

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

FROM
THE SCENIC ESSAY
TO
THE ESSAY-EXHIBITION.

EXPANDING
THE ESSAY FORM
IN THE ARTS.

KEYNOTES BY

**Ho Rui An,
Thijs Lijster, Ogutu Muraya,
Lauren Fournier**

KU LEUVEN

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27 – 29.04.22

THEME OF THE CONFERENCE

More than 400 years after the publication of Michel De Montaigne's leading *Essais*, the enduring afterlife of the essay form attests how this 'heretical form' (Adorno) not only continues to challenge the literary conventions but also transgresses the borders of the literary field to venture into other artistic disciplines. The genre of the essay film is the most prominent example of this dissemination but the expansion has set out in other fields as well. Art historian W.J.T. Mitchell introduced the notion of the 'photographic essay' and theatre scholar Hans Thies-Lehmann coined the 'scenic essay' as one of the constitutive elements of postdramatic theatre. In addition, the work of contemporary artists such as Ralph Lemon, Hito Steyerl, Thomas Bellinck, DECORATELIER and Oliver Zahn attest to a commitment to the essay form. More recently, the essay form has entered the curatorial field and the practice of exhibition-making as the 'essay-exhibition'.

Engaging with this emerging prominence, the conference welcomes scholars and art practitioners to present their academic and/or artistic engagements with the essay form. Unlike the realm of literature and film, the essay form in the field of performing arts, visual arts and curatorial practices has received only modest attention. The goal of this three-day conference is to continue the mapping the essay form in these disciplines. By doing so, the conference aims to enrich the existing vocabulary of theatre and performance studies and aspires to resolve the hiatus between the existing theories on the essay. The conference's emphasis on the essay form beyond the field of literature and film by no means that scholars or artists operating in these fields are not welcome. On the contrary, by assembling a wide variety of contemporary perspectives on the essay form this conference aspires to create a productive dialogue between more established fields of study on the essay and the new articulations presented during this gathering.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Ogutu Muraya

Ogutu Muraya is a writer and theatre maker whose work is embedded in the practice of orature. He studied International Relations at USIU Africa and graduated in 2016 with a Master in Arts at DAS Theatre in Amsterdam. His performative works and storytelling (*Fractured Memory*, *On Thin Ice*, and *Because I always feel like running*) have featured in theatres and festivals across different countries. Muraya's artistic practice is a dialogue between literature as the written word and orature as the spoken word. This dialogue is an essayistic reflex at the core of which is the desire to narrate complexity and led to a search for new forms of storytelling.

Keynote: *Narrating Complexity: A Literary Performance Practice* – Chair: Marte van Hassel
Wednesday 27th of April 2022, 9.30 – 10.30
→ location: Zwarte Zaal

I have an instinctive desire to tell stories. Yet I often doubt this instinct because our world and the intricate interactions within it have always been too complex to model on a linear storyline, how then is storytelling still relevant today? There is certainly more information today than there is comprehension. In this context can storytelling still reclaim its primary role of creating meaning and understanding? My artistic practice is a dialogue between literature as the written word and orature as the spoken word. This dialogue is an essayistic reflex at the core of which is the desire to narrate complexity and with the understanding that complexity does not mean complicated, it is thus centred as a political & aesthetic choice. This need to narrate complexity has led me on a search for new forms of storytelling under what I call a literary performance practice - a long-term practice of publishing; an ongoing symbiosis between reading, writing and publishing as staging, where chapters are released through different means of meeting with an audience

Thijs Lijster

Thijs Lijster is assistant professor of philosophy of art and culture at the department of Arts, Culture and Media studies of the University of Groningen. In 2012 he received his PhD in philosophy (cum laude) at the University of Groningen, for a dissertation on Walter Benjamin's and Theodor W. Adorno's concepts of art criticism. He contributed to books such as *Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy* (eds. De Boer and Sonderegger), *Institutional Attitudes and No Culture, No Europe* (ed. Gielen) and was coeditor of *De Nieuwe Duitse Filosofie* (The New German Philosophy, 2013), *De Kunst van Kritiek* (*The Art of Critique*, 2015), and *Spaces for Criticism. Shifts in Contemporary Art Discourses* (2015). In 2017 he published *Benjamin and Adorno on Art and Art Criticism. Critique of Art* (AUP)

Keynote: *The dialectics of essayism* – chair: Jürgen Pieters (Ghent University)
Thursday 28th of April 2022, 9.30 – 10.30
→ location: Zwarte Zaal

“This is the sort of attention I want from an essay: the solid thing made fully present on the page and then dissolving in all else it implies.” This line from Brian Dillon's essay on essayism nicely captures what the genre of the essay ideally entails. However, the qualities of the essay are not merely dictated by genre conventions; rather, I want to argue that the essay is the philosophical and aesthetic form per excellence of our current condition, which forbids us to tell 'grand narratives' while at the same time necessitates us to 'think big'. This makes the task of the essay a dialectical one. Through the particular object or experience that the essay focuses on, something universal comes to light. However, the essay also attempts to reinstate or revive particularity and our experience of it, in a world wherein all things appear as a mere function or exemplar of something else.

Lauren Gabrielle Fournier

Lauren Gabrielle Fournier is a writer, artist-curator, and scholar whose work coheres around visual culture, philosophy, and multi-genre/hybrid genre writing. She completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Visual Studies at the University of Toronto (2021), and received her PhD in English Literature from York University (2019). Her [Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism](#) (The MIT Press, 2021) is the first book-length study of “autotheory.” Her novella *The Barista Boys* is forthcoming through [Fiction Advocate](#) in San Francisco (2022). She has organized major exhibitions and screenings of contemporary art and film, and recently co-edited an issue of *ASAP/Journal* with Dr. Alex Brostoff on autotheory and decoloniality.

Keynote: “Autotheory” as “Auto” theory: On the Possibilities of Developing a Thesis through Essayistic Exhibition-Making – chair: Anneleen Masschelein (KU Leuven)

Thursday 28th of April 2022, 14.00 – 15.00

→ location: Zwarte Zaal

Lauren Fournier will discuss her recent essayistic solo exhibition “Auto” theory at Vtape in Toronto, which brings together work that she made during lockdown, when she was back home on Treaty 4 lands, Saskatchewan. She returned to the prairies with the yearning to better understand the culture from which she came—a white, working-class culture of settler ancestors from a range of countries, including Romania, Ukraine, Hungary, Bohemia/Czech, France, Scotland, and Turkey, who had seemingly embraced assimilation by a dominant Anglo culture. Lauren made autotheoretical work in response to questions like, what constitutes white-settler culture, and how can I approach this culture as a settler committed to decolonial work? Lauren worked in a hybrid way, engaging her embodied self-alongside theorization, research, and critique. But finding this method was not enough to wrestle with much of the ambiguity, uncertainty, and strangeness of what she was seeing around her during the pandemic, she began to play with para-fiction, humour, improvisation, and site-responsivity as aesthetic strategies. This auto-theory becomes an “auto” theory, where settler culture is analyzed via symbols of automobiles and trucks. She considers the essayistic form of her exhibition as it compares to her curatorial and editorial projects like *Fermenting Feminism* (2016-ongoing) and *Critical Booch* (2019). Throughout the talk, she references the framework established in her book *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (The MIT Press, 2021). In addition to advancing a theory of autotheory, the book serves as its own essayistic, curatorial practice of sorts. Drawing from her lived experience and interdisciplinary research, she considers the relations between exhibitions, books/journals/editing, and written essays when it comes to advancing an argument today.

