



COLECCIÓN CONOCIMIENTO CONTEMPORÁNEO

# El devenir de las civilizaciones: interacciones entre el entorno humano, natural y cultural

Coordinadora  
Sandra Olivero Guidobono

*Dykinson, S.L.*

EL DEVENIR DE LAS CIVILIZACIONES: INTERACCIONES ENTRE EL ENTORNO HUMANO, NATURAL Y CULTURAL.

Diseño de cubierta y maquetación: Francisco Anaya Benítez

© de los textos: los autores

© de la presente edición: Dykinson S.L.

Madrid - 2021

N.º 10 de la colección Conocimiento Contemporáneo

1ª edición, 2021

ISBN 978-84-1377-324-7

NOTA EDITORIAL: Las opiniones y contenidos publicados en esta obra son de responsabilidad exclusiva de sus autores y no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de Dykinson S.L ni de los editores o coordinadores de la publicación; asimismo, los autores se responsabilizarán de obtener el permiso correspondiente para incluir material publicado en otro lugar.

CAPÍTULO 68. DISEÑO DE PROGRAMA DE DESENSIBILIZACIÓN SISTEMÁTICA DE LA ANSIEDAD ESCÉNICA EN LAS ESPECIALIDADES INTERPRETATIVAS DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DE LA ASIGNATURA DE REPENTIZACIÓN Y TRANSPORTE O LECTURA A VISTA DE LOS CONSERVATORIOS SUPERIORES DE MÚSICA.....	1422
AINARA ESTÍVARIZ FAGÚNDEZ	
CAPÍTULO 69. LOS INTÉRPRETES Y LA ACADEMIA. UNA REVISIÓN DE LOS DEBATES EN INVESTIGACIÓN PERFORMATIVA MUSICAL.....	1472
IGOR SAENZ ABARZUZA	
SEF HERMANS	
BEATRIZ POMÉS JIMÉNEZ	
PATRICK MACDEVITT	
CAPÍTULO 70. CAMBIOS DE PERSPECTIVA: LA INDIVIDUALIDAD EMOCIONAL EN LA OBRA DE GISÈLE VIENNE A TRAVÉS DEL LARGOMETRAJE DE PATRIC CHIHA.....	1492
BEATRIZ ARROYO PLASENCIA	
CAPÍTULO 71. EL LENGUAJE DEL LIVE ART: DE LA PERFORMANCE AL ARTE VIVO .....	1511
VANESA CINTAS MUÑOZ	
DRA. OIHANA CORDERO RODRÍGUEZ	
DR. ALFONSO DEL RÍO ALMAGRO	
CAPÍTULO 72. PERFORMATIVE REFLECTIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF JOSÉ ORTIZ ECHAGÜE .....	1528
BEATRIZ POMÉS JIMÉNEZ	
IGOR SAENZ ABARZUZA	
SEF HERMANS	
PATRICK MACDEVITT	
CAPÍTULO 73. EXTENDING NON-PROFESSIONAL PERFORMATIVE PROJECTS: INTEGRATING RESEARCH-THROUGH-PRACTICE .....	1563
SEF HERMANS	
PATRICK MACDEVITT	
BEATRIZ POMÉS JIMÉNEZ	
IGOR SAENZ ABARZUZA	

## EXTENDING NON-PROFESSIONAL PERFORMATIVE PROJECTS: INTEGRATING RESEARCH-THROUGH-PRACTICE

---

DR. SEF HERMANS

*Universidad de Navarra, Spain*

DR. PATRICK MACDEVITT

*Independent researcher, United States of America*

DRA. BEATRIZ POMÉS JIMÉNEZ

*Universidad de Navarra, Spain*

DR. IGOR SAENZ ABARZUZA

*Universidad Pública de Navarra, Spain*

### ABSTRACT

In educational settings, non-professional performative projects have been used as a tool to help participants gain insights and valuable knowledge. Likewise, post-graduate professionals engage in research-through-practice, using reflective techniques in an investigative inquiry of performance, searching for knowledge and a more profound understanding of the processes at play from a creative performative perspective.

So how can participants benefit from non-professional projects? What gains can be made through combining research-through-practice with non-professional performative endeavors? What specific methods and techniques can be useful in developing awareness and experiential knowledge?

At the University of Navarra (Spain), Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura y Diseño (ETSAUN), Dr. Sef Hermans and Dr. Juan Luis Roquette worked with 36 fourth-year Design students in his class, “Scenography, a Creative and Performative Guide to Performance and Stage Design.” In small groups, students designed and performed their own modern scenography based on 19th century operas in a performative trailer. Alongside the benefits of collaborative experience, the class allowed students to explore aspects of design from a performative perspective.

In this chapter, we consider potential benefits of such endeavors. Participants of Dr. Hermans’ class and other non-professional performative projects reported a variety of learning outcomes. Assessed aside research-through-practice investigations, we show how these non-professional performative programs may extend student experiences by integrating research-through-practice techniques.

## KEYWORDS

Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura y Diseño (ETSAUN), Research-Through-Practice, Practice-based Research, Creativity, Non-Professional Performative Projects, Theatre, Design, Farout Artistic Research Group, ICS.

## INTRODUCTION

Short movie-trailers of Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Giacomo Puccini's *Madam Butterfly*, Gioachino Rossini's *Cinderella*, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Magic Flute* appeared onscreen, adorned with plastic-wrap, animal-human hybrids, parking lot DJs, a 1960's diner, and love-stricken post-apocalyptic robots. This was the last day of the intensive 3-week course and students presented their final scenography projects. The innovative concepts had been created and executed by fourth-year students of the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura Universidad de Navarra (ETSAUN) for the class, *Scenography, a creative guide to performance and stage design*. (*Scenography, Stage Design*) The course, commencing in September 2020, was devised by performer/trumpeter, lecturer, and co-writer of this article Dr. Sef Hermans and architect and lecturer Dr. Juan Luis Roquette. It incorporated elements of research-through-practice, a participant-oriented performative research discipline.

