AFFECTIVE SPACE [looking back]

Serge Tampalini

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University, 2006.
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my supervisor Dr David Moody as well as the encouragement of Professor Vijay Mishra.
### CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION [Part 1]</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ART: The Alternative Concretisations of the Lacunae of Indeterminacy</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION [Part 2]</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGHT: Seeing, Vision, Perception and Identity</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMAGE, SIGN, SYMBOL and METAPHOR</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LANGUAGE, TEXTS and PERFORMANCES</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERFORMING THEATRE</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMINALITY, AMBIGUITY and PARADOX [The usual suspects]</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLOUR</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFECTIVE SPACE</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLEASURE AND THE SPECTATOR</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCE [RE]SEARCH</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B: DVD PRODUCTION NOTES</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: DVD DOCUMENTARIES.

- **Performance [Re]Search:**
  *Living is a Horizontal Fall.*
  *Disappearances.*
  *Silent Moves.*
  *Crossing Body Shadow.*

- **Ophelia Conspiracy.**
- **1789…and all that.**
- **India Song [DVD].**
- **India Song [Soundscape].**
- **fuckCrash.**
- **Wittgenstein…the musical.**
- **Bodas de Sangre.**
- **Richard III…a Bollywood musical.**
- **Scenes from an Execution.**
- **The Love of the Nightingale.**
- **Theatre Production: Disc 1 and 2.**
This thesis is submitted under Research Degree Regulation 28 [b] which states that a thesis:

“May consist predominately of published work, provided that the thesis also includes material that provides coherence to the thesis as an integrated work”.

Initially my intention was to frame my thesis with a preface of fifteen hundred words and an introduction of six thousand words that would locate my previously produced theatre work within a discursive practice enabling it to be re-read through both a theoretical and artistic lens. To ensure that the thesis would be a coherent and integrated piece of work, the body of the thesis was to consist of approximately five chapters, each envisaged as an assemblage of a number of my theatre productions and supported by approximately 2000 words. The relevant productions would be drawn from my theatre practice over the last 25 years and all included on a supporting DVD.

The complexity and scope of the project has not only meant that the thesis has grown in word length but that the format has also changed. What has not altered is the attempt to re-read the work within a coherent praxiological frame.
ABSTRACT

“You can’t be a rationalist in an irrational world. It isn’t rational”

Joe Orton 1

It may be argued that a historically accepted model of an academic career begins with having completed a PhD and in so doing identifying a body of theory that will inform and constitute one’s practical academic work. While it may be an accepted model it does not necessarily take precedence as the only model. The relationship between theory and practice is symbiotic and as such it is possible, and indeed at times desirable, that practice inform theory. It is not advisable to be solely operating from a position of theory when making creative work; the risk is far too great. The gravitational force of theory can all too easily disturb the “fragile innocence” of creativity. Pulled and constrained by the logic of theory the work risks becoming too didactic and its creativity sacrificed for the sake of rationalism…a symptom almost diagnostic of our culture.

I appreciate that the term “creative” is open to a plethora of readings, each with their own cogent claim to usage. When I employ the term I am referring to a particular type of decision-making process involved in the solution of problems. I will argue that a creative decision differs from other types of decisions [such as, practical or scientific] in the way the resultant solution of the problem remains open to a greater number of potential readings. I will also argue that it is precisely in those heuristic moments of potential impasse, often associated with a problem’s resolution, where creativity hangs out.

In any creative venture, I have always been guided by the importance and significance of doing…in the doing is the theory. This is not meant to dismiss theory but simply to see it in much the same way as when we see objects in our peripheral vision. Just as objects in our peripheral vision do not take their place in our visual field, theory [for me] participates in creative processes by subconsciously serving as an early guiding system that helps monitor the work. In this age of

2 This concept is discussed as part of the Introduction.
3 The term visual field may be defined as the view seen by our two eyes without any movement of the head.
information we are no longer innocent of theory - it is ineluctable. What is crucial is that we have a command of theory in order that we may go through it and regain our creative innocence. If we do not, we only achieve an artificial innocence born of enthusiasm, exuberance and imprecision.

