How the Concept of Performativity Travels: Between People and Media

Mieke Bal

Abstract: This article examines how the concepts of performance and performativity can neither be merged nor firmly distinguished. The author calls on her own practice as a video-maker and academic thinker, establishing a dialogue between the two activities. She borrows extensively from the work of a colleague, with examples from photography, considering collegiality also a form of performativity. The conceptualisation helps argue for a shift from activist to activating art.

This paper concerns the concept of performativity, which is inseparable from its "other half," performance. I am submitting it for an international audience without proposing its universal validity. I have always been very interested in concepts. That interest concerns the usefulness of the following succinct bits of thought. In 2002, I began to also make video art. The initial occasion for it was simply social – standing up for a neighbour, an "undocumented migrant," who had been treated profoundly unfairly by the police and, by proxy, in my name as an EU citizen. I wanted to make a testimonial film. It ended up in artistic circuits, which turned me willy-nilly into an artist. What makes that second line of my work relevant for this essay is the change in forms of perception.[1]

Concepts are mini-theories that help us do our work of cultural analysis to the best of our abilities. I consider concepts useful principally for three reasons and in three respects:

- First: for *precision* and *explicitness* and for the sake of communication in intersubjectivity (discussions) and teachability (empowering students on the basis of equality);
- Second: for the mode by which they are brought to bear on *cultural objects* for the sake of analytical effectiveness and to *do justice* to the object, allowing the object

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1   See my book on concepts and the way they transform according to contexts (Bal 2002).

to "speak back," to resist projections and misguided appropriations in our inter-pretations. An object considered with enough care and precision (as with what we used to call "close reading") becomes in fact a *subject*, and the analysis a dialogue between analysing and analysed subjects, with concepts acting as mediators;

- Third: for their "travels" from geographical, temporal, and medial backgrounds to others of their kind. They also travel from disciplinary fields to others and, as I will address below, also between authors, including colleagues.

Only when we have taken these three considerations on board can concepts be truly useful for our work as cultural analysts, without the rigidity that stultifies and thus paralyses a concept as well as without overextension and sloppiness, which leads to vagueness. This was the primary point of my book on the subject. And, although that book is now quite old already, I have been able to uphold this point.[2]

Performativity is an utterly meaningful instance of a concept that needs to be taken seriously in view of those three aspects and requirements. Only then can it do the work in our dialogue between the analyst and the object-turned-subject that we need in order to acquire new knowledge and insight. It is prone to misuse by over-use, resulting in the vagueness I mentioned as a primary risk. Thus, with precision in mind, the concept of *performativity* needs to be clearly distinguished from *performance*; however, the connections between those two must also remain openly in sight. To grasp the ways in which that concept has travelled and still travels, it also needs to be positioned *historically* so that changes in its conceptualisation and use can be mapped out. This requires revisiting, for example, John Langshaw Austin, John Rogers Searle, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Pamela Butler, to mention just the most influential theorists of performativity. And not only theorists should be revis-ited but also historically specific practices. In view of the concept of performativity's *geographical* travel, I was excited to be invited to give an earlier version of this paper in a seminar that was part of a collaboration between Linnaeus University in Växjö, Sweden and Nanjing University, China, guaranteeing, I imagine, that the changes which occurred when the concept *travelled* to other continents and to different cul-tural contexts were held up against the light, allowing new case studies to be achieved. In the framework of the Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies,

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2 "Cultural analysis" is what I have done throughout my career as a scholar as well as later as a video artist. In 1994, twenty-five years ago, I co-founded the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis to develop this field as an interdisciplinary, theory-based engagement with cultural artefacts.

which was the hosting context there, the travel between media remains an important question.[3]

This felt like a lucky topic, not only because I have been involved in intermedial travel ever since, but in 2002, I began to make films as an intermedial practice between cultural analysis in discursive writing and filmmaking as an audio-visual one. When I wrote *Travelling Concepts*, I did not yet have any experience with complex travel from a singular medium such as, say, written language, to a complex one such as cinema, which integrates media traits and modalities from language, sound, music, image, theatre, and that primary element of travel: *movement*. Media and modes are intertwined. That complexity assists us in achieving more profound analyses.

