facial muscles and hold them in place for the duration of camera exposure. This allowed him to isolate and visualize the respective muscles and name them after their functions (i.e. the muscle of joy, the muscles of pain), arriving at an iconographic scale of emotional expressions.

Alongside the main Medical Section, Duchenne also included an Aesthetic Section in his 1862 book *The Mechanism of Human Facial Expression*, in which he not only corrected the expressions of classical sculptures, but also engaged in illustrating emotive characters from famous plays from an "aesthetic" point of view – for instance, Shakespeare's "Lady Macbeth," her muscular expressions induced with electricity to act out different intensities of the "expression of cruelty." Describing his process: "The facial expression of this young girl was made more terrible and more disfigured than even in *Plate 82* by the maximal contraction of this little muscle, and we need to consider it as principle and true agent of the aggressive and wicked passions, of hatred, of jealousy, of cruel instincts" (Duchenne [1862] 1990, 122).

In keeping with earlier traditions of pathognomy, Duchenne's *Mechanism* assumed the face as a legible mask and the photograph of facial expressions as equally legible codes for inner states. Featuring the electrical probes clearly visible in the face of his sitter, Duchenne's photography did not just record the body of his model, but actively transformed her in the process of staging the relation between emotion and expression. Engaging different levels of performance and re-enactment, the resulting photographs bring together different stage

and studio conventions through the use of light, gesture, pose, and imaging by electrical and photographic means. Circulating in various distribution contexts, they also attempt to bridge the disparity between "aesthetic object" and "scientific record": as medical research, as atlas of emotive states to be used by artists, as illustration of theatrical characters, and gallery artefacts. As photographic portraits, they stress the varying degrees of collaborative exchange between sitter and photographer in a performative setting.

In the winter of 1854–55, at the same time as working with Duchenne, the brothers Nadar collaborated on a series of expression studies and body postures based on the commedia dell'arte character Pierrot. With long exposure times requiring immobility, Pierrot's simulated movements are confined to the shallow photographic space, his silent performance doubling the process of still photography. It is unclear if Duchenne in some way or other prompted the Pierrot photographs, if the Pierrot series influenced Duchenne's experiments, or if both series were just products of the same physiognomic age, but if anything, their close relation goes to show that performance was not incidental to Duchenne's experiments.

(JA) In a key article, Rosalind Krauss (1978) describes the spectral figure of the mime Charles Deburau as Pierrot photographed by Nadar, claiming that this image is a meeting of the mechanical imprint of photography and the gesture of a theatre mime. Krauss is attentive to the notion of writing present in the word "photo-graphy," and seems to suggest that the collision of temporalities of the trace prepares the ground for a citational space. Patricia Falguières also makes reference to mime appearing in early photographic experimentation, in describing the passage of subjects across the stage created by chronophotographer Etienne Jules Marey in his research station in the late 1800s, noting the meeting of photosensitive materials sequentially capturing and the "purely gestural and silent sequence of the mime," calling this a "white ghost" (Falguières 2000, 102). Krauss observes in the

photograph by Nadar a meeting of representational modes, the gestures traced by a mime and the traces recorded by a camera, and suggests that this encounter is only able to occur by way of a photograph. She writes: "the ultimate surface onto which the multiple traces are not simply registered, but fixed, is that of the photograph itself" (Krauss 1978, 45).

*The essay "Unsettling Materialities" by Edward Dimsdale and Simon Jones in this volume challenges the conventional notions and roles of photography as providing a trace of theatre performance; their "inbetween" strategy experiments with reversing this, with photographs providing the basis of theatre.*

## 3. Remediation

(JA) The theatre photographs of Josef Koudelka, one of which is pictured on the left of Figure 3, onscreen as the backdrop for an interview with the photographer, are the earliest examples of his works, and the least known. Scholars and critics, in the numerous accounts of Koudelka's life and work, give only limited attention to the theatre images, making much of the photographer's resolute abandoning of theatre when he was forced to leave Czechoslovakia after taking widely circulated images of the Prague Spring.

