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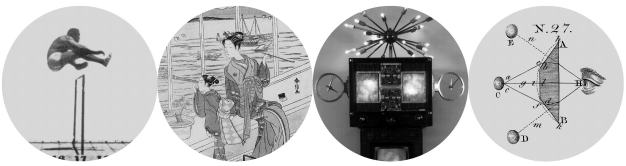

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Shannon Jackson

Abstract
This article analyzes parallels and discontinuities between performance studies and visual culture studies, arguing that a comparison between the two newer fields provides a way of foregrounding the stakes faced in their shared consolidation. It considers the ways that the turn from art history to visual culture studies parallels a turn from theater studies to performance studies. However, it also shows places where the parallels break down, especially when we consider how the threat of theatricality has inflected a longer tradition of visual art criticism. Positioning performance as a 'mixed media' form in both its traditional and contemporary guises, it considers how the conventions of visual and theatrical criticism vary in their terms, histories and formal vocabularies. It argues that we could do a better job of attending to these legacies, both in the perceptual analyses that we employ and in the relevant object histories that we deploy as scholars within and between disciplines in the humanities.

Keywords
discipline • genealogies • interdisciplinarity • performance studies • theatre • theatricality • visual culture

Childhood Rituals

This title is obviously an echo of both this special issue's title as well as of W.J.T. Mitchell's earlier essay 'Showing Seeing' (2002a), an assessment of visual culture studies that appeared in this journal and was reprinted in Routledge's *The Visual Culture Reader* (2002b). It has been interesting for me to return to that essay – one whose patience, wit and sanity I greatly admire – to review his articulations of the myths and anxieties, theses and

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counter-theses which circulate in discourses surrounding the study of visual culture. Working as a scholar, teacher and administrator in performance studies, I feel that I am often encountering threats and composing counter-theses that have a similar shape. Those who have read Mitchell's essay know that the last section of 'Showing Seeing' is where the phrase 'show and tell' becomes literalized in Mitchell-the-Teacher's discussion of his 'return to one of the earliest pedagogical rituals in American elementary education'. He describes how he asks students to become 'ethnographers ... reporting back to a society that has no concept of visual culture' (Mitchell, 2002b: 97). In a number of paragraphs, he dramatizes the range of student examples used to 'show seeing': objects, masks, costumes and narrative strategies. There is something about the last part of this essay that also has a familiar shape for me. When Mitchell says that these pedagogical 'performances have the effect of acting out the method and lessons of the curriculum', he both does and does not announce the fact that his students of visual culture have become students of performance (2002b: 99). Here, visual culture seems to require performance for its seeing to be shown, something that perhaps seems too obvious to require analysis. But it is hard for me not to read the enthusiasm of those last paragraphs as a sign of Mitchell's performance-friendliness. When he is astonished by 'how much clearer the Sartrean and Lacanian "paranoid theories of vision" [become] after you have had a few performances that highlight the aggressivity of vision', he sounds like an advertisement for what those in my field tend to call 'performance pedagogy'. And when that enthusiasm allows him to celebrate this 'visible, embodied, communal practice', even to have a quick dig at the conventional habits of academic practice that he calls 'the solitary introspection of a disembodied intelligence' (2002b: 99), then it really becomes hard not to infer that W.J.T. Mitchell has been bit by the theater bug.

I want to use the fact that performance slips in here in Mitchell's essay to launch an article on the parallels, discontinuities and enmeshments between performance studies and visual culture studies. My title 'Performing Show and Tell' is, at some level, a kind of redundancy; the show and tell ritual is, to my mind, always already performance. But the fact that its redundancy is not necessarily apparent to everyone suggests the need for more clarification. My hope is that a comparison between visual culture studies and performance studies provides a way of foregrounding the stakes and the obstacles faced in their shared consolidation. Both of these fields address the occupational opportunities and occupational hazards of what Bal and Gonzales (1999: 3) more generally calls 'interdisciplinary cultural analysis'; to me, there is something about an encounter between two interdisciplinary sites that brings their similar and quite different disciplinary legacies into higher relief.

