Performing Proximity—"Learning To Fly"

Felicia Herrschaft

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Abstract: The following paper is about artists doing experimental and performative art who expect the spectators to become participants in the process of artwork production. The artwork is thus produced through a process of participation. As a researcher, I was similarly expected to participate in the artwork process. As I observed, the artists worked at having their agency in the artwork process recognized by the participating spectators. At the same time, the artists create a certain proximity to the spectators-participants through performing art, which I call "performing proximity." By involving the participants in their art-in-process, they make use of their agency to redefine the artworld and enlarge it into other social worlds. I also discuss how artists' ability to enact redefined social worlds can be compared to agency in performative social science and in biographical research.

Table of Contents

1. "Learning to Fly" Interlude

Everett HUGHES developed a strategy for his students to learn to "fly on their own" in their field of research[1] (PUNCH, 1998). This refers to an artwork by Serbian artist Tomislav VUKIC, who found a ventilator without blades in the street. He turned it into an object of art and called his work "learning to fly," a title inspired by the song "Learning to Fly"[2] by Pink Floyd. Learning to fly can be read as both a reflection of the stagnant political situation in Serbia, which was as enigmatic to him as his own existence as an artist, and his artistic development; that is, his ability to be an artist without "crashing". Only the title "Learning to fly" is underscored and, as it were, abbreviated by the work itself, which presents a ventilator without blades or "wings."

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1   See also PARKER and SEDGWICK (1995) and HUGHES (1971).

2   "Learning to fly" by Pink Floyd was released 1987 on the album "A Momentary Lapse of Reason", EMI records.

Image 1: "Learning to fly," Tomislav VUKIC, 2007 © [1]

2. Performing Proximity

My research uses radio as an experimental space and employs participant observation and interaction to reconstruct, through interactions with artists, the production of symbolic forms in the framework of a concept of a deliberative public sphere. In interview settings with artists, I accept how they communicate their own reality and how they narrate auto-biographical material. It is meaningful how they invent their realities and how these take on their own meanings. Increasingly, artists themselves are anticipating sociologists in finding ways into social worlds and preparing social worlds for the sociologists. In my view, these procedures of doing art-in-process present new challenges to the methods employed in order to understand artistic practices. Based on preliminary considerations of the performative and participatory aspects of aesthetic experience, this article discusses the interrelationship between artistic production and performative social science. I present two examples "Lawrence" and "Micky," and discuss how aspects of biographical work can be connected with processual structures of performative artistic practices. Proximity in the working alliance with artists gives the chance to reflect performative aspects in these practices of doing art and shows that reflections of approximation in performances are as important as the articulation of the artist's autonomous position. I see these approaches in performative research with artists as comparable with techniques within performative social science. [2]

Within the framework of the generative contexts of artistic works, the artist undertakes the performative assertion and determination of a work in its fragility, because art works are performative themselves. Artists justify their work while they conceptualize it or if they install a work in a public space, they deliberate and explain their concept and this is part of the process of doing art. These justifications are more powerful today, as we have entered a process of permanent democratization and deliberation. Furthermore, these justifications

must be understood aesthetically as being as important as the role of the observer. The fragility of language in the constitution of art works ought to be acknowledged,[3] as ADORNO (1997) framed the ethical and humanizing attitude he demanded from modernism's discourse on art, so to should the artistic agent's role also be acknowledged. For example, what artists actually do through their arts practice plays a role in academic and critical discourses, because those artists are the agents in the process of creating artworks. [3]

What, then, do artists produce, and how is this related to performative social science? How is this question related to the manner in which sociological and aesthetic theory registers changes and transformations in order to redefine the interrelation between art and science? In the next section I will elaborate the role of performativity in both art and science. [4]

3. Performativity in Art and Science

Art and science have been seen as two different domains, apparently facing each other in an opposition that has become obsolete. Similarly, conventional dualisms such as private vs. public no longer apply to the dynamic acts of artists when the latter present installation work and actions in exhibition spaces that invert life-worlds. Artists react to changed aesthetic experiences and reflect environments and landscapes of knowledge in their work. In MERSCH's view, art proves a "way of thinking and research of its own, one that we must regard as an equal in its own right of the natural sciences and of exact mathematics" (MERSCH, 2007, p.97; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). Art is a matter of technique. In today's rapidly changing world, with its new technologies and new forms of communication, artists develop new domains of experience by creating, within their own system of reference, artistic forms of expression that have changed this system of reference, the "artworld[4]." And yet we understand these forms of expression because, as viewers, we are engaged in this form of participation in these artistic processes. [5]

