

# Writing, Language and Site

## ANTI Seminar 2010

This year's ANTI seminar is focused on writing, language and site. Built around a series of short-form presentations that quickly open out into discussion, the seminar variously asks: how does writing operate in public space? What are the performative possibilities of thinking about writing and reading in an expanded sense? What compositional techniques and methodologies allow artists to engage with the written and spoken word when working contextually? An international group of academics, artists and writers will discuss these issues through prepared papers, artists' talks and performance lectures.

The seminar is co-curated by Larry Lynch (Department of Performance and Performance Writing Research Group at University College Falmouth); artist and editor Pilvi Porkola (Esiteys journal), artist and coordinator Maija Hirvanen (Edge of Europe) and ANTI Festival. The ANTI seminar is chaired by Maija Hirvanen.

The participation fee is 25 € / day or 60 € / three days. For students, unemployed and members of artists' associations the fee is 20 € / day or 50 € / three days. Registration by 24th of September at +358 50 3052 005 or [registration@antifestival.com](mailto:registration@antifestival.com). The seminar is held in Kummisedän aitta, Minna Canthin katu 44.

### PRESENTATIONS

Wed 29.9. 13.00 – 16.00 Larry Lynch, Rosie Dennis, Emma Cocker

Thu 30.9. 09.00 – 12.00 Jane Jin Kaisen, Pilvi Porkola, John Hall, Kira O'Reilly

Fri 1.10. 09.00 – 12.00 Caroline Bergvall, Timo Heinonen, Maija Hirvanen, Emma Kim Hagdahl

**Larry Lynch**

**Title: The Writing Situation: Performing Identities and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Textuality**

This talk will draw together two related lines of enquiry:

1. The ways in which writing may figure in interrogating the complex relationships between human subjectivity and language.
2. The ways in which radical, 21<sup>st</sup> Century textuality sees practices of writing extend way beyond the traditional contexts of page and book.

The talk, therefore, will address the following question:

*How might practices of writing that extend their reach into three-dimensional, sited and performed contexts enrich the capacity of textual work to contend with the relationships between identity, subjectivity and language?*

To a large extent, the talk will resist the temptation to address this question in explicitly philosophical and theoretical terms, but rather, will seek a response in readings of practice. It will focus on a number of practitioners who have (or have had) a relationship with the Anti Festival. Namely: Caroline Bergvall, Lone Twin, Aaron Williamson and John Hall.

In considering such work, the talk (with reference to visual examples) will take-on the ways in which the location, or situation of writing (where it happens and/or where it is placed) figures as an integral aspect of the overall thematic and conceptual operations of textual practice, and the ways in which practice, when compositionally situated, might help re-think languages relationship to questions of cultural and social identity. What does site, context and locale do to writing, and what does writing do to a situation?

In working through these questions, the talk will introduce the recently designated field of Performance Writing, highlighting some of its core concerns as a developing area of research and practice.

Larry Lynch studied Performance Writing at Dartington College of Arts, after which he completed a doctoral thesis entitled 'The Difficult Impossible: writing, performance and the subject'. He is an artist and writer who has presented performance and audio-visual work at numerous galleries and festivals in the UK and mainland Europe. He publishes poems and poem sequences for the page, as well as essays on writing and performance. He edits the artist-led initiative Acts of Language, and lives in West Cornwall, where he works as Head of the Department

## **Jane Jin Kaisen: 'Itinerary for a performance: engaging site, translation, and inter-subjectivity'**

Abstract: "Itinerant Encounters"

I will present *itinerant\_sends\_for\_itinerant*, a performance made for 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary OPEN Performance Art Festival in Beijing 2009 in collaboration with artist Guston Sondin-Kung. The performance took outset in the parameters and structures set up by the performance festival and the audience itself and led the participants to reflect on the temporary international community enabled by the festival: the meeting between 40 artists from 14 different countries, the meeting between artists and local as well as international audiences; the potentials, elements of chance, misunderstandings, imaginations, and projections that momentary trans-cultural and inter-subjective encounters often produce.