To begin with, let us think formally about what it is that makes 'show and tell' a performance and, from there, consider how that reflection illuminates the dynamics of the cross-disciplinary encounter more generally. Superficially, we could say that show and tell is referring to a mixture of image and word, a mixture of media and sensory modes that all theater people like to say is the

particular provenance of their beloved art form. When Lessing is taught in a theater theory syllabus, theater is positioned often as a place where the juxtapositive element of painting and the temporal element of poetry are brought together. When we think of showing and telling as referring less to a medium than to types of signification, then that mixing becomes more complex, forcing a reminder of the number of ways in which worded narrative can 'show', or that text and images can be perceived as literal and symbolic in different relations. The image/word binary becomes more unstable and inadequate when you consider all of the elements that go into the show and tell ritual in childhood education. The image *shown* in this scene is usually something *held*, thus it is a particularly materialized image, an object that takes part in the tactile as much as visual register. In this case, the transmission of the verbal is accompanied also by an embodied presenting self, one who makes use of vocal inflection, gesture, facial expression and motion. The child stands before a group of individuals, tries or tries not to make eye contact, pauses, paces and races, gets down and gets back up, as she breathlessly confronts and endures the addressive relation with her audience.

Now even as I begin to elaborate what I think of as a performance-centered list of elements, differently located readers might perk up their ears. 'Theatre is not the only medium that is mixed', one scholar might say, perhaps quoting Mitchell's own essay where he declares all media to be mixed 'with varying ratios of senses and sign-types' (2002b: 91). A self-identified 'digital artist' who works in the so-called multimedia of screens and networks might ask why one would mention theatrical performance at all. A literary critic might ask me to remember the specific attachment of terms such as 'show' and 'tell' to narratology. Meanwhile, someone else would find it important to note that the tactility that one might associate with performance is part and parcel of visuality as elaborated in past and contemporary reworkings of Benjamin, Bataille, Barthes and more. 'And we certainly don't need a theater person to talk to us about addressive relations with the spectator', might say every art historian who has had to deal with the spectator in those endless debates on the legacies of minimalism. More and different claims of disciplinary association and differentiation could follow.

Even if I am not imagining all reactions entirely accurately, let them serve more generally as examples of the type of reactions that pervade the interdisciplinary encounter, one where the sorting out of mine, yours, also-mine, also-yours happens in extended exchanges. And as such, let me use those reactions to remind the reader about another element of the show and tell ritual that she may have forgotten. The shared object in this earliest of pedagogical rituals (rituals that actually begin before elementary school) is usually a possession. This is to say that one of its distinctive characteristics is that it is mine, and that its 'mine-ness' becomes more urgent and anxious in the decontextualizing and recontextualizing travel which happens when a beloved object is taken from home and brought to school. Show and tell is threatening because of the fear that a beloved object will be passed around, abused, misused, broken or taken and, if returned, returned in different shape. Show and tell can be hard for child audiences, too. They are required

to listen patiently and to censor their own embodied desires to touch that which they see. Now, in bringing these dynamics to a discussion of the interdisciplinary encounter, it is obvious that we could abuse the 'childishness' in the metaphor of what Mitchell calls a childhood ritual and say that all of the angst about recognition and 'de-skilling' in interdisciplinary formations such as visual cultural studies is just an example of scholars being nervous that other people are taking their toys. But partly because I happen to think that toys are a very serious business, I would like not to take that tack. Instead, I want to push the metaphor one more time to foreground what I think is essential about the interaction in show and tell, namely, its structure as an intersubjective exchange. The sharing of the toy, the deep breath taken before a treasured object is passed around, the incorporated role of objects in the self-construction and self-extension of individual identities, the meeting and deflection of gazes, all of these elements compose the performance of show and tell as an essential exercise in intersubjectivity. It is a place of delicate relationality and occasional reciprocity, a place where we learn to deal with the inevitable asymmetry of certain exchanges. It is also valuable as a place to hear a story, a tale of what makes the shared object special, even if it is not what seems special about it to the listener. And so finally, the preservation of show and tell becomes essential as a place where – remember, this is a pedagogical ritual – you might learn something new as well.

Disciplinary Likeness

In thinking about what performance studies and visual culture studies have to do with each other, I want to preserve a sense of the weight and exchange embedded in 'show and tell' exercises. For me, learning something new is often about learning something 'old', about deciding that the memories, traditions, experiences and skills attached to the shared object are worth incorporating into any new game that one happens to want to play with it.

