(W)reading Performance Writing
A Study Room Guide on performance writing

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LADA Study Room Guides

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Image credit: Alex Eisenberg, diagram of A Script About Fantastic Diagrams, 2010
(A0281 76–79) (A0290 89–91)

(A0284)

(A0110)

(P0118 146–166)

(A0293 2–3)

(A0292 2–4)

(P0135 98–109)

(P0837 179–182)

(P0837 103–107)

(P1414)

Writing Experiment

http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/Study_Room/pubs_articles.shtml

Go to find. Insert number. Consider the movements in your search, note them.
COLLECTIONS OF [ ]

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Writing Experiment
93. http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/Study_Room/pubs_articles.shtml
or http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/Study_Room/dvd_video.shtml
Go to find. Insert number. Consider the movements in your search, note them.
Assembled by Rachel Lois Clapham (RLC) in dialogue with

Charles Bernstein (CBN) // Caroline Bergvall (CBL) // David Berridge (DB) // Emma Cocker (EC) //
Mark Caffrey (MC) // Alex Eisenberg (AE) // John Hall (JH) // Claire Hind (CH) //
Richard Kostelanetz (RK) // Johanna Linsley (JL) // Claire MacDonald (CMD) //
Rebecca May Marston (RMM) // Marit Münzberg (MM) // Nature Theatre of Oklahoma (NT0O) //
Tamarin Norwood (TN) // Mary Paterson (MP) // Joshua Sofaer (JS) // Danae Theodoridou (DT) //
Peter Walsh (PW) // Simon Zimmerman (SZ) //
What do we mean by { ]?
  // CBL //

THINK / THINK: a score
  // DB //

Fantastic Diagrams
  // DB // RLC // AE //

Starting points and neglected spaces
  // CH //

writing between performance
  // CMD //

attached to
  // MM //

Chorégraphie
  // NTOO //

What is it?
  // DT //

The Writing of Performance
  // TN //

About
Collections of [ ]
Event Scores: A Fluxusconcert
From, For, On, Of ... : prepositional force
I (the)
Invitation to (W)read
Pedagogy and [ ]
  // Index
Performing Theory x 2
See, Work, Think, For [ ]: a syllabus
The Performative / Performativity
Touchstones
(W)reading this Guide
  // RLC //
“When is saying something doing something? And how is saying something doing something? If they aren’t coeval with language itself, these questions certainly go back as far back, even in European thought, as – take your pick – Genesis, Plato, Aristotle. Proximally, posed explicitly by the 1962 publication of British Philosopher J. L. Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words*, they have resonated through the theoretical writings of the past three decades in a carnivalesque echolalia of what might be described as extraordinarily productive cross-purposes. One of the most fecund, as well as the most under-articulated, of such crossings has been the oblique intersection between performativity and the loose cluster of theatrical practices, relations, and traditions known as performance.”

(Parker and Sedgwick *Performativity and Performance*; Schechner *Performativity*)

N.B. A term hard to pin down. See Things to Think About and Things To Do. Approach the cross dressing task with caution. The author is not advocating a simple adoption of habits or wearing of the performative.

(Austin *How to Do Things With Words*)

N.B. happiness, illocution, perlocution

(Butler *Excitable speech: a politics of the performative*)

N.B. speech act, utterer, affect
Starting points and neglected spaces
Claire Hind

I often begin the process of writing through collection – I am a text collector. It usually begins with 3 sources – I watch an art film, I visit a public yet private space and I compose a series of sentences at random. Whilst playing the text collecting game, I have momentary bursts of energy and it seems to happen within a 5 minute time frame where millions of images come to mind and I speak them into the nearest recording device (or tell the nearest stranger ...)

Man with a pink balaclava ...
Donkey Hill as a meeting point ...
Get inside a closet with a composition in 52 parts
Microphone in one hand sitting on the bus
Get Carter
Climb a ladder 450 times
Bauhaus the in-law’s ornaments

When the list stops I edit my ideas – editing is writing.

I teach [ ]. I teach through performativity and conceptual writing rather than working from dramatic literacy. We look at how language operates as performative action either for a space or for the page and I usually start by looking at the work of Tristan Tzara and Zürich Dada. We look at The First Celestial Adventure of Mr Antipyrine, Fire Extinguisher and attempt it and then move into Gertrude Stein’s Tender Buttons. Stein’s work has an amazing ability to seduce students into conceptual writing not only for the page but also for the studio or the bigger picture. Tzara teases the student’s unconscious. I move through time in relation to the avant-garde throughout the semester and end up with reading contemporary work – Caroline Bergvall, the Wooster Group (in particular their scores) and Cathy Lane’s Playing With Words: The Spoken Word in Artistic Practice. Workshop practice may begin with writing for chairs, or the dark corners of the space, writing for the floor, writing for the table, if the objects could speak what would they say? I tend to put solo work together as one ensemble and play around with compositional strategies and invite the students to invent new rules for editing, shaping and writing. We usually score all of our workshops on giant rolls of paper and then I invite the students to go miniature – re-writing for smaller spaces.

Some of my practice is anecdotally present in both mind and spirit and I always remember the teachers of my past – Professor Noel Witts invited us to write a radical text and shared the work of Umberto Eco and Tadeusz Kantor, Tim Etchells taught me [ ] at De Montfort University in the 1990’s – he asked us to ‘write for an impossible space’. I remember feeling totally liberated by that idea and by Claire MacDonald’s practice – Claire invited Tim onto the course and she once asked us to write for the ‘neglected space’. Ever since [ ] at De Montfort my eyes have been wide open to new spaces and ideas.

My teachers were inspirational – they still are and Etchells’ book Certain Fragments reminds me of that fact and supports my students’ practices.

One text I love to repeat in a space for a long time is Captain Walter Arnold by Gertrude Stein. Say it, learn it, repeat it, feel it. Texts that have a multitude of possibilities within a handful of words generate exciting acts of composition. Act two of Stein’s play writes “A dazzling dress. We dazzle altogether.”, and that is it! I love the fact that act two consists of two sentences and leaves the performer to ‘write’ the rest.
To call something a performance is to separate it from the world and then present it back to the world as something distinct. This double movement of separation and re-presentation is the writing of the performance, and it is in this writing that performing exceeds doing. Being written gives the performed thing the simultaneous immediacy and distance of language, by which its separation from the world permits the fullness of its expression.

[Performance Writing] can slip into play quite unnoticed, and so the line it draws between doing and performing is indistinct. Its operations are insidious and difficult to spot: for a start, they need not be textual at all. Any moment of framing, however brief or inchoate, provokes this double movement of separation and re-presentation and in a flash transforms doing into an awareness of doing: a performance of doing. Moreover, although performance only comes into existence once it is written, the anteriority of writing to performance need not be temporal. A thing, a moment, an action might be interrupted by or imbued with a feeling of self-consciousness that is simultaneous to the thing itself, and which writes it into performance in real time. This slip of self-consciousness is sufficient to write the performance into being, and precedes the performance not by coming before it in time but by standing outside it, containing it and circumscribing its form.

Conceiving of [ ] in this way blows wide open the field of performance to the point that any action, at any moment, risks slipping into performance. It stretches a continuum from traditionally delineated ‘theatrical’ performances to [ ] (see the third note) but equally extends through the wider performance spectrum.

\[\text{Tamarin Norwood}\

In his 1976 essay Nontheatrical Performance Allan Kaprow explores this continuum further, testing the boundary between ‘lifelike’ art and life itself. He carves the spectrum into five broad kinds of artistic activity, of which the fifth and most lifelike of all is to “work in nonart modes and nonart contexts but cease to call the work art, retaining instead the private consciousness that sometimes it may be art, too.”

The field of performance is blown so far open that it almost ceases to be a category. The writing of performance is so slight here that performing teeters on the brink of disappearing into doing. Kaprow goes so far as to conclude that “all artists can locate themselves among these five options. Most belong to the first, very few occupy the fourth, and so far, I know of no one who fits the fifth who hasn’t simply dropped out of art entirely.” (Kaprow Nontheatrical Performance 175 – 176)
– with script, stage, actor, curtain, audience – all the way to impromptu, personal and barely distinct ‘lifelike’ performances, in which it might suffice to merely notice an action taking place and, once noticed, to let the action continue all the same.

This conception of performance indicates furthermore a particular tension between performance and the world to which it is re-presented. Because a performed thing is written it exists, like language, both within and at one remove from the world. The performed thing recedes into the distance behind its name: behind the performance of itself. Giving a performance is to give the word for a thing rather than the thing itself; and yet the world that receives it is a world of things, not words.