In addition to presenting documentation of the performance, I will read extracts of a piece of artist writing called *Itinerary #1*, which I wrote in the fall 2008 after returning from *ACT Out: Performative Video by Nordic Women Artists*, a conference about feminism and performative video art in Portugal. Whereas the performance emphasized the generosity and potentialities of trans-cultural meetings between artists enabled by events such as the 10<sup>th</sup> OPEN Performance Art Festival in China, *ACT Out*, and also *ANTI-Festival*, the writing is more ambivalent. It reflects on politics of representation, notions of privilege, and the often times uncritical neoliberal celebration of the 'itinerant' or 'nomadic' artist in contemporary art with reference to Miwon Kwon's essay, *The Wrong Place*. I intend for this short presentation to open up for a broader discussion on performance and performative writing in relation to questions of site, language, translation, and community.

Jane Jin's artwork explores how historical narratives, memory, and ideology are constructed and influence our perception and thinking. From a postcolonial and feminist perspective her work is invested in deconstructing the complex intersections of race, class, and gender in a transnational perspective in order to pose alternative narratives and forms of representation. Jane Jin has performed at numerous international biennials and festivals alongside developing various curatorial projects.  
[www.itinerantsendsforitinerant.org](http://www.itinerantsendsforitinerant.org).

## **Pilvi Porkola: CAT concepts, acts, traces (in Finnish)**

### Alive Christmas Tree

1. Take some Christmas decorations
2. Take your clothes off
3. Dress yourself with decorations
4. Imagine you are The Most Beautiful Christmas Tree

In my presentation I will talk about art project “CAT –concepts, acts, traces” I’ve been working with since 2008. CAT is based on idea of scores, which are playful and easy to follow. Following J.L Austin’s idea of performativity I consider relations between speech, text and act. Also I contemplate Philip Auslander’ s idea of documentating as a performance. In the end I talk about my own experience of writing as an artist and researcher.

Pilvi Porkola is a performance artist and researcher. Her doctoral study in Theatre Academy is titled “Notes on politics, documenting and personal in performance”. She is also working as a chief editor of Esitys journal.

**John Hall**

**Do Not Ignore: Order-words in domestic and public spaces**

Abstract

My presentation will begin and end with some examples of recent visual texts of my own that rely on familiarity with public signs and penalty notices. Between these I shall show photographs of the public signs within easy reach of my home in rural south-west England and use these to set up some terms for considering the operations – the performativity – of such signs repeatedly encountered in everyday life, and shall consider the part they play in ordering public space and the forms of authority they invoke to do so. I shall want to make a distinction between the kinds of regulation that take the form of what are, in effect, legally sanctioned commands and those that provide information on which social behaviour can be based, but which rely on co-operation.

I shall want to touch on the diagrammatic, pictorial and verbal elements of these signs, and I shall want to suggest for discussion some of the other delimitations of social space suggested by the term ‘public space’. The most obvious is, of course, the public / private binary. Much of my own work has been designed for, and concerned with, the domestic, which may or may not equate neatly with the private. And then there are those ‘privately’ owned but publicly accessible spaces, usually with times for opening and closing, associated with shopping, eating and drinking, with leisure and pleasure, and all with varying degrees of authority to command. And of course, still highly visible in built settlements of any scale, are the places of worship: what modalities of space are to be found within those? I am certainly interested myself in invoking some of the vocabulary associated with such spaces. I take the term ‘order-words’ in my sub-title from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, and refer to J.L. Austin’s notion of speech acts, from which they adapt their term. They connect the term not only with commands but also with ‘social obligation’, a much broader and complex linguistic entailment. I also invoke, for the purposes of interpretation, the distinction made by C.S. Peirce between three orders of sign: the indexical, which works through pointing; the iconic, which works through resemblance (the signifier looks or sounds like its signified in some respect); and the symbolic, which works through convention and familiarity and which, therefore, must at some point be learnt.

My own work tends to start out from the assumption that each order of space (public, private, domestic, commercial) is defined and indeed regulated by specific orders of signs and modalities of discourse – textual, visual, and, most frequently, combinations of the two. That is the assumption. The question, that is a practical question – only the work can ask it in a particular way – is what happens when these various orders and modalities, including those that separate the visual from the textual, are allowed to migrate across these supposed borders.

