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The Way We Perform Now

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Terms of Engagement

I would like to group some thoughts under the title "The Way We Perform Now" in part to have a chance to think about each component part of such a phrase. So first, I would actually like to break down and complicate what we think we might mean by "The Way," by "We," by "Perform," and by "Perform Now." In the second part, I would like to review some thinking that I see so many others doing about this question, particularly in the last year, and to see if we can abstract some key concerns and occupational hazards of affiliating with so-called "performing institutions" in our current moment.

So to begin: "The Way" invokes larger and broader questions of medium, technique, skill, and material as they interface with different conceptions of duration, spectacle, amateurism, virtuosity, conceptualism, experience, pleasure, and rigor. These various Ways of making art and culture also interact with different conceptions of what we think that The Way used to be. Did The Way used to mean the making of objects in a studio, or did it mean the making of dance movement in a different kind of studio? Did The Way used to mean creating commodity art for selling to collectors, or has The Way referred to the rehearsing of ticketed plays for subscriber audiences? Did The Way used to be public plop art that has now been replaced by dispersed performative practices?

Those differing notions of what The Way might be obviously expose vastly different notions of who the We might be, based again on who you think that the We once was and whether you ever thought you were part of it. Is the We former art school students—people for whom performance inhabited a side pursuit in an under-resourced studio where one experimented with liberating oneself from the object before returning to proper object-making in the better-resourced studios of the rest of the school? Is the We former theater students—people for whom performance meant accessing the diaphragm, learning scansion, developing emotion memory, and experimenting with all varieties of objectives and obstacles to create believable characters? Is the We former dance students—those who perched limbs atop barres and bodies before mirrors, submitting themselves to Balanchinian discipline so that they could produce feats of virtuosic excellence that made it look like they were not suffering, only to realize that over there—in another studio, another gallery, under some different artists' signatures, or PS1—the frank exposure of suffering in performance had become an aesthetic long before?

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Perhaps the We is a set of museum curators—those trained in a wide and varied set of rigorous visual art histories, those who navigate that turmoil of setting up an exhibition while being responsive to an artist's bidding, those who now find themselves cajoled and sometimes pressured to install performance-based activity whose precedents and purpose remain equivocal in a museum context hurtling ever more toward what this program's announcement called "the experience of totalizing social production." Perhaps the We is the group of performance curators who have been making performance happen for a while: people like Philip Bither at Walker Art Center or Peter Taub at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago who might see themselves in a longer lineage of performance enablers—the descendants of someone like Gertrude Lippincott who staged the first dance event at the Walker Art Center in 1940. Are these individuals called performance curators, performance coordinators, engagement specialists, or "event" schedulers at the museum? Such individuals might be called artistic directors at places like Danspace or The Public or The Met. If you descend from the longer and varied history of that We, it can be odd and de-familiarizing to learn that the performing art forms that your Performing Institutions have historically supported are those now associated with "the experience of totalizing social production." Conversely, you may have a more sanguine reaction to the news that so many museums now want to make themselves performance-ready, transforming galleries into spaces for "music, dance, theater, and participatory programming."

Finally, is the We the receiver of this Performance Now: the one who thought of herself as a beholder at one venue and as an audience member at another venue, the one who sat in rows in the theatre and who roamed in four-second-per-work intervals in the museum, the one who is now struggling to figure out the terms of her engagement with hybrid work? She finds herself propping her back against a gallery wall or muscling in on the lone bench, struggling to catch a glimpse of a gesture only barely seeable across the gallery floor. When she goes to the theater, that same person now finds herself asked to get out of her comfortable seat in the theater in order to roam, to circle sculptural objects that used to be called sets, or, even more disconcertingly, told to "participate" or to "interact" with them. For the We that is an art receiver, what art literacies and art habits were functionally suspended in some places and re-activated at others? What literacies and habits now seem to need complete re-calibration with every newly encountered work?

And what do we make of the word Perform in my title, or even the double phrase Perform Now, which sounds so menacingly familiar as a directive, a command, and a twenty-first century compulsion? "Perform . . .Now." It sounds like a marketing campaign for an investment firm, a luxury car, or a high-end laser printer. On the one hand, the way we Perform Now is not so different from some of the Ways that some members of this We performed Then. This is hardly the first era that has seen performance in the museum; as David Velasco (2012) has said as well, it is hardly the first time it has happened at The Whitney.