Giving a performance means redeeming the distance of the thing being performed: re-presenting the word as though it were a full and immediate thing within the world. Yet the thing itself is precisely what performance can never give, or it will slip back from performing into mere doing.

If performance is to sustain the particular duality of its expression, then these delicate contradictory tugs of separation and representation must be incorporated and obliviated by the supreme fiction of performance: the fiction that there is no writing at all.

Roquentin continues: “But you have to choose: to live or to recount. For example, when I was in Hamburg, with that Erna girl whom I didn’t trust and who was afraid of me, I led a peculiar sort of life. But I was inside it, I didn’t think about it. And then one evening, in a little café at St Pauli, she left me to go to the lavatory. I was left on my own, there was a gramophone playing Blue Skies. I started telling myself what had happened since I had landed. I said to myself: ‘On the third evening, as I was coming into a dance hall called the Blue Grotto, I noticed a tall woman who was half-seas over. And that woman is the one I am waiting for at this moment, listening to Blue Skies, and who is going to come back and sit down on my right and put her hands around my neck.’ Then I had a violent feeling that I was having an adventure. But Erna came back, she sat down beside me, she put her arms around my neck, and I hated her without knowing why. I understand now: it was because I had to begin living again that the impression of having an adventure had just vanished.” (Sartre Nausea 61)

For a moment the ordinary living of a life is written into a performance of itself. It acquires the glamorous distance of a word – an adventure – but words and things collide when the flesh and blood reality of Erna returns. The words dissolve and the performance stops abruptly, leaving the ex-performer unprepared to redeem the gap between performing and doing – word and thing – adventure and everyday life.

In theatre, as in painting, the supreme fiction of performance is that the word is flesh and occupies the world. Denis Diderot’s salon reports of the 1760s suggest one approach to redeeming the distance of the thing being performed:

“It is rare that a being who is not totally engrossed in his action is not mannered. Every personage who seems to tell you: ‘Look how well I cry, how well I become angry, how well I implore’, is false and mannered. [...] If you lose your feeling for the difference between the man who presents himself in society and the man engaged in action, between the man who is alone and the man who is looked at, throw your brushes into the fire. [...] Whether you compose or act, think no more of the beholder than if he did not exist. Imagine, at the edge of the stage, a high wall that separates you from the orchestra. Act as if the curtain never rose.” (Diderot cited in Fried Absorption and Theatricality 82 – 132)

What performance must sustain at all costs is the immediacy of word and world. And yet it must sustain this immediacy not as a matter of fact but as a matter of fiction. Every personage must seem engrossed, engaged, alone – and yet the beholder must exist. It is not that the curtain never rises, nor even that there is no curtain, but that the performer must act as if the curtain never rose.
The book is

BEFOREMATH

// RLC //
FROM, FOR, ON, OF ... : prepositional force
prep-o-si-tion [prep-uh-zish-uhn]

FROM, FOR, ON, OF
Indexical, bound, parasitic, supplemental – to the thing they cleave to
A critical fall-out from the before of [insert object, verb, noun or thought]
The befoремath

(Quick The Wooster Group Work Book)    writing >>>> FROM <<< performance
(Deeney Writing Live)                 writing >>>> FOR <<< performance
(Goldberg Performance Art)            writing >>>> ON <<< performance
(Goulish 39 Microlectures)            writing >>>> OF <<< performance

In each case something SHIFTS
Movement is implied
This is not just words. (Basically, there's a lot in a preposition)
There's a lot in >

from the table.
for the table.
on the table.
of the table.

Writing Experiment (CBN)
58. Write a poem consisting only of prepositions, then of prepositions and one other part of speech, then three parts of speech. (Coolidge Oflengths)
What is it?
Towards a re-enactment of the experience of performative writing.
Danae Theodoridou

A friend is giving you a book. It writes:
Certain Fragments Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment Tim Etchells
Foreword by Peggy Phelan.
And it HAS to be returned. You are reading it. You return it. Then you buy it. Twice.

What is it?
You are in the theatre. You hear a phrase.
‘The bad thing with experience is that it can’t be transferred.’ (Keep these words.)

What is it?

You are at a café. Or in your room. Or at a park. Or out at the balcony. Or on bed. Or at the
library. You are reading a second book. It stays with you in all these places, like a personal
Bible. Here is its cover:
matthew goulish 39 MICROLECTURES in proximity of performance How do we understand
something? We understand something by approaching it How do we approach something?
We approach it from any direction We approach it using our eyes, our ears, our noses, our
intellects, our imaginations. We approach it with silence. We approach it with childhood.
We use pain We use history We take a safe route or a dangerous one. We discover our
approach and follow it.

What is it?
‘The bad thing with experience is that it can’t be transferred.’ (Remember these words?)

What is it?
You go back to it, you try to describe it, you try to analyze it, you try to show it, you try to tell
it, you try to express it, you try to share it, you try to transfer it.

What is it?
Performatve words. Their experience. It can’t be transferred.

What is it?
No need for describing words, analyzing words, showing words, telling words, sharing words,
transferring words.

Just words to re-enact the experience. If it can be transferred, it can be re-done and it can be
re-lived.

Here they are, they don’t transfer, they re-create. The experience of one who read a book and
bought it twice, of one who carried a book everywhere like a personal Bible, of one who since
that day knows that ‘the bad thing with experience is that it can’t be transferred’.

Here they are. The experience of you, here, now.
It starts by reading this:

1 A series of accidents has brought you to this book.

2 You may think of it not as a book, but as a library, an elevator, an amateur performance in a nearby theatre.

3 Consider this book like an interrupted performance. The writer left the stage because of a sudden illness, which has now become prolonged. The writer will not return. I have been asked to stand in.

4 When listening please bear in mind: I have tried to compose some of your most particular experiences.

5 ... the sense that the words not only mean, but also live, and affect an irreversible change on the reader.

6 For there can be no learning without the presence of others.

7 Zen Stories are never about other people. They are always about you.

8 The other in all his or her forms gives me I. It is on the occasion of the other that I catch sight of me ...

9 My poems are meeting places ...

10 Sometimes the reader comes to the realization that all the printed words make up only half of the book. Silence makes up the other half.

11 I would like to find people who in the depths of their souls feel the same way as I do.

12 Everything is true.

13 By now you must be tired of reading and ready to turn off your light. But wait.
It goes on like this:

1. You know it when you see it.
2. Performance as a way of going to another world and coming back with gifts.
3. Not even a game anymore. 
   Go too far. Go too far. Go too far.
   Edges of the game – where it comes back to the real.
4. Make up a story to explain this:
   A dead man in England in winter with a stomach full of strawberries.
5. A text of lines from half-remembered songs.
6. A love letter written in binary.
7. A text composed of fragments.
8. A text for people to find in their wallets, days later, when you are forgotten.
9. A text to come through people’s doors – perhaps a letter.
10. A text for someone to find in the street, caught in one of those eddypools of blown leaves and ragged polythene bags.
11. A text written in condensation.
12. A text written, learned and performed to pass a polygraph test.
15. The same text written every day for a year, in different places, in different locations.
16. A text written on the floor of an old factory.
17. Language like a camera on endless tracks, zooming everywhere, close-up, wide-shot, tracking shot, point of view. Language jumping you from one story, one world, one discourse to another.
18. A text written at 3am in the middle of a war.
19. A text written in the fast food court of a large European shopping mall.
20. A text which raises questions of ownership.
21. ... – copied language like precious stones. Authentic has not really been in it.
22. ... writing (or even speaking) as a kind of trying on other peoples clothes ...
23. here are 26 letters:
   a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
   now write a text for performance.
You are now almost there.

Read this:
That’s the thing you have to do with a voice after all – make it speak of the things it cannot deal with.

Words cannot deal with it.

What is it?

This is the last part.

Now it’s time to do exactly what you’ve been doing so far, since you started reading these words. Just continue to use your voice to write the words you wrote between the phrases read above. To produce the texts you write when you look up. Continue to write about things words cannot deal with.

Take your time. Go on, go on.
Don’t stop looking up . . .
Write, write, write . . .

Lose your way, go there and there and there, come back and depart again, look up, look up.
And write, write, write . . .

Now you know too.

This is it.
All works included, mentioned or touched in this guide are in the index. Assemble the various parts of this guide together as you see fit. There is no right or wrong order, no beginning or end in mind.