So, how much is performance studies like visual culture? The focus of the comparison in this article will be based on two points framed in Mitchell's essay. The first concerns his positioning of visual culture studies in a supplemental relation to the tradition of art history and aesthetics. The second concerns his implicit adoption of that supplemental insight to argue for the inherent mixedness of all media in 'varying media-ratios and sign-types' (2002b: 91). To take up the first talking point, if visual culture studies is conceived as some kind of newer formation which 'supplements' the traditions of aesthetics and art history, then we can see a similar relation of supplementarity between performance studies and the traditions of 'theater studies'. Parallelling Mitchell's staging of visual culture's substitutions, there is a way in which performance studies enacts its supplementarity in that now classically deconstructionist sense as both an addition to, and replacement of, theater studies. Performance studies refers to domains outside of the proscenium-staged theater event to modes of behavior and cultural forms – carnivals, protests, storytelling, everyday life rituals, the *homo ludens* – which can be added to the array of objects traditionally encompassing drama and

theater history. However, that incorporation can never be benignly additive but always anxiously substitutive. As in the art history-to-visual culture movement, the theater-to-performance studies movement: (1) 'indicates an incompleteness in the internal coherence' of the tradition of theater as if it 'somehow failed to pay attention to what was most central' to itself; and (2) opens the field 'to "outside" issues that threaten' its boundaries (Mitchell, 2002b: 88).

Both performance studies and visual culture have celebrators and detractors of this expansion of relevant objects of inquiry. While someone such as Nicholas Mirzoeff (2002) might welcome the field's expansion to studies of CNN, advertisements for milk and Japanese *anime*, someone such as Thomas Crow (1996: 35) might remain more suspicious of what he called 'the vast vertical integration of study, extending from the esoteric products of fine-art traditions to handbills and horror videos'. Similarly, performance studies professor Richard Schechner (1992: 10) vehemently embraced a world where students of performance studied 'rock concerts, discos, electioneering, [and] wrestling', while theater scholar Richard Hornby (1995) vehemently lambasted that same world, where 'figure skating' and wrestling matches were placed on the same analytic plane as Shakespeare. Of course, the invocation of a list of expanded objects is not unique to visual and performance studies, but is part of the rhetoric of interdisciplinary humanities practice more generally. And while I do not think that the politics of expansion always play out in the same way, it certainly has been attached to various attempts to rectify the gendered, raced, intercultural and classed exclusions of the arts and humanities curriculum. While US pundits such as William Bennett worried about whether the expansion of the western canon would mean the replacement of Shakespeare by Alice Walker (see Graff, 1993: 16), his counterparts in theater worried whether the expansion of the performance canon would mean the replacement of Shakespeare by Tonya Harding. But, of course, there are concerns voiced from even more temperate scholars about the possibility of these lists getting out of hand and about whether individuals will have the capacity to reckon with such an 'expanded field'. While visual scholars worry about the appropriateness of studying baseball cards or wonder whether their colleagues really know enough about bio-imaging to think anything worth saying, parallel scholars in theater and performance worry about the prospects of someone who studies the 'performance of picnics' and wonder if their colleagues really know enough about 'the performance of surgical practice' to say anything worth hearing.

A list of expanded objects is only one way of characterizing interdisciplinarity. There are the professional indexes, the conferences, the 'studies' appendages in the naming of subfields, the visual culture edited collections that have their parallel in the performance studies edited collections as well. We also endure similar confusions of alignment between subfields and circulating conceptual terms. The term 'visuality' has a kind of parallel (although I do not think equivalence) in the term 'performativity'. Both are theoretical concepts that percolate throughout the humanities and that are derived often from philosophical explorations into subjectivity. They both sound like

they belong to particular sides of the cutting-edge disciplinary equation (visuality to visual culture studies, performativity to performance studies), but are, in fact, terms with which some but not all visual culture and performance studies scholars identify. Finally, in thinking about shared disciplinary questions and methods that seem to propel both performance and visual culture studies, it is hard not to notice the number of times that something such as 'anthropology' or 'ethnography' has been held up or criticized as the route to new interpretations in both fields. I think that Hal Foster's (1996) impressively neat summary of the reasons behind the prominence of anthropology in visual studies bears out in performance studies as well. Anthropology seems to be a useful discourse not only because it 'studies culture' but also because it does so by 'addressing alterity'; it has an approach whose mixture of humanistic and social science methods can help to 'arbitrate the interdisciplinary'. It also (at least since the 1980s) incorporated 'self-critique' – or what I learned to call 'self-reflexivity' – into scholarly presentation (Foster, 1996: 105).