I will briefly sum up my own intermediality experience. At first, I made films to do justice to the people who constitute and make the culture the aspects of which I was interested in studying. For this, I made documentaries *with* rather than *about* people. Thus, the people who were to be the "objects" of study became true participants: not as "natives" supposed to know best (who in fact don't because they take their cultural properties non-reflectively for granted), nor as "subjects" of representations "subjected" to the camera. Instead, they participated both in their personal choices of what to present and what to keep discreet and in their own and our cinematic choices, especially in the editing. A few of these were, in fact, recordings of performances within which moments of performativity occurred.[4]

Then, a bit later, I began to practice what is usually termed "transmediation" between literature or philosophy and film and video installation. Making films based on novels is not, in my opinion, a practice of adaptation, with the erroneous requirement of "fidelity." Rather, I consider films based on novels *responses* to or analyses of the novels in a dialogue that includes the media themselves. To audio-visualise philosophical ideas seemed a pretty daunting challenge, but challenges push us to move forward. Such responding works demonstrate keenly how intermediality is *not,* or not only, or not always, an issue of showing the same plot, characters, and other elements known from an earlier source in what Elleström (2021) calls media transformation or transmediation. There is nothing "the same" between the two works. Instead, the responding work offers a specific interpretation of the earlier work and thereby reverses the chronology, showing us a different novel (if a novel is

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3 See Elleström (2021) for an extensive (two-volume) anthology on intermediality.

4 See this page from my website http://www.miekebal.org/artworks/films/ for information and photographs. For reasons of discretion, I do not post entire films online. A book on this mixed practice is currently in press (2022).

the source work) than we assumed it to be. Therein lies the performativity of such responding artworks. The later work changes, transforms, the earlier one, which is no longer what it was before the response refracted it.[5]

Making films in response to philosophical ideas, to give another example, requires something like audio-visualising the *process* of thinking, as well as demonstrating how the ideas work in social practice, rather than declaiming the resulting ideas in the abstract mode in which the philosopher had supposedly written them. Performativity comes in when this brings an actualised, reframed, and more concrete understanding to the older work. This can no longer be considered a *constative* knowledge-producing addition to information, but something that partly replaces information with something that is *affectively active*. And that is where the performative partly overrules the constative.[6]

Without going into the issues these films raise, I draw on the insights my dual, spiraling practice of going back and forth between the object to be analysed and the audio-visual interpretative response to it, reflecting on transmediation as a process of a never-ending mobilisation of affect, has yielded. This is why I prefer the term *intermediality*, with the preposition *inter-* denoting relationality, which is by definition mutual and temporally "hovering," rather than *trans-* which seems to assume the passage through is one-sided and leaves the original or source unaffected.

Making installations complicates intermediality even more. For, a third medium is brought into the picture: installation or exhibition. That is, curating in space and curating space respectively. Space participates in video performativity effects quite strongly. I am not referring to the profilmic space or the "set" where the footage is recorded, although the specific features of the set may enhance or inflect the affective performativity of the work. Rather, I consider the space of the installation itself also to be a medium. The effects and meanings produced by the installed video pieces change according to how they are disposed, the kind of space they are in, and their configuration. This makes installing, or curating, also a medium. I have recently been involved in co-curating exhibitions based on my 16-channel video installation *Don Quijote: Sad Countenances*, which has driven this point on the participation of space home with acute specificity.

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5 See Elleström 2021. For a somewhat different take on the subject, see my article on adaptation (2017). On the problematic standard of "fidelity," the leading scholar of adaptation studies has published a definitive critique (Leitch 2003).

6 On this issue, see my article "Thinking in Film" (2020) regarding a film I made on René Descartes. On the film and the installation pieces, see http://www.miekebal.org/artworks/films/reasonable-doubt/.