But even if we might want to counter the presentism of Performance Now by reminding ourselves of the Then, I do think it is worth speculating on what we think is different about Now. Why is the conversation about performance institutions and "virtuosity" happening in this Now with a different kind of urgency or with a different inflection than it had at various moments of Performance Past? Certainly, one answer to the question has to do with the threat of "the experience of totalizing social production" and the fact that the compulsion to Perform Now is such a ubiquitous marketing campaign. Because Artists Space used this language, and also is worrying and wondering about the role of "activity without end product," it seems to me that yours is a venue that has been thinking about contemporary theories of immaterial and affective labor, so I thought I might address some aspects of that conceptual question. Indeed, in what philosophers such as Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, Maurizzio Lazzarato, Paolo Virno, and others now call a post-Fordist service economy, labor spheres, both aesthetic and otherwise, are told *to perform*, that is, to reorient and retrain their labor force to provide "experiences," "services," and "affective" relations as a primary product.

We hear now about the necessity of creating so-called "immaterial" encounters as being key to success in a globalized labor sphere—one that has supposedly transitioned away from the industrial, the so-called Fordist, model of material, object-based, commodity-making. We might all be, as we should be, suspicious of any celebration of a generalized immateriality that represses the material labor of sweatshops, call centers, and Foxconns that produce our immaterial experiences. Indeed, one function of some contemporary performance might actually be to remind us of the performing bodies who—like Nicole Mannarino, whose sweat-drenched costume received so much chronicling (Jowitt 2012; La Rocco 2012a)—do the physical labor and material work that produces immaterial experiences for their receiver-consumers. But while being suspicious of the newness or the comprehensiveness of an "immaterial turn," it is difficult not to notice that the pressure to Perform Now in the museum is an index of a more pervasive social and cultural pressure. If under Glenn Lowry's leadership, MoMA has made "public programming" a central goal, some may feel he is embracing a performance-friendly context for museum participation (Levere 2006). However, some might worry that he is also moving the museum toward the same experiential service idiom that informs so much else in our lives right now: the service training of the Hertz employee, the conversational banter of the Westin hotel receptionist, the cosmopolitan manners of the tech support system, or the hospitality aesthetic of the biennial caterer. The museum along with the hotel and car rental company thus sometimes seem to occupy the same plane as that of other post-Fordist cultural laborers who understand themselves to be marketing experiences, encounters, and—to quote this event's promotional material once again—"activities without end product" that actually end up advancing a "totalizing experience" economy.

So this is to acknowledge that thinking about The Way We Perform Now is to think about how it is embedded in the kind of landscape explored by a variety of contemporary social theorists, including those in the Workerist or post-Operaismo School of Italian theorists who have recounted the "turns" from agricultural to industrial economies, and now to the "turn" to the service economy that we currently occupy. It should be acknowledged, however, that this supposed "turn" looks different to those who have been revising traditional performing arts fields than it does to those who have been revising visual art object-making fields. For those who descend from the dancers, singers, and actors, the chorines, the touring troupes, the actor-managers, and the stage managers that populate theater, opera, music, and dance history, the creation of affect and the design of experience has been central to our and their very long labor history; they have been coordinating affect and experience long before any post-Fordist moment. Other visual artists may have been making objects—activity *with* an end product—but the history of theater, dance, opera, and music is in part a very long history of "activity without end product." Indeed, that is precisely why Marx (1991) turned to these performer-laborers with such perplexity and why people like Paolo Virno (2004) or Michael Hardt (2005) recall these immaterial makers to understand the nature of affective, immaterial labor now. But at least let's notice that those who descend from the performing arts fields do not experience this "turn" in the same way, that they have been in existence long before the experience-based economy discovered them, and also might happen to feel that their practices have resources beyond those that reify the "Society of the Spectacle" or that capitulate to totalizing social production. Indeed, the specter of such capitulation notwithstanding, touting its threat can also seem like just another way of harboring quite old, modernist, antitheatrical prejudices under a new frame.

