

When performance combines with video and installation, are the characteristics of time and space extended or narrowed?

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to explore when performance, video and installation combine together, whether the characteristics of time and space extended or not. Frist, this paper will choose several specific performance artist's time-based works to demonstrate the characteristic of time in performance art in chapter 1, then discuss space-based performance artworks in chapter 2. After that, it will show how the characteristics of time and space vary differently when performance combines with video and installation in chapter 3, also focus Joan Jonas's work as the case study in this part. Finally, this paper would provide insightful thoughts on the current contemporary art's development in conclusion.*

Keywords: *Time, Space, Performance, Video, Installation*

1. Introduction

Time and space are the fundamental elements in our life, as well as in the arts (Rawson, 2005). Since 1960s, when Marcel Duchamp brought the toilet into museum, the boundary of art was extended, artists began to use materials that from life, including clothes, pee, blood and everything, they gained fresh possibilities to develop their work in new directions, including video, installation, photography, performance, public art and other challenging and new ways, this means the art forms expand in some way. Today, artists combine more than one art forms to reveal their concepts, which is also the essential way to read and understand the meaning of artworks in today's contemporary art environment. Michael Rush classified the topics of art in his book *New Meida in Art*, which related to identity, politics, feminism, mass media, narratives, time, space and so on. Also, Christiane Paul listed different themes in the book *Digital Art*, such as artificial life, body and identity, gaming and public space. Since then, time and space are not only recurring themes, but also constitute the most essential parameters of the works of art (Rush, 2005). At the end of the twentieth century, art was used mostly for film and video, as well as other hybrid forms, video installation, sound art and the like (Paul, 2003). Also, Vanderbeek and Schneemann first used the term expanded cinema in the mid-1960s, which is a form of live art, linked to multimedia performance (Rees, 2011). Even though expanded cinema widen the field of vision and melt down all art forms, time and space always play important roles in them. Thus, it is necessary to be discussed how time and space are presented in performance art, and how the characteristic varies differently when combines with video and installation. Except several performance artworks, Joan Jonas's works will be seen as the key studies in the paper, because her artistic processes are like co-existence of time and space, and she often gets involved in the art forms of video, installation and performance.

The context consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 will talk about the characteristic of time in performance art. It will not discuss the duration of the whole process of performance or the duration of the recorded video version, instead of the characteristic of time itself in performance art. In this part, except several performance artists' works, Joe Graham's live performance *Metronome Drawings* and Joan Jonas's work *Delay Delay* would be as the main examples.

In Chapter 2, it will demonstrate the characteristic of space in performance art. It will also take Joan Jonas's early work *Mirror Piece II*, which performed again at Tate Modern in 2018, as the example to discuss the topic. Besides, it will also provide Jorge Luis Borges's philosophy on space for the theory support in this part.

Chapter 3 will be divided into two sections to make the further analyzation about when performance combines with video and installation, how the characteristic of time and space varies differently. It will provide a performance video installation work *Mirage* from Joan Jonas, which performed again at Tate Modern in 2018, to discuss deeply in this part.

In conclusion, I hope to suggest ideas about art related to time and space, which may generate fresh activity in art itself.

2. Time in performance art

If it is time, it can only be a philosophical subject. Whether in the natural sciences or in anthropological ways, time itself does not allow one to say something (Heidegger, 1987). The topic of time has been thoroughly studied and explained in the field of philosophy. However, time is also used as the basic theme of literary creation. Jorge Luis Borges builds a labyrinth of time in his novel of *A Garden with Forking Paths*, and he argue that time is the only magician and master of the universe (Borges, 2018). Also, time is also regarded as a very important parameter in the area of art. Bill Viola supposed that time is the purest being, it is a point, but it contains all the angles of all directions, and we live in it, time is like a big ball, surrounded us. We are like living in this ball of time (Viola, 2011). But how artists present the features of time in performance art? This chapter will provide specific artworks for analysing time in performance art.

Performance art is that artists use their body to do an action at a specific time and space, it is an art form based on body, time and space. Since the development of performance art, artists have used the body as a medium to discuss the relationship between body and time. German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche pointed out that everyone's body is different, which is the most fundamental difference between people (Nietzsche, 1993). The french phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty also proposed body theory that the body is the subject, and he believes the body that is active in space is achieved by the "body diagram test" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). Performance artists are all independent and unique individual, thus all the performance has their own concepts inside. But here are some examples about performances, I will give a new thinking on these works from the perspective of time. *Feeling the voice* from Marina Abramović, a performance which was done in 1975, as she described that she lied on the floor with her head titled backward, and she screamed until lost her voice (Abramović, 1975). It is like a perceptual way of physical self-existence. Also, a Chinese performance artist, Yunchang He, he did a live 72- hours performance work *Longevity Fruit* at Today Art Museum in Beijing in 2017. In this performance, he didn't eat or drink for 72 hours until waiting for the growth and sprouting of 'longevity fruit' (peanuts). Besides, Tehching Hsieh, an artist from south Taiwan, who finished *One Year Performance From 1980-1981*, he punched in every hour for one year and punched 24 times a day. All these examples can be seen as time-based performance, combines with body and doing time. As Tehching Hsieh said that doing art, doing life, is also doing time, passing time that is what he is doing (Hsieh, 2017). It can be seen that the body also occupies a dominant position in the performance art.