Numerical references in (    ) relate to searchable items in the Live Art Development Agency online catalogue
http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/Study_Room/pubs_articles.shtml

I hope you might consider the open nature of the guide and use these pages as an exercise book or base for your own notes.

I offer three open invitations to (w)read from others:

1. The artist may construct the piece.
2. The piece may be fabricated.
3. The piece need not be built.

(Weiner Declaration of Intent)

“A series of accidents has brought you to this book. You may think of it not as a book, but as a library, an elevator, an amateur performance in a nearby theatre. Open it to the table of contents. Turn to the page that sounds the most interesting to you. Read a sentence or two. Repeat the process. Read this book as a creative act, and feel encouraged. ”

(Goudish 39 Microlectures half title)

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**Writing Experiment (CBN)**

92. Make up more experiments.
THINK (1)
The Space

THINK (2)
A gathering

THINK (3)
Writing-Drawing

THINK (4)
Translation

THINK (5)
Already existing

THINK (6)
Erasing making

THINK (7)
Gestures

THINK (8)
Simultaneity

THINK (9)
Your body = A4 page

THINK (10)
Press PUBLISH NOW
A noun of action of quality (performance) behaves as an adjective that modifies the verbal noun (or gerund) (writing) that follows it. Two nouns stand side by side in dialogic proximity, perhaps with the ghost of an ‘and’ between them or an elided ‘in the context of’ that could work in either direction (performance in the context of writing; writing in the context of performance). There is decidedly no fixed preposition between the words such as an instrumental ‘for’ (writing for performance). Other prepositions (or prepositional phrases) may hover in readiness, sometimes inviting an inversion of the noun order: in, as, from, about, towards, in parallel with. There is even just the possibility of hearing performance as a noun followed by writing as a present participle: performance in the process of writing.”

(Hall, 1997)
How might doing theory be a matter of performance, how might it matter to performance, and vice versa?

“[improvisation is] constituted by the very weave of
the moment, place and circumstances of enunciation.”
Isn’t an openness towards being affected what is
asked for when one acts to make with something
or someone else?”

(Lomax Sounding the Event 32)

(Lomax 147)

Performing Theory x 2

42. Write down everything you hear.

[whilst reading the above two texts]
Contents

Foreword vii
1 Oligarchies: Naming, Enumerating, Counting 1
2 Loving in Friendship: Perhaps – the Noun and the Adverb 26
3 This Mad ‘Truth’: The Just Name of Friendship 49
4 The Phantom Friend Returning (in the Name of ‘Democracy’) 75
5 On Absolute Hostility: The Cause of Philosophy and the Spectre of the Political 112
6 Oath, Conjuration, Fraternalization or the ‘Armed’ Question 138
7 He Who Accompanies Me 171
8 Recoils 194
9 ‘In human language, fraternity…’ 227
10 ‘For the First Time in the History of Humanity’ 271
Vielleicht
free spirits
sigh
breathes
souffle
free spirits
Vielleicht
sigh
breath
Free
Spirits
vielleicht
free spirits
free, sehr freie Geister
spirits
vielleicht
I* (the)

OR

Speaking for yourself (and others) in [ ]

(a0286)

(a0287)

* Akzidenz Grotesk Bold I

Writing Experiment
93. http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/Study_Room/pubs_articles.shtml
   Go to find. Insert number. Consider the movements in your search, note them.
94. Publish your encounter with these lines.

Writing Experiment (CBN)
41. Write an autobiographical poem without using any pronouns.
I couldn’t find the book I was going to talk about so I decided to try to improvise a diagram syllabus – although maybe reverie is a more appropriate word. It starts in 1948 with Claude E. Shannon’s schematic diagram of a general communication system – where information source, transmitter, channel, receiver and destination get represented as a linear series of squares linked by arrows. Then there’s George Brecht, whose notebooks – whilst attending John Cage’s New School evening class – re-work the diagram via handwritten notes and drawings, into something more akin to the communication model of Fluxus scores and happenings. Then, in the aftermath of the December ’09 COP15 conference in Copenhagen, I skip to Mauna Loa in Hawaii, where readings of atmospheric CO$_2$ concentrations since 1958 – often represented as a steeply rising jagged red line – provided one of the first graphic indications of climate change, and one that foregrounds how the scale and formal properties of the diagram inform our (emotional) response to its content.

Then it’s Warhol’s Dance Diagrams where he uses those how-to-dance plans, with their outlined feet linked by arrows, and then I was thinking of Rudolf Steiner and Beuys, both of them drawing schematically on the blackboard as they lectured. Such diagram-improvisations became seen and sold as art works. I look at books of them and enjoy them although I really have no idea what they are about. It’s hard, too, for me to think of Beuys’ diagrams without those stories of him in Cork, the caretaker – of course – rubbing everything off when he’d finished – clearing the fat off the chair, too!

Next we’re onto the diagram-drawing tension again: a conversation between Joan Jonas and the Korean artist Sung Hwan Kim where he shows her a plan of his house. Jonas calls it a diagram, but when Kim adds a hand drawn line of his route around the house she calls it a drawing. It’s a fairly casual use of the word, but it’s also revealing of the point at which something becomes an art work, becomes worked-with, becomes seen as either an experience or a representation of one or both.

Finally, I’m looking through Richard Kostelanetz’s anthology Scenarios: Scripts to Perform, and its many diagrammatic performance scripts. I’m thinking of Julia Born’s response to Kostelanetz’s anthology as part of her “Secret Instructions” project, which explores forms of diagraming – including stage instructions and Labanotation – on a spectrum from documenting to the prompting of new movement, and how her performances are chances to open up the schematics of such written systems to the indeterminacies and new schematics of live performance. This suggests what the Brazilian artist Ricardo Basbaum says about his Diagram [love songs] series:

“Always composed by words and lines, the diagram is a sort of drawing (or visual poem) that mediates the dynamic flow between words and images – discursive and non-discursive spaces – or literary and plastic spaces, etc ... Many times I have taken the diagrams as a tool to connect my practice as an artist to other roles in the art system – writer, critic, curator, agent – departing from the visual / verbal monochromatic composition for establishing dialogues with the other ... it is always interesting to look through the diagrams searching for the potentially implied fiction layers – then, each diagram points to different plots, as screenplays for movies yet-to-be-done.”

Finally, Rodchenko: “Drawing as it was conceived in the past loses its value and is transformed into diagram or geometric projection.”
dance with a large piece of chalk
mark up the nearest surface
and pay attention
to the movement of your feet
music optional

(Jonas Instruction)

The performer or performers shuffle into the performance area and away from it, above, behind, around, all through the audience. They perform as a group or solo ... but quietly.

(Knowles Shuffle 7)

Get 180lbs. of a local wrapped candy and drop in a corner.

(Gonzales-Torres Untitled)

Doing Nothing

(Fang [Doing Nothing!])

Burn this book, asap.

(Cantor [Burn this book, asap!])

Make a salad.

(Knowles [Proposition #2])

DON’T do it!
Refuse
Do as your told! (this means you!)

(Golub [Don’t do it!])

Place the palms of your hands side by side on this piece of paper. After a short time; raise hands and place your eyes at the same level as the palms. Notice the possible and coincident unus multorum retardation in the situations etc.

or something else

(Ander son, Opus 50)

Arrange to observe a NO SMOKING sign
Smoking / No smoking

(Brecht No Smoking Event)

Turn on a radio. At the first sound, turn it off.

(Brecht Instruction)

This sentence should not be read by more than one person at the same time.

(Ander son Opus 46)

The audience is instructed to leave the theatre.

(Brecht Event, Fluxversion 1)
Performer enters, bows, then exits. This is executed once for every member of the audience.
(Heflin First Performance)

I imitate the Dove and often I throw a blade of grass to the drowning ant.
(Joubert [1784])

If the earth must perish then astronomy is our only consolation.
(Joubert [1784])

Water.
(Ono Piece for Nam June Paik No.1)

FOR THE DURATION OF AN EXHIBITION A BOUNDARIED, UNMARKED, PRE-ALLOCATED SPACE OF 46,656 CUBIC INCHES IS TO REMAIN UNOCCUPIED.
(Bochner Territorial Reserve no.4)

None of the above
(Armleder 'None of the above')

(Askevold On Shrinking a Head)
What Do We Mean by [Performance Writing]?
Caroline Bergvall

This being a keynote, an opening gesture I won’t dwell too long nor go into too much depth. I suppose it will suffice here to air a number of questions and provide some overall pointers as a general background for the papers and panels and work we’re going to be engaging with for the next two days.