*(It may not be possible to cover all of the topics in this abstract in the short presentation, which may well, in any case, be influenced by what has already taken place in the Festival.)*

John Hall, 11.8.10

John Hall is a poet, teacher and essayist who has worked at Dartington College of Arts (now incorporated into University College Falmouth) in the UK since 1976 and whose first book of poems was published in 1968. He led the group that planned the first Performance Writing degree at Dartington. His poems are written both for pages and for frames. As well as published books he has had a number of exhibitions in recent years.

[www.johnhallpoet.org.uk](http://www.johnhallpoet.org.uk).

## **Maija Hirvanen: Being In a Wrong Skin: site and physical culture in the performance On Ice**

Language: English and Finnish

In the Wrong Skin: the site and the physical culture in the performance On Ice

*„10,000 people are watching the icehockey match Turun Palloseura-HIFK of the Finnish league. I'm slipping and sliding on the ice with the other cheerleaders on my high heels. I'm clapping my hands while Shout by Joan Jett is echoing around, the smoke machine is pushing clouds inside the light spectacle. The air is filled with the smell of testosterone, beer and popcorn. I'm running by the feeling of strangeness. I am here, now but outside myself, alone surrounded by others. I'm being looked at. People are cheering when the players are arriving on the ice. I am a Black Cobra. I'm in the wrong skin.“*  
Maija Hirvanen

The body stores a site, but makes it its own, prints it out, turns it upside down. After some years, all that is left from a site and from a sentence is a mark on the shoulder or behind the eyes. I have tried through these marks to return to the sites that had any influence on the origin of On Ice: the icehall, ice on a lake, evergreen forest or a classroom.

The physical expression of On Ice also carries traces of shouting in a forest, of the choreographies of trying, teaching of manners and gender. Sometimes the social choreographies are dressed up as sentences. Do you remember these? *"Money doesn't grow in trees."* *"We should live the way we can and not the way we would like to."* *"A woman is ugly and stupid when she is drunk."* And so on. The idea has been to create the physical and textual character of On Ice somewhere between banal and polished, comical and serious. As most sites, most memories, most sentences, most people, most steps, most rock songs, most alphabets are connected with some experiences that are controversial with some others.

Under the surface of the esthetic self is the physical self; the biggest part of our body cannot be seen. Our origin is found at the point where our body meets the surface of a city (or of the ice). The borderline between the inside of the body and the skin is also a central site of events of a performance. The inside is the entity where the answers to some esthetic questions are just being prepared to be popped out. The skin, however, is the site where the attachment to the inside of a performance, energy, takes place. This attachment area is relatively large. The weight of the skin together with the subcutaneous tissue in a body of the size of Anna-Maija Terävä is about 12 kg. A space becomes a site through the skin. Even if you are in the wrong skin.

*February 2009. At the preparation stage of the On Ice performance we are visiting an icehockey match with the cheerleaders of HIFK. In the dressing room, Anna-Maija is messing around with hairspray, getting herself ready as a cheerleader. We have agreed with the leader of the group that Anna-Maija joins their training session and can be one of the dancers during one icehockey match. Her task is to get the experience of learning what the performance of a cheerleader is all about. I'm video recording and taping the event. Young women are giggling and gossiping in the dressing room. Anna-Maija is a wanna-be, she is an almost a cheerleader. Her movements would not be accepted at a match. They are not specific and polished enough. They are full of uneasiness. Her body is not enough in shape. Anna-Maija is as a matter of fact a drag version of a cheerleader. She is in the wrong skin.*

On Ice is a solo work made for Anna-Maija Terävä but actually it has three performers: Anna-Maija, me and the sites of On Ice. These sites form the third identity, presence and framework of this piece. Transferred from the stage (back) to the sites, these sites become directly present instead of being present only through the texts and the choreography. The behavioral rules and their typical human choreography of the icehall and the dance lesson guide the actions of the audience/participants and of Go-For-It, the performing character of Anna-Maija.

These particular thoughts as my starting point I am asking: how does the site rewrite the performance and the performer? Why does Go-For-It want to go? What has happened to this site while we have been here? What has faded?