I see more significance in this list of reasons why, as Foster puts it, anthropology becomes the 'compromise discourse of choice', particularly because of how he characterizes the relation between anthropology's 'contextual' approach and that of contemporary artists who 'aspire to fieldwork in the everyday' (p. 105). This seems to be a reminder of something else that the turn to visual culture and performance studies might share: namely, a history of art practice which incorporated the contextuality of art into the art itself. This is to remember the familiar series of art historical movements – Dada, surrealism, Bauhaus, 'happenings', conceptualism, minimalism – not simply as art that, like everything else, needs to be contextualized. The artworks affiliated with such movements were themselves explorations of the category of the contextual, unsettling the boundaries of art and its surround, sussing out the latent symbology of the contextual (à la new historicism), reckoning with the permeation of object and world, asking receivers to decide if and why such divisions need to be reinstantiated. Martin Jay asked for a similar remembering when he said in that notorious *October* questionnaire of 1996 that 'the crisis of the institution of art ... has been as much internal as external, arising from changes within "art" itself and not merely resulting from the importation of cultural models from other disciplines' (1996: 44). In other words, the sensibility of visual culture is an artist's thing, not just a scholar's thing. The visual culture interest in the imagery of advertising, for example, was presaged in some ways by the iconic representation of popular culture imagery in visual art (remember the Brillo Pad boxes and the soup cans?). Upon considering the institutional formation of performance studies, it is noteworthy how often the sensibility of performance studies was an artist's thing as well. The turn to anthropology and sociology – to reading Victor Turner on Ndembu ritual or Erving Goffman on the frontstages and backstages of daily life – followed after certain experiments in the arts; after, say, the large-scale 'happenings' of people such as Allan Kaprow or small-scale events of people such as George Brecht attempted to explore the nature of collectivity and to take a rhetorical stance on the everyday. In fact, two of these performing artists, Michael Kirby and Richard Schechner, founded what

would become the scholarly Department of Performance Studies at New York University. This is an interesting moment, when the lessons learned by the humanities from 'anthropology' were, at some level, also being taught by artists. Clifford Geertz (1983) was not the only person noticing that 'art' and 'common sense' were 'cultural systems' or that 'local knowledges' were rhetorical (pp. 73, 94).

To summarize thus far, as fields that consolidated at a similar historical moment, performance studies and visual culture studies bear a structural resemblance and can be seen as both cause and symptom of a similarly fraught and opportunistic intellectual and artistic milieu. As such, we are also heralded and scolded in language that sounds the same. In addition to that anxious list of objects or those pesky references to anthropology, like selected elements of visual culture, selected elements of performance studies can endure affirmation and ridicule depending upon the interests of the argument. The theoretical bent of performance studies is accused (both internally and externally) of being 'too theoretical', its relationship to poststructuralist theories of representation can be accused of advancing a 'textualized' paradigm, its politics can be accused of being 'politically correct'. Meanwhile, what feels like interdisciplinary innovation to some feels like 'de-skilling' to others. All of these terms and conundrums should sound familiar to anyone who has read the vast number of essays, position pieces, questionnaires or symposium notes devoted to the 'state of' our respective fields in the last 10 years. Finally, there does seem to be a high tolerance for mixture – formal, theoretical, disciplinary and medium-based – in both performance studies and visual culture studies. To invoke the title of Mitchell's own contribution to this special issue, 'There Are No Visual Media', Mitchell's notion that all media are mixed – 'with varying ratios and sign-types' – sounds quite familiar to performance studies affiliates. The only difference is that we usually hear the conclusion differently phrased: 'Yes, all media are mixed, that is why we need performance studies.'