Koudelka, as part of different companies, photographed theatre productions over most of the 1960s, notably including the work of director Otomar Krejča. The nature of his role, of the activity of photographing theatre, seems to beg questions around the status of theatre photography, which is often conducted and conceived elsewhere as an activity of recording, a conception that might posit theatre photography within the Benjaminian notion of the reproduction of a work of art. But this operation is bound to be nuanced where what is being photographed is theatre. At least linguistically, there is a difficulty in the notion of "theatre photography," since such a photography would inherit the slipperiness of the term "theatre," referring, among other things, to an activity, but also to the place where such an activity takes place. And photographs of
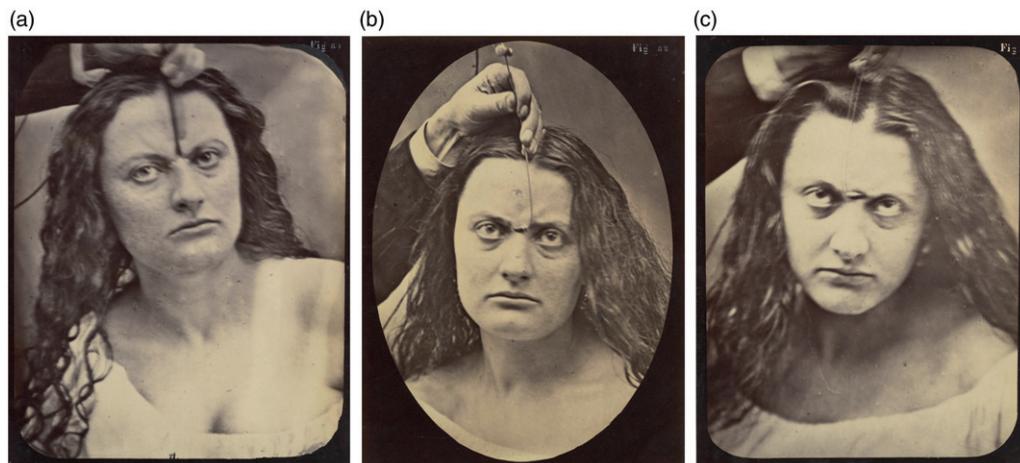
**Figure 1.** Guillaume-Benjamin-Amand Duchenne de Boulogne and Adrien Tournachon, 1854–56, printed 1862, albumen silver prints from glass negatives, 28.4 × 20.3 cm.

Plate 81(a): "Lady Macbeth, moderate expression of cruelty": "Lady Macbeth: Had he not resembled/My father as he slept, I had done't. [Macbeth, act II, scene II] Moderate expression of cruelty. Feeble electrical contraction of the m. procerus (P, Fig. 1)."

Plate 82(b): "Lady Macbeth, strong expression of cruelty": "Lady Macbeth: Come, you spirits/That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,/And fill me, from crown to the toe, top-full/Of direst cruelty. [Macbeth, act I, scene V] Strong expression of cruelty. Electrical contraction of m. procerus."

Plate 83(c): "Lady Macbeth, ferocious cruelty": "Lady Macbeth – about to assassinate King Duncan. Expression of ferocious cruelty. Maximal electrical contraction of m. procerus."

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Buddy Taub Foundation Gift, Dennis A. Roach and Jill Roach, Directors; Harris Brisbane Dick and William E. Dodge Funds; and W. Bruce and Delaney H. Lundberg Gift, 2013.

theatre also pose a problem potentially as representation of a representation – we cannot be sure (if that is what is being demanded) what or whom we are looking at, with, for example, the earliest "theatre photographs" being portraits of actors, often in role, rather than attempts to accurately capture a stage performance.

Theatre photography, at least in the context beginning in the mid-twentieth century, is usually considered in terms of what Bolter and Grusin (2000) have influentially called immediacy, or transparent immediacy, whereby "the user is no longer aware of confronting a medium." But perhaps – and Koudelka's images seem instructive in this regard – theatre photographs might sit uncomfortably within

this notion, and indeed might be located across Bolter and Grusin's triad of immediacy, hypermediacy, and remediation.[3]