**Material list of the presentation:** Anna-Maija Terävä, restaurant Kummisedän aitta, residencies of ImPulsTanz and Akademie Schloss Solitude, the Noverre ballet hall of the Vienna Opera, Zodiak studio B2, a pair of red boxing shoes, a yellow sweatshirt, 10 hardcover books written by deceased female writers, 12 t-shirts, two flour gallons, soil, starch, a plaster statue, a water bottle, silver colored fake eyelashes, Strong Hold hairspray, a pair of white plimsolls, a broken pantyhose, a gray miniskirt, "Shout" by Joan Jett.

Maija Hirvanen is a Finnish performance maker, choreographer and writer. Maija leads Edge of Europe, a programme of events focused on writing's relationship to performance, hosted by Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki. Presentation by Maija Hirvanen, together with dancer Anna-Maija Terävä

**Timo Heinonen**

***Writing, Death and the Space of Performance***

*Notions on Performance, Death, Writing and the Stage of Difference as an Introduction to the Unknown*

According to Aristotle, Leucippus and his pupil Democritus believed that elements consist of three distinctive factors: form, order and position – and that entities differ from one another only and solely by their figure representing form, their connections representing order and by their turning representing position: "Thus A differs from N by its form, AN differs from NA by its order and Z from N by its position." According to Aristotle, these particular thinkers passed the questions on the reason of movement and how it concerns various entities because of their idleness.

However, the categories of reason and nature do not define writing. Characters, connections and turnings instead are part of the material practice of writing, of the happening of writing. They reflect perhaps more particularly the writing and its performative dimension.

Writing is a preface to the non-pronounced. And it always leads to the unknown. Writing is a site, location and performance beyond the temporal, spatial and conceptual coordinates. It is a guarantee on the integrity of the unsettledness. It always reaches out for something which is not present in itself or for itself... unless it aims at hiding something or at intentionally misleading in order to protect something which may not be revealed – these texts are numerous.

Writing primarily refers to the graphics of absence, the performance of difference drawn into letters. It always compensates for something in the way that allows rapprochement in its gesture for this something to finally remain untouched, hidden, unknown. According to Jacques Derrida, writing would be the first and the last trace, if we still could talk about the beginning and the end... but that is not possible. All that is left are the traces, the traces of traces, the traces of traces of traces – always almost wiped out. This very destiny of writing continues to the horizon of the endlessness. This is the performance and event of writing – the stage of difference.

Timo Heinonen is a writer and lecturer at the department of lighting and sound design in the Theatre Academy of Finland and the head of the contemporary theatre studies. His scientific writing and artistic practice is focused on the questions of performance theory, technology and dramaturgy within the contexts of continental philosophy and posthumanism. He is currently working on a number of performance projects, an audio piece for radio and a forthcoming book on Aristotle's poetics (Teos 2010).

## **Emma Kim Hagdahl**

*The Disco Is Open*. Inpex [International Performance Exchange] is an organisation initiated in 2007 by twelve artists active in dance and choreography in collaboration with The Swedish Arts Grants Committee. Inpex works for an expanded understanding of internationalisation in relation to performing arts, dance and choreography. The choreographer Emma Kim Hagdahl will talk about Inpex methods through their activities, which produced two recent projects, the newspaper *The Inpex* and the publication *The Swedish Dance History*. These projects facilitated structures for empowering doers and makers in the field in producing discourse individually and together through writing and sharing in a collective movement. The book release of *The Swedish Dance History* will be held in relation to the seminar.

Emma Kim Hagdahl studied choreography and dance at The University of Dance in Stockholm, Laban in London and ex.e.r.ce CCN Montpellier. In 2008 she received the danceWEB scholarship at ImPulsTanz Vienna International Festival and joined mychoreography and Inpex in Stockholm. Her recent choreographic work for stage includes the ballet duett *DARK*, the solo triptych *As Found* (co-produced by Weld) and a production with the fashion label Weekday. In fall 2010 Emma is invited to the NOTCH (NO+CH) festival in Beijing, China. Emma is part of The Agora Project at PAF. <http://www.inpex-universe.org>