When the philosopher AUSTIN described the distinction between "performative" and "constative speech acts" in "*How to do things with words*" (1962), he considered "whether he could find any grammatical criterion for distinguishing the performative utterances" (ANDERSSON, 1975, p.5). ANDERSSON concluded "that he could not find any single simple criterion of grammar or vocabulary by which he could distinguish the performatives from other utterances [...] or that marks out the 'performative use' of them" (ibid. p.5). HANTELMANN states that "the same holds true for artwork. To speak of a performative artwork is tauto-logical, because there can be no non-performative artwork" (2007a, p.415). [6]

The performative dimension of art does not address "the signifying character of the work of art [...] its factual existence here comes to the fore as significant, as the point of departure for a potential of artistic action and assertion"

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3   See BUTLER (1997).

4   See also DEWEY (1980) in "Art as Experience" and how BECKER (1982) reconstructed cooperative work with artists in "Artworlds."

(HANTELMANN, 2007a, p.415). The social aspect of ambitious art, HANTELMANN contends, is manifest in art with a performative orientation that has turned toward social critique. Consequently, artistic positions such as those assumed by COLEMAN, BUREN, SEHGAL, and KOON abdicate the critical distance from society in favor of "a consciousness of participation (in society)" (HANTELMANN, 2007b, p.9; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). These artists "recognize a power over artistic action not outside of, but within the museum frame of art" (ibid., 2007b, p.9; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). They do not attempt to strive toward a break with the conventions of art, recognizing,

> "in those conventions, which govern the social interaction with art, an active power of art directed at the social. [...] The work of art does not become something social in overcoming these conventions, thus the shared point of departure, but rather it always already is something social by virtue of these conventions" (HANTELMANN, 2007b, p.9; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). [7]

In contrast to the questions asked by HANTELMANN—"What kind of a situation does an artwork produce? How does it situate a viewer? What values, conventions, ideologies and meanings are inscribed in this situation?" (2007a, p.415) Meaning-production in art is not exclusively located in the artwork. In order to better understand the performative aspects of art, we must look at artists' practices. It is in the doing that the performative is revealed. The context of artworks is becoming increasingly complex and open to different interpretations in an open horizon of understanding. Art shows the objectivity of its elements in an intermedial way, because it is thematizing in itself the social, cultural and spatial context of its emergence.

> "Instead of producing an identity, [works of art] are intelligible by power of their function. Not what something is, that is what it constitutes, appears to be relevant, but rather how it happens in a performative way, and what effects it induces. Correspondingly, the art concepts assign to the arts a site that crosses all dimensions of figuration and form. Specifically, this lends a new contour to the concept of art. What this means is that it is not what we get to see or hear that is most relevant—the specificity of materials, the subtle changes of forms, the distinctions between sounds —but rather, the performance of a transitionality, a performance that requires active participation and the acceptance [of] [by the spectators] immediate responsibility. For it is not an underlying thing, nor again a structure, but rather a process" (MERSCH, 2006, p.222; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). [8]

The current debate in philosophical aesthetics over performativity no longer diagnoses the relevance of orders of knowledge of social systems in the same way that BERGER and LUCKMANN (1966) did in the "social construction of reality." Rather, this debate examines orders of justification (BOLTANSKI & THÉVENOT, 2006), which suggest a shift of the systems of knowledge. According to SCHÜTZE, "the landscape of knowledge" has become "increasingly confusing: [...] ever more fluid, more multi-aspectual, more concurrent and contradictory, more theoretical and reflexive" (2002, p.59; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). Since the 1970s, qualitative ethnographic studies have been