Koudelka, by his own account, was averse to any notion of recording or reproducing theatre; he claims that, in photographing theatre, the one thing he never sought to do was to record or document, stating that he was more interested in another "possibility": "to take the performance as an initial reality and try to make something different out of it" (Hvížd'ala & Koudelka 2003, 125). He outlines the problem he identifies: "When [you] photograph the theatre," he says, "you deal with something that's already done" (Koudelka and Goldberg 2007). His approach to achieving this aim of treating theatre as

**Figure 2.** Nadar and Adrien Tournachon: Jean-Charles Deburau as "Pierrot Running," 1854–55, Albumen silver print from glass negative, 26.5 × 20.8 cm.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gilman Collection, Purchase, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift, through Joyce and Robert Menschel, 2005.

a raw material relied on retaining his mobility as a photographer, photographing at times from the vantage point of a spectator, but also from the stage, close to the actors and selecting from inside the frame of the stage his own framings. Where Koudelka's practical method is more unusual is in the production of images in the darkroom. Using cinema stock, Koudelka would cut down his negatives, eliminating great sections, and he would make enlargements from sometimes very small pieces of film. The process of making "something different," to return to his words, is thus a destructive one, sacrificing the captured image in favor of a narrow area, and also, through pushing the photosensitive materials to the point of failure, obliterating much detail in

the final prints, creating areas of pure highlight or shadow, creating disembodied parts no longer shaped by the coherence of an actor's body, and causing the emulsion to surrender its grain, often coating areas of an image with a fog-like overlay (Krejča 2006, 42).

As such, the photographs might be considered in terms of hypermediacy, foregrounding the medium of photography and situating Koudelka's work within a certain photographic trend of the era. But this also grants the images a spectrality; they are hauntological in Derrida's terms, particularly the version of that idea offered by Mark Fisher (2014), whereby the relationship of signal to noise is upended, unseating notions of presence.

The images seem to bring elements into circulation that cannot be accounted for only in terms of Koudelka's avowed project of using theatre to make photographs. The director Krejča (Koudelka 1993, 7) suggests that seeing Koudelka's images gave a strange sense of "reversal," whereby he – the creator of the stage work – started to doubt whether the images had been taken of his production or whether they somehow (almost supernaturally) preceded it, prompted it. As the images remediate, they unstage but also restage theatre.

*The Archive section of this issue engages with traces of the life and work of the theatre designer Oliver Messel, demonstrating photography as part of an aesthetic apparatus, one that it also documents, marking points in the artist's processes.*