Creative innocence is re-found in doing. This assertion conceives of theory as participating as part of a creative subconscious and goes someway towards explaining the sudden epiphany of understanding that is frequently associated with prolonged and intense work, or the immense pleasure at retrospectively recognising the theory that seemed to have informed one’s work without being conscious of it - as if the theoretical component had always been there. This phenomenon is of fundamental concern to my thesis, especially when considering the theatre productions that constitute my creative oeuvre. Upon close inspection, my works ultimately reveal that the defining distance between a visceral creative decision [one whose manifestation is immediately felt as apposite] and one that is conceptualised as the illustration of a theory, is not that great… I just happen to begin working outside of the brackets of theoretical narration.

Throughout my thesis I will refer to all visuals as images but I will argue that there are specific types of images, namely signs, symbols and metaphors.

“In language the term ‘image’ can imply more than a verbal description of a purely visual experience; it can also mean the metaphorical, ornamental, rhetorical figurative use of language as opposed to its literal use.”

For the surrealists “image” meant more than the representation of an external thing in the material world, it also meant the revelation of an internal mental state, a psychological verity occluded from consciousness.

---


5 In philosophy representationism refers to “the theory that our knowledge of material objects is gained through our direct perception of the private impressions or sense data which they cause us to experience and which, in some way or other, they resemble.” [Bullock, Alan and Trombley, Stephen Eds. *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, Harper Collins, London, 2000. p. 749.]
“Images [of this kind] were incandescent flashes linking two elements belonging to categories that are so far removed from each other that reason would fail to connect them and that require a momentary suspension of the critical attitude in order for them to be brought together.”

Having already built a body of practical work [spanning thirty years] the challenge was to see if it was possible to identify a coherent theory that consistently functioned as the catalyst of the work - albeit disparate in its nature. The analytical process proved to be the reverse of that which may be observed in the historically accepted model of academic discourse…where the process is cumulative. In this instance the process was deductive -a forensic assignment akin to tracing the diverse creative elements to their creative source or motivation. The venture proved illuminating in much the same way as when one is asked to crystallise a complex theoretical argument; you have to reinvent the argument in a way that helps to simplify its complexity without attenuating its integrity -a complexity that is well known to you but that eludes the uninitiated reader.

Whenever I try and think about my theatre practice I am vexed -particularly when I filter my own experiences and try and extract the meanings that seem genuinely inherent in them. At first glance it is satisfying because of a sense of coherence or pattern in a whole host of discrete events. However a closer inspection quickly reveals the fractal complexity of the pattern and demands a reappraisal of how we see and decipher it. Any attempt to understand its disparate nature by investigating one part in isolation from the whole proves initially unsatisfying and finally futile, for each part seems to be informed by and refer to other parts, as if participating in a greater organising principle; a principle that resists traditional cartography; one that is best seen as one sees the earth from outer space. When the earth is seen from outer space one becomes aware of the greater organising principle [the universe] within which it functions. Similarly it is only when the topology of my work is seen from a distance that its coherence is apparent…the further away one is, the more clearly one recognises its constituent parts.

---


7 My conception of space is not one where the spectator is positioned outside and above the scene, “it is, rather, a space reckoned starting from me as the zero point or degree zero of spatiality. I do not see it according to its exterior envelope: I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is all around me, not in front of me.” [Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. Eye and Mind, in The Primacy of Perception, Northwestern University Press, 1964. p. 178.]
“Despite our desire to lose ourselves in the living depths of a work, we are constrained to distance ourselves from it in order to speak of it. Why, then not deliberately establish a distance that will reveal to us, in a panoramic perspective, the surroundings with which the work is organically linked?”

When I am in the middle of a theatre production, I have only the slightest idea of how it will end; I trust in the doing, and at the end I am always surprised by what I have created. Ambiguity and paradox and consequently indeterminacy ultimately emerge as the common features of my work; they appear as sign posts that mark a way of finally mapping it. Each individual piece of work remains coherently intact despite its seemingly obscure coalescence with others, but it is when the works intersect at these points of commonality that one may observe the greater organising matrix.

“The phenomenological world is not a pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people’s intersect and engage each other like gears.”

“If the most unrelated things share a place, time, or odd similarity, there develop wonderful unities and peculiar relationships –and one thing reminds us of everything.”

Novalis

10 Novalis. From: Bernstein, J. M. Ed. Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics, New School University, New York, 2002. Reprinted in Kultermann, Udo, Art and Life, Praeger, New York, 1971. p77. [Novalis (1772 –1801) was the pseudonym for Friedrich Leopold, a German poet whose work, Miscellaneous Observations (1798) was to have a great effect on later Romanticism].