conducted in research settings in the natural sciences (for instance by GARFINKEL, LATOUR, LYNCH, and KNORR-CETINA), in order to detect possible interdependencies and influences between highly technologically developed research procedures and the communication between researchers (MONDADA & SCHÜTZE, 2004). In order to examine the production of science in its own communicative contexts, such studies have addressed local settings of work and interaction as well as the contingent practices of action, interaction and communication. Such studies of the social world, as developed by symbolic interactionists such as STRAUSS, have given rise to Actor Network Theory (ANT), ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and the sociolinguistic analysis of communicative interaction. Studies of the social worlds of scientists have envisaged those activities "during whose performance the objects of knowledge change," as concerning the "production, configuration, arrangement of technical instruments in research" or resulting from the inclusion of "concrete processes of the search for objects in research practice" (MONDADA & SCHÜTZE, 2004, p.141; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). The increasing reflexivity (LYNCH, 2000) of the practice of qualitative research is heightened by a reflection on the involvement of the researcher in the process of research. [9]

Drawing on Actor Network Theory, sociologists such as LATOUR (1999a) show how, through chains of translation within the laboratory situation, initial propositions are transformed step by step so as to generate "facts." As the object of a scientific discourse passes through these chains of translation, it must prove its permanence and resistance as a "network fact" while investigating natural science. LATOUR calls such a discursive object a movable immutable (mobile immutable) if this object has become irreversible, having stabilized itself as an object of knowledge (MONDADA, 2004). Thus, discursive objects, after MONDADA, engender "a public version of the world by indicating its adequacy to the intersubjective and social relations among the participants as well as to the social context in which this public version of the world is being framed" (2004, p.184; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). [10]

LATOUR, a sociologist, works as a curator as well. Together with the curator, OBRIST, (mounting the exhibition "Laboratorium" or the distinction between the inside and the outside of a laboratory), LATOUR sees this work as "not so easy to trace anymore," because "we are all working more or less in a laboratory. If we don't do experiments ourselves, others do experiments on us" (LATOUR, 1999b, p.185). Through its "Theatre of Proof"—a part of the exhibition, the audience participated in the practice of science. The designated result was that "the audience will have a better grasp of what to expect from scientific experiments" (LATOUR 1999b, p.185). My view on art and science is different, because I create a performative experimental situation in radio studios that is not comparable with experiments in natural science in order to investigate how artists involve participants in their art-in-process. [11]

The concept of performativity in philosophical aesthetics is too firmly bound up with a concept of works by performative artists that masks the fact that artists are both those who realize their works and those who place this realization in a

historical context of becoming. Discourses about art and artistic procedures are not characterized by communicative activities that discursively engender discursive objects or aim to produce agreement on a public version of the world. In order to understand what art is, aesthetic theories have been developed that resemble each other in that they examine art as their object. In addition, experimental art foregrounds the object-hood of its elements and thus works across media, addressing spatial, social and cultural contexts. The exhibition space becomes part of the art, just as the viewer's recognition is constitutive of the work. Modernist theories of art that are based on the presumption of the autonomy of art no longer comprehend the hybrid formations within its resultant works. These hybrid formations in contemporary artistic production indicate a paradigm shift, seen by REBENTISCH, not as a radical renunciation of modern categories and specifically of the category of aesthetic autonomy, but rather "as a determinate negation of a specific notion of aesthetic autonomy, a notion, to be precise, that is understood in objectivistic terms."[5] [12]

This is, according to REBENTISCH (in HERRSCHAFT, 2004, p.2; translated by Gerrit JACKSON), an understanding of art

> "in which the object is conceived as independent of the viewer and the context, so that a different understanding of aesthetic autonomy can result from it. To that extent, art, as it were, challenges philosophy to revise this central category of its discourse, namely, the category of autonomy." [13]

The aesthetic experience of art cannot occur outside of the viewer's experiential structure. It is a specific process that is not localized within the subject alone but rather in the tense relationship between subject and object. In REBENTISCH's view, installation art develops socially relevant lines of questioning and rejects ideological imputations that the latter are an instrument of debates over identity politics or social theory, contributing to a discourse analysis—imputations that proceed to negate art as art.