Disciplinary Difference

At this point, it sounds like performance studies is to theater what visual culture is to art history, both paralleling perhaps what cultural studies is to literary studies, or perhaps to the humanities more generally. It might seem time for the members on one side of each pair to lock arms in shared struggle against the opponents on the other side of each pair. If all agree that media are mixed, perhaps what we 'need' in fact is a unified front. But there is actually one other tendency that these presumably newer formations share, one that (for me) ends up producing episodes of unwitting or often unwelcome differentiation. Articulations both for and against these so-called newer fields have a tendency to disavow their relation to particular disciplinary histories. That disavowal ends up doing at least two things: (1) it tends to homogenize the 'traditions' from which they are presumably breaking free; and (2) it obscures the specific history of particular types of analysis and method from the critics who employ them or, if you will, are employed by

the skills that they use. Both of these symptoms of disciplinary disavowal end up producing a number of obstacles in our contemporary moment. Let me offer a brief example of the first tendency – the homogenization of tradition. In both art history and theater studies, in fact, 'traditional' scholarly forebears can be found cavorting with anthropologists. In the late-19th and early 20th centuries, long before Clifford Geertz, James Clifford and the ethnographic watershed of the 1980s, Hal Foster and others have noted that Alois Riegl and Aby Warburg were two foundational figures who redefined art history in anthropological terms (Foster, 2002). Similarly, early figures in the formation of theater studies, such as Arthur Pickard-Cambridge and later Francis Fergusson, made extensive use of Cambridge anthropology to develop a notion of theater as the transmission of ritual behaviors (Jackson, 2004). This kind of impure disciplinary tradition can be conveniently sidestepped by contemporary arguments that seek to surpass the traditional by turning to anthropology. This kind of impure disciplinary tradition also can be conveniently sidestepped by arguments that seek to *defend* the traditional by turning *away* from anthropology.

Recently, I have spent a great deal of time examining the effects of varied and variously repressed disciplinary pasts on how intellectual debates in theater and performance studies are framed currently. While I do not feel that I am in a position to do the same for art history and visual culture studies per se, I am interested in comparing my understanding of the heterogeneous precedents of visual culture studies to the heterogeneous precedents of performance studies in order to show that they do not have exactly the same heterogeneity. Indeed, the examination of this non-match is a reminder that the studies of performance and visual material respectively have been antagonistic to each other on occasion. More importantly, the legacies of these cross-purposes are destined to erupt (indeed, in many a graduate seminar, do erupt) lest we assume their shared purpose too easily in the present.

Having considered how the theater/performance studies pair and the art history/visual culture pair are useful analogies, let us now consider why they are not. Once we cease to assume that all old things are the same (and similar in their difference from the new), what happens when we investigate visual and performance genealogies for what Michel Foucault (1972: 33) would call their 'non-identity through time'? One place to begin comes with the realization that the predecessors of performance – whether cast as drama or theater – do not have the same purchase on the received indexes of tradition. Some of you might have noticed a slip in my comparison between the disciplinary history of theater and Mitchell's account of 'art history and aesthetics', for theater studies has not had the same kind of partnership with aesthetic theory that the visual arts (and, it probably goes without saying, the literary arts) have enjoyed. While proponents crafted theater theory syllabuses which characteristically moved 'from Aristotle to Artaud', those movements did not usually help to define or redefine the terms with which aesthetic theory understood itself. (The generic exploration of tragedy is, to my mind, the exception that proves the rule here.) In fact, a look at the institutional history of theater in the academy suggests that it has been something of a question

mark in the humanities – shakily defined as a liberal art, dangerously defined as a technical field, not clearly high or low, not clearly avant-garde or mass culture – which makes its relation to the biggest questions of aesthetic or humanistic inquiry somewhat insecure. The first departments of theater were divided about its proper institutional location. At many Ivy League schools, it was a spin-off of the English department, a literary form adjacent to but different from poems and novels. At Carnegie Tech and Cornell, it was placed in schools for painting, sculpture and the industrial arts (Jackson, 2004). Cornell's first theater department was actually located in a revamped machine shop. The difference in the literary or visual arts location betrays confusion about what kind of form it actually is; in fact, theater is a genre at some universities and a medium at others.