Occupational Hazards/Alternate Possibilities

Alright, having done some scene-setting around the terms of engagement, our Ways, our We's, and how they Perform Now, I want also to try to find a way to be functional at this particular now, that is, the now of May 26, 2012, on the eve of the closing of the 2012 Whitney Biennial, which itself has generated so much interesting conversation and debate about the questions above. This is also a year—I'm on the academic calendar—that included Performa 2011 and its defining and, for some, its deformation of the terms of engagement. Performa renewed and reinforced the category

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of something called "visual art performance," as it elicited a flurry of engaged responses from Roberta Smith, Claire Bishop, Andrew Horwitz, Gia Kourlas, Claudia La Rocco, Caden Manson, and others about what that could possibly mean. A symposium organized at Under the Radar called "Black Box versus White Cube" was not sure that it meant much, but the presentations offered learned and sometimes hilarious disquisitions that made clear that the stakes for making it mean are urgent for some. Subsequently, Mårten Spångberg reportedly annoyed and inspired artists and critics of all varieties when he declared that this new cross-arts ecology was an opportunity of a lifetime for those who want to Perform Now (La Rocco 2012d). Meanwhile, lots of non-New York–based artists and curators have been approaching those stakes from different angles. Compatriots at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis are trying to figure out what it means to be "collecting" Merce Cunningham's costumes (Sebaly 2010), and meanwhile the Fusebox Festival in Austin was founded in 2005 to provide a platform for questioning these boundaries across arts disciplines (Faires 2012). Yvonne Rainer and members of Marina Abramovic's ensemble at MOCA in Los Angeles tried to figure out what they were doing at that much-vetted, if not exactly feted, donor event—whether it was a capitulation to or an interruption of the museum's experience economy (La Rocco 2011). In the U.K., Siobhan Davies (2010) has hosted her Parallel Voices seminars to ask why visual art conversations and dance conversations rarely converge. Some of us have hosted our own gatherings to advance conversation—I have at Berkeley under the rubric of Making Time and Curating People—as has Artists Space, The Kitchen, Tate Modern, MoMA, the Pew Center for Art and Heritage, and many more.

All of these events, dust-ups, kerfuffles, clarifying conversations, and transformative and not-so-transformative art pieces have generated a great deal of engaged thinking. So rather than reproduce that thinking, I wonder if it might be time to take a kind of collective audit—to take the temperature of where we are now with the way we perform now. Herewith, then, is a brief, reductive, and overlapping list of what my top-ten occupational hazards faced in the "context-swap" that we are in—a way of identifying recurrent habits in order, I hope, to encourage the sense of adventure as well as the sense of humility going forward.

First and very generally, we need to recognize the following:

1. Disciplinary Barometers Affect Our Encounters with Interdisciplinary Art Forms

When I first began making this argument, I used to say that "medium-specific histories affect our encounters with un-medium-specific work," but then theater and dance people began to ask me what "medium-specific" meant, which is to say that I had unwittingly made my own point. Even if we all claim to be interested in hybrid art-making, the forms that we have experienced will affect how we gauge the innovation of a cross-arts experiment. It will also affect what reference points and vocabularies we use—and do not use—to compare it, and what traditions of interdisciplinary art works remain blind to us due to our own artistic itineraries.

Furthermore, once we try to learn more about what we do not know, the frames that we use to parse these new knowledges can create their own exclusions. Indeed, we can find ourselves turning to the next point:

2. Binaries That Produce Blindspots

This happens then when we find ourselves in, for instance, gatherings that think about the relationship between "visual arts" and "performance," and realize that a huge range of heterogeneity is reduced and rendered equivalent by such an opposition. When that heterogeneity is reduced in discussion, we end up with a limited conception of distinctive traditions and movements *within* forms—differences that in turn offer alternate points of connection across other forms and produce different points of conflict. Dance is actually enjoying a special kind of incorporation in the art museum at present in a way that "Theater" is not; we cannot begin to notice the difference without noticing the historic tussles and tangles that exist within and across dance and theater, or dance-

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theater, as forms. Similarly, "visual art" is a baggy and largely unhelpful term for the enormous variety; painting's relationship to action or environment or to flatness will connect the dots to performance differently than those that connect it to (or disconnect it from) the parameters of sculpture. I think, too, even of the symposium that was framed as a discussion of the "The Black Box and the White Cube" as a way of binarizing the visual art and theatrical trajectories. The opposition might keep us from noticing the specificity of the history of the white cube within a longer, not always white, history of museum display; the polarization also reduces the specificity of the cube —whether white or some other color—as a specific object that tried to open the door to other modes of self-conscious (performative) engagement with the viewer. Meanwhile, it under-notices that the Black Box is a form of theatrical space that reacted against the theatrical proscenium; the Black Box is not equivalent to "Theater" but a variant of theatrical experimentation. And of course that opposition also will not track the quite different associations and projections at work when the black box becomes a figure for the cinema. So the shorthand is helpful, but also produces blindspots right at the places where productive connections across and within art forms have been made.