> "As art works, they differ from all of this by being constitutively open in their meaning. Neither for the works nor for their individual elements can we identify one single definitive context that could guarantee a conclusive understanding of them" (REBENTISCH, 2003, p.275; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). [14]

The tense relationship between a representation and that which is represented is indissoluble, and enters into a specific process of understanding that, far from disposing over it, is an experimental process. It seems as though a conversation has begun in the meantime between artists and their interpreters because artistic works have become interactive and performative. Yet, is this conversation truly taking place? Are discourses about art being developed in collaboration with the artists? Or is aesthetics, in the end, still nothing but the regime serving the identification of art, as RANCIÈRE (2006) calls it, so that art can be designated

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5   Juliane REBENTISCH, interviewed by the author (HERRSCHAFT, 2004, p.2). This interview was conducted during an experimental public space "Exit and Voice" held at TAT (Theater am Turm, Frankfurt) in 2004. It is documented at http://www.fehe.org/.

as art when it has spoken out as socially relevant and questions if art is societal commitment or not? Aesthetic objects can in no way be defined outside of a discourse; in this definition, they engender their substantial content by virtue of which they are integrated into the subjects' processes of understanding. "Even more: aesthetic experience seems capable of attaining a certain intensity, and hence also quality, only when the contents that are put in aesthetic play are of import to the experiencing subject" (REBENTISCH, 2003, p.279; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). Due to the import of the aesthetic experience, one can say that art works are constitutively *processual*. This *processuality* is constitutively related to the aesthetic experience. If artistic action is distinguished by participation, since it is only through the inclusion of the viewers that the artistic work is constituted, then artistic modes of action and the entanglement of artistic production in the social world are of decisive importance to an understanding of artistic productivity. Because of their own cognitive interests, performative artists doing experimental art, have become migrants between these two worlds.

> "Art ought not to wish to apologize for its being constitutively associated with a practice that is capable neither of direct translation into action nor of immediate transformation into cognition. Art opens up a specific experience; an experience, to be precise, of distance, of an unsettling of the interpretive approach to the aesthetic object. In a certain respect, this distance indeed manifests a distance of the aesthetic from practical or theoretical purposes" (REBENTISCH, 2003, p.279; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). [15]

4. Performativity in Interviews with Performative Artists

Narrative interviews with artists in radio studios do not fit the classical template of qualitative sociological research. Given the intermedia working alliance on which these interviews are based, one may see parallels with the procedures of performative social science studies. The latter are understood as performance (JONES, 2006) enacted in the practice of doing and performing reflexive interviews (DENZIN, 2003, p.200). DENZIN understands the performative to be

> "the present moment [...] defined by a performative sensibility, by a willingness to experiment with different ways of presenting an interview text. The performative sensibility turns interviews into performance texts, into poetic monologues. It turns interviewees into performers, into persons whose words and narratives are then performed by others" (DENZIN, 2001, p.25). [16]

According to JONES, performative social science is "a science that includes more emphasis on collaborations with our research participant co-authors, co-producers or co-performers themselves" (JONES, 2006, p.7). [17]

Recognition of proximity in forms of life and a critique of traditional forms of life are starting points for cooperative work with performative artists because those artists establish an egalitarian relationship with anyone who seeks to investigate them. Their claim to autonomy means that they cannot be made into an object of research. Autonomy is, in my understanding, getting stronger because of the way

artworks are changing and the way artists invent social interaction as part of the art world. In the following, I show parallels of how a researcher can understand artistic worlds and how this can be related to performative social science. [18]

4.1 Lawrence: Performing biographies

The interview with Lawrence[6], a 24-year old artist from England, was conducted as a live broadcast at a radio station[7]. A day earlier, he had executed a live performance at the same studio. The interview refers to this performance and to the family stories that were integrated into the artist's performance, running simultaneously with a slide show, and presented as the objects of a narrative. During the radio performance, the narrative itself became the object of the artist's presentation as he started to accelerate the narrative again and again and, at the end of the piece, summarized the narrative, which had been developed over the course of an hour, in one minute, as though in time-lapse. During the interview, descriptions and argumentation predominated. Based on the description, an image emerges of what artists like Lawrence do and how artists proceed in their work. [19]