(WL) The popular myths that underpin the many understandings of what photography is to this day include all shades of *authenticity*, from "straight photography" to describing it as a "pencil of nature" or as a "message without a code" that delivers "unmediated" imprints on the basis of being "transparent" and "objective," thus conveying "natural" signifiers that "truthfully" record what is in front of them – as if there wasn't any gap between sign and referent. What follows is an embrace of *artifice* as a way of thinking photographs as constructed, cultural images with floating signifiers that operate on many levels of re/presentation. And since images continue
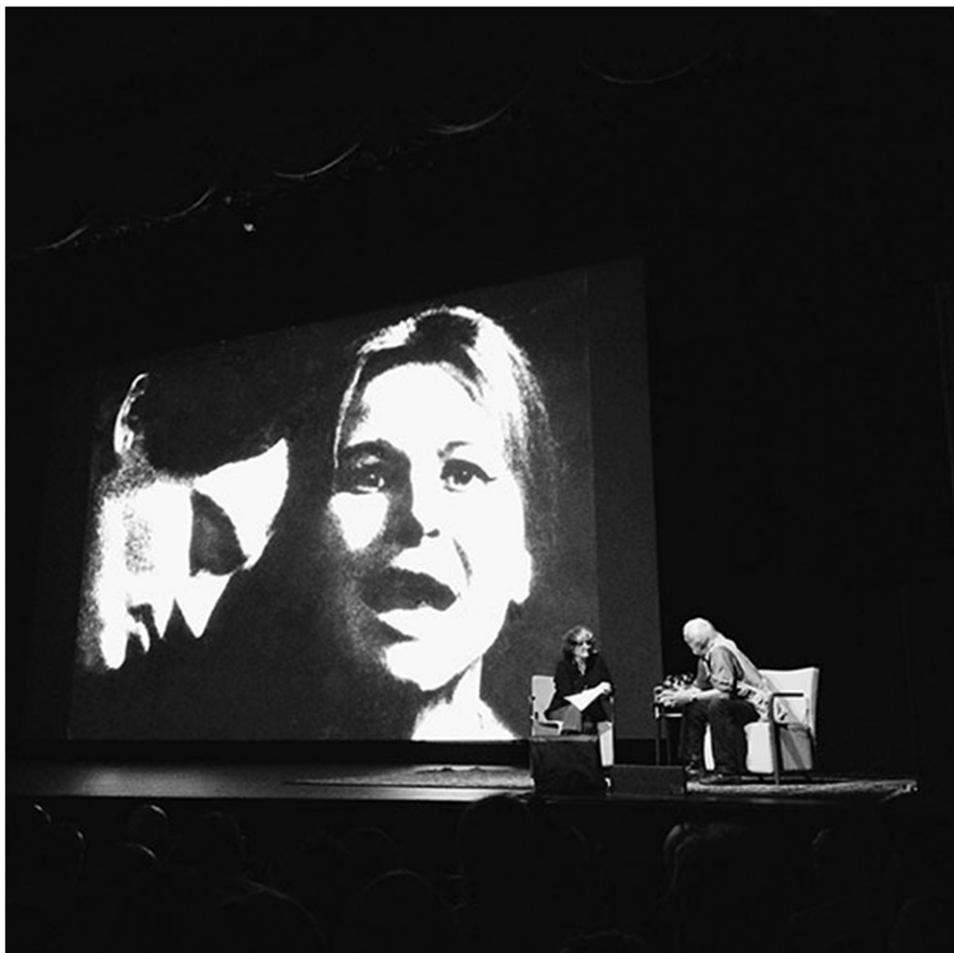
**Figure 3.** Tristan Wheelock: Josef Koudelka on stage with Anne Wilkes Tucker, Paramount Theater, Charlottesville, Virginia, 2013 (projected image by Josef Koudelka of "Cat on the Rails," dir. Otomar Krejča, Prague, 1968). With permission of the photographer.

to produce their very own constructions of "truth," we should never forget that there are indeed many indexical images that do not constitute likeness, while photography stages many acts of mediation: from world to image, and from image into interpretations.

The different aspects of remediation can be observed in the conceptual work "Camera Recording Its Own Condition" by John Hilliard in which the hand-held apparatus serves not only as a recording device but also as the central motif. This expanded self-portrait of an artist scrutinizing the limitations of his medium excels at turning the process of mediating photography's mediality into a performative image. The work consists of 70 photographs that were taken by photographing the camera in a mirror with a range of combinations of aperture and shutter speed, resulting in a serial grid

of photographs in which only a diagonal line of prints appears "correct" while the opposite corners show prints of gradually changing settings, fading into monochrome abstraction of either white over-exposure or black under-exposure of the film. This is a purposefully self-reflexive gesture of reduction that highlights the relation of negative density and print, performed by the inherent logic of the analogue camera in the form of a continuous spectrum of possibilities. This visual system of spatializing the body of the image is generated by systematically executing the camera's mechanism as a way of structuring the image plane to the effect of an optical illusion.

*Manuel Vason and Emmanuelle Waeckerle's essay in this volume offers a performative context that seeks to resolve a dialogue into the possibility of "becoming one" single-joint author; a dual unison voice that performs their act of photographing.*

## 4. Liveness

(WL) In the photograph "Boy at Circus," the boy is captured by Weegee's camera while being captivated by a performance in the circus ring himself.[4] He follows the spectacle from a distance, bridged by a pair of opera glasses that bring him not only closer but also more into the center of attention. The binoculars blocking out his eyes, leaning forward in suspense, the left hand on his knee to support his posture, he is not just a passive spectator but also engaged in participating in a scene in front of him that we, in turn, cannot see. Laughing openly, he does not know that he is an observed observer.

