Between Place, Performance and Score: Meeting Places
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Abstract: A collaborative research project exploring negotiations through text, place and practice.

This paper explores the complexity and multiplicity of interpretation in collaborative practice and the subsequent potential and difficulty of re-telling exchange. Using varied viewpoints it examines processes of separation and negotiation between private and public spaces. Playing with the idea of different meeting places, as physical and metaphorical frameworks for exchange, it offers a juxtaposition of parallels presented as fragments of a collaborative process. Through an investigation of these shared spaces, we set out to reveal the dynamics of our own collaborative practice, identifying spatial aspects of collaboration as a result. Using project documentation from a duet performed within a gallery studio between a drawer and percussionist as the focus for investigation, the presentation will specifically re-present issues of set up, in particular the ways in which a barrier or separation is established, bringing into existence an exteriority. In doing so, it will map territories of practice through collaboration, locating interconnections, difference and overlaps.

Framing and re-framing activities within a series of re-telling, we will model the dynamic impact of different material to consider the potential influences of physical site(s), individual and disciplinary frameworks of practice.

Drawing on the notion of a performed score we will offer opportunities through which the viewer/participant might themselves re-site fragments of our dialogues within their own territories and experience.

Introduction

We propose to position our work as an explorative project centered on three interlinking aims: To investigate how the occupation and negotiation of place might be understood through a shared, collaborative experience. To examine particular spaces: Lift, Library and Gallery, as physical and metaphorical frameworks for exchange. To utilise and investigate these interactions through difference, and contextualise our own involvement and investment in collaboration through established frameworks of practice based research.

We present our experience of collaboration through this text and through a conference presentation. Through different formats we set out to explore methods for offering access to the inner workings of its construction. The foundation for this research was Sound Seminar, which took place between the School of Art and the School of Music (University of Southampton 2007-08). Our project centres on a duet performed within a gallery studio between a drawer and percussionist, and has progressed through documentation, narratives and memories of this event from separate viewpoints. In this way, the duet has provided a means for examining how barriers or separations were established and considering the
difficulty and opportunity of difference as a process of research. In so doing we offer the reader an opportunity to interpret our work through a juxtaposition of material sometimes presented in non-linear ways. We offer the opportunity to imagine the places that exist between public performance and private practice, how territories are established, maintained and redistributed, and open up a tour through the various viewpoints from places into spaces of the other. ‘Boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits’

Library affords consideration of individual histories and knowledge, a familiar place that can be collectively owned. Through library we recognise the question of accessibility to different ways of knowing and the difficulty of opening unresolved thinking.

Lift is used to model exchange and development affording reflection on the difficulties and frustrations of exchange, which moves through process in sometimes unpredictable ways. The lift links our private and public thinking and connects different layers of our archive.

Gallery provides a metaphor for the presentation of developed thinking, a conclusive realisation of ideas. It offers potential for the juxtaposition of a series of works or statements whilst leaving room for the potential difference in interpretation.

**Methods for re-telling exchange**

‘I am constantly caught undressed in writing – I have an image in my mind of someone twisting their head towards the light as the lift door opens, lifting themselves to standing after leaning on the wall, their hair in movement and head half bent eyes lifting, conscious of another presence, but not quite looking out and grazed by strands of hair.’

Diffraction is a necessary condition within collaborative practice, taking place only through close proximity and interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diffraction</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>diffraction pattern</td>
<td>mirror image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marking differences from within and as part of an entangled state</td>
<td>reflection of objects held at a distance</td>
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<tr>
<td>differences, relationalities</td>
<td>sameness, mimesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>objectivity is about taking account of marks on bodies, that is, the differences materialized, the differences that matter</td>
<td>objectivity is about homologous to copies that are homologous to originals, authentic, free of distortion</td>
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<td>diffractive methodology</td>
<td>reflexivity</td>
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<td>performativity</td>
<td>representationalism</td>
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<td>subject and object do not preexist as such, but emerge</td>
<td>preexisting determinate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>boundary between subject</td>
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Fig. 1. Diffraction (Barad)
In entering another’s space, diffraction makes it difficult to find your feet - structures are opened in a way that challenges your own ways of working. It takes time to enter such spaces. As well as the interaction between each other, perceptions and outcomes are altered in relation to the syntax of different spaces. These processes of diffraction exists somewhere between expectation and performance.