Part of the pleasure in wishing to establish cross-disciplinary dialogues around a resonance such as [ ] is the fact that we all, as practitioners and critics meet here in the knowledge that only the very diversity of, at times seemingly incompatible starting-points, in both theory and practice, can turn the possibility of [ ], beyond a BA degree, into a culturally networked area of investigation.

I suppose this is the time to ask why are we here, exactly. I think we all have a vague sense of what [ ] might entail, which we can link back to our own work and approaches but what of the overall idea that brings us here. Is there an overall idea. What is [ ]?

I think that’s a good starting-point so let’s do a Gertrude Stein on it and talk about it for what it is not. This won’t stabilise any answer particularly but it will hopefully guarantee that it doesn’t get looped into itself prior to the question being fully asked. So, what is [ ] not? Is [ ] not writing?
Is it writing which performs not writes?
Is it not performance which writes?
But then does writing not perform?
And when does writing not perform? And what kind of not performance are we talking about? Is it not performance to write or is it not writing to not perform?

Some examples. Is it not [ ] to site some text in a space or on a wall or on electronic boards or is that not installation art? or is that not public art? Is it not [ ] to treat spoken writing as part of a sound composition or is that not music? or not sound art? Is it not [ ] to inscribe words on a canvas, spray them on a wall, layer text into photographs or carve them into wood, steel or other solids or is that not visual art? or is that not graffiti art? or is that not poetry? Is it not [ ] to use text as part of a body-related piece or is that not performance art or is that not dance or theatre? Is it not [ ] to bleed a word into flesh is that not Jenny Holzer? or is that not tattoo art? or is that not activism? Not is it [ ] to generate text for the page or for the screen or for a book or is that not video art? or is that not literature? or is that not visual art? or is it electronic art?

You might be starting to think that [ ] is all of the above, or you might start to think that it is none of the above. Mostly you might think that the dialectics of either/or induce a slight irritation, some vague déjà-heard. That at a deeper level what is at stake might be less a question of classification than one of applied definition.

I wouldn’t like you to think that as soon as I read “This is not a pipe” I go “Oh [ ]”. Well, I might. But bearing in mind that, for all the push and shove of postmodern practice and discourse, the overall historical classifications (music, literature, theatre et al) are proving all the
time less appropriate to read formally and place critically the kind of language work which is being produced. Some concerted excavation of the intradisciplinarity of much textual work, or work which features writing in one form or another, is called for to establish through and beyond the literary, a broader understanding of writing, its structural and functional strategies.

I would like to suggest that each artistic discipline (writing, or rather literature, among them) with its specific histories and developments and points of collapse and regeneration should be read more and explored more. Explored not merely according to its specific discourses and histories, with the inevitable narrowing down and cocooning which ensues, but as so many criss-crossings of sophisticated skills borne out of these histories and questioned through the mental and material constructs of textual contemporaneity.

The contemporaneity of the notion of [ ] is that it can only locate itself as part of the atomisation of literature, music, theatre and so on. In that, of course, it inscribes itself in line with the aesthetics of suspicion, disruption, and reappraisal which have to such a large extent determined the frame of mind of this century’s effusion of experimentality. In this sense, [ ] needs to highlight the many kinds of tensions which arise from the concerted pooling of differing writing practices and explore the kinds of relationship text-based work entertains when developed in conjunction with other media and other discourses.

The act of writing becomes then as much a question open to literary analysis as one open to the broader investigation of the kinds of formal and ideological strategies which writers and artists develop textually in response or in reaction to their own time and their own fields.

I’m aware that much has been and is being written along those lines. But it all remains generally dispersed across so many fields and tucked away as so many side-projects that, unless one happens to make cross-disciplinary text-work a specific area of research, the likelihood is that much will escape one’s attention.

It is also important to point out that, although much theoretical and poetic work has been done, this is especially true of exploratory poetry and deconstructive philosophy, to widen the literary debate and incorporate to it various notions of materiality (and the materiality of writing is an essential aspect of [ ]); it is largely true to say that the whole approach to writing remains in these fields primarily located on the page. This ignores and cuts short the debate on all writerly work which extends beyond the page.

The poet and critic Johanna Drucker points out that if much post-structuralist analysis has usefully conceptualised the idea of textuality and textual performativity, it still falls short of addressing and critiquing the range and scope of materials available to writing and how this range may affect the very idea of writing.

Marcel Broodhaers’s work is a useful case in point. Indeed a large part of his work concerned itself, sometimes at a sarcastic level, with the investigation of poetic means and poetic conventions. However, he chose to do so by locating a writerly activity not primarily on the page but into objects and spatial constructs. He would locate the points where objects and words, syntax and
architecture apply direct, difficult pressure onto each other. Both in intent and product, his work displays an awareness of the act of writing and of its points of fission. So is the literary field’s indifference to his work an example of literary blindspot? Is it lack of vocabulary? I would argue that along with the development of a shared terminology, it is a shift in attitude with regards to what defines the writerly that we should wish to operate.

A number of debates in the visual and performing arts as well as in cultural studies have applied deconstructive theories to question and articulate the importance of the contextualisation of practice, the siting of work and the locations (and relocations) of identity in the contemporary arts. It is questions like these which could provide the extra-literary pointers we need to get to grips with the wider implications contained within the idea of [ ]. Hence the textual does not only throw up the question of the literary, it also urgently prompts an interrogation of the impact the use of writing applies on visual, sonic or movement arts. And vice-versa. It is also paramount that the impact of this cross-fertilisation does not remain fixated at a formal level, but that it acutely and insistently, one might say intravenously, makes a point of examining the personal motivations and urgencies for work, the ways in which such forms are used and function in their relation to social, cultural modes of identification and, often oppressive, models for representation. Indeed, writing’s link with language inevitably forces the appraisal of writing as so many activities which at one level or other grapple with the psycho-social and political violence of any collective language, however localised.

I don’t know whether the idea of [ ] can in itself provide the means to instate theoretical grounding and clarity of practice in the cacophony of textual cross-disciplinarity but I certainly hope it provides a step on the way.

So rather than entertaining ideas of aesthetic orgy or formal fusion, anything goes as long as there’s something like a bit of something which looks like writing in it and leaving it at that, my sense is that [ ] would wish to inscribe itself within debates that revel in conflict.

Conflict at a formal as well as an ideological level. The conflicts and tensions at work within and between any of the elements a writer may choose to explore, sometimes collaboratively. The conflicts and tensions exposed by the expressed or subtextual semantics of such a piece. The way it resonates at a local-subjective as well as a wider cultural level. [ ] would be about detail. A close attention to the workings, the sitings and the political dimensions of atomised writing practices – whether on or beyond the page.

It is in this complex and responsive reading of the performance of writing that one can most clearly make sense of this field, not primarily as a unified academic discipline, not even necessarily as one delineated, hybridic artform, but rather as an area of joint practical and critical investigation of the many uses writing and language are being put to and push themselves into. In this sense, Lorna Simpson’s stylised photographic combines of portraiture and verbal cliches, Heiner Goebbels’ text-sound theatricalities, Gary Hill’s conceptual use of text and video as sculptural environments, or Susan Howe’s acute paginations of some of her poetic texts, to name but a few, do not merely read as inherently divergent or potentially parallel activities. More importantly, they read in relation
to the act of writing, the performance of writing itself. The extent to which its literarity is sine qua non (or not) to both the process and production of the overall piece whatever its media and context of reception.

As Susan Hiller could have said, a frame is not square by nature. Similarly could one not argue that there is more, not less, to writing than the page, more, not less, to writing than language, more, not less, to text treatment than syntactical or morphological experimentation. And that to engage with writing in such extensive material terms, both as writers and readers, is what inscribes the performance of writing. A performance of itself at a relational level.

You might think that all of this really provides a very stretched out definition of performance. And doesn’t fully address the writing traditions which come out of theatricality and are still being carried through in much live work. Should theatrical writing be privileged in our appraisal of [ ] on account of its longstanding history? If anything this does make writing’s relation to performance more strenuous and difficult to disengage from established conventions of production.

This is a long debate. Indeed, how do we clarify the ambiguity between performed textuality and spoken writing? Perhaps I could sketch it out in terms of process. What is the process of live performance in its relation to writing? Is it writing’s role, in that context, to function as a guiding background, as the blueprint of a live piece? This would mean that the text remains absorbed, subsumed by the live performance.