Apart from the concept of the relationship between body and time, there are two examples revealing the feature of time in different ways. The first example is Joe Graham's live performance *Metronome Drawings*, which happened at ACTS RE-ACTS 5 in Wimbledon College of Arts. He used some paper and a mechanical metronome in an attempt to record the same amount of time differently. Each of the individual drawings will use a different combination of tempos to represent the exact same amount of time. In accordance with the rhythm of the mechanical metronome, participants drew the handwriting on the paper, it showed that the pattern of every second was not the same and repeatable, which is related to Bergson's philosophy of time, 'time is as it is experienced', 'we never experience the same moment twice' (Bergson, 2005). The artist tried to present the shape of time by this performance, every shape which was drawn by the rhythm of time according to the mechanical metronome could be seen as a homogeneous and independent moment, all shapes judged by time, and they all have an end and a beginning, as if they were going on a circular path (Aristotle, 2008). What's more, a series of symbols or sequences made by participates are the result of simple and mechanical actions, but the mechanic metronome itself is a physical object and exist in the certain space, physical things are in space and are measurable. Thus, there is a question arise, is the essence of time changed when putting these visible actions into the certain space?



Figure 1: *Metronome Drawings*, Joe Graham, 2018

Graham, J. (2018) *Metronome Drawings*, Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Metronome+Drawings+Joe+Graham&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjK5uSPyo3eAhXpKsAKHVQ7DGoQ_AUIDigB&biw=1440&bih=839#imgrc=kVxN2cWhNMEs5M:

The other example will mention the artist Joan Jonas, and she has been engaged in many performances. The work *Delay Delay*, which was re-performed in London in 2018, it consisted of two groups of dancers, they performed on both banks of the Thames river, each performance was repeated twice with the total duration of 26 minutes. Even the performers on both sides performed the same performance, they were not simultaneous, and one side had few seconds delay. When the left bank performers performed the action, the performers on the right bank began to repeat the same but after several seconds. The whole process didn't have simultaneous movements, for instance, when one of the left bank performers walked to the shore and taps a wooden block, the performer on the other side repeated the actions after hearing the sound, the movement of each performers was one after another, making the entire performance rhythmic and fluid. Even Joan Jonas created a different way to express the possibilities of time, even the audience saw the two same performances within several seconds delay, what we saw was different things, because every moment of time is different, and time is always changing, innovating, and integrating diversity. We can't step into the same river twice, not only the river is changing, but more importantly, we are changing ourselves (Bergson, 2005).



Figure 2: *Delay Delay (London Version)*, Joan Jonas, 2018

Jonas, J. (2018) *Delay Delay (London Version)*, performance on both sides of Thames River, photo by Lyu Wen.

As we can see, performance artists have been thinking about time and trying to express their experiences on philosophical time through artworks constantly. They use their body as the main medium to explore the relationship between body and time, some artists like Joan Jonas and Joe Graham's performance also make us rethink the features of time in different way. Apart from time, performance art is space-based art form as well. The next chapter will continue discuss the features of space in performance art.

3. Space in performance art

Space-based is also a feature of performance art. Except the time-based performances listed above, artists still explore the relationship between space and body. The famous American artist, Bruce Nauman, he did many workshop performances, which are not aimed to interact with the audience, instead, to explore the relationship between individually and space through the use of his own body. Besides, a Chinese performance artist, Yunchang He, his works usually give people a distinct impression of ruthlessness, accuracy and fierceness, all his works challenge people's will and psychological endurance capacity more than the instinct of the body itself. In one of his work casting, he cast himself into a cement block and stayed inside for 24 hours. In this work, he extends the boundary between body and space. French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty pointed out in his theory of the space of embodiment, my body is not only a part of space in my opinion, but if I don't have a body, there is no space (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). In this sense, space is as embodied space, and the spatiality of the body is not the spatiality of a position like the spatiality of an external object or the spatiality of a spatial sense, but a spatiality of a situation. As a short poem by Noel Arnault in Gaston Bachelard's book *The Poetics of Space*: "I am the space where I am." (Arnault, 2014). Body is put in a narrow space for a long time to become the sculpture and dominate the space. Thus, body is not only an element concerned with performance, but a physical extension of concept.