The process of reflection on the artist's own work as an analysis of the work, is interwoven with the material, and a reality in its own right is constituted. The artistic position, which also contains autobiographical material, playfully and inventively alters it. This permits the reconstruction of the knowledge-producing procedure that engenders an artistic position. MANNHEIM (2005/1936) calls intellectual processes that are inventive-altering inventive thinking. With respect to the performative character of the interview with Lawrence, this can be understood as an explanation of artistic cognitive processes.[8] For Lawrence this process consists in searching and finding. He explains this as another form of translation:

> "but I do—I do do watercolour paintings as a part of one project which is the 'Finding in ... In Search of ... project', and one of the main themes in this whole work was about translation and different methods of translation and how can that be incorporated in daily activity, thus watercolour painting was also another translation" (Lawrence, 2006 II.24-27). [20]

By describing how he creates an artwork, his biography is performed and integrated into his process of presentation. In earlier artistic forms, this occurred only in the form of autobiography (for instance, in GOETHE's "Dichtung und Wahrheit" ["Poetry and Truth"] (1981/1830), but did not become a central medium of presentation. Here, it is addressed as a problem within the narrative. The

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6   Anonymized. Radioshow from 2006.

7   For the history of radio in Germany see also HAGEN (2005).

8   "In any case, this stage proves that the capacity for abstraction springs from a higher level of activity than that of chance discovery—i.e., from the stage of inventive thinking" (MANNHEIM, 2005, pp.206-207). See also BARBOZA (2005), where she describes the experimental forms of science in MANNHEIM's understanding of sociology. I would suggest here MANNHEIM's sociology as an early approach to PSS.

distinction between the author and the bearer of the narrative becomes problematic. Lawrence communicates the identity of an artist and a narrator who presents himself to the public, and simultaneously that of someone who has authentically experienced something, who is the bearer of the story. The frame of argumentation is rendered conscious to the point of an explicit experience and the development of an authentic artistic identity. Ordinary daily activities, which had previously been masked are employed, and connected to his frame of trans-dispositions, a procedure that can be understood as an archeology of the framework, as the performance uses interlocking and alienated perspectives in order to generate a more authentic picture of Lawrence's work. MERSCH calls these forms of action archeologies of the performative: [21]

"The creative act itself, as it suddenly emerges from processes of intermedia performance" (MERSCH, 2006, p.222) is an assertion of artistic actions. Concepts begin to supplant the mere image, and this must be understood as an act of liberation. "Such assertions, as events, are irreversible: once they have been put forth into the world, a fissure appears in them that rests on a force that cannot be undone, one that simultaneously evokes the possibility of a 'different beginning' " (ibid., 2006, p.222; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). [22]

The spectator/participant is enabled in order to engage in processes of understanding during the performance. Artists like Lawrence shift the predetermined frame like white cubes in galleries or museums spaces and develop their own mechanisms in order to find and *mediatize* their own discursive arenas. To this end, artists choose their own historical perspectives on their procedures in order to identify traditional notions of art and transpose their works into new paradigms. They have a need of their own historiography in order to define for themselves their position within art history, and to interrogate it with respect to formal circumstances.[9] [23]

Lawrence contemplates fragility in saying,

> "If I said, for example, if I sit in this institutional space and I perform, not to say that is a form of an emotional or intimate exchange but, uhm, I think it really does—it shifts not only the meaning of the work but also only one thing that is definitely in question is the fragility of it. For example, the project, it is very delicate and fragile now if I funnel it through a medium such as radio it completely shifts what you could say the essence of it and at the same time things like repetition or these performative approaches can easily be executed and used very well through something like radio. But things such as a personal sentiment or a very kind of fragile narrative or complexity can only be spent upon and developed basically through an engagement with someone who is also reciprocating that" (2006, II.362-372). [24]

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9   "But there are other phenomena as well that—such as Georges Mathieu's informel—must be understood less as themselves than as documentation or traces of a creative act, traces in which a handwriting is manifest and that address their production as the act of an individual, lyric subjectivity" (IMDAHL, 1996, p.135; translated by Gerrit JACKSON).

A difference[10] is moreover being produced that cannot be understood simply as activity. In this difference, the presence of the work is manifest. Lawrence sustains his narratives within the interrelation, or framing (difference), of facts and stories. [25]

In the following section of the interview, Lawrence begins to ponder the conditions of the constitution of his own work—to survey them.