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In this project, I have specifically explored how theatricality can help turn the museum into a theatre with something as simple as providing seating so that visitors are encouraged to take or, rather, give time to the works. But this raises a prior question: what is, or how can we consider, theatricality? Which in turn, as an epistemological doubt, raises the question as to whether a definition is what is primarily needed to grasp what theatricality is and does. Theatre scholar Kati Röttger (2010, 381) considers theatricality "a specific mode of perception, a central figure of representation, and an analytic model of crises of representation that can be traced back to changes in the material basis of linguistic behaviour, cultures of perception, and modes of thinking." This multi-tentacled description cannot be considered a definition. It gives theatricality many functions and foregrounds its participation in thinking as well as in its inherent *intermediality*. That intermediality is of primary interest to me and in the humanities today. And theatre and performance scholar Maaike Bleeker gives theatricality the critical edge that my video work seeks to achieve when she calls it "a critical vision machine" with a thorough exploration of how that would work.[7]

In my attempt to grasp additional nuances of the concept of performativity, I will give a brief comment on the issue of precision, my motivation to remain keen on conceptual work. The main problem as well as opportunity of this particular concept may well be the quite banal issue of the adjective or qualifier derived from it. I have often witnessed analytical thinking going awry simply because the researcher failed to take into consideration that the qualifier "performative" applies to both performance and performativity. This leads to confusion. However, in the historical, intertemporal travel, separating the two rigorously is not so easy either. This ambiguity of the in-between of these two concepts is its unique intellectual challenge and treasure. In a nutshell: whereas its inventor J. L. Austin ([1962] 1975) initially considered only a special category of words as performative, he also implied that certain moods, such as the imperative, are performative. But Austin was rightly criticised for that categorisation, as well as for excluding literature and fiction in general from his theory because it was "not serious." John Searle pointed out that all utterances do something and are thus performative. Therefore, the later specification of the illocutive and perlocutive aspects of all utterances, distinguishing between intention and effect, took hold. Jacques Derrida (1988) insisted on the iterability of all speech acts. This makes sense if we consider the means of communication that language is. Derrida's insistence made it possible for Judith Butler (1993) to theo-

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7   See Bleeker 2008, 64. Through detailed analyses, Bleeker demonstrates in her publications (2008, 2009) how productive such a concept of theatricality can be for a political art that is not bound to a political thematic.

rise sexual identity by means of these concepts. It allowed her to propose that gender and sex emerge through the repeated (iterated) conformance to the cultural concepts of both, a repetition that allows slow change from within. This leaves us with the need to place performance in relation to performativity. For, according to Butler's theory, it is through repeated performances that sex and gender are established, which is the result of the performativity of the performance itself.

Another aspect that contributes to the difficulty of disentangling and connecting the two concepts is their respective theoretical context. Both concepts come from a different area of thought and scholarship. The word *performance* does not come from philosophy of language, as does performativity, but from art practice and studies. Most commonly, a performance is the execution of a range of "artistic making and doing." In his very useful, characteristically lucid, and highly recommended discussion of performativity, Jonathan Culler (2007) mentions performance in connection to the misunderstanding of the *reception* of Butler's performative theory of gender in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990), which mistook the theory as implying a theatrical performance and the free choice of doing such performances. This misunderstanding was caused by erroneously confusing the two and considering only one of the concepts, performance, as autonomous from the other.

Butler addressed that misconception in her next book *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (1993) and explained gender difference in terms of performance and performativity in the entanglement I have just outlined. To come up with another of my academic slogans: in order to achieve *performativity*, you must repeatedly *perform*. The difference significantly hinges on the crux Culler so effectively identified in Derrida's shift from intention and singularity to convention and iterability. And given my life-long battle against intentionalist interpretation – basically because it disempowers the critic or reader and encourages unwarranted projection – I was quite happy about that distinction. The rigid separation of the two concepts of *performance* and *performativity* "performs," so to speak, a reconfirmation of individual intention as generative of meaning and effect, and that to me seems utterly wrong. Meaning-making happens in the dialogue between sender and receiver, and that dialogue is not the delivery of a ready-made package from a sender to a passive receiver.[8]

I have learned from my current intense involvement in making a work of video art based on or, rather, responding to that monument of cultural heritage, Miguel de Cervantes's world-famous masterpiece *Don Quijote*, a response which has already

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8 I have developed this critique of intentionalism in the relevant chapter of *Travelling Concepts*.

been exhibited in four different contexts in one year, frequently in a context where art making and academic research go hand in hand. In light of this experience, I propose considering *intermediality* itself as performative in both senses of the word. To simplify, there is inevitably a performance by actors who speak the lines from and enact the gestures described in the historic novel – selected on the basis of a specific interpretation. This performance is already intermedial. Those performances achieve performativity in that, as such, whenever the pieces have been made, they cease to function as distinct communicative "media products." This is Lars Elleström's term, which opens the linguistic source terms 'text' and 'utterance' to a media-unspecific wider use. As performative in the performativity sense, this occurs by definition *in the present*. The visitor's participation, different in each act of perception, cannot avoid connecting what is seen – the performances, recorded at another time and borrowed from a novel from yet another time – to the present within which they are doing the viewing, hearing, or other forms of perception. The resulting interpretation each visitor is free to come up with is triggered by performativity.