While I think that the partial fit of theater in a literary curriculum and in a visual arts curriculum makes it intriguingly liminal to us now, the fact of the matter is that such partial fittings made it uncomfortably liminal, indeed institutionally insecure, in the early 20th century. Theater's insecurity derived not only from its mixedness, but from what modernists and postmodernists might retroactively call its non-autonomy, its enmeshment in the cultural and the contextual. Indeed, it has always been hard to decide where the autonomous theatrical art piece ended and its context began: in the text, in the acting of the text, in the acting and design of the text, in the theater space, in the seating arrangement of the audience? The necessity of all these elements to be coordinated again and again, every night, for weeks in a row, in order for the theater to be itself bespeaks a hypercontextuality that has been hard to disavow, even when – under Crocean aesthetics, early 20th-century formalisms, or new critical paradigms – it was trendy to disavow contextuality. This kind of history makes it hard to draw equivalences between the effects of a late-20th-century 'turn to culture' in literature and art history and those it had in theater studies. If a cultural turn is characterized as an incorporation of the social and extra-aesthetic surround of the art object – a surround which includes more than conventional histories of artistic precedence and influence – then that surround has actually been a fundamental part of how the traditional discipline of theater studies has been conceived and not something that theater studies waited for performance studies to do for it. In no way would I argue that the earlier disciplinary histories of theater already produced the terms of our interdisciplinary future. The theoretical and political language of poststructuralism and newer culturalisms rarely appears in the defensive empiricisms or pro-production appeals of earlier theater scholars. But I do want to say that such heterogeneous pasts mean that our innovations in the present also might need some differentiation. The 'dominant' disciplines of the past are not equivalent in their domination. Indeed, older paradigms in each field did not only *share* power but also *exerted* power over each other, an historical fact that gives each of us a more complicated relationship to the different traditions from which we are supposedly rejecting.

The inexactness of pairing and eliding theater/performance studies and art history/visual culture also becomes clear when one considers not only

methodological pasts, but also the recent history and varied historiographies of experimental artistic production. Of course, one way of characterizing the major shifts of 20th-century art is to chronicle the development of modernism and its eventual giving way to postmodernism. One way of characterizing the artistic history of that shift is to focus on modernism as a quest for medium purity and postmodernism as a violation of medium purity. So when W.J.T. Mitchell says that all media are mixed media, it is a statement that seems to be made possible by a postmodern turn. What becomes interesting is how various art forms – however mixed they appear to be – become positioned inside this account of modernism and postmodernism. Indeed, to whom they appear mixed and to whom they do not is one of the questions. The debate over the theatrical in visual arts is a much labored example, so much so that the complexity of its residual effects in the present can be simplified. But for scholars and artists identified with visual culture and performance studies, I think that it is worth remembering, even before Fried, the reaction of people such as Clement Greenberg and Hilton Kramer to Harold Rosenberg's theatrical characterization of the action in action painting. Rosenberg (1952) argued that such canvases were 'an arena in which to act – rather than a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyze or "express" an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an *event*' (p. 22; emphasis added). In turn, Greenberg (1962) chastized him for moving abstract expressionist painting to the same domain as 'breathing and thumbprints' (p. 59). Hilton Kramer (1953) was baffled: '[P]ainting being painting and not the theater, what does he mean by the canvas "as an arena in which to act?"' (p. 423). For modernist critics who needed painting to stay 'specific' – and, moreover, needed that medium-specificity to be 'flat' – the idea that painting could be mixed, that it could have (or, after Mitchell, always did have) embodied, durational, tactile and environmental elements, was not conceivable. Of course, the references to a threatening 'theatrical' would multiply as the 20th century wore on, reaching their much touted apex in Michael Fried's deployment of the term to refer to a number of things: literalism over pictoriality, the entry of the durational into what should be a juxtapositive realm, the addressive relation (the need for an audience) 'that a modernist sensibility finds intolerable', as well as a more general anti-art stance (Fried, 1998[1967]: 163). More to the point for a discussion of medium-specificity, theatricality was an index of mixture and liminality which was profoundly anti-modernist. Fried used 'theatrical' to characterize an 'in-between' state in which forms belonged to no essential artistic medium; to work across media, that is, to violate medium-specificity, was to inhabit the 'in-between' that 'is theater' (p. 164).

When we take this recent history of the visual arts debate back to our analogies between the 'from' foundations of theater and art history and the 'turn-to' moves of visual culture and performance studies, it becomes even harder to connect the dots amongst shared terms, labels and movements. Such histories remind us how often the turn away from modernism (and thus the turn toward postmodernism) in the visual arts has been characterized as theatrical.

