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A Performer's Lexicon of Synesthesia (Abridged)

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Leonardo, Volume 34, Number 1, February 2001, pp. 69-71 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



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ENDNOTE

A Performer's Lexicon of Synesthesia (Abridged)

What happens when a performer stands in front of people? What goes through the mind, what becomes real? It's not all linear, a to b to c. There are eddies, currents, slipstreams, backwaters, rapids, quiet pools, grottoes, in that rush of actions/feelings/perceptions that are a performance. Below are a few of the concepts I deal with.

CONTINUUM, SPACE/TIME

Performance/perception occurs in a field/framework. A work of art reaches out to connect its framework to the living observer. It sparks (barks, speaks, arcs?) a series of linear thoughts, each with a tail and trail that envelops whole landscapes of personal history. In the single sweep of an eye across a canvas/object/dancer/performer, one creates, potentially, dozens of context-worlds; in that moment our actions are channeled into conditioned habitual pathways (normal life) or to "random" responses that smell of inspiration and unpredictable renewal.

DESIRE

Desire is a metaphor for need, an analog of genetics, a blueprint for the coming structures. How does a performer get from one state to the next? The present moment must be so loaded, so full of fluxing information and edge-territories, that **GRAVITY PULLS THAT INTENTION INTO ITS NEXT FORM!** That's desire, always there, seeking the next level.

EDGES

Implications are everywhere. What we see, hear and feel implies a continuation of those perceptions. But sometimes things **STOP**, and the edges of that moment create a tension that begs to be broken or rearranged, transition zones where sound moves to silence, nothing becomes something, nonsense acquires form and language decays into noise. Those fringes carry potential (energy!), like quantum foam welling up at the edges of things. And the energy that it gives a performer or artist is uncategorized until the moment we dip into it and start to mold it.

GRAVITY

All senses are fighting the downward pull. Every action is a rebalancing of forces. Every movement is a manifesto of resistance. Each breath is a juggling of momentum and pointillistic possibilities.

Gravity can equal time, or distance, or energy, or connection, expansion, implosion or fate. Gravity implies a branching out into infinity, which implies infinite freedoms, which equals weightless imagination. But meanwhile we are ingeniously tied to the earth.

MEMORY

The mind's muscles, striated branches and probability paths, bear the chemical touch of our past experiences, open radically to smells, rearrange present moments in cascades of personal hierarchies. Without memory there can be no transformation, because each thing can only be itself in an ever-changing stream.

Synesthesia demands a memory of each moment just before in order to reference it and charge it with power, pleasure or pain.

MUSCLES

Muscles are the most basic, recognizable unit of sensual transformation.

Muscles are catapults loaded with stones waiting to be aimed and released to break down a fortress and trigger the rush of new forces to build something new. The muscles are the arbiters of gravity and desire; they are the controllers of our time.

RITUAL

Rituals are the enhancers of synesthesia—the salt, pepper, chili of social sensuality. Rituals carve deep channels while creating banks that will someday be overrun, thus allowing new courses to be channeled. Rituals are fractal change-of-state ceremonies, edge moments where interactive patterns generate unpredictable stabilities.

A ritual freezes time and allows the body to have access to a wider gamut of responses.

Ritual marks the field, interacts with gravity, holds desire in check and gets things ready.

SECOND HAND TOUCH

Human beings fully believe that objects touched by powerful people are endowed with power and can access power, cross empty space, transform lives and manipulate the initiated. This is a belief system, a kind of religion: a hereditary caste system of transformative object/experiences (our consumer cultures thrive on this transfer system).

But "Second-Hand Touch" is also the residue of ritual and shamanism. It's the cultural equivalent of the chemicals that stream from axon to axon in the brain.

SURPRISE

A critical state, that moment of surprise, when all things are ready to be turned upside down. Surprise is the transitory explosion of memory that creates new connections. Surprise is the linkage of desire to uncertainty. Surprise is the coral reef under the water you float in. Surprise finds you in one world and leaves you in another. It's that uncontrollable point where gravity and touch are confounded by instability and the unpredictable OTHER.

TIME

For humans, time is a perception linked to movement of muscles, head, foot-tapping, blood-pumping, sun-rising, size of bodies, movements of other bodies, involvement in ritual, number of surprises. How to measure time? Snap a finger and you'll know (if you take into account the preparation time, hearing time, muscular-wave time, friction-establishing time, positioning-feedback time, action/release time, result-judgment time!).

TOUCH

This is the central concept-image-action for sensual exchange!

Someone creates something; touches pen to paper, brush to canvas, hand to violin,

fingers to ivory keys, palm skin to drum skin, feet to floor. TOUCH is the moment of contact, the memory of contact, the wish for contact, and contact to memory and desire (past/future). TOUCH is transference. Why do you want to own a Monet or a Warhol? Because we want to physically share the same space with an artist, dancer, actor, musician whom we love. We want to breathe their molecules.

TOUCH is the release valve, the go-button, the point-of-no-return, the crossroads, the balancing point, the motor that activates all other qualities. TOUCH is the pathway tracer, the joiner of similars and the revealer of (and reveler in) differences.

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