I am using the experience of *making* as a source for theorising and conceptually understanding what is at stake in performativity as a concept that travels between media and deploys its "other," performance, to conduct that travel. Now, what is to be gained by bringing these concepts to bear on this kind of artwork that aims to revitalise works from what is now called "cultural heritage"? I am only talking about responding works that avoid falling into the trap of the genre of the historical costume drama. This is a historiographic trap: most media products place the new work safely at a distance in the past so that contemporary perceivers need not feel worried about what they see. This is the wrong attitude, an abuse of historicity for escapism. I seek to move out of the narrowly defined realm of adaptation, yet take on board the obvious fact that a monument of world literature such as *Don Quijote* cannot be *addressed*, as I prefer to call it (rather than adapted), without considering the relationship (as in the preposition *inter*-) between the older text and what we can do with it *in and for the present*. Bracketing the issues of adaptation that have usefully led the prominent adaptation studies scholar Thomas Leitch (2003) to his classical enumeration of no less than twelve fallacies in that field, I am interested in looking how media can *exchange* modalities in order to achieve a performativity that, instead of neglecting the interlocutor text, makes elements or, rather, aspects of it stand out, come to life again, in a new performance that emanates performativity; hence, an act in the present.

For this purpose, I take what I have called the "pre-posterous" historical view, that is, the anachronistic back-and-forth travel between the present and past, as my

starting point, as a canvas on which to paint the theory of performativity (Bal 1999). On that basis I aim to connect to Lars Elleström's four modalities of media. He lists these four as material, sensorial, spatiotemporal, and semiotic (2021). I endorse the list but not quite Elleström's qualification of the first three as "pre-semiotic" and only the final one as semiotic. To offer a small amendment, I would suggest that the first three, each in their own way, participate fully in the semiotic, which is the meaning-giving activity to which the recipient is – performatively! – compelled. They are not pre-semiotic. Material, sensorial, and spatiotemporal modalities together facilitate an ongoing process of *affective* meaning-making that impacts the kind of performativity at work, which, in turn, qualifies the moods and modes of meaning-making that can occur. This qualifies the social-cultural effect of the public domain in which art happens. Understanding the socio-political impact of performativity is, in the end, the grounding of the concept and the point of its use.[9]

The primary goal of the video work *Don Quijote* is to modify museum practice, endorsing theatricality and, through the presence of the visitor, not in front of but outside, the "play." The goal is to implicate the visitors, an implication compelled materially and sensorially, in order to make them offer *empathy*. Needless to say, this is a goal of performativity, and the display itself must achieve it as much as the content of the pieces. For the discussion of performativity, I will include a form of conceptual travel that matters enormously: that which occurs between colleagues coming from different areas of expertise.

In this respect, I am calling in Ernst van Alphen, with whom I have exchanged ideas for a very long time. Since he is my usual accomplice in crime, I gladly acknowledge that most of my work always passes through his very critical hands first. For this paper, I selected three examples of performativity in different media from his work, along with the impossibility to distinguish media as such from the intermediality that keeps roaring its head when performativity occurs. All three instances Alphen alleges as performativity-generating, are both medium-specific and emerged from medial innovation, and in all three, the distinction between performance and performativity matters, while, at the same time, the merging of the two remains difficult to disentangle. Historically, they have travelled and must be positioned. Most importantly, all three show the social-political impact of performativity. I had expected to write this paper together with him, but he could not make it to the conference for which this was initially written. Please consider it as co-authored with him.

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9   For a recent anthology on affect, see Alphen and Jirsa (2019), especially the article by Alphen himself, which uses paintings by Francis Bacon as his case.