Ho Rui An

Ho Rui An is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. Working primarily across the mediums of lecture, essay and film, he probes into the ways by which images are produced, circulate and disappear within contexts of globalism and governance. He has presented projects at the Asian Art Biennial (2019), Gwangju Biennale (2018), Jakarta Biennale (2017), Sharjah Biennial (2017), Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2014), Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2018), Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2017), Jorge B. Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center, Manila (2017), NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (2017) and Para Site, Hong Kong (2015). In 2019, he was awarded the International Film Critics’ (FIPRESCI) Prize at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany. In 2018, he was a fellow of the DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm.

Keynote: *Between Here and There: Essaying the Global* - Chair: Maude Bass-Krueger (Ghent University)

Friday 29th of April 2022, 9.30 – 10.30

→ location: Zwarte Zaal

Situated at the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance, and theory, Ho Rui An's recent projects examine the shifting relations between the state and global capital amidst the systemic crises of late capitalism. Drawing upon his ongoing body of work that examines China's integration into the global economy during its Reform era, this presentation considers the essay as an artistic strategy for reading against hegemonic narratives of global capitalism. If the prevailing liberal imaginary of the global describes a world sustained by the free movement and exchange of commodities, labour and capital, the task of "essaying the global", as proposed here, seeks to draw out moments of discontinuity within global capitalist networks so as to articulate hitherto foreclosed historical and spatial continuities in a world where things tend to fall away in moving between "here" and "there".

FROM THE SCENIC ESSAY TO THE ESSAY-EXHIBITION

PANEL SESSIONS

DAY 1: MORNING SESSIONS
Wednesday 27th of April 2022 – 11.00 – 12.30

Panel 1: *Boundary crossing by/through the essay film and the audiovisual essay*
Chair: Joséphine Vandekerckhove (Ghent University)
→ location: Zwarte Zaal

**'Between *Level Five* and *Zapping Zone*. The deconstruction of the audiovisual thinking process' -
 Lourdes Monterrubio Ibáñez (Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne)**

Abstract

The displacement from the essay film to the video installation has in Chris Marker one of its first and most relevant figures. Defining the former as the materialisation of an audiovisual thinking process generated from the filmmaker's subjectivity, the comparative study of *Level Five* (1997) and *Zapping Zone* (1990) allows to analyse the deconstruction processes that take place between the most complex expression of the Markerian essay film and its transformation into video installation. Marker deconstructs the audiovisual thinking process to turn it into a polyhedral offer in which the spectator must choose his/her own itinerary and generate his/her own reflection.

Biographical note

Awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship from the European Union, Lourdes Monterrubio Ibáñez is a Film Studies postdoctoral researcher at the Institut ACTE, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, where she develops her research project, *EDEF – Enunciative Devices of the European Francophone Essay Film* (www.edefproject.com).

**'Experiments in Media Translation and 'Dissection': Deploying the essayistic in 'Gaddafi in Rome' –
 Alessandra Ferrini (University of the Arts London)**

Abstract

The practice-based PhD *Gaddafi in Rome: Dissecting a Neocolonial Spectacle* is centred around the production of an essay film investigating a twenty-first century media event and the way it was reported instantaneously by an Italian newspaper. Rooted in Nora Alter's argument that the potential of the essayistic is the translatability of ideas, genres, and media into other forms, it is developed through a series of experiments that expand and translate its form. In doing so, it strives to deploy how the essayistic can shed light on the temporal structure of instantaneous news, addressing their gaps and engagement with colonial memory.

Biographical note

Alessandra Ferrini is a London-based artist and researcher. She is a PhD candidate at the University of the Arts London and a Research Fellow at the British School at Rome. Experimenting with the expansion and hybridization of the documentary film, her research questions the legacies of Italian colonialism and fascism.

***81 things I thought I had forgotten* – Jasper Rigole (KASK & Conservatorium – School of Arts Ghent)**

Abstract

The presentation discusses the essayistic approach applied in both the exhibited artworks and scenography of the exhibition (and ongoing project) *81 things I thought I had forgotten* (Z33, Hasselt & De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, 2016). This show provided an overview of my project *The International Institute for Conserving, Archiving and Distribution of Other people's Memories (IICADOM)* and was perceived with the intention not merely to serve as a retrospective but also as an introspective exhibition.

Biographical note

Jasper Rigole is a visual artist, filmmaker and postdoctoral researcher (School of arts Ghent, KASK). In his practice he (re)uses found ego-documents and films as a way to investigate topics such as (collective) memory, collecting, the archive and the relation between the image and its textual representation.

Panel 2: *Breaking the Spell. On essayism as a way of giving voice to images*
Chair: Tessa Vannieuwenhuyze (Ghent University)
→ location: Cirque

Ella de Búrca (LUCA School of Arts)

Abstract

Since the essay implies the visualization of a thought process, visual art seems particularly apt to essayism, being both reflective of and often also reflecting on the dynamics between looking and thinking. Starting from the video-essay on the painter Robert Ballagh by Ella De Burca, I will show how this reflexivity is mediated by an experience of fascination, being under the spell of an image. The (audio-)visual essay is a critical attempt at breaking this spell, I want to argue, staging a dialectics between imaginary identification and distancing. As such, it connects thought and image into a similar process of transformation, exhibiting a self-portrayal on the brink of becoming.

Biographical note

Ella de Búrca works through performance, sculpture and poetry to focus on how humans construct meaning, particularly from a female perspective. She is especially interested in how we perform as 'viewer,' and the discourse surrounding active versus passive experiences. She is currently pursuing a practice-based PhD at KU Leuven/LUCA.

