

## PaRLab meeting minutes – Friday, 2 February 2018 (G56)

Present: Carmen Wong; Anthony Ruck; Chris Dowling; Christoph Hoerl; Eva McIntyre (on Skype); Nese Ceren; Nick Drofiak; Rakel Marin; Natasha Davis; Carolyn Deby and Mark Hinton (presentation)

***Please see below the Action Points for recorded minutes.***

Upcoming meetings:

**Reading Group Session: Friday, 23 Mar, 1:30-3:30pm (Venue: Humanities Studio)**

Reading TBD - taking proposals

**Voice Workshop: Monday, 26 Mar, 3:45pm-6:15pm (Venue: G55)**

Limited to 10 places, please book your spot by emailing carmen

**ACTION POINTS** (in suggested order of priority)

- That folks might contribute time to research and suggest readings that they can email over to Carmen & Carolyn.
- Consider inviting Mark Hinton to teach a full-day clown-in-teaching workshop (negotiate through IATL?)

Discussion of reading:

Chapter 3 “Practice as Research: Transdisciplinary Innovation in Action” by Baz Kershaw with Lee Miller/Joanne Whalley and Rosemary Lee/Niki Pollard in Kershaw/Nicholson’s *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance* (ebook available via encore).

- a few people were sceptical about Kershaw’s setting out of the essential elements of PaRLab
- most felt that this was too limiting and prescriptive and not true for every practice research process or project
- why put your practice into a framework? Carmen: because I have to write about it and publish
- NC: how do we circulate PaR knowledge? Is it only in a written form...
- CW: difficult to be the theorist of your own work; like being your own therapist; I can be too authoritative; can sound like I know everything about my own project; post-show questionnaires or discussion can help to bring other points of view, but difficult to do that.
- CD: I really liked this piece because it helps to have a way forward; found it really vague and so room for me to interpret it – there’s no manifesto yet for PaR
- AR: what’s missing in this paper; how do you locate yourself, who are the people; it tries to be very systematic
- NC: there is a landscape (gut feeling); there is something to know; I will decide what knowledge is; like ‘grounded theory’ in social science
- CD: the two examples were so far apart; can’t imagine being constricted by these five elements; fascinating example of the thesis submitted as notes on notes on notes
- CH: found the case studies fascinating but they were still at opposite ends of the spectrum; first one trying to gain academic credibility but starting with clear concepts; second one going in opposite direction, starting with the practice,

reflecting on it, then academic trope of the performance/lecture; to what extent is it less about theory because it operates using certain methods; like science where they take a certain variable and do several iterations of it; can't encompass that with a series of bullet points;

- EM: isn't it about the transmission of the PaR? how do you write this up?
- CH: what is the difference between a performance or work of art that isn't PaR and one that is?
- NC: doesn't it depend on your research question or starting point? the fact that there's a practice and a research about that practice – can we not say that some aspects are; there needs to be a minimum jargon or language
- ND: liked the aspiration to be constantly un-grounding ourselves; we're open to other things happening; it's dawning on me the difficulty of the documentation; you have to document everything in every possible way
- NC: the reflection at the end includes a return to your own original position; what did you perceive as knowledge, what was your gaze? When do you stop, how to not get lost in it. (perhaps we need to suggest another reading that is more recent?)
- CW: this book has many different voices; curious whether Christoph can apply these five points to the project he's doing with artists?
- CH: what I worried about was that you could always apply those five hooks to the work; performance practice more specific to particular performers and scenarios compared to the scientific research where all the data is stored and potentially reproducible
- CaD: idea of new knowledge coming out of many aspects of the practice, not only the thing that is shared with audience
- EM: the performance continues to live on in the people who experienced it; going beyond in time long after the event itself; I find a parallel with my previous life as a priest, when I discovered that I had had a profound impact on someone's life many years ago (one eg. in the 1980's)
- NC: impact is not the same as new knowledge – there is some sort of social engagement, impact is about some sort of public engagement but not the same as new knowledge
- CW: something fruitful if we look at impact vs knowledge generation;
- CaD: transmission is crucial, it's not a different issue

## Pecha Kuchas

### **Eva McIntyre pecha kucha**

biblical passage very well known; justice and liberation;

issues of decline, division and disfunction in church ; change is resisted

lay people are usually infantilised and most clergy enable this; I want to empower people

and to find parallels with their own lives and faith stories; Boal is important

storytelling is part of this practice; they have relative ease with this practice

move from bible texts to visceral and living texts; increasing the amount of change; the

stories are already known to the participants; it is the changes I introduce that are significant;

we tell the stories from renewed and challenging contexts

the technique creates a different window on the narratives

it's crucial that the listener exposes the emotions; their embodied response is first importance for the participants; then explore the same stories through further role playing; realise that others think differently; to induce change in disfunctional church communities; people hard-wired for story and to accept it as a positive experience of change; their physical response is to relax, their faces light up, bodies release tension; this practice revisits childhood response to story. The participants embrace new theological and other evidence.

#### DISCUSSION

there is a question currently of longevity: how long will these changes last; currently looking at sociology and neuro-science as knowledges that might help to manage the effects of change

question: using these other sorts of knowledge, does it link to disfunction in the communities you're looking at? I'm trying to link it to behaviours.