What if the writing were to openly interfere with the live piece? What if it were to force a disjunction between performing a hidden text and performing writing? Can one turn the hour-glass and argue for the specificities of a live writing (I use the term with caution) where the performer’s presence is cut open, emptied out, absented by the writing’s own presencing (mise-en presence), much like late-Beckett, The Wooster Group, Laurie Anderson and Forced Entertainment’s Speak Bitterness would seek to instigate. I remain excited by this idea of a live situation where writing is another performer and as such needs to be addressed explicitly during and as part of the live piece.

In other words, the performance of writing would be this observation which seeks to locate expressly the context and means for writing, both internal and external to language, whether these be activated for and through a stage, for and through a site, a time-frame, a performer’s body, the body of a voice or the body of a page.

This does not really imply spontaneous and magical multi-layering, simultaneity of process and product, cooking and eating at one and the same time. But it does rest with the idea that everything about a piece of work is active and carries meaning. Any treatment, any font, any blank, any punctuation, any intonation, any choice of materials, any blob, however seemingly peripheral to the work, is part of the work, carries it, opens it up, closes it in, determines it. This is its performance. Its points of impact.

So where does the text start or end? In the case of a text for the page, does it start and end at the words? at the fonts? at the presentation lay-out? at the edges of the page? or in the case of a
text-sound piece, does the text start and end at the recitation? at the vocal treatments? at the overall composition? How are we to articulate this? The critic Marjorie Perloff talks of contemporary poetry as an activity which increasingly defers the activity of reading. Which increasingly highlights the tensions between the visual and the verbal aspects of writing. One could take this further and say that practitioners who engage with a process of writing inevitably forward an intervention of language and of reading which destabilises and refocusses the processes of looking and/or of listening.

Of course, we might start to wonder whether writing can function as a sound-effect or as a mark-making device. Whether writing can be fetishised into a word-thing or a word-sound. Whether reading can be turned into looking and listening. I said earlier that writing’s link with language inevitably forces the appraisal of writing as an activity which grapples with the psycho-social and political dimensions of any collective language. Only at the risk of turning writing into a look or a decorative device can this be played down.

Writing questions the authority of language with language, through language, as well as beyond language. No performance of writing takes place without it. This is part of the responsibility which comes with writing. What makes writing, writing. For at its most direct, writing (whether visual or spoken) takes its cue from the social body of language, however distended this cue may be. This may generate or force up formal, ideological unreadabilities, aesthetics of erasure or aesthetics of presencing, extreme dislocations, specific realignments of language through writing which do occur as a response to the psycho-social situations it highlights or undermines. Whatever the context or materials, the overt tensions and dynamics between language and writing are difficult to ignore. So can language be used as an image, can the text function as an object? Is that still writing?

Another example. The Mexican writer and performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña mentions in an interview that he uses performance in a very different way from his writing. That where performance might impede the materialisation of his point of view he goes with writing and vice-versa. This might seem logical. A question of moods. A question of appropriate skills for appropriate uses. And that’s exactly the point. But it’s got a catch. And it lies with us. Do we as audience as reader read Gómez-Peña as a writer or do we read him as a writing performer? Does it matter? Well yes if one considers the writerly an exclusive domain of the literary. But then what validates writing as literature? Is it writerly skills or is it cultural domain?

What of language occupies the writing, what enables it, what prevents it, what forces its relocations, what makes a piece readable, what occupies the making and the performing of writing, and what occupies the reading, the reception of writerly activities?

With this, I’ll ask again: Where does a text start? Where does it not end?
This guide is only a score, one of many, for an introduction into [ ] as it is found by me – and in proximity of a small group of experienced practitioners – in the agency study room in April 2010.

These practitioners are from a diverse field of poetry, visual art and performance. What gathers them here is their particular focus on writing in the context of performance, including the performance of text.

As a score, it follows that there are others; two in the immediate vicinity are Pustianaz In Search of Documentology and Lone Twin You may perform a spell against the madness.

As a score I am locating a good part of this guide, its work (work), off the page – in your (w)reading of it. It’s hard (hard). At times this might mean a struggle. This is where the W of (w)reading, which is to say the work (work), comes in. But grappling (with the work of [ ]) is all important. This guide – any guide? – is centrally concerned with how I (we) might speculate in writing as pedagogy. Or how I (we) might navigate, essay or try (work) the not already known for good friends or strangers.]

Repeat

This openness, it’s the kind of room I like a text to have. But it’s important in lots of other ways too.

[ insert your own ways here]

Still on ‘How to write a Guide (of [ ])’ I located myself as author / expert in the main by my own journey through previously published works, including my own. And I invited contributions from collaborators and friends, or friends of friends, who are currently active in this field. Despite wanting to ‘open out’ the writing to others in this way, the nature of an invitation – made by someone, someone with permission, to someone else possibly without – inevitably creates something of a map of [ ] that circles around me. Their (or your) being or writing as +1 to me, to this guide, should be considered generative here. We are all +1. That said, there is a complex politics of acknowledgement in being +1 that I hope to have addressed explicitly.

The process of ‘assembling’ the different contributions has been rich. In particular, the mobility and physical gestures implied in the term has opened up my thinking on how writing manifests here – as handling, collating and designing.

I very much felt my self-appointed role as Assembler. The term seemed to invite self-definition and lent itself to the process of pressing against the edges of where others’ work left off and mine began. Who is contributing what, and to whom? Generosity and trust on the part of the contributors has perhaps been the mainstay, the stitch binding the whole (work) together.
A SCRIPT ABOUT FANTASTIC DIAGRAMS

David Berridge, Rachel Lois Clapham, Alex Eisenberg

Throughout summer 2009 David Berridge (DB), Rachel Lois Clapham (RLC) and Alex Eisenberg (AE) are reading Richard Kostelanetz’s (RK) 1975 anthology *Essaying Essays*. Its abundance of forms – drawing on performance scripts, conceptual art, concrete poetry, experimental fiction and critical prose – feed into various individual and collective projects.

For a planned collaboration for Dance Theatre Journal the three return repeatedly to Kostelanetz’s description of the diagram in his introduction to *Essaying Essays*, relating it to their own differing engagements with writing about and making performance. Throughout several months of meetings, phone and email conversations Kostelanetz’s celebration of the diagram is repeatedly summoned to embody a certain sense of writerly possibility that is simultaneous, open and fantastic …

SCENE 1: ‘THE ESSAY’

RK One kind of innovation is the conceptually resonant chart, which ideally reveals the essayistic function of compressing a large body of perceptions and / or connections into remarkably little space. Though necessarily simplifying, a chart offers the compensating advantage of vividly documenting the entire picture – a concise image of the whole that reveals contrasts and connections that would not be so apparent if spread over many pages of prose.

A chart is particularly useful in documenting multiple relations among several discontinuous elements. Since charts tend to lack explicit beginnings or definite ends, they cannot be read in the conventional way – steadily, in one predetermined direction, at an even speed. Instead, charts must be read around and about, indeterminately, much like geography maps which are, after all, visual essays of a different sort; for a rich chart offers many levels of meaning, generalization and relatedness …
SCENE 2: ‘MAKING CONNECTIONS’

[IN WHITECHAPEL, LONDON DB SITS IN A CAFÉ ON BRICK LANE WRITING AN EMAIL]

DB I’ve been thinking about George Macunias. Macunias is best known for his amazing charts chronicling the history of Fluxus, such as *Expanded Arts Diagram* (1966). These demonstrate all RK says about the diagram as condensing and simultaneous. But actually what interests me about Macunias is the other charts that he makes, such as *Chronology of Russian History*. These are handwritten, on sheets of lined notebook paper glued together. As the amount of information increases, Macunias’ charts get bigger and bigger. He adds more sheets, and then adds flaps and fold out sections to the existing sheets. His investment in the chart form begins to negate what attracted him to it in the first place. These charts – written in his neat and tiny handwriting – become almost impossible to read, and, unlike the fluxus charts, never get translated into Macunias’ trademark bold graphic design. As their historical breadth increases these diagrams also become ever more private, gnomic utterances. Macunias, incidentally, was a chronic systematizer, and also set up a typology for his friends’ bathrooms.
**SCENE 3: ‘UNKNOWN PRODUCT’**

[IT’S DAYTIME AND RLC SITS ON THE STAIRS OF HER AUNT’S HOUSE IN BRADFORD ON THE PHONE TO AE, WHO IS IN HIS PARENT’S HOUSE, IN NORTH LONDON]

Baskerville 9.5/15pt

RLC ... and so the critical aspect of diagrams is that they are speculative. And in terms of a document they leave lots open by way of meaning. In that sense diagrams are an unknown product.