Tom Van Imschoot (LUCA School of Arts)

Abstract

Artists often stage themselves through the presence of hands, a Rückenfigur or a (moving) spectator. I will show that what Robert Ballagh and Ella De Burca, as well as artists such as Francis Alys, Korakrit Arunanondchai and Tacita Dean, aim for is more than a spatial immersion into the work. They are looking for a dialogue with (art) history by merging moments in time, seeking to relate their personal and present-day pursuits to other (shared) social and artistic histories. The Rückenfigur reveals the subjectivity of the artist's gaze, responding to the essayistic desire to set up a dialogue with history, making it tangible, while at the same time sharing one's own fascination with it.

Biographical note

Tom Van Imschoot lectures in essayism, art writing and literature at LUCA School of Arts. He researches imaginative consciousness and creative criticism. He is a member of Passage Journal (UHasselt) and SEL (UGent/ VUB), chair of 019 & Kunsthal Gent and member of the board of Campo Arts Centre.

Isolde Vanhee (LUCA School of Arts)

Abstract

In our panel, we will create a chain of images, gazes and narratives, showing that the essay form can serve as a mode to perform a fascination, in order to give voice to images, find one's own voice and put (a) history in motion. My performative essay responds to the series 'People Looking at Paintings', created by Robert Ballagh between 1972 and 1975. I create a droste effect, bringing physical representations of the painted viewers into the performance space, and as such perform to the very viewers I am critiquing as they view me, placing the other (living) viewers in a predicament - they must position themselves in relation to passive/active viewing. Linking Robert Ballagh's frozen spectators to "self-protective apathy," violence in Northern Ireland and the modernist gaze, I recognise their role as pallbearers, dragging with them a past and outdated mode of viewing.

Biographical note

Isolde Vanhee lectures in film and painting at LUCA School of Arts. In her research and writings, she tends to focus on artworks that go against the grain, relating those to questions on imagination, (auto)fiction, inspiration, chance, boredom, love and the everyday. She is chair of Art Cinema OFFoff and a member of Passage Journal.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS I
Wednesday 27th of April 2022 – 13.30 – 15.00

Panel 3: *Essayistic storytelling as method*
Chair: Isolde Vanhee (LUCA School of Arts)
→ location: Zwarte Zaal

'World-in-process: essayistic storytelling and fictional instauration between gallery and cinema' - Jade de Cock de Rameyen (Université Libre de Bruxelles, FNRS-ASP)

Abstract

Since the 2000's, artist-filmmakers are increasingly making multiplatform projects embedding video installations and a fiction feature film (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Helena Wittmann, Albert Serra, Saodat Ismailova, Ben Rivers, Elena Ulman etc.). Because each work is site-specific, gallery and film theatre represent autonomous but complementary levels of signification. Because the project produces a fictional world, weaving together fragments of fiction across time and space, storytelling is key, albeit inherently fragile. As artists display their working process, a *world-in-process* burgeons. Looking at various modes of articulating cinema and gallery, I will address the consequences of intermedia juxtapositions for essayistic storytelling and fictional instauration.

Biographical note

Jade de Cock de Rameyen is a PhD student at Université Libre de Bruxelles, focusing on narrative ecologies in contemporary artists' cinema. She was visiting assistant in research at Yale University (2018-2019). Her articles are published in *Film-Philosophy*, *NRFTS* and *RBPH*. She holds MA's in Literature, Philosophy (ULB), and British Studies (HU-Berlin).

'Vue brisée/Broken view: Congo and the magic lantern' - Hannes Verhoustraete (KASK & Conservatorium – School of Arts Ghent)

Abstract

Vue brisée is an essay film on the colonial gaze and the magic lantern. Through collages and montages of photographic glass slides from catholic missions in Belgian Congo, the film stages a reversal of this gaze. Research and film work intertwine. The essay is a method as much as a poetics: editing and cutting became a way of writing. The essayist is caught between the immersion of the material and the oversight of the structure. He or she is in constant movement and "this movement is as much an approaching as a distancing: approach with reserve, distance with desire." (Didi-Huberman)

Biographical note

Hannes Verhoustraete is a filmmaker and is currently pursuing a PhD in the Arts at KASK School of Arts in Ghent.

'Observing and staging critique: fiction as an essayistic device' - Robbrecht Desmet (LUCA School of Arts)

Abstract

The work of another artist is often the subject of my essayistic documentaries. Through what I call observational staging, I have tried to create a cinematographic scenography that sets these arguments in motion, focusing on different readings of institutionalism. I would like to zoom in on my intention and method of applying various aspects of staging as a means to both art criticism and auto-reflection. Applying both formal and narrative elements taken from classical fiction (or even melodrama) in a documentary on art, I'm exploring ways of avoiding classical textual commentary, as a probing gesture for a more engaged or open spectatorship. The subtle fictions don't function in the linear way they do in mainstream storytelling. Quite the contrary: in my film storylines, poses or scenes are often interrupted or left behind. They are only there to echo the question of staging, assembled in a new way.

Biographical note

Robbrecht Desmet (°1985) is a filmmaker and researcher living in Brussels. He studied cinema and fine arts at Sint Lukas Brussels. His films have been presented at CourtisaneFestival, BFI London Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Brussels Art FilmFestival. He teaches Film Studies at LUCA School of Arts in Brussels and is currently working on a PhD titled *The World is Really There*, on urban space and mise-en-scène.

Panel 4: *Staging the essay: thinking, knowing and enchanting*
Chair: Sara Fontana (Verona University/Ghent University)
→ location: Masereel

'Scenography as invitation' - Philine Rinnert (Independent artist, Germany)

Abstract

How to get away from representative theatre towards a collective process? How to create an essay by many different voices? Using the example of a project development at Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, I describe the role of scenography as a narrative structure, a theatrical landscape, a host for both the performers and the audience. Fragments of narrations, research and music are displayed and dissected as in an archaeological site. The setting invites to take part, to create new narrations through your own personal authorship. It is supposed to stay in flux and unfinished.

Biographical note

Philine Rinnert studied stage design at the University of Art Berlin and the Theatre Academy of St Petersburg. Besides her work for music theatre and as scenographer she is part of many interdisciplinary artistic collaborations. She is committed to site specific projects, collective actions and social movements. (www.philinerinnert.de)

'Against the Orthodoxy of Thought: the Essay on the 21st-Century British Stage' - Heidi Lucja Liedke (University of Koblenz-Landau)

Abstract

This paper applies Theodor W. Adorno's framework from "The Essay as Form" to the genre of the essay play on the British stage as exemplified by two recently staged plays: *Sea Wall* by Simon Stephens (2008/2018) and Benedict Lombe's *Lava* (2021). By looking at both the playtexts and the respective performances, one arrives at a polyphony of untruths that become true in their progress(es). In Stephens' *Sea Wall*, the protagonist's happy life deconstructs itself against the literal waves of the sea that figures prominently in his narrative and the waves of words that carry it. Lombe's *Lava* embraces rhapsodic thought, which is fuelled the most by an Adornian drive toward heresy when the protagonist grapples with the experiences she made as a Nigerian immigrant to the UK.