The 'T' word, 'theater', comes in not to characterize an old stodgy form as it might in performance studies, but to refer to the subversive invasion of the latest fad. Nor is there room for either the term 'theater' or 'performance' to inhabit the medium-specificity of modernism. If the practices that come under those terms, in traditional or avant-garde form, incorporate more than one artistic register and 'exist for an audience', then it is hard for any of them to be modernist. This is another place where the legacies of performance have a qualified relationship to the traditional indexes of (here 'modernist') tradition. Performance from this history looks less like its own specific medium than the means by which visual media undo their specificity. From this view, performance is not so much a parallel field to visual culture, but a mechanism by which art history begins to cultivate the sensibilities of visual culture.

That is, of course, a certain way of showing and telling a particularly located history. To pursue the addressive relation between art and receiver, as so much experimental theater did and continues to do, is not a violation of medium-specificity if the starting medium happens to be theater. In fact, what might be a violation of medium-specificity from one angle of vision is hyper-medium-specificity from another. Even more confusing is how often the experiments in performance art, 'happenings' and fluxus experiments of the 1960s and 1970s used an anti-theatrical language themselves. Their referent for anti-theatricality was, I would submit, very nearly the opposite of the anti-theatricality referent of concern to the visual arts (Auslander, 1997; Erickson, 1995; Jackson, 2004). Performance experimenters were interested in foregrounding the durational, environmental and addressive nature of performance in ways that they did not feel were being exploited by the conventions of theater itself. It was precisely what they called their 'anti-theater' extensions into duration, environment and address that visual art critics called 'theatrical'. Again, this is only one more relevant disciplinary history that precedes any articulation of a relationship between performance studies and visual culture studies. But I think that it is useful as an index of how the heterogeneity of different pasts can have the odd effect of both confusing and overdetermining the position of performance in visual culture studies. If performance is the vehicle by which the boundaries of the visual arts unsettle themselves, then its subversive status becomes strangely normalized and its relationship to longer histories of cultural forms somewhat skewed.

Disciplinary Self-Difference

For the sake of enlarging our sense of the occupational hazards of interdisciplinary exchange, it is worth remembering how often similar processes are at risk when we work from a different direction or on different encounters. If a self-identified 'visual culture' person came to a theater history seminar, then there are interesting ways that her 'subversive status' would become 'strangely normalized' and her relationship to longer histories of cultural forms also 'somewhat skewed', demonstrating that what Jon McKenzie (2001) has called 'the liminal norm' in performance studies operates in a

variety of interdisciplinary encounters. When visual culture and literary studies meet, the projections, substitutions and skewed referentiality proceed differently; one possible starting point would consider how very different the referent for Clement Greenberg's critiques of 'the literary' were from most contemporary literary critics' understanding of their cherished term. When visual culture and anthropology meet, the disciplinary foregroundings and forgettings are different, too; from the perspective of anthropology, we might do well to remember, visual culture is something being done to anthropology, not only something that anthropology is doing to art history. Meanwhile, the digital and technological component of visual culture studies is one which has produced a variety of analyses whose relationship to 'art history' often receives an oddly retroactive articulation.

It is at this point that I want to suggest a qualification, not only to an analogy between the theater-is-to-performance studies what art history-is-to-visual culture constructions, but to what it means to consolidate 'theater' and 'art history' as the relevant 'traditional' pasts at all. The fact (and difficulty) of the matter is that the membership of visual culture studies is not only individuals whose background is art history or aesthetics. Some are from film, some are from English, some are from website design. The same goes for performance studies, where the variety of scholars from film, folklore, anthropology, area studies, gender studies and English means that each scholar is weighted with a different notion of what is traditional and is implicitly employing (and being employed by their relation to) inherited frames and different skillsets. As a result, the barometers and boundaries that individuals use for registering the mixedness of media also vary. This means that 'the ratios' and 'sign-types' mixed in mixed media are not simply *there* – in the cultural form, awaiting elaboration – but also something produced by the perceptual habits of particularly located receivers. Scholars tend to stack our ratios and apply different 'differentials' to gauge media-mixing and sign-type labeling. If the place from which someone approaches, say, a fluxus event, is painting, then the way in which that person gauges its media-ratio is different from the gauge that she might apply if she measured its distance from theater, both of which would differ from how she might gauge fluxus's difference from poetry or music. They might also have different notions of whether an element is part of a media-ratio or part of the surrounding context, or of whether a sign-type is iconic or indexical depending upon their discipline's habits for locating indexicality. They might wonder whether a sign is really a sign or part of the apparatus. Even in an artistic and scholarly context that is working to blur the lines between art and context, sign and apparatus, they will not register the crossing of the line if they do not work with the same notion of where the line is.