> "And if you bump into me in a train station or in a bus or strolling through a gallery and I perform a story ... there is always a framework, the framework is the bus or the framework is the gallery, but the point is the framework does not make a specific kind of relationship to my biography, it doesn't say 'on the bus between these hours'. Lawrence will perform a story to you" (2006, II.379-383). [26]

An institutional framework such as a radio broadcasting studio can destroy the situation of narration, one that is for him very fragile and intimate, because the narrator is identified with his biographical data. The performative act of the work can be destroyed because the reciprocity and the direction of the narration toward a listener is absent, even as listeners are present. The rhetorical assertion of narrative thus vitiates the narrator's disposition. [27]

In the radio situation, Lawrence experiences the disappearance of his own presence as an artist. His explanation for this disappearance resembles the situation he experienced during his studies when he sought to overcome the flatness of his photographs by telling stories while standing next to the slide projector. The reflection on his presence, as he reclaims the latter, is part of his artistic becoming:

> "I like that, but in the radio, that notion of fact and fiction of how do I come to this? It is gone, because it is obvious I am coming into your life, because you are driving a car listening to the radio, you are switching on and you hear it and who did that that it was this guy, bang—it is over, it kills it in some ways" (2006, II.405-408). [28]

Justifying, defending, and pondering in which context and under which conditions a work can be staged or sold is part of the economic order of the art world, an order toward which Lawrence, as an art student, cannot but take a position. A work in a medium such as the radio broadcast is accessible to many listeners. At the time of the radio broadcast, the market potential of the performance was unclear; Lawrence refused to make the broadcast available for download from the Internet. Not until half a year later was a limited edition record of the performance produced as part of an exhibition. Lawrence apprehension was that his performance could become liable to exploitation by the culture industry[11]. On the

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10 This relates to DERRIDA's considerations on the philosophy of language in the essay "Die différance" (1988). See also LUTZ and DAVIS (2005) and RIEMANN (2003). See also JONES: "In addition, revisiting the collaboration between the narrator and researcher within our biographic investigations also deserves to be fore grounded in a 'performative' way, to include involving research participants in the production and dissemination of their own stories" (2006, p.7).

11 See also THURN (1973, 1979).

other hand, Lawrence seeks to legitimize his own work with justifications and to protect it against the public interpretive forms of art criticism. [29]

4.2 Micky: Performing a sphere of approximation

Micky[12] is an 34 year old artist from South Africa. We met the first time at a radio show organized by an art student who curated an art students' exhibition. When the show started, the students were drinking beer.

Image 2: Art students in a radiostudio, 2007 [30]

IDRIZI, a photojournalist from Prishtina, was invited to the radio studio as well to make some images of the participants. The curated exhibition was about stars. They made a postcard and a catalog with drawings. Each participant created her/his own star. In the radio studio, they felt and behaved like stars. Some had prepared sound works and some played music as well. The six participants in the show presented their works one after the other accompanied by comments, laughing and shouting as they progressively became drunker. A female artist had a sound work on DUCHAMP: she played a recorded wee-wee and the audience listened to it as a gender critique on the male form of the work "Fontaine" from DUCHAMP.

When Micky presented his work, a performance in a shopping center in Frankfurt, he was interrupted by another art student who was speaking louder and louder in translating his English phrases into German as he tried to explain his artwork.

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12 Anonymized. Interview from January 2008.

Image 3: Interruptions in the radiostudio, 2007 [31]

It was very difficult for me to follow his performance and, towards the end, the situation in the radio studio escalated more and more. At the end of the show the students all started to scream without any interest and respect for others. At the same time they had fun in creating an uncontrolled situation.