Biographical note

Dr Heidi Lucja Liedke is Assistant Professor at the English Department at University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany. She was a Humboldt Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at Queen Mary, University of London from 2018-2020. Her second monograph, *Livecasting in Twenty-First-Century British Theatre: NT Live and the Aesthetics of Spectacle, Materiality and Engagement*, is under contract with Bloomsbury Methuen Drama. Recent publications have appeared in *Performance Matters*, *Participations* and *Hipster Culture*.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS II
Wednesday 27th of April 2022 – 15.30 – 17.00

Panel 5: *The essay as an experimental apparatus and a dramaturgical principle*

Chair: Sara Fontana (Verona University / Ghent University)

→ location: Zwarte Zaal

'First attempt on "Schauspielhaus Hotel": A container for professional dilettante entanglements' - Andreas Fleck (Independent dramaturg, Vienna)

'Second attempt on "Schauspielhaus Hotel": Dramaturgies of (postpandemic) assembly' - Lilly Busch (Schauspielhaus Wien)

Abstract

In season 2021/22, we worked together as dramaturges on a project at Schauspielhaus Wien by Tomas Schweigen and team, which transformed the theatre space into a hotel for five months. Instead of one big stage, many differently shaped hotel rooms offered space(s) for a wide variety of performances, installations, research and concerts. The simultaneity of different dispositifs and artistic processes offered a challenging field for experimentation and interesting examples for essayistic dramaturgies. By bringing our different yet related previous essay research into a dialogue, we will try to prove our respective vocabulary on this particular spatial arrangement and report on the essayistic entanglements this project provided.

Biographical note

Andreas Fleck (*1985) works as a freelance dramaturge in Vienna. He studied Theatre, Film & Media Studies in Vienna as well as Comparative Dramaturgy and Performance Research in Frankfurt/Main and Brussels. In his thesis the essay as form is the conceptual starting point for a dramaturgical thinking and working that he affirmatively describes as professionally dilettante.

Lilly Busch (*1990) has been working as a dramaturge at Schauspielhaus Wien since 2019. She studied Comparative Literature in Berlin and São Paulo as well as Comparative Dramaturgy and Performance Research in Frankfurt/Main and Brussels, which she completed with a thesis on the essay as a scenic form (of thought) in contemporary dance and theatre works.

'Fragments of confrontation' - Rubkwam Thammaboosadee (Bangkok University)

Abstract

This paper views cultural performance as the essay form and situates it as a tool that not only allows freedom, flow, and fragments to be performed but also tackles and confronts oppression amid a crisis. Focusing on cultural performance in public spaces like streets, pathways, food stalls, and government buildings, I draw on incidents wherein the Thai working class confronted the authority amid the Covid19 pandemic. I gather scattered pieces of micro performances to weave them together as evidence of structural confrontation wherein these subjects did not only 'think aloud' but also 'act aloud' to expose cracks in the society.

Biographical note

Dr Rubkwam Thammaboosadee is a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Performing Arts, Bangkok University, Thailand. Her research interests focus on cultural performance and its relation to neoliberalism. She is an independent scriptwriter, and her writing creates dialogues between the neoliberal socio-economic conditions and their impacts on everyday life.

**'What is it like to be a dramaturg? Exploring the dramaturgy of things' - Giovanni Sabelli Fioretti
(University of Huddersfield)**

Abstract

The current pandemic has dramatically accelerated a process that was already underway: the massive use of digital media and social networks supported many dance practitioners to continuing their artistic work and connecting to a broader dancing community. How these tools are affecting artistic and dramaturgical processes in the dance field and how dance practitioners are increasingly building through digital media new narrative experiences are the questions underpinning this proposal. It will then be clear how the entanglement between digital media and embodied arts is contributing to a new essayistic approach to performance, deeply affecting the mode of representation of dance.

Biographical note

I studied dance and movement in Milan and New York after earning two MA degrees in philosophy. My research focus is the impact of digital media on the dance dramaturgical practice, applying a multiplicity of perspectives to dramaturgical research, such as embodied research, queer studies and philosophy of technology.

Panel 6: *Notes on/from the literary essay*
Chair: Eline Denolf (Ghent University)
→ location: Cirque

'The Essayistic' - Mario Aquilina (University of Malta)

Abstract

This paper explores what we mean when we use the descriptive term, 'essayistic'. It argues that the 'essayistic', while being a defining quality of the 'essay' form and originates in a primarily literary tradition, is not bound to the 'essay' and might be found in works or texts that are not necessarily 'essays' or not necessarily 'literary' – poems, novels, films, photographs, performances, installations, musical compositions etc. While the essay is often thought of as a 'form' or 'genre', the essayistic might be more fruitfully considered as a 'mode' that is associated but not necessarily bound to the 'form' of the essay.

Biographical note

Mario Aquilina is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Malta. He is the author of *The Essay at the Limits* (Bloomsbury, 2021), *The Event of Style in Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and the lead editor of *The Edinburgh Companion to the Essay* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

'The "Essay Manifesto" between Arts and Politics: Claiming De-subjectification' - Carsten Junker (TU Dresden)

Abstract

The paper focusses on how the "essay manifesto," as I call it, pushes and transgresses boundaries between the arts and politics. I place particular focus on recent essayistic texts that use the label of "manifesto" as an index of artistic and sociopolitical intervention, and especially on their conceptualization of subjects. Discussing the example of a queerfeminist text-and-image-based essay manifesto (Legacy Russell's *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*, 2020), I ask how this essay manifestos formulates a critique of dominant forms of subject formation and proposes to queer modes of subjection through innovative artistic uses of digital technology.

Biographical note

Carsten Junker is University Professor of American Studies with a focus on Diversity Studies at the TU Dresden. His research interests include North American literatures and cultures including Canada and the Caribbean from the seventeenth century to the present, structural violence, genre theory, and theories of authorship.

'Ways of Seeing and not Knowing. Gendered Exclusions and Embodied Positions in the Essay' - Sophia Lohmann (FU Berlin)

Abstract

The essay is often characterized as a democratic, norm-breaking form and as such holding critical potential. First, I intend to show that the idea(l) of the essay has for a long time contradicted its actual materialization as a genre of an exclusive, white "maleness of reason." Second, I will draw on Joan Didion and her 'ways of seeing' as an ambivalent example to show how US-American women writers reclaimed the essay since the 1960s and embraced it as a medium for the renegotiation of cultural knowledge, social authority, factual aesthetics and embodied experience.