## Emma Cocker: Performing Communities

*Emma Cocker – (provisional) presentation synopsis*

*Performing Communities*

*R.S.V.P - Répondez, S'il Vous Plaît* (working sub-title)

In this presentation, I propose to explore the capacity of (site-specific) writing – moreover the specific format of the *textual invitation* – to produce an emergent form of social assemblage or ‘temporary invented community’. Miwon Kwon uses the term ‘temporary invented community’ to describe those specific social configurations that are “newly constituted and rendered operational through the coordination of the art work itself,”<sup>i</sup> formed “around a set of collective activities and/or communal events as defined by the artist.”<sup>ii</sup> Such communities, she asserts, are both *projective* and *provisional*, always “performing its own coming together and coming apart as a necessarily incomplete modeling or working-out of a collective social process. Here, a coherent representation of the group’s identity is always out of grasp.”<sup>iii</sup> The construction or *curation* of a temporary, imagined or even ‘invented community’ – through the use of an invitation issued by an artist – can be witnessed within various performative and participatory art practices from the 1960s onwards, where the specific form of an invitation is often used to set the terms or establish the constitution of unusual – even arbitrary – categories of belonging or participation. Other art practices invite us to consider how we might perform every day – or perform the everyday – in ways that are resistant and affirming, poetic and political. Their invitations urge us to “do it”, coerce us with their call, “let’s”.<sup>iv</sup>

My presentation will involve the critical interrogation of forms of instructional or propositional writing that specifically invite participatory performative actions or which produce communities of *readers* who become temporarily – and potentially visibly – bound by the terms of a given text. In this sense then, my intent is to address and examine the specificity of the textual invitation as a particular manifestation of written or spoken language within a performance. In turn, I will consider ways whereby such an invitation might *call* forth or give permission for the formation of unexpected or non-habitual configurations of ‘community’ or collectivity, no longer bound by existing rules or habitual societal protocol. I am interested in how the performative invitation might create the constitutional foundations for a nascent social assemblage, setting up the conditions wherein the possibility of a ‘temporary invented community’ (Kwon), ‘counter public’ (Warner) or even liminal ‘communitas’ (Turner) might arise, momentarily united by and within the shared – even ethical – event of *response*. My investigation of the invitation and its capacity to produce emergent, time-bound forms of sociability or ‘temporary invented community’, will thus attempt to build upon and contribute to selected contemporary debates that are attempting to rethink – and problematize – the terms of ‘community’, by conceiving its constituency beyond the determination of already defined geographical, social or economic criteria.

Drawing on selected examples of art practice – including contributions from within *ANTI*, past and present – as a point of departure, I propose to discuss the invitation as a specific manifestation of performance writing, focusing on its capacity to produce emergent forms of sociability, collectivity and participation. In particular, I hope to use the discussion as a space to recuperate a critical value for the role of responding witness alongside that of *active* participant, as well as explore the relationship between obligation and individual volition within performances that invite response, that demand an *R.S.V.P.* I propose to begin by critically reflecting on my own collaboration with the artist-led project, *Open City*, to explore how the term ‘temporary invented community’ can be used to describe the time-bound relationships, connections and intensities that bind together diverse individuals acting in response to an invitation or instruction within the specific space-time of a participatory performance. *Open City*’s projects often involve inviting, instructing or working with different individuals to create participatory performances in the public realm; discrete art works that put into question or destabilize habitual patterns and conventions of public behaviour. In a number of projects, *Open City* have attempted to synchronize the speeds and affectivity of individuals through performances that specifically invite collective action, where individuals become temporally united by a rule or instruction that they are collectively adhering to. Publicly distributed postcards and written instructions have been used to invite as-yet-unknown publics to participate in collective action, setting the terms for the possibility of imagined or future assemblies.