Compared with Joan Jonas's *Mirror Piece II*, there are some different concepts about space. She used the mirror as the main element to create another virtual multiply spaces. *Mirror Piece II* is Jonas's early work, but re-performed at Tate Morden in 2018. A group of performances, carrying full-length mirrors, moved across the floor. Jonas said she was intrigued by Jorge Luis Borges's story collection *Labyrinths*. In this book, Borges described that mirrors were mysterious and evil as well as beautiful, and they break up the space, they multiply reality (Borges, 2000). When all the performers held the full-length mirrors to the audience, the audience could see themselves and others in the mirrors. Through the use of mirrors in the space, this work evoked an atmosphere of danger (Lorz, 2018). From our experience, mirrors can give us uncomfortable and uneasy feelings. When we speaking to ourselves in the mirror, which makes us feel strange and uncomfortable, like facing to the camera, the camera makes us uncomfortable. When the audience had to watch themselves, and had to be watched by others, they must feel uncomfortable. The audience sensed the danger. Mirrors, self- images reflection or reflect other objects surrounded by you, can also divide and create multiple spaces, creating an illusion of a maze, are mysterious and interesting (Jonas, 2003). It's very interesting that the mirror itself is not offensive, but it makes the audience feel stressful and it creates a sense of tension. The audience could see themselves, but perhaps felt uncomfortable. "I like to have that going on in the audience. Everybody looks, but you don't want others to see you doing it, because nobody likes a narcissist." (Jonas, 2003). The process of facing to ourselves is a way to destroy something. We were all in total control in the performance when so many big mirrors in the front of us, so that we were nowhere to go but had to look at ourselves and be watched by others, we were controlled by the mirror, in fact, we were bounded by ourselves. In this work, Jonas created multiple illusion spaces by mirrors, when audience as the viewer watched the performance, but they were watched by other illusion spaces which still existed in the real space at the same time. A question that we have to think now is how illusions are created within framed space and how to deal with a real physical space with depth and distance?



Figure 3: Early works of Joan Jonas, *Mirror Piece II, Performance*, 2018

Jonas, J. (2018) *Mirror Piece II*, performance at Tate Modern, photo by Lyu Wen.

From these above examples, we can find something in common between the features of time and space in performance art, which is body plays a fundamental role all the time. The discussion of the relationship between body and time or space also would be the permanent topic in performance art. However, when performance combine with other materials, such as mirrors, the mechanical metronome, or change the performance place to outside, like “Delay Delay”, we may see new signs about the features of time and space. The next chapter will focus on a new form of performance, which combines with video and installation, to make a further discussion.

4. Time and space travel in performance video installation - Take Joan Jonas’s *Mirage* as the case study.

As Daniel Birnbaum pointed out in the book *Chronology* that how can we disintegrate or extend the time and space so that they are no longer presented in a single way? (Birnbaum, 2005). Video provides different ways to play with time, and installation is possible to play with space. The Chinese professor Juchuan Li pointed out his views of video and video installation on *Journal of Hubei Institute of Fine Arts*, he reclaims that video is a time-oriented "time-space" form, and when video combines with installation, it becomes a space-oriented "space-time" form (Li, 2014). If time can be manipulated by various forms of performance art, then when performance combines with video and installation, the exploration about the topic of time and space is no longer breaking linear time and real space, but how weaving more complex and exquisite grid of time and space for creating diverse possibilities of time and space. In the following content, Joan Jonas’s *Mirage* will be the case study to explore whether the features of time and space in performance art will be extended or narrowed with the combination of video and installation.

4.1 Time in *Mirage*

The early performance *Mirage* was finished in 1976, which combined with video, installation, drawing, sound, and performance. In 2018, it was re-performed at Tate Modern. In this work, she created a specific theatre space like the early one. Then an old TV was placed in front of the left side of the stage, a blackboard was placed in the back of the right side, and a large projection screen was hung in the back but middle of the stage. What’s more, she also combined the materials to create more layers, the cone that she used as a microphone to make some sounds, the objects that blackboard and chalks she used to make some drawings, all these objects can become indispensable elements in her performance. A famous art critic Julienne Lorz made comments on Jonas’s work that no one medium surpasses another, and no one element is dominant (Lorz, 2018). Like collage, cut images and connect things together to juxtapose them. Also, Susan Morgan, a writer based in Los Angeles, California and Edinburgh, made comments that performance is a way to combine elements, such as movement, image and sound, to produce a

complex and layered content (Morgan, 2006). Thus, when artists make a connection of materials to juxtapose them, a new thing or concept will appear, Jonas's work give us a new way to rethink time, space and narrative.