Biographical note

Sophia Lohmann (*1992) is a PhD candidate in Literature at FU Berlin and at the department of cultural theory and history of aesthetics at HU Berlin. Her research focuses on the essay as cultural practice, epistemologies of gender and the body. She studied comparative literature, political science, cultural theory and history. Lohmann is editorial director of the journal *ROM Gesellschaftsmagazin* and worked previously as freelance journalist and at Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

DAY 2: MORNING SESSIONS
Thursday 28th of April 2022 – 11.00 – 12.30

Panel 7: *Critical essays on stage*
Chair: Steff Nellis (Ghent University)
→ location: Zwarte Zaal

'Scenic essay as emancipatory practice' - Agnieszka Jakimiak (Royal Holloway – University of London)

Abstract

I will analyse scenic essay as an emancipatory tool that undermines fixed structures and enables shaking the habitual. I consider essay to be a practice that - because of its open and decentralized character - can incorporate marginalized and underprivileged voices. Therefore, I would like to refer to those examples of scenic essay when this framework unveils its revolutionary or egalitarian potential. In the context of my artistic experiences and referring to work of Mapa Teatro, Lola Arias or Boris Nikitin, I will propose a toolbox consisting of essayistic strategies that incorporate both personal perspective and political stake within a theatre formula.

Biographical note

Agnieszka Jakimiak is a PhD student in Royal Holloway, University of London. She works as a theatre director, an essayist and a dramaturg. She researches traces of censorship and self-censorship within performing arts. Her current work remains focused on interrogating forms of distribution of power and challenging hegemonic practices in theatre.

'From soaking to leaking: essayistic undercurrent of choreographic making in the diptych of solo works *SOAK* and *LEAKS*' - Mary Szydłowska (Independent artist, Brussels)

Abstract

Between 2020 and 2021 Mary Szydłowska made a diptych of solo works - *SOAK* and *LEAKS* - emerging from the research conducted since 2017 on cleaning and maintenance practices in the context of cultural institutions' spaces. The diptych traced the global shift from cleanliness and order making towards the regimes of sanitisation, encountered during the making process, as pandemic began. The diptych carried out ways of reading spaces through the cleaning as a gesture of care, and (re)writing them through questions about the invisibilisation of working bodies. How does research unfold as an essayistic form, revealing a series of works? *SOAK* and *LEAKS* cruised through cleaning as a terrain, investigating its layered potential, continuity and subversiveness.

Biographical note

Mary Szydłowska is a Brussels based choreographer and performer of Polish origins. Her work feeds on the notions of the peripheral, withdrawn and invisible, followed within architectural spaces, institutional environments and marginalised fields of labour. Her work expands towards sculpture and installations, in which she performs. She holds a MA of dance (2021, PARTS) and in cultural studies (2018, Jagiellonian University in Cracow).

'Essayistic thinking. Alexander Kluge staging *Opera: The Temple of Seriousness* (2019-2020)' - Anja Isabel Schneider (Universidad de Castilla La-Mancha/ARTEA. Research and scenic creation)

Abstract

Alexander Kluge (Halberstadt, 1932) has been called an essayist principally as a filmmaker and theorist. More so, it has been argued that Kluge's "essayistic thinking", indebted to the work of Th. W. Adorno, "infiltrates" all of his work "regardless of medium" (Langston 2019:6). While Kluge's recent curatorial projects have not been explored in terms of essayism, this novel intersection will be my site of inquiry. The exhibition format caters to Kluge's core endeavour: that of forging connections through the

principle of montage. As such, the exhibition's scenography is conceived as a constellation to interrogate the phenomenon of opera: its contemporary relevance.

Biographical note

Anja Isabel Schneider is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Faculty of Fine Arts, Cuenca and a member of the research group ARTEA. Research and scenic creation, Madrid (<http://artea.uclm.es/>). She has a special interest in transdisciplinary art practices on the crossover between visual arts, performing arts and literature.

Panel 8: Autotheory, psychoanalysis and the voice
Chair: Tessa Vannieuwenhuyze (Ghent University)
→ location: Cirque

Anneleen Masschelein (KU Leuven), Yael Segalovitz (Ben Gurion University of the Negev) & Mariske Brockmeyer (LUCA School of Arts/KU Leuven)

Abstract

In this panel we will look at the practice autotheory in relation to psychoanalysis and the voice. We approach this topic from three distinct directions. First of all, Anneleen Masschelein will focus in her presentation *Autoanalysis and autotheory: How the uncanny return of psychoanalysis led to strange encounters of the voice* on the history of autotheory in psychoanalysis, most specifically zooming in on the desire to somehow forge a written equivalent to the analytic encounter, by staging dialogical forms in an autotheoretical practice. She will focus on two specific examples: Didier Anzieu's work on Beckett and Julia Kristeva's work on the maternal erotic and her most recent autobiography.

In *Psychoanalysis as Argo: A podcast setting sail in the virtual classroom*, Yael Segalovitz will give an account of an experiments with podcast made during the previous year, focusing first of all on the triadic dynamics of a dialogue with three rather two interlocutors. Secondly she will also talk about how podcast can be used in a course.

Mariske Broeckmeyer, finally, is a singer and sound artist, who has recently completed her PhD in the arts on migraine and the voice. She will explore in her presentation *Unvoicing Migraine. A study of the Failing Voice* how working with her own voice, during migraine attacks, leads to a deeply impersonal asubjectivity and to a redefinition of voice in the context of illness.

Biographical note

Anneleen Masschelein is Professor of literary and cultural studies at KU Leuven. She published widely on psychoanalysis, autofiction and autotheory.

Yael Segalovitz is a lecturer at the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics at Ben Gurion University, Israel. Her work spans 20th and 21st century Anglophone, Brazilian, and Hebrew literatures, and she also translates between the three languages.

Mariske Broeckmeyer is a singer, sound artist and researcher at LUCA School of Arts and KU Leuven. Her work focuses on the aesthetics of a failing voice and wavers between voice collage and melody.

Panel 9: *The essay as vehicle for critical thought*
Chair: Jorge Poveda Yáñez (Ghent University)
→ location: Masereel

'Critical Theory/Conspiracy Theory: The Essay Form in Hito Steyerl's *Liquidity Inc.*' - Steyn Bergs (Utrecht University)

Abstract

This paper will argue that the apparent approximation of critical theory and conspiracy theories in Hito Steyerl's *Liquidity Inc.* (2014) indexes the extent to which critical thought and practices are inevitably informed by their historical conjuncture—and especially by the formations and constellations of media that enable their production and dissemination. In other words, Steyerl's work intimates that what gets to count as criticality 'proper' is necessarily determined by a historically contingent media ecology that criticality will be both a product of and an intervention in, raising questions concerning the conditions—and, indeed, the very possibility—of critique in our present moment.

Biographical note

Steyn Bergs is a critic and an art historian, working as a lecturer at Utrecht University. His research operates at the intersections of contemporary art, aesthetics, critical theory, political economy, and media theory.