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The first example is the photography of Fredrick Douglass. This happened at a time when photography was a new medium. Sitting for the daguerreotypes took much time and demanded performance skills from the sitter. Thanks to social media and especially the webcam, the second example is the use of images that would formerly be seen as pornographic. The third example is the use of video in public exhibitions, which brings out a key form of performativity, perhaps the strongest one: *provocation*.

About Douglass's performative performances, Alphen wrote:

> The long posing for daguerreotype images also requires presence of mind and composure. One should be in control of one's emotions and actions. American abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) understands this required composure as a form of self-possession, symbolically announcing freedom and the end of slavery. There is for him a vital link between art in general and reform, and more specifically between photography and freedom. Photography is important for achieving freedom and uprooting racism. There is also no other figure who has been photographed so much in American history of the 19th century, especially daguerreotype images [. . .] (van Alphen 2019a, 5)

I find this important because it demonstrates the social-political relevance of performativity as a concept. It helps us understand why and how performativity matters.[10] Quoting from Douglass, Alphen writes:

> Photographic portraits provide dignity to the sitters for these portraits. When someone's picture is taken "there is even something statue-like about such men": "See them when or where you will, and unless they are totally off guard, they are serenely sitting or rigidly standing in what they fancy their best attitude for a picture" (Douglass 128). Douglass suggests that posing for a portrait *performatively produces dignity*. The image is not seen in terms of its *likeness* to the sitter, but as actively producing a *truth* about the sitter that results from his posing and other aesthetic elements in the image. The sitter discovers this truth of having dignity when he sees the image taken of him. [. . .] He considers this production, or revelation of truth, the social force of pictures. This makes it understandable that he gave a long lecture on daguerreotypes and other photographic portraits in a speech which was supposed to be about the abolition of slavery. (van Alphen 2019a, 5)

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10   The three examples are derived from Alphen's books on photography (2018) and on the archive as an artistic medium (2014).

The importance of performativity, connected to the reiteration of or the long duration inherent in the then-new medium and to the way illocution and perlocution collaborate, is stated a bit later in the analysis when he broaches a topic important in cultural analysis: "Although he was not the photographer, he is the author of his own portraits. That is why his portraits are indirectly self-portraits. Having these portraits made of him is 'a process of soul-awakening self-revelation' (Douglass 169). As a former slave, Douglass needed this self-confirmation through portraiture repetitively." (van Alphen 2019a, 6) This statement binds the medium, the genre of portraiture, and the political relevance together in a performativity-generating performance.

The example demonstrates the intermediality between, say, individual as well as group psychology and its social performance, and photography, which Douglass preferred strongly to painting, also for political reasons. What the "media product" of the former is, other than Douglass's own autobiographical statements and the discourses around it, remains unspecific, yet, of course, very relevant. But it is no less crucial to understand the performativity that merges out of his media-specific practice.

The second example is almost the opposite. Alphen analysed what German artist Hito Steyerl has termed "poor images," the non-professional, low-production-quality images that circulate on the internet. He wrote (and this is a patchwork of quotes from his 2017 essay):

> The explosion of information since the 1990s through digital media has had as its effect the implosion of meaning with the release of affects as a result. This happened and happens most of all through the dissemination of images. [. . .] The intimate relation between the implosion of meaning and the release of affects is demonstrated by the recent "post-truth" regime in populist politics, especially, but not exclusively, in the US. This regime accommodates flagrant lies and contradictions in order to produce its own truth as affect. (van Alphen 2017, 82)

In an analysis of Thomas Ruff's nude photographs, blown-up stills from webcam porn, Alphen (2017, 88) writes: "The stakes of this generic exploration demonstrate a paradigmatic revolution in visual culture, namely the transformation of visuality defined by voyeuristic positions into one determined by exhibitionist positions." This is crucial. He explains:

> Conventional pornography in photography and film always relies on two crucial components. First of all, its *reality effect*. This explains why pornography is always realistic; sexual stimulation by means of modernist or postmodernist texts or images seems to be unconceivable. The other crucial element is the *voyeuristic gaze* it enables. The viewer is outside of the scene that he looks at, belonging to another world. This voyeuristic positioning provides power and pleasure to the

viewer. Both defining elements of pornography seem to be missing in the poor images of Internet pornography, and even more so in the enhanced poor images of Thomas Ruff. The poor images do not function like windows through which the viewer voyeuristically gazes at sexual action. They are rather opaque screens onto which the viewer can project his fantasy in order to be part of the scene he is watching. (van Alphen 2017, 90–92)