Sitting next to a father figure, the boy's forehead overlaps the man's lower face, while the boy's upper face is covered by the opera glasses so that their two faces almost read as one. Both figures wear seeing devices, making it impossible for me to see their eyes. My encounter with the photograph therefore ultimately becomes about watching, enhanced by the triangle of sightlines operating in the picture that intertwine and extend their gazes beyond my point of view. The boy's laughter is aided by a mechanical eye – just as the expressions



**Figure 4.** Josef Koudelka: Czechoslovakia, Prague, 1966, Theatre Divadlo za Branou (Beyond the Gate), *The Three Sisters*, play written by Chekhov and directed by Otomar Krejča. Magnum Photos.

of Duchenne's model were triggered by an electrical device, the former used to observe the performance close up, the latter to actually create the photographic performance.

The boy's prosthetic gaze thus becomes a catalyst that makes me think of a parallel between the hidden elements in the image and its production: the absent circus scene seen by the boy with hidden eyes, and the unnoticed photographer who depicts him with his face equally hidden behind the camera, giving the image several layers of liveness: the absent action in the ring, the depicted reaction of the boy, the constitutive position of the photographer, and by extension the event of the image and how it communicates with me in the present – combining different time zones and viewpoints that add up to more than a single here-and-now.

Part of the image's photographic event therefore is not only the image-immanent elements that relate to the actually depicted scene and how it is

**Figure 5.** John Hilliard: "Camera Recording Its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors)," 1971. Original study, silver gelatin photo on museum board, 61 x 56 cm. Courtesy the artist.

interpreted, but also the different participants and off-frame agencies that contribute to the changing situation of production and reception. The different pro-photographic layers involved in the construction of a photograph of this kind are described by

Vilém Flusser in his essay "The Gesture of Photographing," where he portrays the three inter-subjective elements involved – the photographer, the photographed, and the observer of the act of photographing – who all move around, influencing

and affecting each other, thus creating the social circumstances that add up to the photographic outcome. In Flusser's words: "In fact, there is a double dialectic in play: first between goal and situation and then among the various perspectives on the situation. The gesture of the photographer shows the tension between these intervening dialectics" (Flusser 2011, 79).

The description of the photographer and how he approaches his subject also reminds us of the obsessive behavior exhibited by the main protagonist in Italo Calvino's short story "The Adventure of a Photographer," which maps the breakdown of a romantic relationship by photographic experimentation and objectification (Calvino 1993).

*The Portfolio section of this issue shows photographic gestures of photographers "at work" with a preamble to Flusser's "The Gesture of Photographing."*

(JA) The photographs of Hayley Newman's *Connotations* series draw on the longstanding relationship between photography and performance art, and are a play on this close affiliation. Commentary by the artist on each of the photographs in the series states what is taking place in the photograph (here, the artist on the London underground wearing glasses equipped with a pump to produce the effect of tears [Figure 6]). Often the conceit of the image corresponds to familiar notions of what kinds of acts are undertaken as performances, with extreme physical acts including endurance or acts of intimacy done in public. The photographs invite the viewer to see them as documents of performances, of something ephemeral that has happened and that has been captured by the camera. The closeness of the link between performance art and photography led David Briers (1986) to suggest that not having photographs of a work of performance art had become akin to not having photographs of one's wedding. Indeed, the prevalence of photographs, usually "documentary" in their style and form as much as in their intent or use, of performances from at least the 1950s onwards leads to the idea that photographs might be constitutive of performance art: performance art becomes

defined as that which might be documented in photographs.

Newman's work in *Connotations* emerges perhaps in response to such a context, and is one of a number of challenges made by performance artists and scholars of performance studies in particular during the 1990s to the desirability or indeed the possibility of the documentation of performances, then conceived as something ephemeral and "missable," and involving a limited number of participants in a particular place at a particular time. A key argument of performance studies is made by Peggy Phelan in *Unmarked* (1993), which suggests that documents of performances do not document performances, further suggesting that performance resists participation in mediatization. Philip Auslander's *Liveness* (1999), on the other hand, seems to undermine claims of performance operating outside of media technology, pointing out that the notion of "the live" can only be operative within recording (for example, theatre would not be construed as having the particularity of being live by those having not encountered recordings).