Meaning is not easily sieved from experience; there are many layers and trajectories opening unexpected directions and interpretations. In collaboration and through practice things arrive unbound from other ways of knowing, and are rearranged as one index or frame of reference is applied to another. "Working with multiple theoretical frameworks can be confusing, exhausting, and inconclusive." Practice based research encompasses many layers, including lived experience, documentation and re-construction. However, the focus is often placed primarily on the presentation of the reconstruction, by its nature a partial representation of the whole, often smoothed to allow a particular angle to emerge. "The outcomes of such research (made in or through practice), are not easily quantifiable and it can be difficult to articulate objectively methods, processes and conclusions that emerge from an alternative logic of practice."4

In this paper we raise questions about the means through which we can present research, a meeting place of complex territories and relationships, as an academic text and related presentation. It is necessary to consider how messy, experiential processes can be re-told without losing any sense of the immediacy of practice and yet adhering to academic conventions.5 Utilising text as a material and scrutinising our methods, we have been working through the interactions between practice led, practice based and practice in research.6

In this paper, access to the project is afforded through text and image. Through the order and arrangement of material, interpretation can be altered and affected. In complying with the writing guide, these considerations and values of the visual have led us include some text as image. In this way a text might be seen as a fragment of something else, taking on new meaning through its juxtaposition within a larger image where different elements combine as one.

Within the related conference presentation, we re-present the paper through the frame of the Gallery, creating links between the formal space of a gallery and a conference presentation. The presentation utilises the standard format of conference presentation, but links different sections of this paper using a combination of video projection and three voices to explore the difficulties and opportunities of difference and occupation. In these ways, we set out to guide the reader/delegate through a sequence of points, places or intersections. Narratives "traverse and organise places; they select them and link them together . . . they are spatial trajectories."7
Between place, performance and score: Meeting places

"I was once asked as a student in design to undertake a project called stripes, the memory of it stays with me still—I realised in drawing that everything comes down to edges and how you describe relationships of difference—in drawing I teach looking across the 'apparent' edges of things to find relationships and to come to an understanding of edge as a meeting place. Boundaries can be defined from either territory; at times they are so close as to be indistinguishable and at other times of great contrast. Together they can be discordant tones or work in harmony within the whole image. Within an image one only exists through the differences of the other."  Gould, T (2009) personal narrative

Meeting place 1: Library
The Library allows for varying levels of contribution in a way that other meeting places do not.

- a familiar space that is collectively owned
- divided into territories of individual interest and knowledge
- territory is found not demanded.
- offering privacy within a public space
- giving space to dwell without expectation of performance
- there is a disruption of the visual
- separations and boundaries frame our view

In the Library, territories are defined and confined by books, records and words organised in stacks or accumulations. Our collaborations have been opened and explored through different layers of a project, itself situated in relation to Sound Seminar. The Sound Seminar Archive arose as a cross-disciplinary field of thinking that was formed through participatory engagement. Through practical exchange, conversations and dialogues taking place between smaller groups contributed to larger events. The resulting archive was patchy, nebulous and massive, and formed a bank of material to be accessed, pulled out and interpreted; a store of fragments through which to consider collaboration.

Here the Library forms a meeting place between the archive and our collaboration, and serves as a model that can be applied to a wider understanding of collaborative practice. A familiar space that is collectively owned, Library offers involvement in individual ways. Personal histories and established modes of operating can form a base from which to work. But even through the gaps in the book cases or through apertures formed by accumulated knowledge, viewpoints into a space of the other is limited.
Through our process we have recognised our individual ways of indexing and the impossibility of reconciling these differences in categorising and ordering. \[\text{一切可以被找到的事件，都存在于研究者的记录中，而研究者的记录，又可以被他的自己的索引卡所吸收。}\]

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‘Conversations moved between the conscious and the unconscious mind, between things seen and thought; the work was built, changed, in dialogue and flux, often arriving at the gap between language and line’

Fig. 4. Public/Private

Working collaboratively is a different form of exchange where access to emergent ideas and context is often necessary. Different ways of knowing and the diffraction of our own experience and knowledge form barriers to communication. Through library we recognise that we can only see the world from our own place, using this viewpoint to clarify and extend our own understanding.

**Meeting place 2: Lift**

Through our project the lift has come to be an important metaphor in our exchange enabling us to objectify some of the potential difficulties of bringing to conclusion a text through collaborative exchange. Taking account of different working methods and time constraints, in addition to accommodating different approaches and ways of working can be frustrating and stressful. Recognising and utilising difference to investigate shared values and experiences has enabled and reinforced opportunities and potential.

Lift also provides a framework for linking different layers of our research project. Moving through time to re-view or reconsider past experience in the light of current thinking. Lift mentality is opportunistic and fractured in terms of time, experience and action. As a meeting place moving between public and private spaces, continually departing and arriving, it accesses the difficulty and transience of meeting place, and enables back tracking and reframing.
We wait for lifts. There is an expectation and anticipation of shift and a frustration on non-arrival – or on arriving full with no room for occupancy. The lift is a space of transition; this transportation operates both vertically between levels (elevation) and as an opening between separate spaces (revelation). From a position of elevation, removal or objectivity, it is possible to create strategic overviews for action; however, in the lift this elevation is disrupted. The private space inside the lift, an established territory of enclosed (individual or collaborative) practice, is interrupted, demanding a more tactical, opportunistic mode of operation.