In this chapter, we will explore how research-through-practice techniques can benefit courses such as *Scenography, Stage Design* or other non-professional multi-disciplinary endeavors. First, we will outline the basic structure of Hermans' course, then we will discuss relevant methods in research-through-practice, followed by a survey of non-professional performative projects and research-through-practice inquiries. These case-studies will emphasize benefits gained from performative experience, such as deeper understanding of content, creative process, collaborative dynamics, embodied knowledge, and spatial awareness. Finally, we will attempt to apply these analyses to Hermans' course, explaining some of the reported benefits for students and how the course or similar undertakings could be improved.

## 1. *SCENOGRAPHY, A CREATIVE GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE AND STAGE DESIGN* SUMMARY

In the course, students reinvented and updated the storylines of famous operas from the 19th and 20th centuries and designed a novel scenography production plan for their concept. This entailed floor plans and designs for three different scenes, costume designs for the main characters, and a 3-minute trailer showcasing their production. The class navigated the dynamics of individual and group work and the balance between planned activities and open creative exploration, both vital to creative collaboration. The three-week intensive course consisted of daily lectures on scenography, research-through-practice methodology, surveys of literature on creative processes, and some practical and technical subjects related to students' projects.

At the beginning of the course, students were asked to form groups of three to four students, each group consisted of students from various design disciplines: service design, product design, and fashion design. It was hoped this strategy would offer students a basic understanding of multidisciplinary creative collaborative approaches.

Project work began with individual research followed by an associative activity. Students selected an opera and then conducted research: listening to recordings, watching recent productions, and analyzing the storyline and historical context. After immersing themselves in the opera, students needed to disconnect from conventions of the material with an associative activity—thinking of words based on preset lists. Using time pressure, the students were able to access spontaneous parts of the mind (Lopez-Gonzales, 2012). Each student used ideas from the activity to form a free adaptation of their opera's storyline, thus integrating their research with the freedom of the associative activity.

Students used their research and associations to complete mood-board activities. The mood boards initiated a burst of activity. Students presented materials they had discovered, impressions, and ideas. More importantly, group members then adopted and extended upon their peers' ideas, performing dynamic collaborative structures. They were then ready to directly begin work on their projects. Even though each

participant had his/her own design specialty, the process was multidisciplinary, and group-members actively gave each other feedback and took responsibility for all facets of the work.

The course then shifted towards practical application. In a lecture, they learned how to use audio-visual editing software, which proved vital for several projects. Concepts ranged from virtual-reality video games and stop-motion renderings of scenographies to real-life enactments, with students taking part in production, direction, recording, and acting. This final portion of the course was relatively open, with only non-invasive teacher input and no pre-organized activities. This format, supplemented by elements of research-through-practice, allowed students to explore the adaptability and flexibility of their own creative process.

The class ended with a screening of the students' final projects (their 5-minute movie trailers) at the university's media presentation room. For their final assessment, Hermans and Roquette had students write an exegesis, which provided designs, written reflections, documents of process, and a written concept.

## 1.1 DEFINING TERMS

Hermans and Roquette's class is an example of a non-professional, participant-oriented project.

*Non-professional* performers lack professional performative experience or training, either because they are pursuing a different vocation which is not focused on performance (unlike musicians, actors, dancers, etc.) or because they are undergraduate or graduate students just beginning their performative development.

*Participant* or *performer-oriented* projects do not follow the common arrangement of theatrical production where contributors facilitate an experience for a spectator. Instead, a participant-oriented production emphasizes the participant's own experience and insight gained from these experiences (both the experience of practice/development and performance) and is less concerned with that of the spectator. This is of

course not an exclusionary definition but a gradient scale. This paper studies several performer-oriented events. For example, Hermans and Roquette's class, as is the case in most educational programs, is centered on student experience (rather than those watching their end-of-course video). This is not to say that the spectator is unnecessary, but that their contribution—the addition of performative/observational tension—is meant to facilitate the performer's experience and development, making the act of performance more demanding through scrutiny.

## 2. RESEARCH-THROUGH-PRACTICE

Typically, methods of performative research-through-practice are used by postgraduates in professional, participant-oriented studies. Using *Scenography, Stage Design* as a case-study, supplemented by other examples of research-through-practice and non-professional performative projects, we argue that several elements of research-through-practice are applicable to non-professional, performer-oriented endeavors. Researchers Brad Haseman and Daniel Mafe point to non-professional benefits in the article, *Acquiring Know-How*, and extensively discuss the applicability of research-through-practice in non-art fields that require multi-disciplinary skills. Among other developments, students or participants, regardless of their potential vocation, build skills and knowledge in collaboration, creative processes, and physical and spatial awareness (these last two are most applicable to research-through-practice projects in performative studies).

A defining feature of research-through-practice is reflection. The students' final exegeses followed conventions of research-through-practice: researchers are expected to evidence their outcomes through "the creative work and the exegetical, linguistic accompaniment to that work" (Haseman and Mafe, 2009, p.216). This verbalization of research findings can be difficult to articulate, often being embedded in physical experience, and enables the subject to distance themselves from their own process, creating deeper insights (Nelson, 2013, p.67). Although this written exegesis appears at the end of the process, the subject undertakes recurring cycles of reflection throughout the development of a work. This reflective process results in research-practice reflexivity:

knowledge or insight developed through reflection affects the performers behavior during their practice (which, in turn, will affect their research) (Haseman and Mafe, 2009, p.219).