Newman's images posit, or pose, recorded performances, leading to accounts of the works as documenting imaginary performances, or situating Newman's work within the conceptual art genre. They posit the photographic viewer as the spectator of performance and, like the celebrated Yves Klein image "Le saut dans le vide," but in a slightly different manner, they enable this by means of doing away with the (idea of the) original spectator: for Klein's image, because the performance only "takes place" through a compositing of photographs, for Newman's series through drawing attention to an original performance in a way that undermines the photograph's apparent veracity and the existence of any such event. The images straddle the performative photograph and the performance document.

*The essay "Performance in Print" in this issue posits a dialogue between re-enactment and enactment; Julian Ross and Jelena Stojković unseat the photographic or textual recording of an event, supporting the possibility of an ongoing performance.*

**Figure 6.** Hayley Newman: "*Crying Glasses* (An Aid to Melancholia)," from the series *Connotations*, 1995. With permission of the artist.

## 5. Performativity

(WL) The ways in which the relationship between theatre and performance is commonly understood could be summarized by the following: "acting" is just fake (artificial), while "performance" is real (authentic), and that for this reason performance is never "theatre" (rehearsed) but "live art" (actual). And the earlier-quoted distinction between "staged photography" as construction and "theatre photography" as documentation seems to operate in similar terms.

In photography, we usually speak of "performativity" if the scene exists only to be photographed – as in the Jeff Wall tableau image, in which the set is built for the camera and to be seen from its point of view, while the models are directed with a clear consciousness towards the borders of the image they are about to become. Equally, Duchenne's "Lady Macbeth" and Nadar's "Pierrot" are built around performative and demonstrative aspects of the studio setting. In this context all three – the studio, the theatre, and the gallery – are inherently performative, because everything is constructed in order to perform for the camera.[5]

In comparison, clown image # 425 by Cindy Sherman is performative not only because it is staged to be photographed, but also because it has other levels of performativity that make reference to the clown performer: the hyperreal colors, the larger-than-life scale of the image, the staging and framing of the figures, all gazing directly into the camera as part of a digitally composed multiple portrait acted out by the artist herself. With an acute postmodern awareness, Sherman is not only "clowning" the codes of the clown, she is playing with our viewing conventions and our archetypal images. She de-familiarizes and subverts the idea of the harmless joker up to the point where the image actually seems to turn against the viewer. It invades our space, returning our gaze – while the laughter gets stuck in our throats, since we cannot laugh back at the depicted clowns to release ourselves from them (in a Freudian way) or to correct them (in a Bergsonian way). Simultaneously, they seem untouchably safe in their world, making us feel excluded and exposed in ours.

Framed by the three mocking rictus masks that fill the frame from both sides, Sherman's image # 425

**Figure 7.** Jeff Wall: "A ventriloquist at a birthday party in October 1947," 1990. Transparency in lightbox, 229 × 352.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

further gives view on a tiny fourth figure hiding in the distance. Also looking to the camera, she inhabits the shy posture of a pigtailed schoolgirl, presenting her body in profile (support leg, free leg). Triggering the nightmarish image of being isolated and laughed at that provokes the viewer's projection and identification, the image merges the positions of the mocked outsider in front of the image with the ridiculed outsider inside the image. Thinking back to Weegee's "Boy at Circus," it seems as if the stage has here been turned by 90 degrees, now mirroring a laughing audience while at the same time throwing its viewer into an embarrassed and infantilizing position in the middle of the ring. Peter Handke's play "Offending the Audience" also springs to mind. It operates with speech acts and direct address to provoke some kind of Brechtian alienation effect. Sherman's display of theatrical methods is therefore far more complex than most "staged photography" because it acts out different performative levels to disrupt any unity of

form and content. At the same time, the image includes its own act of viewing, giving it a sense of liveness or live encounter that is not only part of its construction in the studio but also part of its agency in the gallery space.

(JA) The Chinese artist Ai Weiwei has for some years seemed keen to embrace both photographic recording of performance and photographic performance. We can trace his relationship with photography to his time in New York, in the 1990s, as part of a grouping of avant-garde artists operating in a district of Beijing nicknamed "the Beijing East Village." The artists' work was extensively photographed, primarily by two photographers, Rong Rong and Xing Danwen, whose work seems committed to the idea of recording one-off events, events often taking place before a small audience and in necessarily private settings.