Needless to say, the reversal of voyeurism into exhibitionism has enormous cultural consequences. This is where the concept of performativity becomes a tool for critical cultural analysis. Alphen explains:

This use of the webcam is so extraordinary because voyeurism, a crucial aspect of more traditional visual technologies, is now overshadowed by its complementary other: exhibitionism. This exhibitionism is not only exploited in the sex industry. Most webcam images shown on the Internet are utterly boring. Showing these images seems to be more important than seeing them. The transformation caused by the webcam is that for the first time there are now more people who want to be looked at than people who want to watch. (van Alphen 2017, 96)

With regards to my interest in intermediality and the concept's "travel," when the performativity is so massive that we can almost despairingly wonder if this can still be analysed, what matters most is the explanation of what it is, exactly, that *changes* as a result of performativity. The issue is not moralistic, as in conceptions of what is proper. Alphen's conclusion lays out the more general cultural-political relevance of this discussion when he foregrounds the affective consequence:

It is precisely in this displacement from voyeurism to exhibitionism that the intensities of affective mechanisms are released. When using the terms voyeurism and exhibitionism, I am no longer applying them in the more limited erotic sense. [. . .] I use them in a more general sense, indicating a distinction between a *passive consumerist* attitude and a more *active* attitude of self-positioning of those distributing the information. (van Alphen 2017, 107)

This reversal, then, can also be seen in a very positive light: from passive to active, and from consumerism to production. This connects to what I advocate as *activating* art, rather than activist art.

This reversal is also at stake in the last example I draw from Alphen's work, his analysis of the provocative and much-contested video works by Polish artist Artur Żmijewski: *Game of Tag* (1999) and *80064* (2005) (van Alphen 2019b). Żmijewski makes videos related to the Holocaust and gets systematically in trouble because the films are considered an insult to victims and survivors. But what he is really doing is

provoking Polish people to reconsider their own attitude during the war and now, later, their affective investment in their innocence and victimhood. What matters in this example is that the performativity of the "speech act," or audio-visual utterance, "overshoots its target" because it is not recognised as performative; it is misunderstood as a constative speech act. Alphen adds:

> But even acknowledged as performative, it is often not clear in what kind of situation or event the provocative speech-act should result. [. . .] In the case of the Holocaust a rather limited number of performatives is considered as acceptable. Acceptable, because of a strong post-Holocaust morality, which stipulates what we should and what we shouldn't do in relation to the Holocaust's past and victims. The two performatives that are pre-scribed as morally responsible and necessary are those of teaching and commemoration. (van Alphen 2019b, 82)

This qualification brings in something not systematically considered when we discuss performativity: the social-political values attached to these concepts, which come from their earlier contexts. Alphen (2019b, 83) foregrounds this on terms that helps us grasp the connection between performativity and affect: "Instead of the right attitude, we, later generations, need affective investments in the Holocaust and an understanding of our affective investments because it is due to this understanding that we can be ethical instead of moral in our thinking. According to Jill Bennett it is precisely such an understanding that distinguishes ethical from moral art." And he quotes from Jill Bennett (2005), another colleague with whom I am closely in permanent discussion: "An ethics is enabled and invigorated by the capacity for transformation; that is precisely by not assuming that there is a given outside to thinking. A morality on the other hand, operates within the bounds of a given set of conventions, within which social and political problems must be solved (15)." (Quoted in Alphen 2019b, 83)

Alphen pursues this:

> The given set of conventions of how to adopt the right attitude towards the Holocaust stifles a sincere ethics; it results in a Holocaust morality, or in the words of Walter Benn Michaels, "ethical kitsch". For the ultimate goal of a sincere, effective ethics concerns our social behaviour, behaviour which might substantiate the conventional slogan "never again". (van Alphen 2019b, 83–84)

The qualifier "sincere" is derived from a book we edited together in which Bennett also participated (see Alphen, Bal, and Smith 2009).