Documentation is a key facilitator of these cycles of reflection and subsequent reflexivity. Subjects are expected to evidence the research inquiry by writing journals and/or testimonials, recording sessions via audio or video, or compiling scrapbooks, sketches, photographs, or other documents that represent their process (Nelson, 2013, p.86). Students in *Scenography, Stage Design* were asked to keep similar records with copies of their concept, brainstorming maps, sketches, a diary, and notes from activities. These documents act as remnants of practice that serve two purposes: first, memory is imperfect and subject to the perception of the moment, marred by forgetfulness and subjective perspective. In supplementing these memories with more objective representations, we are better able to analyze the process. Second, time changes one's perspective. By evidencing the research inquiry, subjects are able to use the insights of today to analyze the experiences of yesterday (Hermans, 2018, pp.77-82).

Both Hermans and guitar soloist and researcher Stefan Österjö present the crucial role played by documentation in research-through-practice. During his collaboration with composer Henrik Frisk on *Repetition*, Österjö watched and analyzed video of their work sessions and derived new conclusions about the potentials and dynamics of collaborative process, how collaborators organically exchange roles, and the parallels between creative and performative processes. Österjö and his collaborator also found the video beneficial for creative content, developing new ideas for the composition while watching and analyzing the video (Österjö, 2008, pp.305-320). In the reflective case study of theatrical and performative elements in Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Oberlippentanz*, Hermans used video to explore the displacement of his own perspective when watching recordings of his practice sessions rather than experiencing them as an active subject. He exploited this method to identify flaws in his performance of acting tasks and then drew upon the literature to find appropriate alterations and substitutions. Without documentation, reflection, and theoretical preparation, these improvements would not have been

possible. More importantly, these techniques and skills are now available for Hermans or any interested actor-musician's future projects (Hermans, 2018, pp.62-82).

Although researchers engaged in research-through-practice seldom use the rigorous theoretical frameworks of traditional disciplines that contain strict constraints and detailed expectations of outcome, research-through-practice projects do require some form of theoretical framework in order to create a basis of exploration (Haseman and Mafe, 2009, p.216). Researchers define terms, survey relevant literature, and establish some limitations in scope and method (e.g. Hermans, 2018; Österjöö, 2008; Hübner, 2013; Carrasco, 2018). Hermans and Roquette undertook similar methods in the course and provided students with relevant literature on scenography and the theory and methodology of research-through-practice. Theoretical frameworks, although crucial to the process, are unique to each project and few overarching mandates are required or even helpful (Hübner, 2020, p.2). Likewise, although theoretical context is crucial to a research project, it must be flexible enough that the act of practice can be altered according to the changing process of the researcher (Haseman and Mafe, 2009, p.214). In designing the course, Hermans and Roquette were careful to cultivate a similarly complex balance between organization and creative freedom.

This open approach to theory is often present in the researcher's actual artistic material. Many proponents of research-through-practice do not begin with an infallible text or concept for their artwork, but an initial germ that can be expanded, changed, or even removed depending on what happens within the creative process: the outcome is not defined by beginning constraints. Incidentally, participants will often use collaborative processes which further open the process (e.g. Österjöö, 2008; Hermans, 2018; Kinnunen, 2010; and Hübner, 2013, 2020). Hermans and Roquette were careful to facilitate an open creative environment where collaborators could freely exchange and change ideas and work together unbounded by the hierarchical bridles of supervision.

These strategies of research-through-practice ultimately challenge theoretical insights and preconceptions. Research-through-practice takes

techniques and habits already within the creative and performative process and renders them explicit (Hübner, 2020, p.16). This allows the subject a greater degree of control over their own ways of doing. It also allows the performer to look at their process from the outside (Österjö, 2008), deepening the performer's understanding of self and the world around them. This second insight is critical to the research-through-practice method which often results in epistemological breaks, discovering new ways of understanding, and altering boundaries of knowledge (Haseman, 2006, p.3).

### 3. NON-PROFESSIONAL PERFORMATIVE CASE-STUDIES

In the following section, we will be discussing five companies that do not purposefully use research-through-practice methods but work with non-professionals, such as university students and audience-participants: TURLg (Théâtre Universitaire Royal de Liège), The Shakespeare Laboratory, The Samuel Beckett Laboratory, the Edinburgh Project, and TAAT (Theatre as Architecture and Architecture as Theatre).

TURLg casts students from across university disciplines. There is little information as to the exact method of their productions—on their website, they refer several times to the collective creation of works with scant detail—but their endeavors have reaped some fascinating benefits, particularly through the need to adapt to large, non-performer casts.

Some information on their process may be gleaned from director Robert Germany's description of a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, this time for teenagers (ages 12-16). Although the concept seems fully formed, details of the production are highly reliant on the student-performer:

we decided to put modern teenagers on stage and have them question the meaning of this late-sixteenth century masterpiece and how it might impact their lives today, in terms of their relationship with their parents and to power, the conflicts that beset our society, and the eternal themes of love, life, and death. We presented selected scenes from the play that lent themselves to 'staged' reflections of this kind, and this procedure in turn permitted multiple casting for many roles, especially the two main characters.

(2010, pp.74-75)

This process had an impact on the participants who reported a deeper understanding of the work and author, themselves, and the world around them. Other productions have interpreted works with equal innovation. In their 2010 production of Moliere's *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, students, portraying writers onstage, fervently tried to update Moliere's concept with the usual trappings of costumes, props, and dialect as parallel actors in period costume haunted and attempted to frustrate their endeavor, a compelling interpretation of the conflicts of staging historic works (Germany, 2010, p.74). More recently, TURLg undertook a production dealing with the conflicts, anxieties, and potentials surrounding the CETA trade agreement (TURLg, 2020).

