

## Three questions

These answers were in response to questions sent to me from a workshop participant and spectator at one of my performances at the Arena Festival in Erlangen Germany I don't remember the questions, but the answers seem to make sense by themselves:

**Third Question** (first- it will help with the others):

When talking about purpose, (or anything for that matter), it is important to state that: one can only talk from one own's point of view. So: if a performer (and I was talking as a 'voice' of the performer [how or if I can do that is another question]) has no purpose (so I say) this does not mean that the spectator can have no purpose in being at the performance, seeing it, responding to it etc etc as you describe. Indeed I would say that the spectator does judge constantly, and this has to be dealt with by the performer.

'If it is designed, it shows an intention.' This is an interesting sentence, and one that opens up a whole question. I do not want any spectator to be able to see the intention in whatever a performer in Optik does. On the other hand, I do want the spectator to feel that there is a design here. After all, it is not anarchy. What I am after is randomness, or unpredictability, which means there has to be an element of constraint in the process, but only an element. There also has to be an element of complete independence (which is what the performer has on an individual level). And so design is there, but it is a self-designing process - a design that emerges as it goes along. This is still a mysterious process - to me. It means that the performance is a self-organising system - not a system organised/designed in advance and reproduced.

Now in all of this, there is the human question - which is where 'will' comes in. I call this 'want'. What after all does a human being 'want'. This is why in the rehearsal process each performer is constantly asked to operate on an 'do it if you want to' basis. Because the actional options are so restricted this question can be focussed on very acutely. For

example, it can be as basis as move or not move - move if you want to. What does that mean? When a performer does move (because they want to) are they moving with intention? I am wary of the zen reference. We are dealing with ordinary human beings here. I only talk about specific things - never in general. So although I talked about mu in the Conference - this was my personal thought. I have never used this concept in rehearsal. In rehearsal everything is related to concrete things - the weight of the foot, the proximity of another performer, the turn of the body, the movement of the head etc. And yet - from the spectator's point of view, I think that sometimes there is a nothingness, an emptiness. This is not for the performer to fill. The spectator must fill it for themselves, or contemplate it.

### **First question**

Again, another perceptive question. Just to take that particular period - the sixties - there is a considerable amount of work that Optik relates to: Judson Dance, Happenings, Situationists etc. Between now and then has been a period of post modern development. Now a set of conditions exist which reaches beyond post modernism but in a period radically altered from the sixties. As Auge states (Non-Places- The Anthropology of Supermodernity), our current state is characterised above all by excess (of information, referentiality etc). This has to affect such a notion as the happening in a drastic way. The happening was generated in a period of cultural solidity/stasis. It aimed to fragment this. It succeeded (in some ways). We now have the worst of both worlds: the stasis of fragmentation within the condition of excess. Where does this leave performance? This was what I was trying to refer to in my lecture. The performer no longer has the luxury of the 'anti-stance'. Existential angst is the norm. Where to pitch your work? What to do? Why do anything? (And only add to the excess of image, information, statement etc).

It is to this dilemma that Optik attempts to address its work. Hence no attempt to 'add' anything (in terms of image, information etc). No 'collage' technique in which fragmented discourse is presented (to be 'made whole' by the spectator). The performer is whole to begin with. There is no fragmentation. And yet there is no whole picture either (except in the perception of the spectator).

As in the happenings / situationists there is a strong sense of the 'now' of the performance. I referred to this in my lecture as the 'future' present, as distinct from the 'past' present of most performing. As the future is unpredictable, so in performance anything can happen. And following chaos theory, simple actions and events can eventually have quite complex consequences - and each performance is completely different in this respect.

**Second Question:**

I think I have answered this in my first email. But just to repeat: the question of polarity (in individual cells) is something that I only read about (Richard Dawkins) a few months ago. My own work is not based on Dawkins' work. What I find interesting is the connection between my own insistence on the primacy of polarity in the performer, and the existence of polarity in individual cells. I don't know even why I find this interesting - but to me it seems to connect into a larger picture. And in this sense, my performance work is an investigation of human action when left to its own devices ('nature'?). I am not using science to justify my own work. In fact I would call my own work 'science'. The Soviet work you quote had a particular reason to invoke science - and there is always the danger of art latching on to the favoured discipline of the age -but in my case I did not mean to imply that my work is based on science. I did not discuss this in my Erlangen lecture, but I believe that performance is an epistemology in its own right - a way of knowing.

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