'On disciplinarity and legibility, failure and attempt' - Paul Bailey (KASK & Conservatorium – School of Arts Ghent)

Abstract

This presentation invites deliberation on the role of the visual essay within a discipline that appears to be at odds with the essay's slippery, disruptive and transgressive tendencies. In particular, the visual essay's commitment to attempt and its capacity to court failure as a viable and welcome end result. Following a line of discussion that observes tensions between disciplinarity and legibility, failure and attempt, the presentation will trace instances where graphic designers have employed the visual essay as an instrument to essays alternative imperatives for/from graphic design.

Biographical note

Paul Bailey is an Irish graphic designer, educator and researcher based in London (UK). His practice is made public through exhibitions, publications, performances, workshops, writing and curation. He currently leads an independent design-research studio and is undertaking a PhD in the Arts at KASK, School of Arts Ghent.

'Messaging: A Method in Artistic Research and the Humanities' - Alice Twemlow (Leiden University, Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK))

Abstract

The essay as a format and a mode of communication is usually temporally located at the *end* of a process of research. Alternatively, and especially in the field of artistic research, however, the essay can also be used *during* a research trajectory or project to reflexively document experiments, visualize arguments, and to explore connections and contradictions between concepts. This paper proposes the term *messaging* to resituate the essay as a non-hierarchical meeting place for the capacities of making and writing — as an active, pluralist, and responsive method-practice that is as 'unsettled' in its form as it is in its subjectivity.

Biographical note

Dr. Alice Twemlow is a design historian whose research intersects with environmental humanities, museum studies, and artistic research. She is Special Professor in the Wim Crowel Chair in the

History, Theory and Sociology of Graphic Design and Visual Culture at the University of Amsterdam
and Design Lector (Research Professor) at Royal Academy of Art The Hague (KABK).

AFTERNOON SESSIONS
Thursday 28th of April 2022 – 15.30 – 17.00

Panel 10: *Visual essays*
Chair: Hilde Van Gelder
→ location: Zwarte Zaal

'Amidst the fire, I was not burnt – a documentary approach' - Michiel De Cleene & Arnout De Cleene (KASK & Conservatorium – School of Arts Ghent)

Abstract

In 1872, Mount Vesuvius erupted. Villages were destroyed. The mountain's shape was altered. There were casualties. 'Amidst the fire, I was not burnt' is an ongoing project on the 1872 Vesuvian cataclysm, and the synchronicity of events surrounding it. It is a speculative documentary essay, based on in situ research. In their practice De Cleene De Cleene test the limits and possibilities of the combination of discursive and visual elements, the tension between the personal and the neutral, and the confrontation of auctorial and readerly strategies.

Biographical note

Michiel De Cleene (BE, 1988) is a photographer, he explores the possibilities of uncertainty, speculation and cross-referentiality in documentary practice. He is a researcher at KASK, School of Arts, Ghent and a founding member of the School of Speculative Documentary. He is part of De Cleene De Cleene and 019.

Arnout De Cleene writes about art and literature. He is a researcher at KASK, School of Arts and a scientific employee at Dr. Guislain Museum. He is the author of *Outsiderliteratuur* (Garant, 2020), and, with Michiel De Cleene, *F#1-13* (APE, 2017), *the-documents.org* (2021) and *The Situation As It Is* (APE, 2022).

'There where the line disappears. A performative essay' - Nicoletta Grillo (KU Leuven, Politecnico di Milano)

Abstract

The national boundary line that separates Italy and Switzerland is today highly dematerialized and mostly invisible. Yet, it continues to exist as a "borderscape", reproduced by a series of crossing practices - such as cross-border work and migration - and by their associated imaginaries. Based upon oral history, photography, and performative walks, the essay considers how this border is kept alive or contested by those practices that routinely cross it. The starting point is the story of some female workers employed in a border shirt factory, who used to go to the border woods to harvest lilies of the valley.

Biographical note

Nicoletta Grillo studied architecture at Politecnico di Milano and photography at CFP Bauer. She is pursuing a double Ph.D. between Politecnico di Milano (Department of Architecture and Urban Studies) and KU Leuven (Lieven Gevaert Research Centre for Photography) with the thesis "In/visible constellations. Photography and spaces of imagination in the Swiss Italian borderscape".

'Exhibition Without Objects' - Sadia Shirazi (John Hopkins University)

Abstract

Exhibition Without Objects (EwO) (2013—) travels the world on a hard drive. It transforms as it travels, growing in each instance to include artists from cities it visits along its designated route. The exhibition features artists from across South Asia and its diaspora who have contributed work following an ongoing series of emails, studio visits, and conversations with the curator. Artists contribute two things

to the exhibition: a “visual essay” and a live event. The visual essays deploy the ubiquitous format of the PowerPoint in distinct ways, a few of which will be discussed through the artists’ own contributions to a forthcoming iteration of the exhibition.

Biographical note

Sadia Shirazi is a writer, architect, and independent curator based in New York. She is an ACLS Emerging Voices Postdoctoral Fellow at Johns Hopkins University and a recipient of the 2021 Arts Writers Grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation. Previously, Shirazi was the Instructor for Curatorial Studies at the Whitney Museum of American Art’s Independent Study Program.

Panel 11: *Performing and choreographing the essay*
Chair: Jorge Poveda Yáñez (Ghent University)
→ location: Cirque

'Situations with the Archive: Hauptaktion's Essay Performances and the Politics of Performing Problematic Repertoires' - Clio Unger (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London)

Abstract

This paper explores the trilogy of essay performances by the Munich based performance collective Hauptaktion. The group explores the theatrical essay through various modes of staging archival research and probe into politically and culturally sensitive topics. I propose to read these performances as specific kinds of archival practice that unearths performance history by putting archival documents into conversation with the embodied legacies and corporeal repertoires. Reading Hauptaktion's essay performances against contemporary discourses of the archive and repertoire, I argue that the essay performance in its hybrid form offers a way of responding to archival violences and omissions.

Biographical note

Clio Unger is PhD student at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London. She works on contemporary lecture performances and the politics of the knowledge economy. Her essay *Share Your Work: Lola Arias's Lecture Performance Series and the Artistic Cognitariat of the Global Pandemic* was published in Contemporary Theatre Review.

'Bee Dances (2021), a Choreographic Essay Exploring the Latest Buzz on Virtuosity' - Annelies Van Assche (Ghent University)

Abstract

This paper takes the performance *Bee Dances* (2021) by Indonesian choreographer ninus and Berlin-based choreographer Kareth Schaffer (USA/NL) to unpack the notion of virtuosity in reference to the concept of a choreographic essay. The performance explores the Balinese duet *Oleg Tamulilingan* (1952), inspired by the courtship of bumblebees and created by I Ketut Marya to present Balinese dance in a Western context. *Bee Dances* inquires into the figure-eight movement (waggle dance) that forager bees perform to share information about the distance and direction to nectar and pollen sources as well as to water and new sites for nesting.