Image 4: "Make it louder," a poster in the radiostudio, 2007 [32]

Because of the interruption during the radio show, I met Micky again in a cafe to talk with him about his performances. His work is related to the political situation in Post-Apartheid South Africa and being a social activist influences his

performances.[13] He studied Sociology in the 1990s in South Africa, when he started walking. "I used to go on walks in the early 1990s I used to go for like four days, wake up in the middle of the night and then go for a walk, you know, out into the bush, out of the town and that was a few times when I used to write poetry about my experience, the homeless people I would meet, I gave like one man on the street everything I had, you know, a jacket, everything" (Micky, 2008, II.139-141). After he came to Germany, Micky tried to sort out his position in the world by defining "who" he was. It was when he went to a drawing course that he realized his need for this "definition." For example, it was through his art practice that he could connect his first performances as an artistic practice:

> "... and today, knowing more, I realized that this could be interpreted as performance of course, I didn't see the connection I think that I mean I don't want to put too much focus on the walks because they weren't very many of them and this is just an example for my first kind of what I would now think about my artistic entrance perhaps" (Micky, 2008, II.212-217). [33]

A performance for Micky allows him to test his own boundaries. Thus, he is asking the public for 10 seconds of their time, to perform. "How much do I need and of course how much space do I need but the focal one it was me" (Micky, 2008, II.294-295). [34]

Importantly, Micky realized that it was through artistic expression as performance that he could transform himself. At the same time, Micky also realized what art is for him: "... a personal transformation which automatically becomes a social transformation" (ibid. II.187). He is now doing performances as his main genre of work; this is because it is possible in a performance to create mirrors for the participants. Very important for the notion of proximity is that someone has to come to him, he is waiting; this is automatically reflected in that observers of his performance are part of the performance and he is reflecting whether they need it or not: "if I place myself in the public a social need is there, it will be addressed by the person who comes to me, otherwise they wouldn't come to me" (Micky, 2008, II.226-227). Micky realized in doing performances that he is positioned in and possibly positioned against the art world. For example, he felt increasingly bored seeing the same kinds of exhibitions. For him, art has many functions and he rejects being another artist who is over intellectualizing art works while ignoring the transformational power of performative art. "For me to create something I believe in transformational power of everyday things like taking the *U-Bahn* or like greeting your neighbor" (Micky, 2008, II.268-270). The artwork is for Micky the moment one person has with him: "May be it is 20 seconds or it is ... and then it is gone. And it is always there and then gone it is like a heartbeat it comes and it goes, it is a kind of a social rhythm it is a kind of a rhythm" (Micky, 2008, II.281-283). [35]

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13 See also the explanation in DENZIN (2003) of the call to performance in addressing matters of racial injustice. The demand for a critical pedagogy lies for him in "a performative, pedagogical politics of hope [that] imagines a radically free democratic society, a society where the ideals of feminist, queer, environmental, green, civil rights, and labor movements are realized" (2003, pp.5-6).

Thanks to participatory approaches, the artistic sphere is no longer dependent on traditional models of representation. "They are not so much about the vicarious illustration of a problem, an [aesthetic] experience, or an idea of a community, but rather about directly realizing a multidisciplinary cooperation" (HÖLLER, 2007, p.410). Consequently artistic processes of proximity and participation have moved increasingly into the foreground in the production of works. "Participation includes the entire spectrum of behaviours a recipient can exhibit towards an object, project or exhibition ambience" (ibid., p.410). The participatory claims in the works of artists have become essential to an understanding of a participatory public. "Participation in its current form aims to create new collectives and to create ephemeral communities of action and interest, without an ongoing identificatory basis" (ibid., p.410). What is sublated in the question of artistic participation is the distance between artistic modes of action and the recipients. The question of participation is a consequence of a changed understanding of the political, with renewed and urgent importance. Participation, representation, and constitution are interlocked; according to GERHARDT (2007), they form a triangle within which the political moves. This political notion is engaged in a process of boundary dissolution, thereby moving toward its own margins. This form of boundary dissolution is comparable to the delineation and critique of the *Verfransung* [marginal blurring or wandering] of the arts given by ADORNO[14] in his essay "*Die Kunst und die Künste*":

> "The *Verfransung* of the arts is a false demise of art. Its inevitable illusory character becomes scandalous in the face of the overwhelming power of an economic and political reality that transforms the aesthetic appearance, even as an idea, into a mockery because it no longer permits any perspective toward the realization of the aesthetic content. This is less and less compatible with the principle of rational command of the materials with which that content had allied itself throughout the history of art" (ADORNO, 2006, p.208; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). [36]