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"Never again?" Well… what I wanted to foreground in this sampling from colleagues is not only the need to discuss and listen to one another, but to consider and accept that concepts can be most helpful when brought in with the precision necessary for intersubjective understanding. Collegiality stands for that intersubjectivity. But it is just as important, I submit, to connect concepts to their political relevance and, in that quest, to their "cousins," their context, their histories, their frames, and their travels. Because culture, the artefacts we study, is vitally important for the social fabric in which and thanks to which we live.

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Mieke Bal – author of 45 books and supervisor of 81 finished PhDs, the cultural theorist, critic, video artist and curator. Bal writes in an interdisciplinary perspective on cultural analysis, literature and art, focusing on gender, migratory culture, the critique of capitalism, and political art. In 2002 she began to also make films as a different (more in-depth and more contemporary) mode of cultural analysis. Since then, writing, filmmaking and curating go together. In her 2022 book *Image-Thinking* (UP Edinburgh) she develops her ideas about how to integrate academic and artistic thinking. As a filmmaker, she made a number of experimental documentaries, mostly about migratory situations, and "theoretical fictions," films and installations in which fiction helped developing difficult ideas. *Madame B* (2014) was exhibited in the Munch Museum in Oslo in combination with works by Edvard Munch. *Reasonable Doubt* (2016), on René Descartes and Queen Kristina of Sweden, also travelled. Then she made a 16-channel video-installation *Don Quijote: Sad Countenances* (2019) and a short essay film *It's About Time! Reflections on Urgency* (2020).
www.miekebal.org
e-mail: mieke.g.bal[at]gmail.com

S U M M A R Y

Kuidas performatiivsuse mõiste rändab: inimeste ja meedia vahel
M i e k e   B a l

Märksõnad: adaptatsioon, mõisted, visuaalne-kujundlik mõtlemine, interdistsiplinaarus, etendus, performatiivsus, teatraalsus

Resümee: Artikkel uurib, kuidas etenduse ja performatiivsuse mõisteid ei saa ühitada ega selgelt eristada. Autor tugineb oma kogemusele videorežissööri ja akadeemilise mõtlejana, luues dialoogi nende kahe tegevuse vahel. Kolleegi fotograafia-alastest töödest lähtudes arutleb ta kolleegiaalsuse kui performatiivsuse ühe vormi üle. See kontseptsioon viib tõdemuseni, et kunsti kui aktivismi juurest tuleks liikuda aktiveeriva kunsti juurde.

Mieke Bal – 45 raamatu autor ja 81 kaitstud doktoritöö juhendaja, kultuuriteoreetik, kriitik, videokunstnik ja kuraator. Bal kirjutab interdistsiplinaarsest perspektiivist kultuurianalüüsist, kirjandusest ja kunstist, keskendudes sugupoolele, rändavale kultuurile, kapitalismi kriitikale ja poliitilisele kunstile. Aastal 2002 hakkas ta tegema ka filme, mida peab kultuurianalüüsi spetsiifiliseks (sügavamaks ja nüüdisaegsemaks) viisiks. Sellest alates on kirjutamine, filmide tegemine ja näituste kureerimine käinud käsikäes. Raamatus „Visuaalne-kujundlik mõtlemine" (2022, UP Edinburgh) arendas ta edasi oma ideed, kuidas ühendada akadeemilist ja kunstilist mõtlemist. Režissöörina on ta teinud mitmeid eksperimentaalseid dokumentaalfilme, peamiselt rännuolukordadest, ja „teoreetilisi fiktsioone" – filme ja installatsioone, kus väljamõeldis aitas arendada keerulisi ideid. Filmi „Proua B" („Madame B", 2014) näidati Munchi muuseumis Oslos koos Edvard Munchi töödega. Dokumentaaldraamat „Mõistlik kahtlus" („Reasonable Doubt", 2016) René Descartes'ist ja Rootsi kuninganna Kristiinast näidati samuti mitmel pool. Lisaks sellele on Bal teinud 16-osalise videoinstallatsiooni „Don Quijote: kurvad ilmed" („Don Quijote: Sad Countenances", 2019) ja lühikese esseefilmi "Aeg on käes! Mõtted/peegeldused pakilisusest" („It's About Time! Reflections on Urgency", 2020).
www.miekebal.org
e-post: mieke.g.bal[at]gmail.com