This self-reflective interrogation of a singular collaboration, will be developed through reference to the project *SHOPS* by FrenchMottershead. The origins of the *SHOPS* project can be traced back to a work made as part of the *ANTI* festival in Kuopio, Finland (2005) where the artists worked with *Five Shops* to invite their customers to participate in the live event of a ritualized group photograph, where the request itself was performed by the shopkeeper as a whisper or surreptitiously stamped on the back of each till receipt. Since then, FrenchMottershead have negotiated a series of international residencies in other cities in Brazil, China, Romania, Turkey and the UK to establish similar collaborations, produce further group photographs. What unites the disparate individuals encountered within FrenchMottershead’s *SHOPS* project is that they have all *voluntarily* opted to participate in their chosen community. Unlike those rather more fixed and enforced societal categories of community based on already defined geographical, social or economic criteria, the project’s social groupings are constituted through a process of self-selection, on an individual’s decision to have a piercing or buy a hat. Moreover, beyond the act of purchasing goods, the individuals have further elected to participate in a social ritual orchestrated by the artists. As such, the photographs do not simply document the customers of a selected shop on a given day, but are group portraits of those individuals who curiously responded to an invitation.

The use of invitations or instructions is a device often used by FrenchMottershead for activating public participation within their work, for gently provoking or prompting unexpected forms of social behaviour. Their

printed or spoken instructions work *against* the expectations of social etiquette, granting the individual recipient permission to behave against the grain, contrary to habit or routine. Within the *SHOPS* project it was the shopkeepers who issued the invitation, asking their customers to participate in the making of a ritualized group portrait. The portraits thus make visible a particular form of *social bond* – between the shop and its community – whilst also attesting to the honoring of a *contractual bond* or promise, a commitment to participate made between strangers. Individuals are not photographed *whilst* shopping, but return instead to participate in the ceremonial inauguration of a new community produced through the lens of the camera. Collectively returning to the site of a previous relational or social exchange (between shopper and shopkeeper), the gathering of individuals perform a strange reunion; the meeting of a community who may never have before acknowledged its own constitution, like the awkward assembly of wedding guests for whom the only common connection is the bride or groom. Separated from the habitual routines of everyday life, these individuals are like initiates at the threshold of a nascent communion; each photograph somehow marking the liminal site of a rite of passage, the swearing in of a newly elected. During the intervals of photographic stillness it becomes possible to witness a new social configuration existing alongside, or even as an alternative to, the more habitual or typical social groups operating within contemporary culture.

Like that of Michel de Certeau's creative consumer, practices such as that of FrenchMottershead and *Open City* operate through the act of *bricolage* or a form of enunciation which attempts to read the social texts of dominant language differently. The artists appropriate the vocabulary and syntax of various social situations found or encountered, recombining them through invention and improvisation to produce new kinds of social assemblage. Rather than a form of socially engaged practice or collaboration that involves the participation – and often proposed empowerment – of an already defined or constituted community, such practices instead actively produce propositional and experimental social assemblages, based on textual invitations that are playfully optional and often temporary, rather like the rules of a game. Here perhaps, the logic of 'new genre public art' collides and reconnects with the traditions of artistic assemblage or even of *postproduction*, the borrowing and reassembly of existing cultural and social formations into new compositions or *refrains*.<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2004), p.126.

<sup>ii</sup> Kwon, 2004, p.126.

<sup>iii</sup> Kwon, 2004, p.154.

<sup>iv</sup> *do it* is the title of an exhibition and publication conceived and curated by Hans-Ulrich Obrist in 1997, and organized and circulated by the Independent Curators Incorporated (ICI), New York, which brought together over 30 instructional art works and actions within a single exhibition. The

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majority of the works operated as forms of invitational yes, provoking forms of being or behaving differently to habitual expectation. The invitation form of *Let's* refers explicitly to the instructional works of Yoko Ono.

<sup>v</sup> Félix Guattari describes how the isolation and separation of a 'partial object' or 'fragment of content' from its habitual context, grants it a certain autonomy, which in turn might become the basis of a new 'existential refrain'. See Guattari, 'Subjectivities: for Better and for Worse', *The Guattari Reader*, ed. G. Genosko, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), pp.193–203.

Emma Cocker is an art-writer and a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University. Operating under the title 'Not Yet There', her writing and text-based work often explores models of practice - and subjectivity - which resist or refuse the pressure of a single or stable position by remaining willfully unresolved. She is currently working on the research project *Performing Communities*, and a forthcoming book entitled *Desiring to be Led Astray: The Art of Wandering*.