5. Conclusion

Reflexivity and heightened complexity are recognizable features of the institutions of art, art schools and museums, and of exhibition practices. The substantive content of artistic work is measured by knowledge of institutional practices and by how artists reflect and transform these practices in their works. One emancipatory move that artists are currently engaged in consists of addressing their knowledge of the means necessary in order to have their own history as artists and artistic agency recognized in this process. Moreover, given the incalculability of the art system, strategies of action such as the creation of networks of informal relations are being developed in order to compensate for uncertainties. The engagement of the artist's own cognitive interests becomes a social marker of his or her professionalism and of the performativity of the works created. ALHEIT understands aesthetic reflexivity as a potential present when autobiographical texts show references to aesthetic experience and to aesthetic procedures. "Aesthetic reflexivity" has become, for ALHEIT and BRANDT, "an

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14 See also ADORNO (1997) and de DUVE (2006).

exemplar of distance and approximation, of the autonomization of aesthetic experience and of a renewed ties to other orders of experience" (2006, p.302; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). The substantial novelty of this form of autobiographical self-presentation resides in the fact that "the question regarding the type of autobiography becomes a matter of little importance" (ibid., p.25; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). The self-presentation of one's life stands at the center of literary autobiographies no longer subsumable under existing patterns of order, offering "instead the potential to develop substantially new forms" (ibid. p.25; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). According to ALHEIT and BRANDT, the configuration of the orders of knowledge has changed, and relationships with the world and with oneself are capable of an expanded perception on the basis of the potential space of biographical reflexivity. Questions of one's own social responsibility and connectedness thus come to the foreground. "Aesthetic reflec-tions are integrated within other orders of reflection, and only this gives rise to the entirety of the pattern that is here called aesthetic reflexivity" (ibid., p.298; translated by Gerrit JACKSON). [37]

The fact is that, after the modern individual has been rendered capable of being defined, identity is a characteristic of social change. Lawrence takes this up in his work by addressing biographical points of reference and pointing out the social constructedness of these points of reference through the interruptions and accelerations he employs during his narration. This reality is transitive because the mode of narrative is performatively used to establish a communicative situation involving the listener-viewer that is open to subsequent communication. This process does not resolve into an act of interpretation, but into participation in his performance. Micky justifies his role as a performer in creating a space for the autonomy of his artistic position. For both Lawrence and Micky, the approximation to the performance and how the audience is coming to it could be destroyed if there is too much proximity or too much intellectualization about what they are doing as well as through over-interpretation of their works. A rupture would then destroy the relation to simple everyday interactions and understanding of art. In this direction, definitions of art could learn to fly. [38]

What does the artistic interaction with one's own biography and understanding of performative art show? The power of art to resist an analytic approach; a power that consists in breaking open the frameworks of research, and thus securing the autonomy of a work that is not at anyone's disposal. With respect to the intersection between biographical research, interpretive social science, and philosophical aesthetics, "learning to fly" means adopting a perspective such as that developed in performative social science so that conversations with artists can begin. I see here one precondition for a more substantial working alliance with artists that, rather than limiting itself to cultural-industrial critique, seeks to understand social change explained by artists. [39]

Acknowledgments

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Videos

Audio_1: http://www.youtube.com/v/KW5UAESviaA&hl=en (300 x 200)

Author

Felicia HERRSCHAFT studied Philosophy, Cultural Anthropology, Psychoanalysis and Sociology at J.W. Goethe-University, Frankfurt/M. Her main fields of interest are biographical analysis, performative social science, critical theory, theory of the public, feminist philosophy and sociology of art and music. In 2005 she established a webproject with artists. Her dissertation is on experimental public spheres and conceptual art, based on her radio programs with artists on her public radio show in Frankfurt (*redaktion universal* at *Radio X*).

Contact:

Felicia Herrschaft

Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität
Fachbereich 03 Gesellschaftswissenschaften
Institut für Gesellschafts- und Politikanalyse
Robert-Mayer-Straße 5
60054 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Tel.: +49 17662006867
Fax: +49 69 798 22013

E-mail: F.Herrschaft@soz.uni-frankfurt.de
URL: http://www.fehe.org/

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