The Shakespeare Laboratory had a much less diverse group of participants—only professionals and graduate students—and presented a more disciplined collaborative approach. Professors assigned readings for seminar-style discussions of theory and set a performative-inquiry structure; the students were asked to form a research question for each performance that they then reflected upon afterwards. Professors also dictated some outcomes, having them adjust to advice and re-run their "experiments" accordingly. Despite these constrictions, students seemed to have an immense amount of control over the process and outcome of their practice and performance. Although there are few details about smaller separate performances and improvisations that preceded the main event, the final performance, *in.Love*, shows some of the non-verbal outcomes of professors' and students' work (albeit, this final production was likely more constricted than other, smaller undertakings during the investigation):

After a moment of hesitation, an audience of ten strangers enters an unfamiliar room deep in the stacks of a campus library. It is a conference room: a big table in the middle, surrounded by chairs; windows on three sides frame long rows of books; on the back wall, a white board is covered in script as a breathless performer copies out one of Charles Lamb's anti-theatrical screeds; in a corner, another performer casually, quietly reads sections of *As You Like It*, including footnotes, into a microphone—his mild, mediated delivery in contrast with the wordless though frenetic inquiry of the other performer, who is soon covering the room's

windows with his own commentary on Lamb's essay. Gradually, audience members realize that on the other side of those windows, out in the stacks, ten more performers have appeared and begun duets—intimate dances with one another and with books pulled from the shelves. Often, their dancing brings a pair of performers right up to the windows of the conference room; for a moment, they look pointedly at the audience before retreating back into the stacks (fig. 1). After a couple of minutes, cell phones “ping” all around the room as everyone in the audience receives the text message: “Take a picture of something Shakespearean.” (Bedau and Hopkins, 2013, p.145)

The experience of the students in the Shakespeare Laboratory is not explored in published literature. However, some testimonies have been published from the Samuel Beckett Laboratory, which offers a variety of participants—including undergraduates, postgraduates, professionals, academics, and amateurs—the opportunity to co-create a production of a lesser-known work by Samuel Beckett. Although participants vary greatly in expertise, the facilitators attempt a “de-hierarchization of knowledge” (Heron and Johnson, 2017, pp.283-286), where participants can freely improvise and collaborate (Heron and Johnson, 2017, p.285). Within a larger framework of materials and exercises that emphasized various facets of theatre and movement, participants were divided into small groups where they were assigned roles: director, dramaturg, designer, and actors. They collaborated and created a performance based on the text, showcased their creation to the entire group, and then repeated the process with different roles. The discoveries made in these activities helped to inform the larger production (Heron and Nicholas, et al., 2014, p.84).

This process was joined with relatively extensive forms of open reflection. Throughout the project, participants were reminded to consider what they expect, observe, and learn. Facilitators also encouraged students to be aware of the experience of self and of the external world as two separate, albeit highly related, forms of observation (Heron and Johnson, 2017, pp.285-286). Qualitative surveys were also distributed at various time intervals, including a month after performance, for participants to reflect on their experiences (Heron and Johnson, 2017, p.286). In the surveys, participants expressed a newfound appreciation

of the potential of the body as a crucial piece of performance and textual interpretation; a new awareness of textual multivalence, especially in the unpublished works of Beckett; and a deeper understanding of Beckett and his works (Heron and Nicholas, et al. 2014, p.90).

TURLg, the Shakespeare Laboratory, and the Samuel Beckett Laboratory all encourage participants to explore facets of creativity, but the Edinburgh Project offers an intriguing example of how students can interact with components of the creative process. In the collaborative production, *Searching for Spalding Gray*, professor Rosemary Malague, chose to attempt an open creative process. Instead of working from a text, her point of departure was a site: the Edinburgh cemetery. She had the students read a paper on some creative performative techniques by director Tina Landau, which informed their subsequent creative process (Malague, 2009, p.193). Malague then invited students to react academically and subjectively to the semantics of “cemetery” and “life and death” (Malague, 2009, p.193). Students contributed an array of sources from songs and dramatic scenes to examples of death-centred ritual. She then had students do a series of small, open collaborations using sources from their first activity. Like the scenography class, there were unexpected obstacles. During the class, Malague, discovered that the cemetery would not be available for performance and had to shift concepts. Malague chose to focus the project on the recently disappeared actor Spalding Gray (later in the process the body was found and suspicions of suicide confirmed). Given the circumstances, her decision was unilateral, countering her open creative method, but her choice did maintain their main themes introduced in previous activities. The class then chose a collage approach to the form of the work; each student would perform a monologue in the “spirit” of Spalding Gray. The adaptation had impressive result (Malague, 2009).

The performance began with a TV set which played a Spalding Gray monologue, interrupted by the news of his disappearance. Students spread across the stage, donning Gray-esque plaid shirts, and quoted online message boards reacting to Gray’s fate. After a brief TV news interruption, the monologue portion began. The array of creative output in this portion is highly diverse. Many students strayed from the

monologue form: one student choreographed a Spalding-Gray dance, inspired by his mannerisms; a student wrote song lyrics, *Even Astronauts Get Depressed*, which was set to music and joined by a choreographed dance; other students based their monologues on reviews of Gray's acting; and a duo read from an essay by Hugo Perez, the last person to see Gray alive. Afterwards, the students performed a bizarre black-umbrella clad funeral procession to Laurie Anderson's *One White Whale*, followed once again by soundbites from grieving message boards (Malague, 2009, pp.196-197). "In closing, the cast performed a short reprise of the 'Spalding Dance,' ending with a lone woman, silently regarding the single empty chair and desk that remained on stage. She exits, and lights fade to black." (Malague, 2009, p.197)

There is no available testimony to define the student experience of the class, but the largely open format of *Searching for Spalding Gray* allowed students to explore the complexities of collaborative endeavors. The open process and the real-world problems (the cemetery being unexpectedly unavailable) also gave participants new insights into the dynamic nature of the creative process.