AE For me that’s the exciting part actually, the opportunity they have through a certain non linearity to really activate someone that reads them. It goes into a notion of ‘room’.

RLC Yes. In a traditional essay you start at the beginning, by the end you have got to your idea, and that is what your thinking on your subject is, and you have come to it and displayed it in a linear way. For me, the diagram leaves off from where the bottom of an essay would be, it’s an opening up of the conclusion, or what you think your conclusion might be.

AE The two things work in conjunction. In some ways I don’t see a diagram necessarily as a replacement of an essay. It’s just a different form of an essay ...

RLC ... yes, as a different form of ordering knowledge, a different form of writing. Not even form as in formal or academic. To diagram is a gesture; to write, to do or to perform. It makes the document more performative because the reader has input into how they read across the page, the diagram allows multiple connections.

[Later, reading the transcript, DB inserts himself retroactively into the conversation]

helvetica 9.5/15pt

DB This is a pretty personal sense of ‘diagram’ we’re coming up with here. We’re asserting our right as writers / artists to define this term any way we want, to appropriate it. It almost becomes a made up nonsense word. I love this sense of diagram as gesture but I think it’s also good to leave things in their own tradition and relate to them there.

For example, when we met at Victoria Station to talk about this article I had been reading about the designers Otto and Marie Neurath and their concept of The Transformer: the person who listens to experts and then transforms their data into a single poster image. In their work with isotype charts the Neuraths found ways of translating social issues into instantly recognisable graphic forms, even exploring the possibility of the isotype as an international language. I’d like to have some of that singularity of purpose when I consider how diagrams relate to my own writing. Well I think I would. ...

Baskerville 9.5/15pt

RLC I like the idea that diagramming is simultaneous writing, in the sense that the reading of it is a performance and it’s also a ‘working through’ of knowledge on behalf of the writer; it’s a live writing, a self conscious writing ...

AE It’s much closer to the surface, the choices that are made are a lot more spontaneous in diagram making than in words

RLC ... Yeah.

AE ... Are you finished or shall I contribute something?
SCENE 4: ‘THE DIAGRAM – “DIAGRAM” SPECTRUM’

TAKE 1

DB I’ve made up a spectrum. This is a bit cartoon like. At one end it’s, well, like social scientists, or my idea of them. All plotted and X and Y axes and pie charts and bar graphs. Percentages and correlations.

Baskerville 9.5/15 pt


DB In the middle of the spectrum our concerns shift. We are less concerned with pie charts and percentages, more with a growing sense that ideas, experiences, and places, can be represented together in some form of writing, but we don’t know what. I call this sensing the diagram as a possibility. It’s less an actual method of diagrams than an impulse to a particular way of seeing.

What happens along the spectrum beyond this? Beyond that it all gets really crazy. It’s all about putting the pie back in pie chart, which is where writing really becomes a performance itself rather than something that might be about performance.

SCENE 4

TAKE 2

INSERT DB A Syllabus for diagrams from A SCRIPT ABOUT FANTASTIC DIAGRAMS

SCENE 5: ‘MAKING DIAGRAMS’

TAKE 1

[IT’S DARK OUTSIDE. AE AND RLC ARE STILL ON THE PHONE]

Baskerville 9.5/15 pt

AE What I have become interested in is the linking of making or drawing or writing of diagrams to presence, actually. To the idea that diagrams are a very … they don’t have to be of course, but for me there’s something quite exciting about how spontaneous … diagrams can be – I’ve picked out some words here – processual, accidental, spontaneous, emergent, intuitive and informal.

Obviously diagrams don’t have to be those types of things. You do get diagrams that are incredibly detailed. But for me, also given the link to performance that we might be thinking about here, it was those elements that I really liked.

AE I also had a little moment of thinking about the word ‘drawing’ but also ‘making’ a diagram. I wrote this series of sentences down like ‘draw a diagram of a journey you make regularly.’ I was thinking particularly about acts, things that are analogous to a performance – small acts.

[IN WHITECHAPEL, DB HAS BEEN SLEEPING BUT SUDDENLY SITS BOLT UPRIGHT AND SPEAKS ALMOST ANGRILY INTO THE DARKNESS]
DB  I want to reject drawings for their associations with thought and supposed presence! Reject them as metaphors for writing or performance! I want us to attain presence through an artificiality of diagrams, through their opacity to thought and the body! Do NOT dissolve body, writing or thought into them! Let us celebrate the marvellous mechanical artificiality of diagrams!

[DB FALLS BACK ONTO THE BED AND SLEEPS SOUNDLY FOR MANY HOURS]

Baskerville 9.5/15pt

… RLC  Maybe diagrams are a way to get as close as you can get in, … well I was going to say in writing, but actually, as close as you can get to the performance without actually being the performance.

SCENE 5

TAKE 2

INSERT AE diagram OF A SCRIPT ABOUT FANTASTIC DIAGRAMS

SCENE 5

TAKE 3

[THE THREE PROTAGONISTS PICK UP THEIR COPIES OF ESSAYING ESSAYS AND READ THE INTRODUCTION AGAIN, SILENTLY]

SCENE 6: ‘FLASHBACK’

[THE THREE PROTAGONISTS PICK UP THEIR COPIES OF ESSAYING ESSAYS AND READ THE INTRODUCTION AGAIN, SILENTLY]
SCENE 7: ‘MAKING DIAGRAMS’

TAKE 1

AE What was that noise? That was weird. I heard like. There was some sort of Gremlin going oooohhhhhhh AAHHHHCH. That was really weird.

RLC [LAUGHING] It’s the spirit of David.

AE It’s the spirit of David!

RLC I’m also thinking about Georges Perec in terms of writing space … I’m not even going to use the word write any more, how you can ‘diagram’ space. There is so much room in Perec.

AE The system that he uses for Life; A Users Manual is based around the movement of a Knight around a chess board, which is bizarre. In the book, there is this amazing diagram of all the permutations of how a Knight can move round a chessboard. And it’s interesting because it is a full novel that moves through this wonderful apartment block in Paris but the way it moves through it is according to this particular system, which is actually a diagram.

RLC Can I just refer to another author? I am feeling very literary right now.

[AE LAUGHING]

RLC In Paul Auster’s The New York Trilogy, there is a fictional character, who is also Auster, who is playing at being a detective, and is trying to trace the movements of a man who is very dangerous for reasons that the novel goes into. Auster tracks this man over a period of months, who is homeless and appears to be moving at random through New York City. Part way through the book the detective isn’t getting anywhere in the case so he looks back through his notes and it turns out that each route the man walked around the city blocks on each day makes a specific letter.

AE Wow

RLC There is this moment when the diagram is worked out, and the letters spell a name. It’s very scary actually. And the plot falls into place at that moment. But there is this wonderful notion of movement and of the city being physically written or diagrammed.

AE That reminds me of Tehching Hsieh going round New York in his One Year Performance 1981–1982 (Outdoor Piece) where he stayed outside for a year and made these amazing diagrams of where he has been every day. They are re-printed in Out of Now, The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh by Adrian Heathfield. Every day he would diagram his movements. Each one is a map of Manhattan and on it is a little written path correlating to his physical movement to the city. Not only is that documentation of that remarkable performance but it is also the text of the performance, it is a score, which in theory could be performed again.

[The Spirit of DB, excited, attains physical form in both RLC’s aunt’s living room and AE’s parent’s house.]
The Spirit of DB

In the work of Gabriel Orozco we find the production of objects that are diagrams, drawings, icons, sculptures, and paintings. The diagram is both end point and tentative proposition, between 1D and 3D, inanimate and animate, social scientist and insider-outsider artist. It’s multi-scaled. Orozco himself says: “You can look at the paintings as diagrams and think in terms of molecules, or atoms, or DNA chains, but at the same time they’re not claiming to be scientific, of course. They’re also ludic, they look childish and I think that is good also.”

I think this echoes a lot of what we have been exploring – that something about the present moment enables us to combine both the mechanistic sense of the diagram in, say, Shannon’s model of communications systems, and the way the diagram is an intuitive, gestural tool.

RLC

As part of Out of Now Adrian Heathfield responded critically to Hsieh’s performance by following part of his route around Manhattan, physically mapping his movements. He tried to last out for 24 hours, I think he only managed 12...