Ai Weiwei has, since the Beijing East Village experience, embraced work in which he is both

**Figure 8.** Cindy Sherman: Untitled # 425, 2004, color photograph, 182.9 × 236.2 cm. Copyright Cindy Sherman. Courtesy of the artist, Sprüth Magers, and Metro Pictures.



**Figure 9.** Ai Weiwei: "Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn," 2015, LEGO bricks (from the original 1995 photographic triptych by the artist), 230 × 192 × 3 cm. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

photographer and subject. Here, consider his 1995 tryptic "Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn," a set of black and white photographs. In the first image in the sequence, Ai is holding an urn, tilted to one side at shoulder level. In the next, his hands remain up, and he has dropped the urn, which is caught in mid-air. He retains his position in the third image, in which the urn has hit the ground and shattered, with the pieces scattered around his feet. Each of the three photographs is framed identically, and in each Ai is looking directly into the camera lens.

The tryptic recalls the sequential approach of chronophotography, a scientific means of capturing the phases of a movement, but also an aesthetic technique of narrativization. Here, the title's word "dropping," depending perhaps on whether it is taken as a participle or a gerund, might emphasize either the capturing of an event, a singular moment, an unrepeatable action (affecting an irreplaceable and irreparable object), or the "dropping" as performance done for the camera. Critical responses to the triptych have focused on its documenting the deliberate destruction of an artwork, and have centered on iconoclasm, whether this is deemed to impact upon conceptions of value in art or to the status of ancient relics tasked with representing national heritage and history. The fact that this is a sequential image seems to reinforce the possibility of its being objective photographic evidence, and leaves little doubt that the urn is being "dropped" on purpose.

As well as being sold and exhibited as an artwork in its own right, "Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn" has also formed part of a gallery installation entitled "Coloured Vases," in which the triptych is hung behind a collection of vessels which Ai has dripped in two contrasting colors of paint (the work recalls several from the artist, including painted Neolithic vases and a series bearing a painted Coca Cola logo; and the act of painting vases has itself been photographed). Coating antique vases in paint has been called a kind of vandalism, but the artist has been keen to identify instead a process of modification through which the ancient objects are recontextualized and recirculated, rather than

destroyed. The co-presence of the sequential photographic backdrop and the similar, painted vessels in "Coloured Vases" seems to stage the constituent works' play on temporality. The stakes of this, and of the confusion the works stage between a documented past act and a current performance, were perhaps revealed and complicated in one notorious response to the exhibited work.

On 16 February 2014, a visitor to Ai's retrospective installation at the Perez Art Museum smashed one of the "Coloured Vases." Footage shows a man, identified in the press as Maximo Caminero, picking a green and peach vase from the plinth. A woman, presumably a security guard, is heard saying, "Don't touch!" just before Caminero drops the vase on the floor, breaking it. He then stands for a moment, hands in pockets, looking up at Ai's triptych hanging on the wall.

Accounts in the press suggest that Caminero, who is himself an artist, was unaware of the provenance of the destroyed item (the museum initially declared its value as $1 million), assuming it was a contemporary piece of decoration rather than an antique (Miller 2014). For later reports, Caminero claimed that his action was a performative protest against the hierarchical nature and commercialism of galleries and the art world, and particularly with regard to the relative treatment of local and international artists. He later wrote to Ai and described his act of "solidarity" with the artist, also suggesting that his action might be instructive and could deter Ai and others from damaging historically significant items (Madigan 2014), a reference to the triptych. Considering the damaged item less in terms of its symbolic value, and more as a piece of private property, Ai, in a BBC interview, condemned Caminero's act in terms of his having deliberately broken something that did not belong to him, also pointing out that his own destructive artistic acts took place "a long time ago" (Jones 2014).

Offering another angle on his act, Caminero described "Coloured Vases" as having been a "provocation" (Miller 2014), suggesting that his act might be understood as a performance that was

coherent with, and indeed prompted by, the tryptic backdrop. This seems a compelling point, if not necessarily an advisable legal argument, since it suggests that his interaction with the piece was consistent with the work on display, and that he was guilty of responding to a step-by-step set of instructions, corresponding as such to an ambiguity in the notion of "documentation" itself, which is etymologically related to the idea of instruction, teaching, proof, and warning, and thus seems to point to something future as much as something past. Photographs and video footage of the incident – which appeared as evidence in the successful case brought against the perpetrator and show Caminero standing alongside the installation, joining it by adopting the pose of Ai on the wall behind him, then copying his action – thus constitute a next step, and another fragment of what we might venture to see as an interactive, durational multimedia performance.