The theatrical endeavors mentioned above facilitated an embodied experience of space but presented limited relevant participant testimony. TAAT's *Khor II* is a prime example of the effect of space on the experience of professional and non-professional performers. TAAT was founded as a collective that works at the intersection of theatre, architecture, the visual arts, and design. Taking the complex relationship between theatre and architecture as a starting point, their work explores how the arrangements of physical space can serve as a means of stimulating interaction and encounter (Horemans and Stam, 2018).

In *Khor II*, "there is no distinction between actors and audience" (Horemans and Stam, 2018, p.83). Collectives of performers and non-performers, such as students and audience members work together in a collaborative environment to build a structure from a prepared do-it-yourself box. They choose leaders and delegate tasks (Horemans and Stam, 2018).

The process is meant to deepen participants' awareness of the interaction between group and individual. A pre-written script forces them to take novel approaches to these interactions: "You look at who is opposite you: you have to make eye contact with this person for a very long time and, if it feels right, to hug each other" (TAAT, 2015). Participants reflected on their own habits and biases of social interaction: "If people are in a group, they never really look at each other except for two or three people. And in this project, you become aware of that and that is a very pleasant sensation;" "on the very essential level of how you meet people and how you present yourself to others, as generous or very closed, the play touches these mechanisms and makes you aware of them" (TAAT, 2015).

The testimonies do not discuss participants' reflection on and experience of the space in any depth, but space is crucial to their experience of interaction: "You notice how you are forced to stand close to people, because you're in a limited space. And you actually think, 'I don't feel like it'" (TAAT, 2015). The space becomes an invitation for the performative event (Goebbels, 2015, p.38): "You have to have something in common for a community. And I think the commonality here is this building. And everybody gets a script." The space becomes integral to their experience of the work, each other, and themselves: the festival director said, "So, for me it is interesting – in the place where you are at or the environment you're in – to search for what you want to accomplish together....Being together as a factor, in a place, a place in time and space, helps of course. That contributes to the pace at which such a community can come into existence. And to the intensity of the experience of that group of people" (TAAT, 2015).

This testimony shows that moving within the space benefited these participants' spatial awareness and understanding of the functional qualities of the space. They have become aware of the tight-knit relationship between movement, the performer's physical action, and space—the created or incidental world surrounding them. These factors interact, developing and influencing each other: "it is not a question of knowing which comes first, movement or space, which molds the other, for

ultimately a deep bond is involved. After all, they are caught up in the same set of relationships” (Tschumi, 1996 quoted in Rufford, 2018, p.102).

This effect is enhanced by the participants’ actual building of the structure. Composer and New Music Theatre Director, Professor Heiner Goebbels describes the enhanced experience of those who have a deterministic power over an event. When the spectator is brought into building the process, when they make choices that affect its being and becoming, they are able to experience space itself in a different, more integral mode (Goebbels, 2015).

#### 4. CASE-STUDYING RESEARCH-THROUGH-PRACTICE

We believe that the benefits reaped in these non-professional projects could be enhanced by applying research-through-practice strategies. Their indulgence in more sophisticated forms of reflection help further develop participants’ inquiry and acquired knowledge.

Participants in the previously described non-professional projects had the opportunity to experience embodied knowledge. This form of learning was established by theatre director and theorist Jerzy Grotowski. Grotowski and his students achieved a deeper awareness of their body and their own performative process, becoming more aware of body-memory and motor skills and dissolving common sense assumptions about the nature of self and the dichotomy of mind and body. Their body became a vehicle for learning (Grotowski, 1968/2002). This reflection on physicality and its relation to the mind opens new pathways to understanding the self.

If participants in the non-professional case-studies had explored expanded forms of reflection, benefits of embodied knowledge may have been more prominent. Fiona Wright’s innovative dissertation, *Other versions of an uncertain body: writing towards an account of a solo performance practice*, shows how knowledge creation through movement, especially within a reflective process, can inform other creative endeavors. Largely concerned with problematizing documentation—all too frequently we consume the video of a performance without actively recognizing its

distance from the identity of the original work—Wright relies largely on written poetic reflections (Wright, 2005, pp.20-21). The experience of movement defines her concept of writing. In the introduction, Wright describes the writing event. Her descriptions of writing are poetically conflated with physical movement, using metaphor to examine how time and space exist within the written word:

This writing needs the image of the movement between knowing and not knowing and to remain knowing about this. I am making a move - moving in thinking and describing in words - moving in theory. I am making a move, moving forward, onto my knees, negotiating bodyweight, hands reaching down, laying my body down, taking my skin down to the floor, imaging the skeleton re-orientated; some kind of slow motion fall, an elaborate death, even.

This movement is my king itself through space and time and gravity and this making is moving through writing. What else might a body do? (Wright, 2005, p.14)

In her chapter, “reflecting on movement,” Wright transmutes the physical experience of dance directly into poetry:

This body space eats space, consuming air as it functions, necessarily. This body artist might stop before sated and start again when already it is enough.

This (body) aesthetic is touched and touching, closely felt, (and closely monitored for the move across the control of state borders of the girl/woman). Transformations of bodies that are in the end so much fluid, the weight and volume of which is constantly lost and found, abandoned and expelled as blood, sweat and tears (and piss and more) regained and resumed, the lines redrawn, constantly.