SCENE 7: ‘MAKING DIAGRAMS’

TAKE 2

[IN THE CAFÉ ON BRICK LANE DB IS FINISHING HIS EMAIL]

DB

Orozco talks about how important ‘disappointment’ is to his work. Yes, the diagram is disappointment. For all these possibilities, one cannot just present magazines full of diagrams. It lacks the commonality that language brokenly attains. Its possibilities remain resistant, its sociality is, well, odd. It tantalizes with its ambition, yet must be rationed. I say farewell to the diagram here.
writing between performance

A sequence
a possible list
description of an object

inadequate to the task

wrong.

A means of framing, introducing or explaining the subject
But failing to make it more than its elements.

Rearrange to make sense.

I stand in between
open-handed

always have

cueless
at sea.

The challenge has been to write not well
neither
clearly
nor expertly

but to understand writing as a condition and as a land
es
scape
that I inhabit as a reader writer.

Writing between performance I stand
undecided
in a world made only of the specific words either side of me
or the space that drops away at either end.

Before story
before list

dressed in the simplest of circumstances
in white linen
scrubbed
ready.
Pedagogy and [ ]

[As a score I am locating a good part of this guide, its work (work), off the page — in your (w)reading of it. It’s hard (hard). At times this might mean a struggle. This is where the W of (w)reading, which is to say the work (work), comes in. But grappling (with the work of [ ]) is all important. This guide — any guide? — is centrally concerned with how I (we) might speculate in writing as pedagogy. Or how I (we) might navigate, essay or try (work) the not already known for good friends or strangers.]

Repeat

or

[ ], in retaining its fluidity, currency or criticality is perhaps best guided or taught not as a distinct field of work (work) but instead as a process, an endeavour (work) or “a lens through which to view all writing practice” (email from JH to RLC on 20.02.2010 at 10.52am). As such, the pedagogic implications for [ ] run deep and weave throughout many of the texts included in this guide. Some are waywardly pedagogic, others have more regular scholarly lessons to teach. I assemble them here as an exercise in cramming or revision.
see Olson
work Projective Verse
think field composition, generative pages, objects, percussion, bodily pressure, breath

see Hall
work Reading (Illegible) Pages
think obfuscation, illegibility and difficulty

see Blanchot
work Communication and the Work
think Radical (W)reading, engagement and affect

see Bergvall
work What Do We Mean by [ ]?
think (k)not: Is [ ] not writing? Is it writing which performs not writes? Is it not performance which writes? But then does writing not perform?

see Hind
work Starting points and neglected spaces
think workshops on writing for chairs, or the dark corners of the space

see Shechner
work Performance Processes
think writing in/as/with these performance processes. [n.b. the text-boxes and diagrams]

see Marcolo
work Failing to do without: writing as classical documentation of post-classical choreographic documentation
think how might feature in a performance practice-based PhD

see MacDonald
work How to do things with words: textual typologies and doctoral writing
think on teaching writing in the Fine Arts

see Berridge
work THINK / THINK
think THINK

see Goldsmith
work Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing
think uncreative writing, concept, writing the before

see Bernstein
work Writing Experiments
for teaching poetry
The following text is from a piece by the company entitled Nature Theater of Oklahoma (after one of the earliest books defining a system of choreographic notation by baroque dance master Raoul-Auger Feuillet - Chorégraphie; ou l’art de décrire la danse.)

The text for the piece was created from a series of recorded phone conversations, in which the directors asked the company’s three main performers to describe in full detail the complex eight-minute dance they all do at the end of Act 1 of the company’s epic dinner theater melodrama, No Dice.

As the three performers have no formal training in dance and lack a common vocabulary to speak about it, each of them describe the same choreography quite differently (and with difficulty). What we are interested in is the process and effort of translation, or transcription, of the physical language of dance into the abstraction that is spoken English, and from there back into dance again.

The piece when performed is the staging of a process of translation and transcription which takes place in three parts. I should also mention that during performance, the original phone calls are played in-ear as a prompt, and the performer’s task is to stick as closely as possible to the exact description, including breaths, sighs, coughs, etc.

Part 1
Kelly, one of the directors, appears onstage in a professional showgirl dance costume and orally performs one of the descriptions. (The dance is left to the audience to imagine.) She walks off.

Part 2
A group of ten professional dancers is led onstage. Pavol, one of the other directors, introduces them one by one. They have only met the directors an hour before the show. They are told that this performance is actually an audition and that they will be eliminated based on their accurate and artful performance of the described dance moves.

(The audience is measuring and evaluating the performance of the dancers against the language they hear.) Kelly describes the dance, and one by one the dancers are eliminated until only two remain.

Part 3
Kelly again describes the dance to the two remaining who listen. She walks off and they are fitted with in-ear monitors. The music comes up, and the two dance as again the description is played on the in-ear. (The audience sees only the dance that they have just heard described. They hear no more language. They link the performance perhaps with their memory of its description.) The translation is complete. Chorégraphie premiered at Tanzquartier Wien in Vienna on April 13, 2008 as part of the performance panel: Nichts is aufregend. Nichts is sexy. Nicht is nicht peinlich.
We begin –
Jumping up and down …
Um – you’re making a –
Vague –
(Well, not vague … nothing’s vague.)
Uhmmm.

A kinda –
A – T-shape with your feet –
The – the right foot
Is coming in – the right heel is coming in for this one.
So, that leg is a little bit more bent –
Than the left – foot.

Uhm …
You're mostly jumping on your left foot.

And while you're doing the jumps –
Your – arms are going crazy, so ... the –
Left arm – is in – a loose fist …
With – uh, the thumb – extended.
And that’s –
Bending at the elbow.
So your arm is sticking –
OUT of your body –
And bending at the elbow …
And the first move the – the hand comes up.
So when you jump the – left hand comes up,
The – right arm – is –
You’ve got the index finger pointing –
And that’s going up, too, so –
Although the –

(pause)

The left arm is – is –
Just coming out from your – shoulder.
Bent elbow, and all of the move –
Movement comes from – the elbow,
You know, you don’t extend the – left arm.
The right arm is fully extended – above – your head.
So when you jump – um.
Your arms are –
Your right arm especially is extended

'Cause we gotta uh make this a really big
movement.
So that’s for a count of eight with the jumping.
Then – you’re – we’re gonna head –
Stage left.
And we’re still in a line here.
We stay in a line.
For this entire –
We travel together …
Uh.
Um.

The second move we’re – traveling stage left.
The – right arm is coming in a sweeping circle
from behind …
A li – it’s like your hand comes behind your
shoulder …
(that’s the goal ...)
And – and travels in front of you in this sweeping –
A sweeping circle.
Uhm.

(pause)

So.
And while you do that the left leg shoots out.
When the right leg JOINS the left –

When the right foot JOINS the – left foot,
You – snap.
With the left hand.
So.
Wi – it’s:
Circle with the arms,
Step with the left foot ...
Bring the right foot in,
SNAP!

(pause)

Uhmnn.
We got four of those.
As we’re traveling stage left.
Then – we’re gonna –
Bring it – tiiny bit back stage right –
With this – next move …
Where –
Uh, you step with the –
Right FOOT, toward your right
And as you’re doing that,
Your right arm is doing angular – movement.
This part is the part where we may not look completely in unison, because – we –
We choose how exactly we want to move our arms in that angle.
Uhm.
And it –
This is just bending at the elbow, too.
And moving the hand.
Again with the fingers – STUCK together.
Uh, and the thumb – separate.

Uhhm.
So we – step to the right …

(pause)

Uh, and –

(pause)

It’s: step and bring the left foot in.
So …
For both of those foot movements –
The arm is moving, so: angle,
(While you step with the – right),
Angle again when the left foot joins it.

Then we’ve got, uh – step, step step.
With –
Starting with the left foot, and pointing down with the left hand.

Uhhm.

(pause)

Now we’ve got –
Uhh.
The left hand – is – is – is going to shoot out with

the two fingers pointing –
So it’s like shoots out from the center …
And – and the leg is going to mimic –
The –
The movement of the arm.

So.
So – while – you balance on your right foot,
And the arm and the leg sweep out –
And when the leg – comes back,
When your foot comes back …

[This – this isn’t a traveling move, it – it’s all in place.]

...