Tactical thinking is that which takes place ‘in the space of the other’. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power. Within collaborative practice, interruptions and disagreements are valuable; strategic planning and overview as well as opportunism and contingency are vital components within collaborative methodologies. Exchange between a small group within a closed, defined or established space is disrupted, opened and interjected upon from the outside, and difference is re-invigorated.
Meeting place 4: Gallery

The project finds its place within and through the visual arts and Gallery is a territory of the visual. In focusing our research through an experimental exchange between a percussionist and a drawer, we used the gallery as a studio. The formal, pure, atemporal exhibition space within which ‘Art exists in a kind of eternity of display’ is disrupted, through occupation and practice.

Gallery provides a metaphor for the presentation of a conclusive realisation of ideas. Within this text we use the frame of Gallery to map territories and indices, which have guided and affected our resolution at this time. A useful parallel can be drawn here between Gallery and the related presentation; the restraints and formal syntax of these spaces providing a framework for a representation of process.
Fig. 7. Gallery

Conclusion

We set out ‘to reveal the dynamics of our own collaborative practice’ through the exploration of specific spaces, and through this process have arrived at a shared space with defined characteristics. Gaining this knowledge has required significant introspection and examination of individual working methods within the broad arena of practice, laying open aspects hitherto unseen in our previous projects. The shared environment of the Sound Seminar, extended through this collaboration has enabled us to decipher and analyse the influence of site on exchange, offering a new set references as material in our dialogue. The use of frameworks for practice, in investigating occupation and negotiation and in scrutinising methods so as to re-present in a new environment, has given us a means of objectifying our exchanges and opened out deeper ways of thinking about our own and others contribution in the collaborative process. This process has initiated a new spatial language around collaboration enabling a physical connection with ways of working together.

Gallery has provided us with an enhanced appreciation of territory, perspective and difference. In our experience individuals working co-operatively tend to do so within a framework of similarity, looking for areas of overlap between viewpoints, frameworks and disciplines. Identifying common research interests and progressing towards shared aims and objectives through these correlations can lead to the dissolution of differences in approaches and methods.¹¹

From previous experience of working together, in various combinations, we had shared methods and understanding particularly in relation to looking and thinking about practice. However, for this project, we deliberately utilised difference, (between disciplines, individuals, approaches and methodologies), locating points where we did not overlap.
Thus our practice has involved re-thinking information through various manipulations to analyse properties or assumptions. This investigation through different practices offers opportunities to understand the greater potential of collaboration as a means of production where re-orientation from a distance or from unfamiliar territories functions in a generative way.

'The research value will come from studying the changes in perception that occur with the move from one description to the other, from one disciplinary perspective to the other. It is not simply the case that we leave one way of shaping experience and move to another; it is the tension between the two that is decisive.'

Taking incidents of disparity and scrutinising this gap through the transfers and exchanges that take place across them, we have utilised separations in developing a methodology that 'describes the different spaces of dissension.' The drawing and re-drawing of boundaries and the delineation of separate territories is inherent to collaboration through an understanding of the frontier as bridge. In making this paper we deliberately utilised disparity, locating points revealed through difference and conducting comparison through edges.

Diffraction has excavated new understanding, re-ordering knowledge according to different frameworks and offering us a better understanding of our own places. 'The commentary and reflection that follow the negotiation and openness to possibility that one is obliged to adopt when working across disciplines.'

Library has also highlighted the benefit of extended knowledge that comes from establishing a base, an intent and working methods right up front. Once this is established our work underlines that understanding of engagement must remain flexible, moveable, recognising the possibility of loss within more rigid structures.

Within collaboration we have identified the potential apparent in adopting 'lift mentality' as a means of being open to negotiation/revelation and the benefit of establishing the capacity for a tactical opportunistic mode of operation. In the absence of defined roles or a pre-established hierarchy, the specific characteristics of the approach that we have developed encompass several distinct departures from other collaborative models. Throughout our process of collaboration ownership is shared, distributed, passed but never fixed. Re-arranging knowledge within one another’s index has brought about new insights and opened new avenues of thinking as well as a better understanding of one’s own viewpoint. The continual negotiation of aims and objectives, as well as an understanding of operating within a system of partial and incomplete knowledge increases its aptitude for application to complicated problems.

We have maintained open access to shifting individual intentions and alterations to separate frames of reference. Through an asymmetry of interrelationships, a methodology that operates through interjections and points of dissension we have engaged in 'a self-organising process in which meaning is generated through a dynamic process, and not through the passive reflection of an autonomous agent . . .Instead of being self-sufficient and isolated, discourses are in constant interaction, battling with one another for territory, the provisional boundaries between them being the very stakes in the game.'
Acknowledgements
Roger Turner’s contribution to the project through dialogue and practical exchange has been of great importance.
We also acknowledge the contribution to the development of images from Sue Wood.

Endnotes
3 Tiainen, T., & Koivunen, E. (2006) ‘Exploring forms of triangulation to facilitate collaborative research practice: Reflections from a multidisciplinary research group.’
8 Barad, K. (2007) Meeting the Universe Halfway P89

References