You can look for me. (You do the looking in my place. I'll just dance.) (Wright, 2005, p.79)

Although her form of documentation is cryptic, the experience of physical movement is manifestly embedded in her writing. In Wright's case, physical performance became a site of creative development in a separate discipline. It is likely non-professional reflective projects, such as *Scenography*, *Stage Design*, would benefit from an emphasis on embodied forms of learning, especially in projects with participants pursuing

creative fields, whose experience of embodied knowledge may shift their own artistic perspective.

In the non-professional case-studies, students actively engaged with material to locate new potentials and nuances latent in a text or theme. Research-through-practice expands forms of embodied reflection to further formation of specific, nuanced knowledge. In *Shut up 'n' play*, Österjö considers the identity of the work and the various nominations of work as text, performance, authorial intent, or other gradients and variations of these categories. His experiences through research-through-practice allowed Österjö further insight into the complexity of these concepts. Whilst working on a guitar concerto, he (Österjö was the guitar soloist) and the composer agreed to add a ritardando to a section. They sent the edit to the conductor without realizing that the conductor had an earlier version of the score with fewer measures (and thus, different measure numbers). Thus, the conductor put the ritardando in a different musical section. Later, the conductor preferred his accidental alteration and insisted on following it in performance. This created three concepts of the authentic work: that made by the composer, that created with Österjö, and that accidentally created with the conductor. Through his own experience and an attempt to reflect and communicate experience, Österjö was able to, in some small way, overcome the unnecessary exclusionary tendencies of rigid definitions of the work (2008).

The creative process is central to many research-through-practice investigations and shows a far deeper, more detailed engagement than those referenced in the Edinburgh Project. Social psychologist and educationalist Graham Wallace outlined a four-phase creative process model in his book, *Art of Thought* (1926, 2014). These phases are not structured one after the other, but are non-linear, recurring and overlapping constantly. Since then, numerous studies have built upon this creative phase model with additional descriptions and sub-phases. The applicability of the model is variable, dependent on the nature of the project, its participants, and the framework in which it is situated. Hermans analyzed his own process while co-devising the 50-minute New Music Theatre solo work, *Silencio*, identifying creative sub-phases that were especially

relevant to his and his collaborator's (Hübner) process. Furthermore, by reflecting upon his experiences, Hermans was able to draw conclusions about the tendencies of these phases and the effect of external factors (Hermans, 2018, p.124).

Through reflection, Hermans reported a deeper understanding of emergence, a creative phase Hübner defines as a sudden burst of creative production after intensive structured preparation (Hübner, 2020, pp.20-22). After expending a great amount of effort with what seemed like little progress, Hermans and his collaborator moved from a dance studio to a theatre with tiered seats that rose above the stage. Suddenly, in this new theatrical setting, what seemed like abstract notions became performative material forged by the renewed perspective of the space (Hermans, 2018 pp.129-130). Hermans' reflective description emphasizes the mutually dependent relationship between the organization of preparation and the relinquishing of control in emergent production (Hübner, 2020, pp.22-24). Hermans also considered the broader recurring nature of the creative phases and identified and analyzed them using a timeline and an ingredient model, which is often implemented by on-stage directors in order to define participants' potential contributions and unique qualities (Hermans, 2021, pp.35-36, Hermans' ingredient model is based on Moosman, 2007).

Typically, in musical collaborations, practitioners find a far more flexible distribution of roles than the exclusionary dichotomy of performer-creator. Both composer and performer undertake generative, interpretive, and explorative actions. Although students certainly experienced these modes within *Searching for Spalding Gray*—which required reinterpretations of concepts to adapt to new external circumstances—and in the Samuel Beckett Laboratory—which had students exchange roles throughout their improvisation activity—these experiences are further developed and made explicit within the creative process through reflective methods used in research-through-practice. While workshopping the piece, *Hiver*, Sonya Lifschitz and the composer, Anthony Lyons, would use recording technology. During a workshop, the composer was preparing for a next recording when he heard Lifschitz experimenting with a phrase. This specific segment was written to be played on the

piano strings directly, but Lifschitz tried sounding them on the keyboard. The composer grew excited and considered using it within the work (Lifschitz, 2014, pp.234-5). Lifschitz had acted as a composer, generating new musical material and Lyons had presented interpretive aspects of creation by listening and judging her creative output. The boundaries between composer and performer became nearly invisible. This and other experiences led Lifschitz to a more complex and dynamic understanding of the potentials and flexibility in creative collaboration (2014, p.262). Österjö (2008), Hübner (2013), and Hermans (2018) have also discussed similar insights at length. We believe, by using select techniques from research-through-practice, these benefits could be reaped in non-professional contexts. The feasibility of this method can be assessed through the case-study, *Scenography, Stage Design*.

## 5. LESSONS FROM *SCENOGRAPHY, STAGE DESIGN*

In *Scenography, Stage Design*, students noted many benefits from the course, and some of these benefits seem directly related to the integration of research-through-practice techniques. The final phase of the class required students to write an exegesis, which provided designs, written reflections, documents of process, and a written concept. Some of the students' findings can help in outlining other non-professional performative projects that try to cultivate deeper understanding of content, insights into the complexity of the creative process and collaboration, and further explorations into the dramatic utilization of space.

Hermans' students found that creative projects can deepen the understanding of content. They learned about their selected opera through historical, scenographic, and dramaturgical research and even expressed a greater appreciation for the genre at large. The knowledge gained listening to lectures by Dr. Hermans and conducting research supplemented their concepts, inciting them to explore ideas latent within the text. Many of their works became studies upon distilled operatic themes, creating insights into operatic content and context. Their creative interaction with the text led to discoveries inaccessible without direct, active experience.