I am sure that it is the case that all of us are vigilant enough about such habits; so we already know strenuously to avoid or combat them. Once we all remain committed to exploring and enabling cross-arts experiment, it is interesting to begin to notice anew the places where it has already occurred. In my own work, I cannot help but notice that, occasionally:

3. The Deconstruction of One Form Involves the Reconstruction of Another

One begins to notice this dynamic when one compares a work in relation to one artistic barometer and then thinks about what it means to measure it from another. So while I delight in analyzing Andrea Fraser's institutionally critical interventions in the space of the museum (Jackson 2011), I cannot help but notice the traditionally theatrical conventions that she uses to do it: a costume, a script, and the creation of a persona. On the one hand, Fraser is de-materializing the visual art space; on the other hand—and from the perspective of the performing arts—Fraser is also acting.

Some can end up being suspicious about the appropriation of one form in order to stage the disruption of another. And some might be even more suspicious of the fact that few people notice this re-use. In fact, please see the next point:

4. Innovation to Some Can Look Like a Reinvented Wheel to Another

I always try to not use examples too much when I am talking about these hazards, but let's consider, for instance, something like dance critic Gia Kourlas's critical response to Michael Clark's *Who's Zoo*: "For one, he forages deeply through the costuming and movement language of Merce Cunningham, even showcasing one of his former dancers. It's awkward to watch such repurposing of the Cunningham aesthetic, with its skittering feet, impossible balances and quivering muscles under Spandex" (Kourlas 2012). So we have here a situation where one set of eyes is seeing the reproduction of a tradition where another pair of eyes may have assumed invention. And Kourlas seems to be objecting to the idea that this repurposing will not be registered to those for whom such movement is new. (It is kind of like what NBC used to say when it ran the *Friends* re-runs for so many years to an audience that it hoped had not seen all of them; it is after all "New to You.") Meanwhile, when I made this point in front to Stefan Kalmár in Artists Space, he assured me that Kourlas is the one who is misreading Clark's self-conscious appropriation: "She didn't get it," he assures.

Indeed, this way of articulating the hazard of swapped contexts has, I think, become more persistent in the last year of critical response, as critics, viewers, and fellow artists are weighing in with more intensity about what they see, and do not see. I myself tend to phrase the problem in these terms, where like David Levine (2006), I wonder why "bad theater" ends up being received as "good art," as well as why "good theater" is often received as "bad art"—or as Andy Horwitz (2011) said in one of his pieces, why the visual art world considers so much theater "laughable." So I think it is worth going a level deeper in this discussion about good and bad, innovation and repurposed tradition,

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and also being clear about how elements such as execution and concept, amateurism and virtuosity, skilling and de-skilling actually have a more complicated cross-arts history. To invoke a term in Artists Space contextualization of this event . . .

5. What Happens When Virtuosity as Technical/Physical Skill Meets Virtuosity as Conceptual/Cognitive Skill?

It seems so basic to review this—and I realize that I am creating a new binary. At the same time, it really seems to me that tussles around this relationship are key toward understanding why differently positioned viewers and artworlds will find the same work beautiful from one angle and lame from another, conceptually rigorous from one position and like the "emperor's new clothes" from another. Depending on one's answer to this question, virtuosity can look like a capitulation to "totalizing social production" from one angle of vision or like the interruption of that totality from yet another.

While they use different labels, all varieties of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art forms have had their conversations around what might be called a Conceptual turn. To be brief but reductive, we can generalize and say that the so-called Conceptual orientation on art-making focused on de-centering the execution of identifiable skill—whether skill was understood to lie in the stroke of a paintbrush or in the height of a leap—in order to focus on the art object as an exploration of an Idea. In its most cynical form, this is when art put itself in quotation marks, provoking, in a less cynical reading, a critical form of reflection on the parameters and definition of art itself. Within different art forms, there rose growing suspicion of virtuosic skill as traditionally executed. The internal critique of these art forms—and the critique of their relation to social systems, economies, and culture industries—needed to happen in an environment that sidelined the appeal and pleasure of virtuosic skill in order to focus the artistic encounter on the idea—the idea of movement, the idea of task, the idea of exchange, or objecthood, of the body, of the museum, the studio, the theater, or the screen.