Eva: disfunction in church is measured by opposition to change; dependence on clergy; this idea of disfunction is widely discussed by clergy but not laypeople

Carmen: sounds like this disfunction is about not finding consensus

Eva: spectrum of opinions between open and conservative; more conservative is most convinced they are right

#### **Christoph Hoerl pecha kucha**

project at the moment: Time between metaphysics and music

people have metaphysical thoughts about time; now is important but past and future don't matter

we also have an idea that the past is fixed and the future is open

current physics says this is misguided

no such thing as the flow of time

the marshmallow test: if you want one immediately, you will only get one; if you wait, then you can have five of them

our thinking about time has an effect on our psychology

for the AHRC you have to have an impact element

developmental psychologist partner; idea to work with artists, specifically three companies:

"Be Beyond" collective in Ireland; engaged with topic of duration

"Echo Echo" – also ideas about our thinking through time

"Big Telly" – working with themes of time; Irish myths; people

there will be an evening next year in Warwick Arts Centre with these three companies

philosophers try to represent time in a diagram

the artists just spilled water on the paper

We need to somehow interact with the artists; a way of communicating; how does it relate to what we are doing?

We will film the performances at the Arts Centre

we have a software that allows audience to feed into the performance with their phones

there will be some publications as well

#### DISCUSSION

did you have success contacting the Warwick Theatre & Performance department?

Yes, but they were vague on the question about what to pay artists

Christoph's on-going work is about the way that we experience time

marshmallow experiment: children don't have a concept of time

time is cultural; linear for some; circular for others

Christoph: physics treats time as another dimension of space; that way you get away from focussing on now; part of our project, much of the psychology, people make use of space to represent time; people lean forward to talk about the future or back to talk about the past. The utopian idea if you could change how people think about time, there are benefits; why are we afraid of death but not the period of time before we were born;

the ambition is to find ways of making our experience of time malleable

I was struck by the 2<sup>nd</sup> case study from the reading: something like what we're planning for this

### **Natasha Davis pecha kucha**

performance of her UK citizenship ceremony called "Rapture"

against the backdrop of her own cancer, used as metaphor for the trauma of displacement of war; surgical instruments hanging and making sounds

research in the Andes; out of breath – little oxygen; filled her mouth with photos of her past;

wore a gas mask that restricted her ability to breath

suspended by her hair, audience had to cut her hair to free her to move; rest of the piece

with pieces of her hair; we have to leave pieces of ourselves

another installation from suspended; migrant experience; using a glass jar installation from

the performance; this is a method that that she has used several times, transforming

performance into a new form (such as an installation or sculpture) brings new insights and

informs in a different way; in one example, strings with hair, became electric cables with

bulbs

Teeth Show: identity as migrants

50 rooms: stem cell researcher collaboration

Tate Modern: installation from 50 Rooms

### DISCUSSION

Natasha: has always taught...had made a considerable body of work before doing a PhD; wanted to do a PhD under her own terms; wanted to find out more about her own practice; a huge part of her career has been curating other artists' work; always loved reading theory; it wasn't a struggle, had two amazing supervisors; calls herself a poetic academic; at one point she felt that academia was taking over her life (asked someone to punch the academia out of her life); likens it to the trauma of change when you become a vegan, for eg.

50 Rooms was her first piece after the PhD; wanted to just do it without worrying about the research; nevertheless have been through the PhD process did something very important for the dramaturgy of the piece; I was aware of it but the audience might not have known. I made this piece the fastest ever so there was something profound about that.

There are struggles around it; good to recognise that. Good to know they exist.

Academia is still suspicious about us, we still exist around the edges; worry about time and how much time we will burn; if you're an artist, academia will be suspicious about this 'art clock'; everything outside of your work is against the art clock; economics, academia, etc suspicious; how can we exist in this outside world ; we show work and tour work; how does the employer deal with this; how flexible will they want to be? How many institutions will allow you to take 3-6 months off to do your research? We have to fundraise for ourselves. If you work in academia you still have to fundraise for yourself and yet the institution still has ownership of the work.

When it works it really is beneficial, because of the depth of dialogue and interrogation. Requires time...

**Mark Hinton presentation – *Learning from Stupid: Clowning & Community Engagement***

Mark put us in pairs to talk about “where your granny grew up” – talk and listen – what community she was a part of – think about how she was engaged with community the person listening doesn’t take notes; report later on what we say ourselves; don’t look bored; 1.5 minute for each person

game of names/touch and hitting

clowning is about ‘staying in the shit’

foleshillfields Vision Project

A project to bring people together; a lot of worry in the world; we had men’s groups and women’s groups; children’s projects; cooking project; another turned poo into wheat; had intra-cultural community music events; we had a live karaoke band some visual arts

sometimes direct dialogues projects between different populations (African + Caribbean) – a lot of anti-Jewish sentiments emerged; for core teams it made us think about things we weren’t good at thinking about

after 2011 riots we did a meeting to see what people thought about it

did project in Kenya via mobile phone making connection to a group of children in Coventry also on phone

six things he learned from that, wondering how community engagement relates to clowning:

1. welcome people well: careful attention to detail, and generosity – unlike our dominant culture
2. listen and get others listening (esp if you disagree with them)
3. hangout thoughtfully
4. hold out a bigger picture beyond localism, nationalism or ‘status quo-ism’
5. talk directly about difficult issues: How has racism affected your life?
6. build diversity deliberately: continually reach out to people from under-represented groups

They relate to clowning like this: clowning involves a very direct connection with the audience; completely connecting with the audience, listening with them

European cultures in general enjoy the ludicrous? Many different traditions of clowning (his was le Coq in France)

> perhaps a clown in teaching workshop to be arranged at later date.

-----