In their exegeses, students of the scenography class reflected on creative processes and the benefits of collaboration, a key focus of research-through-practice. Along with common struggles of the creative process, students had to deal with unexpected external factors. Covid-19 had an obvious effect on the work sessions with a number of students quarantined or hampered by lockdown restrictions. During September 2020, class attendance was halved (with remaining students split between two classrooms) and students became increasingly dependent on videoconferencing as a means of collaboration and production. They adapted adroitly, discovering new dynamism in the creative process. Students also reported forms of emergence and discovered new tools to cope with multidisciplinary art projects, such as brainstorming and mood-board exercises, pointing to the usefulness of such activities within a non-performance environment. Several groups expressed appreciation for the perspective-expanding effect of multi-disciplinary collaborative bodies and found that the participation of students from other design disciplines offered innovative extensions to their ideas, solving problems, and adding fresh aesthetic treatment.

Students' self-reflections seemed enhanced by implementing a theoretical anchor. They benefited from the recurrence of the ingredient model, which guided their concepts and objective reflections on experiences. Of course, one's approach varies greatly depending on context. While Hermans' class had 40 contact hours over 3 weeks and exposed students to academic concepts and terminology, the Samuel Beckett Laboratory had only a few days and instead concentrated reflective practice to a simple three-word inquiry: Expectations, Observations, and Learning. This repetition seems especially useful, giving students reference points for their own exploration.

Students were also influenced by the make-up of their groups. Creating working groups with a diversity of voices, in this case a variety of design disciplines, opens students up to different points of view to enrich their own experiences and perspectives. Similarities and differences became the bedrock of collaboration. They found common ground to work from and new ideas to diversify their own world view.

The class showed significant benefits specific to structural design disciplines. Students discovered how space and its projected image can create an emotion or convey messages and impressions to an audience to provoke a response. These claims are similar to Heiner Goebbels' polemic, which is frequently sensitive to the primacy of space in determining theatrical content. In his work, *Everything that already happened and would happen*, Goebbels designates the space as one of the three main sources of his piece. He sees the space as bringing its reality into the work; the space contributes its "history... memory in stones, dirt, and smell," and its "functional architecture" (Artangel, 2019). Students described new perspectives on the functionality of space. Their experiences in performance forced a confrontation between the theoretical applicability of their designs and performative and spatial reality—a vital lesson for design students.

Through the above case-studies, Hermans and Roquette hope to add to their course, facilitating new beneficial experiences for students. These insights are also applicable to other projects. Hermans hopes to extend student experience in embodied knowledge. Partially due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many groups chose to make their trailer through solely digital means. Although it still lent them vital experience in the creative process, not all groups got to physically explore the spaces they created and did not experience any forms of embodied knowledge. Exegeses prepared by groups that created physical performances showed a deeper connection with their creative work than those without. Hermans believes classes would further benefit from the addition of select exercises on performative artistic actions, such as acting, dancing, reciting, and playing with the connection of body and object.

Although Hermans adopted a model similar to Wright's, asking students to document their process in project journals, few students fulfilled the requirement effectively. Subsequently, some students were unable to meet the standards of the required self-reflective portion of their exegesis. It seems that they did not have the tools necessary to take an objective reflective perspective on their own processes and experiences. Hermans believes the students' reflections focused too much on justifying the results of their projects rather than on their creative process

and hopes to provide more opportunities to refine their own recurring reflective process. Hermans plans to ask students to write brief testimonies after each class or work session describing their experiences and what they learned. Hermans will then take these assignments and offer feedback during the course to better achieve a more objective voice.

Hermans hopes to supplement this form of documentation with audio-visual components. Many research-through-practice scholars use such recordings to document work sessions that they can then apply whilst developing their reflections. This too would be useful in non-professional, performer-oriented experiences. Next year, Hermans' students will be asked to write three longer self-reflections during the process, using three different audio recordings from their work sessions. They will be expected to describe pieces of the recording in detail and apply them to their own reflective observation.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to give several suggestions for those wishing to apply research-through-practice techniques to non-professional, performer-oriented settings. The format can be used to accommodate experiences in embodied knowledge, creative process and collaboration, content, and spatial awareness. Research-through-practice is a relatively new discipline and is still not fully integrated into most university courses. Especially in creative fields where performance is not a priority or even part of the traditional curriculum, the benefits of non-professional performative projects combined with elements of research-through-practice are seldom considered. These case-studies have shown that the discipline's applicability is diverse and functional in its ability to connect disparate fields. It creates new insights and fusions, navigating interdisciplinary space and offering students new perspectives.

These projects require a balance between structure and freedom. Students benefited from planned exercises, such as mind-mapping, but then required freedom to extend their experiences, the lecturer moving from organizer to facilitator, creating a free environment without wrong answers, only ideas to extend. In this respect, the responsibility of the