I think we end up with difficulty sometimes when such Conceptual pursuits partake of experimentation across art forms. Without more solid immersion in the trajectory of conceptual practice that got us to different points, whether Conceptual visual art, or Minimalist dance, post-dramatic theater, or expanded cinema, we might still have different ways of deciding where the Idea is and where the Skill is. When is a piece appropriately understood as virtuosic in the lay sense of the term, that is, as executing exceptional skill? And when is a piece appropriately understood as virtuosic in the sense forwarded by Paolo Virno (1996), as immaterial cognitive virtuosity in the Conceptual sense? For Stefan Kalmár, Gia Kourlas "did not get" that Michael Clark was putting the Cunningham aesthetic into quotation marks, not so much cluelessly re-purposing Merce but conceptually exploring "the idea of Merce." Sometimes rigor in the Conceptual sense of virtuosity looks amateur in the lay sense of virtuosity—and vice versa. Is it helpful to invoke the quotation mark effect in order to think critically? At the same time, when do the quotation marks seem not to provide enough traction? Put another way, when does the invocation of the conceptual turn seem to be rationalizing the fact that certain artists never learned any skills in the first place?

Indeed, this brings me to another complication in a growing list of occupational hazards, the case of:

6. Hijacked De-Skilling

The history of de-skilling in Conceptual art and performance occurred when artists trained in a variety of forms actively masked that skill, marshaling a series of Conceptual questions in order to interrogate and perhaps explode the art traditions from whence they came. This actually can be hard to do; hard for Jackson Pollock to do, hard for Yvonne Rainer. But I think we can breed distrust when we find those internal critiques of virtuosity used to celebrate work that might be, dare I say, mediocre or even banal. The specific parameters of artists' decision to mask or self-de-skill assumed that they had the skills in the first place—a formulation that may sound odd until you think of the number

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of ways that critiques of virtuosity in one context are hijacked to rationalize experimentation that does not have to make itself accountable to the form it says that it is rejecting. Forgive me for not sharing an example here.

But we can also say that the reverse situation can be a hazard. In a landscape where we might have different barometers and tolerances for gauging the relationship between virtuosity as concept and virtuosity as skill, we can also find that a new exposure to some techniques and forms might look suspiciously virtuosic, like capitulations to older traditions of Art and Beauty. So while unfamiliar Conceptual forms can appear curiously un-skilled, they can also look egregiously proficient—too good, or too beautiful in that lay sense of virtuosity to have any Conceptual value. Indeed, some forms look to some eyes . . .

7. Suspiciously Over-Skilled

Certainly this suspicion shadows performance in the museum, especially dance performance, especially beautiful dance performance. Indeed, at our Making Time gathering in April 2012 in Berkeley, Sabine Breitwieser acknowledged that, in her conversations with museum trustees, part of what appeals to them about this trend in dance curating is the idea that "Beauty" and "skill" are being brought back into the museum gallery after so much Conceptual art disallowed it.

So that makes it suspicious to some, and perhaps we can talk about the possible misrecognitions and missed opportunities that befall any context that capitulates to it or any context that is too quick to reject the possibility that alternate Beauties and alternate uses of skill-sets might make a critical intervention. If the homogenizing of the heterogeneity of performance has meant that too many understand performance only to be itself when it is live, spontaneous, unrehearsed and everyday, then we find, not only dance people, but also theater people needing to explain why some kinds of interventions might need rehearsal. Consider Richard Maxwell's (2012) statement on his Whitney experience, where he almost needed to apologize to articulate the alternate rigor that comes from rehearsal:

> Rehearsal is getting used to the idea of repeating. It feels more honest to say to the people that are going to watch a theatrical production, "Look, we know we've repeated this. We're not going to put any energy into pretending that this is the first time it's happened." I think about rehearsal as a way of reckoning with the fact that we're going to repeat . . . I feel like repetition also has something to do with being the best that you can be. . . . It's something tangible that you can master. . . . I don't know if I can defend that. Maybe by saying, we can do it, so let's do it, let's master that. (Maxwell 2012)

Again, rehearsal and mastery can sound suspicious in a context that is worrying about beauty and skill being smuggled back into the art institution under the guise of performance. But can we also back up and be suspicious of that suspicion, and ask if there is a binary opposing the Conceptual-de-skilled-traditions-of-visual-art to the virtuosic-but-presumably-less-Conceptual-traditions-dance-and-theater that is creating new blindspots of its own?

