



The documentation of practice: framing trace

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volume 1 content
journal home pag
conference home pag
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to cite this journal article

Lycouris, S. (2000) The documentation of practice: framing trace. *Working Papers in Art and Design*. Retrieved <date> from URI http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research_papers/wpades_vol11/lycouris2.htm

ISSN 1466-4917

From a postmodern/post-structuralist perspective, the complexity of the relationship between theory and practice does not allow for hierarchical, causal or dialectical connections between the two. As Gilles Deleuze has mentioned in a discussion with Michel Foucault, the relationship between theory and practice can be understood as "a system of relays within a larger sphere, within a multiplicity of parts that are both theoretical and practical" (Deleuze in Foucault, M. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, p206), in other words is an interaction between the two, a dialogue which can be also discontinuous.

In my PhD thesis "Destabilising dancing: tensions between the theory and practice of improvisational performance" (University of Surrey, 1996), which includes a practical project, I have challenged theoretically the traditional notion of choreography using the example of movement improvisation in performance as an alternative method of making dances and I have proposed a new model for the characterization of the "dance piece", one which transcends the space/time limits of a distinct performance event and can be also viable in interdisciplinary and hybrid contexts. I have also studied the process of learning how to perform improvisationally in dance under the light of post-structuralist theories, and I have suggested that, in such practices, the process of crossing the border between a theoretical model and its application in studio-based practices is discontinuous.

In my forthcoming post-doctoral research project which starts in September 2000 and aims to explore the role of practice-based research in interdisciplinary choreographic explorations, I will concentrate on the issue of documentation, as a strategy which will reveal tangible meeting points between theory and practice, the dialogue and interaction between practice-based research and its theoretical implications.

I would like to use my submission to the RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE Conference at the University of Hertfordshire (July 2000) as a transitional moment in my research process, as an opportunity to explore further the complexity of the relationship between theory and practice by initiating a discussion on how the documentation of the making process of a piece of work can become a tool through which major decisions are made about the nature of this work. What is documented and how this is documented reveals the framework within which artists understand, conceive and develop their work, the questions, issues and "theories" behind the material manifestations of these pieces of work (depending at the same time on shifting definitions of such terms as "theory" and "practice").