ABSTRACT SUBMISSION for Paper Presentation

Theatres for Enactment and Reception: Psychoanalysis, Performance Art and Virtual Reality

Though it is understood that different disciplines foster different research methodologies and that knowledge and understanding is acquired through discipline specific processes; arts and design can be said to be implicitly predisposed to collaborations with other disciplines and that now other disciplines are also looking towards arts research for new approaches. (Leavy, 2015) However, traditionally there exist particular ready routes for interdisciplinary relations - that is to say that there are more established interdisciplinary relationships between arts and design and certain disciplines than others. This note in some ways serves as a methodological disclaimer, fore though I will be talking about interdisciplinarity, the disciplines I combine, psychoanalysis, performance arts and virtual reality, are already, theoretically and philosophically, and perhaps methodologically predisposed to each other in some ways. (Didi-huberman, 2004) (Taylor, 2003) (Heim, 2000) I mention this point to acknowledge these different disciplines’ elective affinity towards each other to emphasise the usualness in the interdisciplinary (methodological) grouping and to acknowledge what is proverbially “left-out” of the research (other disciplines). (Howe, 1978)

I will explain this ready relation between psychoanalysis, performance arts, and virtual reality in terms of their thematic and epistemological similarities through an alignment of their methodological structures for comparative analysis to discuss the development of my post-doctoral arts practice-based research. Before this is elaborated further I Holt the summary of my paper here to position my approach towards the review of methods from a feminist perspective which further cements the outline of the subject of study in terms of the “declaratory” job of research methods, that is, to not only acknowledge the reasons for an interdisciplinary grouping but also to acknowledge the research bias and its embedded meta-structural driver: FEMINISM. (Irigaray, 1985)
These are some of the protocols (definitional processes and categorisations) that research projects speak to to devise arts practice-based “R”earch, and though this point is a side-note, this serves to highlight some of the constraints of methodologies in terms of what the research “is” and “is not”. – And now, that I have finally prepared the reader in terms of the structure of my exploration; in terms of what is usual about the different topics brought together, what is left-out, the bias, and what will be analysed and how, I can further elaborate the specifics of the working topic that I am currently researching.

My method concerns the alignment of psychoanalysis, theatre/performance arts, and virtual reality. I review how these different areas epistemologically practice viewing and though viewing arises for different purposes in these different fields the process of viewing as subject to passive and active forms. The potential risks of an objectifying gaze, of what is indeed looked at when considered in terms of representation and reception, is considered through the relation between the viewer and what is viewed. What can be aligned between these different disciplines’ methodologies are the clinical gaze and the (male) gaze and how these might be considered as having the power to objectify what they view from their (perspectival) position or not. (Irigaray, 1985) (Didi-Huberman, 2004) This gazing dynamic in psychoanalysis, performance arts, and virtual reality, as practices, have a common conceptual underpinning in terms of the context in which a viewing takes place, that is, the “theatre”, a theatre for particular forms of audience and/or participant reception. As far as identifying the relational markers between these different disciplines through the parameters of the “theatre” I could say that this concerns an analysis of the “viewing environment” as ensuing specific “enactments”. Though perhaps this is contingent on whether an enactment is acknowledged within a given environment. (Taylor, 2003) The paper asks, what are the positions of viewers within this environment and how is the environment put into affect and/or effected through an audiences’/participants’ viewing and enactment? How do we free the viewer without also undermining what is viewed? For example, between analyst and analysand in psychoanalysis and through the interactive tendencies of performance art? The context of virtual reality is manifold in terms of its uses, so for the purposes of this paper I will speak to the issues of Head Mounted Displays and social media as forms of alternative mediatised interactive theatres. (Kinsey, 2016)

The alignment between these areas in my arts practice-based research concerns addressing how artists and designers address viewing relations to contemporary images, through methods of performance arts and multi-media arts and design practices and virtual environments for a discussion of audience/participant/actor/user’s immersive/close-up/distanced experiences.

Presentation Format:
As part of my paper presentation I will show images (PowerPoint slides).

Bibliography
Irigaray, Luce (1985) *This Sex Which is Not One,* New York: Cornell University Press