

PSi#19

NOW THEN" Performance and Temporality

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Ticking and Leaping

Performance doesn't fully belong to abstract time divided into a series of measurable, interchangeable, and equivalent units, nor to a free flowing time that knows no distinctions and quantities. Every performance generates its unique temporal identity. It is always positioned within conceptual scissors that recent theories of temporality seem unable to resolve. Within modernity, conceptual investigations of time seem to dwell on a deep rift within the very concept of time. So, Henri Bergson distinguishes between a linear, continuous and homogenous time adapted to the needs of language and space, and a pure duration with multiple rhythms and flows. On the other side of the philosophical spectrum, Martin Heidegger maintains a separation between temporality as a primordial phenomenon of authentic being and what he calls public time or world time. And back to the resurgence of vitalist philosophy, so influential in performance studies, Gilles Deleuze speaks of Chronos that takes the present moment as time's only existing facet, thus relegating past and future to its two dimensions, and Aion as a past-future of infinitely divisible abstract moment that sidesteps the present. The list goes on, all the way to the split between vulgar commodification of time and queer temporalities seen as discontinuous, multiple and ever resisting homogenization. Performance can't escape time-keeping, whether it is a split-second performance, or a durational performance that takes days, weeks, months or even years to complete (for example, Tom Marioni's one-second sculpture, which he will present in this conference, and John Cage's composition organ2/ASLSP, the performance of which started in a church in Halberstadt, Germany in September 2001, and is projected to last until the year 2639). At the same time, it defies limitations of any kinds by evading the present, leaping into the future, and devising strategies of multiple time tracks. It is both a time slot firmly rooted in an Augustinian idea of time as passage of moments from past, to present, to future, and an experience that originates from an anticipated future and slips directly into the time of memory. The former gives itself to visual representation, the latter actively opposes it.

Call for Papers

"Now then" as an adverbial form opens time as a modality of manner, not a thing: not a series of points, nor a line, nor even a circle. The adverbial contradiction nowthen, both nonsensical and functional, points to that aspect of performance which vanishes, but also persists, accumulates,

anticipates, truncates, forecloses, syncopates, pauses, hurries, retards, accelerates, stops, starts, repeats ... in time.

This conference seeks to bring forward the complexity of temporality in performance by inviting submissions that address this theme in its many variations. Further, performance studies has the potential to establish a unique take on the politics of time. Instead of alleviating social and economic injustices and inequalities, new technologies and new economies have aggressively pushed them from spatial to temporal dimensions of labor. Free time is not leisure time; we invite you to explore this and other paradoxes of neoliberalism. Also, the question of temporality is inseparable from question of history. This conference invites papers and presentations that examine performance studies' contributions to existing methodologies in historiography. "Now Then" also invites presentations on our discipline's institutional history. The first Performance Studies conference held at NYU in 1995, "The Future of the Field," inherently positioned the field as a forward-looking discipline. Now, in the future, we hope to create an opportunity for focused and rigorous reflection on the paradoxical notion of the past anterior that can be seen as the paradigmatic situation of performance.