// NT00 //
A Script About Fantastic Diagrams

VOICE/ROLES

TIME

PROCESS

LOOK

PAGE

TURN (x 87?)
INDEX
An impossible index of (W)reading Performance Writing compiled by its contributors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, Eric. Opus 17</td>
<td>(n.pub.)</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anderson, Eric. Opus 46</td>
<td>(n.pub.)</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Anderson, Eric. Opus 50</td>
<td>(n.pub.)</td>
<td>1964</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
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<td>criticism, exclusivity, partial, political</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>PW</td>
<td>book</td>
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<td>Bergvall, Caroline, Ciarán Maher. Say Parsley Arnolofini, 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>CRL</td>
<td>exhibition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bergvall, Caroline. Fig. Salt, 2005</td>
<td>poem, theatre, page, space, voice, landscape</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>DB</td>
<td>book</td>
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<td>speech, speculation, manifesto</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>CRL, CMD, B1C</td>
<td>P1433</td>
<td>speech</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernstein, Charles. Writing Experiments 1–92 University of Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Collaborative Surrealist Language Event (1) (for two or more people): One person writes down a question without showing it to anyone else; simultaneously, another person writes down an answer.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>RLC</td>
<td>online text</td>
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<td>Berridge, David, Rachel Lois Clapham, Alex Eisenberg</td>
<td>a script about fantastic diagrams in Dance Theatre Journal Issue 23 No.4 2010</td>
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<td>Beuys, Joseph.</td>
<td>Directives forces (Of a new society): Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA), London 1974</td>
<td>blackboard, lecture, action, chalk, no idea, enjoy, caretaker, fat off chair</td>
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<td>‘... where levity is given us, gravity does not lack.’</td>
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<td>action, doubleness, weight,</td>
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<td>communication model, Fluxus, score</td>
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<td>Butler, Octavia.</td>
<td>Survivor. 1978</td>
<td>speculative identity</td>
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<td>Six MEMOS for the Next Millennium. Harvard University Press 1998</td>
<td>started but did not finish</td>
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<td>The Big Sleep. Alfred A. Knopf 1939</td>
<td>performing disclosure</td>
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<td>Christie, Agatha.</td>
<td>Murder on the Orient Express. 1934</td>
<td>performing disclosure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clapham, Rachel Lois.</td>
<td>Inside Performance in Dance Theatre Journal Vol.23 No.3 2009 2 – 4</td>
<td>column</td>
<td>journal article</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clapham, Rachel Lois.</td>
<td>Inside Performance in Dance Theatre Journal Vol.23 No.2 2009 2 – 3</td>
<td>column</td>
<td>journal article</td>
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<td>text<a href="#">footnotes, wandering, serialized essay, dispersed ec</a></td>
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<td>De’Ath, Amy.</td>
<td>Listened to 25.03.09 Openned poetry</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>text</td>
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<td>Deeney, John.</td>
<td>Writing Live: 1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Delany, Samuel.</td>
<td>Dahlgren</td>
<td>Bantam 1975</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>text</td>
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<td>Derrida, Jacques.</td>
<td>Signature Event Context in Limited Inc Northwestern University 1977</td>
<td></td>
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<td>text</td>
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<td>Dickens, Charles.</td>
<td>Bleak House, 1852–1853</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>text</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Essais sur la peinture Salons 1759, 1761 and 1763. Hermann 1984</td>
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<td>Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present Thames &amp; Hudson 2001</td>
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<td>Title</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page Numbers</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Journal Article</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>Online Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goldsmith, Kenny</td>
<td>Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing</td>
<td>uncreative writing, concept, writing the aura</td>
<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>online text</td>
<td><a href="http://www.epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/conceptual_paragraphs.html">www.epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/conceptual_paragraphs.html</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goode, Chris</td>
<td>Listened to 10.11.08</td>
<td>openned poetry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hall, John</td>
<td>Missing Persons: Personal Pronouns in Performance Writing in Performance Research Vol.3, No.1 Spring 1998 87–90</td>
<td>'I is I but you means a text, a conversation. And in that moment everyone else is not (quite) written.'</td>
<td></td>
<td>RLC, JH</td>
<td>a0289</td>
<td>journal article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, John</td>
<td>Performance Writing in Performance Research Journal Vol.11, No.3, September 2006 84–91</td>
<td>seems to be used in three broad senses 1. as a convenient generic term for the production of scripts or script-like texts, including play-scripts and film scripts: writing for performance 2. to refer to a field of practice and enquiry in which both words are seen as in a necessarily troublesome but productive relationship with each other 3. the writing of evaluative reports on the ‘performance’ of employees.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>RLC, JH</td>
<td>a0290</td>
<td>journal article</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, John</td>
<td>Performed Through: Grammar for Performance Writers in Performance Research Vol.2, No.3 1997 68–72</td>
<td>organ, tongue, actualisation, doing, vehicle, context</td>
<td></td>
<td>JH</td>
<td>journal article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hall, John</td>
<td>Sentenced To: Grammar for Performance Writers in Performance Research Vol.1, No.1 Spring 1996 98–102</td>
<td>punctuation, breath, reader, performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>JH</td>
<td>journal article</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Hall, John</td>
<td>Thirteen Ways of Talking about Performance Writing. Plymouth College of Art Press 2008</td>
<td>'X is a performance writer she writes pages and she writes performance she performs writing she forms writing which informs performance…’</td>
<td></td>
<td>RLC, JH</td>
<td>a0110</td>
<td>book</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Shattered Anatomies: Traces of the body in performance. Arnolfini Press 1997</td>
<td>Pitch your literary questions to the objects in this collection. Endeavour (seriously) to write the answers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>p099</td>
<td>book</td>
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<td>Title</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
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<td>First Performance</td>
<td>n.pub.</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hendricks, Jon</td>
<td>Fluxus Codex</td>
<td>Harry N. Abrams Inc</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td></td>
<td>book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hind, Claire</td>
<td>Starting points and neglected spaces</td>
<td>Cross-Arts Publications</td>
<td>1994–2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>text</td>
<td>CH P1433</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, R. Justin, Danae Theodoridou</td>
<td>10 Performances</td>
<td>Jubilee Theatre</td>
<td>Roehampton University</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>performance</td>
<td>RLC P1417</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jow, Lindsay</td>
<td>Listened to 02.05.08</td>
<td></td>
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<td>reading</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kavan, Anna</td>
<td>Asylum Piece</td>
<td>Jonathan Cape</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td></td>
<td>book</td>
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<td>Ruskin, John</td>
<td><em>Unto This Last: Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy. Oxford University Press</em> 1877</td>
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<td><em>Captain Walter Arnold: A play in Geography and Plays</em></td>
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<td>106–114</td>
<td>journal article</td>
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<td><em>The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine, Fire Extinguisher in Collection Dada</em></td>
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<td>n. pub.</td>
<td>1916</td>
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<td><em>Declaration of Intent in Statements Seth Siegelaub</em></td>
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<td>1968</td>
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<td>'Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.'</td>
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<td>Wellman, Mac</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<td>Wilde, Oscar</td>
<td><em>The Decay of Lying in Intentions. Osgood, James R.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
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<td>criticism, brutal humour</td>
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// RLC //
Touchstones

or

Finger / ing a historical lineage (Pointing literally and literarily)

Here are some early touchstones of [ ]; historical examples I was drawn to finger by way of declaration, quotation, tribute, but also out of a concern with physicality, pressing on these works and showing my hand.

(Mallarmé Un Coup de Dés Jamais N’Abolira Le Hasard (detail))

Touched March 6th 2010 14.30 in the British Library, Reading Room, Boston Spa, desk 10

Feeling nervous that I might be seen touching this slightly too enthusiastically

Feels like it has a corset; the pages pulling away from the centre showing the binding eyeholes. Characterized by water damage that has stiffened some of the pages. Pencil annotations are possibly Mallarmé’s own.

(Pound In a Station of the Metro (detail))

Touched March 15th 2010 13.00 in the British Library, Reading Room, Boston Spa, desk 3

Feeling quite glad I’m experiencing this on its original page rather than transposed into a contemporary typeface on a computer screen or printed from an inkjet printer.

Feels fragile, crumbly, dusty and papery. Possibly over used. Beyond repair.

(Apollinaire It’s Raining (detail))

Touched March 15th 2010 14.30 in the British Library, Reading Room, Boston Spa, desk 3

Feeling just caught my finger in shot as it was withdrawing from the work veering towards the French.

Feels strangely contemporary

(Blast Manifesto (detail))

Touched March 20th 2010 13.00 in the British Library, Reading Room, Boston Spa, desk 10

Feeling bold

Feels machine produced – but only just.

Writing Experiment

95. Press @ to get closer to the text.

// RLC //