Biographical note

Annelies Van Assche is doctoral assistant at S:PAM, Ghent University. She studies the relationship between dance and labor. She co-edited a *Dance Research Journal* issue on *Work (with)out Boundaries* (2019) and published the monograph *Dancing Precarity* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2020). She is a member of CoDa – Research Network for Dance Studies.

'Dancing the end of the world: essayistic choreography as archeological method in Michiel Vandeveld's *Ends of Worlds*' - Kristof van Baarle (Antwerp University)

Abstract

In *Ends of Worlds* (2018), Belgian dancer and choreographer Michiel Vandeveld adopts a sci-fi perspective to look back at dance movements of the 20th century, in order to understand our present moment. This particular dramaturgy adopts an essayistic approach to open up the possibility to think about a possible future again. I will argue that Vandeveld's take on the essay has an archeological strategy (Foucault, Agamben) to at once seek to grasp the current state events and wrest a new potentiality from the past, towards a future. It is a way to think through choreography, about the potential future of a body and community, of a world in times of collapse and technoscience, on the threshold between the philosophical and literal posthuman.

Biographical note

Kristof van Baarle is post-doctoral researcher at Antwerp University's Research Centre for Visual Poetics. As a dramaturg, he works with Kris Verdonck and Michiel Vandeveldel. Together with Verdonck, he conducts an artistic research project on Beckett and Noh at KASK – School of Arts. He is associate editor of Performance Research and co-editor of Machine Made Silence.

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DAY 3: MORNING SESSIONS
Friday 29th of April 2022 – 11.00 – 12.30

Panel 12: The essayistic and the curatorial: reflections on the curatorial field
Chair: Laura Herman (KASK & Conservatorium – School of Arts Ghent)
→ location: Zwarte Zaal

'The history of ideas of the exhibition as essay' - Mattias Bäckström (NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

Abstract

From the late twentieth century onwards, critics, curators and scholars have used the terms 'exhibition as essay' and 'exhibition essay'. The exhibition as essay is a key concept in my scholarly monograph: *To build content with exhibitions. Exhibition production as research process* (published in Swedish in 2016, second edition in 2021). In my paper, I will outline the history of ideas of the exhibition as essay. How has the exhibition as essay been used as a concept? What are the characteristics of the exhibition as essay, in relation to concepts like the curatorial, museum research and practical knowledge?

Biographical note

Mattias Bäckström is Associate Professor of Cultural Heritage Management at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. He has a PhD and holds the title of Associate Professor of History of Ideas and Science at the University of Gothenburg. Mattias has also a background as museum curator and exhibition producer.

'The Essayistic in the Curatorial: repurposing the politics of exhibition' - Carolina Rito (Coventry University)

Abstract

The curatorial has been situated in the expanded field of exhibition-making, with a role that exceeds the curation of exhibitions, and points towards the interpretative and epistemic functions of cultural production. In that way, the curatorial has become an arena from where to create new knowledge, instead of a display of already validated discourses. This paper explores the essayistic capacities of the exhibitionary as a speculative and propositional gesture. "The Essayistic in the Curatorial" aims to mobilise exhibitionary tools (aesthetic, spatial, theoretical, epistemic) to analyse and intervene in the field of aesthetics and its politics.

Biographical note

Carolina Rito is a curator, researcher, and Professor of Creative Practice Research at Coventry University, UK. Rito's latest publications include *Institution as Praxis – New Curatorial Directions for Collaborative Research* (Sternberg), *Architectures of Education* (e-flux Architecture), *FABRICATING PUBLICS: the dissemination of culture in the post-truth era* (Open Humanities Press).

'Monoculture: A Recent History. A case-study of the essay-exhibition' - Giulia Bellinetti (University of Amsterdam)

Abstract

In my presentation, I will discuss *Monoculture – A Recent History* as an example of essay-exhibition. The project aimed to revive the debate on 'multiculturalism' by investigating the notion of 'monoculture' through artworks and artefacts from the last hundred years. Featured as thematic subject as well as epistemological principle of the exhibition, the concept of ambiguity infuses the project with a sense of openness which allows to think beyond dichotomous approaches to the subject matter. By walking the audience through some of the material-conceptual constellations, I will analyse

how this specific form of essay enacts an arena of intellectual and aesthetics experiences in which the construction of meaning is an open process of negotiation between the subject-narrator, the individual visitor, and the exhibited objects.

Biographical note

Giulia Bellinetti is PhD candidate at ASCA - University of Amsterdam, where she investigates the epistemic cultures of art institutions in times of ecological emergency. Giulia is also Head of the Nature Research Department at the Jan Van Eyck Academie and was previously Coordinator of the Production Department at the M HKA. There she coordinated monographic exhibitions of seminal artists as well as substantial group exhibitions, among which *Monoculture – A Recent History*.

Panel 13: *The lecture performance, where performance and the essay intersect*
Chair: Clio Unger (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London)
→ location: Cirque

'The lecture as an essayistic form. Reflecting on "The art of the lecture"' - Helen Brecht & Jascha Sommer (Independent curators, Germany)

Abstract

Helen Brecht (text-based artist & researcher, Ruhr University Bochum) & Jascha Sommer (performance artist & curator, Cologne) in cooperation with: Nina Gojić (performance dramaturge, Zagreb) & Zrinka Užbinec (performer & choreographer Birmingham) In 2021, we initiated a series of events entitled The Art of the Lecture / Reihe zur zeitgenössischen Vortragskunst / Um(j)etnost predavanja. Our curatorial endeavor was to give the lecture performance format a contemporary perspective. Digging into artistic practices of knowledge production, we were confronted with diverse and expanding formats: from card-reading practices to essay performances. In our lecture, we will reflect retrospectively on the curated works. As the works are discursive in themselves, a classificatory discourse seems contradictory to us. Instead, we will re-read the notes that were taken and bring them into an essayistic constellation.

Biographical note

Helen Brecht lives in Cologne. She works as a text-based artist, and as a researcher at the Institute for Theater Studies at Ruhr University Bochum. She studied at the Institute for Applied Theater Studies in Gießen and is completing a postgraduate course Literary Writing at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne.

Jascha Sommer lives in Cologne. He works as performance and media artist, and as a curator of festivals, academy programs and event series. He studied theater & literature at Ruhr University Bochum and Université Paris X as well as media arts at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne.