lecturer is to show the students doors to walk through, but not control what is on the other side.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ARTANGEL. (2019, April 30). *Documentary: Heiner Goebbels, Everything that happened and would happen* [Video]. Youtube.  
<https://tinyurl.com/yycnmrey>
- ARSEM, M. (2020). *Recent:remote* [Video]. Marilyn Arsem Website.  
<https://tinyurl.com/y659jlw8>
- BEDAU, D., HOPKINS, D.J. (2013). The Shakespeare Laboratory: Intercepting “Authenticity” through Research, Pedagogy, and Performance. *Theatre Topics* 23(2), 145-156. doi:10.1353/tt.2013.0015
- BOAL, A. (1993). *Theatre of the oppressed*. ProQuest Ebook Central. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/y5yptdcf>
- CARRASCO, M. (2018). *Monodrama and music theatre as transformative artistic experiences: from a performative to an embodied acting musician/guitarist* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation]. University of Melbourne.
- FILMER, A.P.D., RUFFORD, J. (2018). *Performing architectures: projects, practices, pedagogies*. UK: Methuen Drama.
- FREEMAN, J. (2010). *Blood, sweat & theory: Research through practice in performance*. ProQuest Ebook Central. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/y5yptdcf>
- GAMBLE, R. (2016). *The practice of everyday (virtual) life: a participatory and performative artistic enquiry*. [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation]. Nottingham Trent University.
- GOEBBELS, H. (2015). *Aesthetics of Absence: Texts on Theatre*. London and New York: Routledge.
- GROTOWSKI, J. (1968/2002). *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Holstebro, Denmark: Christensen & Co.
- HASEMAN, B. (2006). A Manifesto for Performative Research. *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture and Policy*, 118, 98-106.

- HASEMAN B., MAFE, D. (2009). *Acquiring Know-How: Research Training for Practice-led Researchers. Research Methods for the Arts and Humanities: Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*. UK: Edinburg University Press.
- HERMANS, S. (2018). *“The Trumpeter Re-Conceived”: An investigation of the creative and performative skills required in New Music Theatre works*. [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation]. University of Melbourne.
- HERMANS, S. (2021). *Silencio, the Co-Creation of a New Music Theatre Piece*. *Forum +*, 28(1), 32-39.
- HERON, J., JOHNSON, N. (2017). *Critical Pedagogies and the Theatre Laboratory*. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 22(2), 282-287.
- HERON, J., JOHNSON N., DINÇEL İDEM, B., QUINN, G., SCAIFE S.J., TYRELL Á.J. (2014). *The Samuel Beckett Laboratory 2013*. *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 23(1), 73-94.
- HIRVIKOSKI, R., KILPELÄINEN, R., LOUKOLA, M., PULKKA, J. (2011). *Staging Thinking*. Finland: Oistat Centre Finland.
- HOREMANS, B., STAM, G.J. (2018). *Khor II: An Architecture-as-Theatre Project by TAAT*. In A. Filmer, J. Rufford (Eds.), *Performing Architectures: Projects, Practices, Pedagogies* (pp. 83-89). UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- HÜBNER, F. (2009). *...As if you would... Journal of the artistic research, theory and innovation group*, retrieved from: <https://tinyurl.com/y3xveug6>.
- HÜBNER, F. (2010). *Thespian play: Synchronous differences*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/y3uv4dpq>
- HÜBNER, F. (2011). *Give it away now, a reductive approach to performance*. Canada: McGill University.
- HÜBNER, F. (2012). *Research in and through practice?* Czech Republic: Academy of Music and Performing Arts.
- HÜBNER, F. (2014). *Shifting Identities: The Musicians as Theatrical Performer*. Amsterdam/Utrecht: HKU University of the Arts Utrecht and Uitgeverij International Theatre & Film Books Publisher.

- HÜBNER, F. (2020). A Practitioner in the Centre. A Flexible Approach to Methodology in Practice-Based Research. In C. Vear (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook for Practice-Based Research*. London: Routledge.
- KORSBERG, H., AHO, L., CHASSANY, I., VALTANEN, S. (2019). Remembering the Finnish Civil War: Embodied Empathy and Fellman Field. *Theatre Research International*, 44(1), 6-22.  
doi:10.1017/S0307883318000810
- LASTER, D. (2012). Embodied Memory: Body-Memory in the Performance Research of Jerzy Grotowski. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 28(3 [III]), 211-229.
- LEHMANN, H.T. (2006). *Postdramatic Theatre*. UK: Routledge.
- LIFSCHITZ, S., & LEE, S. (2014). *Creative collaboration in and as contemporary performance practice*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- LOPEZ-GONZALEZ, M., LIMB, C. J. (2012). *Musical creativity and the brain*. Retrieved from: <https://tinyurl.com/y38gbj47>
- MALAGUE, R. (2009). *Searching for Spalding Gray: PAR Pedagogy, an Undergraduate Ensemble, and "The Edinburgh Project."* In S.R. Riley, L. Hunter (Eds.), *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research* (pp. 192-198). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- MOOSMAN, D. (2007). *De Toneelschrijver als Theatremaker*. Amsterdam/Utrecht: Uitgeverij International Theatre & Film Books.
- NELSON, R. (2013). *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- RILEY, S. R., HUNTER, L. (2009). *Mapping landscapes for performance as research. [electronic resource] ; Scholarly acts and creative cartographies*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- RUFFORD, J. (2018). Towards a Tectonics of Devised Performance: Experiments in Interdisciplinary Learning/Teaching. In A. Filmer, J. Rufford (Eds.), *Performing Architectures: Projects, Practices, Pedagogies* (pp. 167-186). UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- ÖSTERSJÖ, S. (2008). *SHUT UP 'N' PLAY!: negotiating the Musical Work*. Sweden: Malmö Academies of Performing Arts.

TAAT. (2015). *15 10 20 khorii denbosch ancarola* [video]. TAAT Website.  
<https://tinyurl.com/y22q4ncv>

TURLG. (accessed 2020). *Creations*. Retrieved from  
<https://tinyurl.com/y4wv8suv>

WALLACE, G. (1926/2014). *The Art of Thought*, UK: Solis Press.

WRIGHT, F. (2005). *Other versions of an uncertain body: writing towards an account of a solo performance practice* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation]. Nottingham Trent University.