Mitchell's argument about the ratios and sign-types of inherently mixed media is a response to Carol Armstrong's concern that the difference between a painting and a novel will be a 'non-problem', the capacity to differentiate between verbal representations, temporal significations and 'marks made on a thickened material surface' drowned in a sea of interdisciplinary indifference (Armstrong, 1996: 28). What is being suggested here

is that, while I support Mitchell's ideal vision of visual culture studies, the fact that not everyone makes the same differentiations can make *not* differentiating them (or not differentiating how we differentiate) seem deceptively appealing. At the least, a less detailed formal understanding in interdisciplinary media analysis sometimes can make for an apparently more harmonious – if always shortlived – interdisciplinary encounter. Meanwhile, variously positioned scholars' relationship to the heterogeneous past can go unremembered as well. Earlier, the sensibilities of both visual culture and performance studies were referred to as being 'artists' things', sensibilities that have a kinship to those cultivated by interdisciplinary artists in advance of interdisciplinary scholarship. What is perplexingly productive now is that students can declare an interest in one of the list of expanded cultural forms – milk ads and rock concerts, CNN and wrestling – without understanding a connection within (or even knowing about) that artistic history. Students who did not begin with art history come to visual culture to study 'home product advertising' without knowing about the Brillo Pad boxes, much less *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*. Students who did not begin in theater come to performance studies to study rave culture without knowing about 'happenings', much less *The Cherry Orchard*. Once we factor in the heterogeneity of the fields from which students of visual culture and performance studies now come, we also need to notice that the artistic sensibility which propelled scholarship across the humanities and social sciences will not always result in a scholarly paradigm that remembers the artists who cultivated that sensibility. Then we need to take a deep breath and decide how everyone feels about that.

I hope that it is apparent that I do not think that we need to recentralize a unified history. However, I do think that we could do a better job of differentiating how we differentiate – both in the perceptual analyses that we employ and in the relevant object histories that we deploy. What we show and tell, how we do the showing and telling and how patiently or impatiently we listen to the performance, will vary with inherited skills and notions of what makes an object special. Any way of arguing for innovation, break or change in cultural practice always assumes certain traditions and likenesses across cultural practices, too. If Alice Walker threatens Shakespeare, then Shakespeare is textual, literary and a genre. If Tonya Harding threatens Shakespeare, then Shakespeare is visual, durational, embodied and a medium. Different differences need different samenesses. Meanwhile, a shared interest in mixedness does not in itself dispel the fact that we have different ways of registering it. If, on some level, an antagonism to opticality did drive the innovations toward exposing mixture in the conceptualist movement, then that turn is similar to, but different from, the mixed arts analysis that a materialist art historian might find in cultural models. Both of these revelations of mixture are similar to and different from how a philosophy of visuality exposes the dependence of visibility on sensorial mixture or, to quote Kaja Silverman (2000), 'upon a confluence of the phenomenal, the psychic, the specular and the social' (p. 3). At some level, all of this work places the visual in relation to 'breathing and thumbprints', but it will still produce different positionings depending upon whether one thinks of thumbprints

phenomenologically, materially or indexically. It will also produce different positionings depending upon whether one is used to thinking about breathing as part of a depiction, as part of the medium used to create the depiction, or as part of the apparatus used to support the medium. And it will make a bigger difference if one is not used to thinking about breathing at all.

Since barometers for gauging mixedness and sign-types vary, the possible disciplinary connections between them will be most interesting when they have been argued rather than assumed. I am finally asking for scholarship which shows its tracks and which writes with an awareness of its contingency. By differentiating how we differentiate, we will find more utility in the project that so many readers of this journal actually share. The game of show-and-tell acquires a certain pleasure when it adopts a self-reflexive pedagogy, when everyone takes that breath before a treasured object, method or discipline gets touched, turned and passed around – and then takes another breath before that object is returned, inevitably, in different shape.

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