'How to face' - Veronika Darian (University of Leipzig) & Jana Seehusen (HFBK Hamburg)

Abstract

HOW TO FACE? is designed as a scenic essay in citation-like mental images. We are gathering essayistic practices and resisting figures that circulate between pop culture and discourse, everyday life and academia. As tools, that are never neutral, we focus on blank sheets and blind spots in the field of identity politics. We use them as a starting point as well as a converter in order to prepare an experimental field for our exploratory approach. There we encounter ambiguous figures, that oscillate between language and image, the poetic and the political. This kind of resistant material turns out to be material of resistance against mechanisms of dominant cultural positions.

We, Veronika Darian and Jana Seehusen, have been working together for many years. Our scenic lectures apply essayistic practices with a focus on contemporary social and cultural critical issues.

Biographical note

Veronika Darian is assistant professor for contemporary theatre with focus on transmediality and transculturality at the Institute for Theatre Studies at the University of Leipzig.

Jana Seehusen, artist and author, works on modes of language and action of the in-between, the third and displacement as well as identity politics. She is doing her doctorate on the essay film as an experimental theoretical format in the field of artistic research.

'Essaying art: an Unmethodological method for artistic research' - Emily Huurdeman (Fontys School of Fine and Performing Arts, Tilburg)

Abstract

In the field of artistic research, science and art are integrated. The essay inherently embraces both the artistic and the scientific. In the academic article *Essaying Art, an Un-methodological Method for Artistic Research*¹ I centralize the act of essaying as an approach for the artistic researcher to investigate any topic. The form of expression can encompass all possible artistic media and combinations of media. This presentation is in the form of a lecture-performance.

Biographical note

Emily Huurdeman (1985, NL) artist, research and educator. Her research revolves around theorizing and practicing essaying. On this topic she has published an academic article and presented at multiple international conferences. She is a video/performance artist and teacher at multiple art institutions. She is also co-initiator of Café Chercher and Mouse Ear Concerts.

Panel 15: Collaborative experiments with and through the essay form
Chair: Annelies Van Assche (Ghent University)

'ENTWEDER NOCH' - Sandra Freygartten & Lucia Rainer (Independent artists, Germany)

Abstract

The German expression *entweder oder* (either or) anticipates a decision regarding one or the other, while *weder noch* (neither nor) acknowledges that a decision can in fact not be made. Taking this into account, Rainer Freygartten's scenic essay *ENTWEDER NOCH* is a collaborative writing experiment on gender-fluidity. In performing the essay, the authors address prevailing questions how gender and sexuality play out across different bodies within the trans spectrum. The collaborative set-up curiously experiments with diverse strategies regarding scenic-essayistic writing and non-contested authorship.

Biographical note

Sandra Freygartten is an artist and art coach (DGFC) focusing on artistic practices within the, non-artistic' field. Her recently published articles focus on complementary artistic strategies and artistic agency. *ENTWEDER NOCH* is part of an artistic research series with her partner Lucia. More info: www.kunstcoach.de

Lucia Rainer is a performance studies theorist, dramatic advisor, and artist researcher experimenting with collaborative methodologies. Her artistic research interrelates diverse narratives and their physicality to philosophical-political discourse. *ENTWEDER NOCH* is part of an artistic research series with her partner Sandra. More info: www.lucia-rainer.com

'Ragged Dialogues: On collaboration-as-essay' - Anne Karin ten Bosch (Platform-Scenography) & Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink (Utrecht University, Platform-Scenography)

Abstract

In this duo-presentation, scenographer Anne Karin ten Bosch and performance scholar Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink share their experiences-so-far on their off the beaten path to essayistic collaboration. Inspired by living atlases and *The Hundreds* by Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart, they seek to collaborate without pre-set aims, sharing unfinished ideas, learning through response. The object of the attempt is Ten Bosch' artistic research project on 'placemaking' practices in Rotterdam; Groot Nibbelink is involved as an artistic dialogue partner. The talk is an exercise in scenographic sensitivity, exploring practices of framing and scaling, the value of dilettantism and of discursive-material dialogues. Keywords: essay and scenography; essay and performativity; collaboration; dialogue.

Biographical note

Anne Karin ten Bosch is a critic, curator and coach. She has worked as a scenographer and coordinated the Scenography Department at the University of Fine Arts Minerva, Groningen (1999- 2010). In 2012 she (co)founded Platform-Scenography (P-S), curator of the Dutch entries for PQ (2015 and 2019) and currently studies MA Design at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam.

Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink is an Assistant Professor in Theatre and Performance Studies at Utrecht University and coordinator of the MA Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy. Her research interests include spatial theory, new materialism and performance philosophy. She co-founded Platform-Scenography and is also active as a dramaturg and artistic adviser.

'Lecture-Performance: Essayer: Walking as Speculative methodology' - Christel Stalpaert (Ghent University) & Nina Vurdelja (Tampere University)

Abstract

Our video essay explores walking as speculative methodology across disciplines. Bringing together own daily movement in well-known and less familiar terrains, with movement and migration of various human and nonhuman others, we work along Ingold's concept of lines and wayfaring. We are curious to explore what kind of cultural knowledge is created by these collective embodied practices, and are primarily interested in material and performative qualities of walking narratives conveyed in the essay. Through diffractive reading of multiple walking instances (in streets, forest, snow, et cetera), we invite diverse voices and perspectives to emerge and converse throughout the essay. In a loose, cut-up structure of the video essay, we create space for own reflections and open questions to emerge.

Biographical note

Christel Stalpaert is Full Professor Performing and Media Art Studies of the Art Studies Dept. at Ghent University (Belgium) and co-director of the research centre S:PAM (Studies in Performing Arts and Media). Her main areas of research are theatre, performance, dance and media art (since 1890) at the meeting-point of philosophy. She investigates how art practices throughout the 20th and 21st century activate awareness and change, generating also alternative modes of activism in relation to environmental and ecological crises.

Nina Vurdelja is a doctoral researcher at T7 Centre for Practice as Research in Theatre at Tampere University, Finland. Her main interests reside in posthuman intermedia studies and performance ecology; she is studying sensuous encounters and embodied knowledges, and is interested in new ways of thinking and being together.

PLENARY SESSION:

closure of the conference, future steps, new initiatives and collaborations

Friday 29th of April 2022 – 14.00 – 15.00

→ location: Cirque

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/ORGANIZATION

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Ghent University (Faculty of Arts and Philosophy: Department of Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies, Department of Literary Studies and Department of Architecture and Urban Planning)

PRACTICAL ORGANIZATION

Research Centre S:PAM – Studies in Performing Arts and Media (Ghent University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies)

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This conference was organized with the support of Commissie Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (CWO) of the Faculty of Arts & Philosophy of Ghent University, Research Centre S:PAM (Ghent University) and KASK & Conservatorium – School of Arts Ghent.