Earlier I asked why this kind of cross-arts conversation is happening now, and with a different framing and urgency than it has happened before. In acknowledging that it seems to have something to do with the threat of a post-Fordist labor context bent on the affective and immaterial totalized social experience, I think that we can also acknowledge that a huge part of why all of these hazards seem to matter is that they are occurring in a power field. Indeed, they are being worked out in an apparently asymmetrical power field—one where donor dollars, collector interests, ticket prices, union rules, and the availability of day jobs all seem to swirl in an anxious mess. In this mess, we can find ourselves enduring what many experience as the following:

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8. Provincialism of the Elite

This is the way that certain powerful organizations can position themselves suddenly as discover-adventurers, even as they pluck what Claudia La Rocco (2012b) called "blue chip" specimens into their curatorial vision, or fly pre-anointed British bad boys from one context to another, akin to what happened to German opera's former bad boy Christoph Schlingensief before all of the biennials and art critics discovered him. When that habit is paired with the other habit, that is, the offer of a performance commission to the friend of a friend who sat next to you at dinner, some cry foul, feeling that whole reams of practice and generations of artists are being pushed to the sidelines despite the apparent gesture of incorporation. And of course, once one is offered the chance to swap contexts, especially in one where the new context is perceived to be more powerful than another, one might not necessarily find that the resources and know-how provided match the status of the space. Do installers at the art museum have any sense of where to store props, direct lighting, or provide performers with a way to go to the bathroom?

That kind of frustration seems to be exacerbated by a pervasive sense that the power relation between visual art worlds and performing art worlds is asymmetrical and non-reciprocal.

9. There Always Seems to Be More Power Elsewhere

Claudia La Rocco (2012c) says that visual artists are not jostling for recognition at Danspace to the same degree that choreographers are hoping for a spot at MoMA. Or that the Guggenheim would never ask Sarah Michelson to paint a painting, even if the performance world might be chasing after Matthew Barney to get him to make an opera. To some dance and experimental theater artists, there is a sense that visual art institutions and celebrity visual artists occupy the powerful, totalizing, donor-driven, speculative sphere. But of course, visual artists happen to feel themselves to be a part of a critical history that distanced itself from the all-powerful culture industry—the "culture of the celebrity" more readily associated with the brainwashing function of the performing arts fields. The sense that Power Is Always Elsewhere will inevitably boomerang back to the recognition that power is also right here at home.

That sense that the Grass Is Greener, and that sense that its Greenness must mean it is artificial turf, fuels finger-pointing that might keep us from noticing the larger issue: economic concerns around live art are embedded in larger questions of how artists will be able to stay alive.

10. Live Art and a Living W.A.G.E.

Older forms of jealousy among fellow artists can become exacerbated as one learns about the economic models of other forms and wonders about further corruption. Performing artists who never sold documentation suddenly are. Visual artists who never sold tickets to experience their work suddenly are. Are you selling out more if you sign up with a gallery, or more if you decide to choreograph a Gap ad? But it seems to me that economic distrust, cynicism, and longing bespeak a much larger question about the economic models that will sustain culture workers of all varieties—the subject that I understand to be that of another Artists Space gathering on and with W.A.G.E. My hope would be that the questions we are asking today might be joined to the questions you are asking in those upcoming forums. Only then might we extract ourselves from the distress and cynicism maladroitly doled out on each other and join in a shared discussion about how such finger-pointing keeps this cross-arts context-swapping from being a new opportunity to imagine cultural labor together, and more imaginatively.

Conclusion

Indeed, each of the hazards that I list above contains within it another way to be, to think, and to question ourselves and each other. I think it is useful to try to imagine the same work from the headspace of another—to measure its distance from forms that are different from the ones that you habitually, perhaps even unconsciously, use. Even as I worry about the hijacking of de-skilled discourses to rationalize "mediocre" work, I also ask my students and colleagues to think more about the effects of the quotation marks. What happens when a dancer's moves are de-familiarized

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by being placed inside a gallery's cube? Or when theater's conventions of realistic acting are made into an endurance performance on the gallery floor? And what happens when the defamiliarization happens in the other direction, when a dancer's moves frame, quote, and tilt what we think a museum is? Finally, all art forms have their celebrity artists, distributing opportunities and resources inequitably and sometimes without logic. But sometimes there is a logic—one discernible when we all make time to talk about how we perform now, and to talk about how we might like to perform later, for each other, and for a future where artists and artistic experiments still live.

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