*Alice Maude-Roxby and Dinu Li draw on one photograph to consider the stakes of performativity, performance, and photography; their essay "The Performance Document: Assimilations of Gesture and Genre" in this issue adapts the form of an interview into a dialogue.*

## 6. Apparatus

(WL) So far, we have questioned the idea of a medium in relation to both theatre and photography in favor of discussing their intermedial interactions as part of what is potentially the same discourse looked at from different points of view. We have proposed definitions of liveness and performativity, suggesting that both theatre and photography are institutional contexts that are instructive and contextual for their respective productions. To conclude, we want to introduce introduce the 'apparatus' as a productive framework for thinking about the dialogical field of theatre and photography as something that frames and stages – just like the historical playhouse and the early Camera Obscura were room-sized apparatuses.

Even though tools and machines might initially have been invented to "free" humans from enslaved labor, it has been argued that living beings are now captured in apparatuses. But we cannot simply destroy them; we need to find a way of using them so that the human is not separated from itself. Giorgio Agamben suggests that this could happen through "profanation," which he describes as a "counter-apparatus that restores to common use what sacrifice had separated and divided" (Agamben 2009, 19). So, what does this mean if we are forever subjected to the media apparatuses of photography and theatre?

In her essay on the post-medium condition of art, Rosalind Krauss expands the specific definition of a given medium (i.e. film) through the "compound" idea of an apparatus, saying that the medium is "neither the celluloid strip of the images, nor the camera that filmed them, nor the projector that brings them to life in motion, nor the beam of light that relays them to the screen, nor that screen itself, but all of these taken together, including the audience's position caught between the source of the light behind it and the image projected before its eyes." This produces a united viewing experience out of these interrelated elements, revealing how viewers are intentionally implied and physically invested in the work: "The parts of the apparatus would be like things that cannot touch on each other without themselves being touched; and this interdependence would figure forth the mutual emergence of a viewer and a field of vision as a trajectory through which the sense of sight touches on what touches back" (Krauss 2000, 25), potentially opening up an affective or even intercorporeal relationship with the work.

Different from Agamben, Vilém Flusser sees in the experimental gesture of photographing not a process of objectification, because "one cannot take up a position without manipulating the situation" (Flusser 2011, 83). Instead he points out that the photographer is an active subject whose reflective faculties are in fact a strategy and not a surrender of self to the rules of the apparatus. Rather he sees in the act of photographing a search for the self (Flusser 2011, 85), a playing against the apparatus, which he describes as the only freedom in a post-

industrial world left open to us – because, as he says, ''self-reflection through a division of labour becomes more collective and dialogical'' (Flusser 2011, 88). And in this spirit, we propose to further embed each other's apparatuses and terminologies as a way of testing new ground by performing the photographic conditions of theatre, and the theatric conditions of photography.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes

1.. Allsopp and Williams (2006) compare their approach, among others, to an open-ended ''Lexicon of contemporary performance'' with the ''Fragments of The Intersubjective Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre'' (Theaterschrift 1994).

2.. Barthes develops the term ''filmic'' in his essay ''The Third Meaning,'' the stilled image of a film conveying an obtuse meaning that cannot be described, ''where language and metalanguage end'' (Barthes 1977, 64–65).

3.. ''No medium today, and certainly no single media event, seems to do its cultural work in isolation from other media, any more than it works in isolation from other social and economic forces. What is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media'' (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 15).

4.. Weegee (Arthur Fellig), ''Boy at Circus,'' 18 April 1943. International Centre of Photography/Getty Images: https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/license/3093329.

5.. Iversen extends the definition of the ''performative'' from recording something pre-existing or pointing at something in the past, to using it as an element for analysis of what will come or how we see the world after a specific encounter: ''Photography is thus conceived, not as a melancholic 'that-has-been', but more as a future oriented and interrogative 'what-will-be?''' (Iverson 2007, 105).

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