Figure 4: *Mirage*, Joan Jonas, 1976/1994/2005

Jonas, J. (1976/1994/2005) *Mirage*, Available at: https://www.moma.org/calendar/performance/1014/installation_images/4632?locale=en

The feature of time was showed in this work when the projector combined with drawings. The big projector screen showed she was drawing an image at the blackboard, at the same time, she was drawing the exactly same image in the performance at this stage. Past and present exist at the same time. But most interesting thing is that Joan Jonas drew faster than the past herself, when the drawing was done, she just waited for the past herself to finish the image. As Gilles Deleuze said that because the past was not formed after the moment it was, but at the same time, time splits into moments and pasts at every moment (Deleuze, 1989). This view is derived from Henri Bergson's philosophy of time. He believes that the essence of time lies in its passing. He puts forward "when I took my foot at present, the other foot is in the future." in his works of *Matter and Memory* (Bergson, 2005). He puts time in the centre of metaphysical place.

The passage of reality is in nature the movement of time. Jonas created two different time dimensions, the big screen showed the past time, and at the same time, she did the same live action in real time. Even though she tried to make the same drawings as she did in the past, the drawings couldn't be the exactly same, as Henri Bergson said that we can't step into the same river twice (Bergson, 2005). In the drawing part, she juxtaposes past and present to create a kind of reality and fantasy, in her game of time, she seems to be sceptical about the time and place, does time really exist?

When Jonas combines performance with video (closed-circuit television), installations (cones, blackboards) and sound (her voice), the narrative structure in performance art is no longer a traditional linear, but presents a non-linear form, like fragments. If you separate and reassemble each part of the work, it won't seem to affect the integrity of the narrative structure, it is like a collage made of different materials, and a novel without clear beginning and ending. If the viewer is told to find the connections from all the objects shown in a piece, then it is certain that everyone sees the work in a different way. Jonas constructed the work related to the video, the cone, the drawing and the space. The work *Mirage* comes together with varied fragments, just like every part can be seen as a beginning or an end. As the narrator Donald Barthelme wrote in *Sixty Stories*, 'Fragments are the only from I trust.' (Barthelme, 1981). This kind of narrative is similar to the concept of "time zero" created by Italo Calvino in many novels. As he said that the dimension of time is broken, we can only love and think in the fragments of time, each fragment runs along its own trajectory and disappear in an instant. (Calvino, 1998). In *Mirage*, each part ends like a freeze in the movie, showing an absolute time, "time zero", which is converted to the beginning relative to the next part.

4.2 Space in *Mirage*

Compared with other performance works, Jonas created a very specific place, kind of a little theatre settings within the scenes framed by the camera. But different from theatre acting, her performance is like simple behaving. And it doesn't have a certain text, instead, the narrative structure is like a poem, which put all objects together to create the possibilities of multiple spaces. As she said that the most important thing for performances is to shuttle through various spaces (Jonas, 2018).

When the live action combines with the projection and video, a kind of triple space was created, television(video) and projection are two virtual spaces, the live action is in the real space, but the real space is also created by Jonas. She connected the three different forms together to juxtapose triple space, the virtual and the real spaces gave audience an uncertain illusion and interesting visual experience. It reflects the way we live in the world now, we are always experiencing different things at the same time (Jonas, 2010). It is not impossible to have different spatial experience at the same time. In one part of the piece, the projector showed Jonas was drawing with chalk on the blackboard in her studio, and in the real space, she was making the same drawing on the real blackboard with chalk as the video, which created the illusion and virtual space. Giving the audience the impression that the recorded action and Jonas are in the same space. Johann Burton also pointed out that the connection between reality and illusion is basically clear (Burton, 2015).

Anyway, what is interesting is *Mirage's* narrative, and how performance becomes inherent to video and installation. However, juxtaposition of projector and closed-circuit television, together with live performance, it gives the audience a subtle feeling of visual disorder. Their attention has to frequently change between projection, television and live performance itself, so the audience was forced to change their habits of viewing. This performance also gives the viewers a complex and varied spatial visual experience.

5. Conclusion

The creation of artworks is personal, and the artist's perception of temporal, spatial and visual expression are also different. This paper has discussed the features of time and space in performance art. Then, it has taken Joan Jonas's work *Mirage* to demonstrate that how the temporal and spatial characteristics of the performance art are different when combined with video and installation. As we can see, artists have been exploring new forms and gaining visual experiences, when different forms of art come together, not only the narrative in artworks seem to be more various, but also the possibilities of time and space seem to be created. However, it is not comprehensive enough to discuss only one artwork. Thus, as for the question raised at the beginning of the article: when performance combines with video and installation, are the characteristics of time and space extended or narrowed? It seems that the exact answer cannot be obtained in a short time, and answers are never easy. Only by constantly trying to expose every question and every answer from creation and observation, and mobilizing enough senses, may we hear the hidden words.

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