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## Performing the Network

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### Introduction

*Séance*: a networked glossalalia is a networked performance that is part of the media art project, [The Perpetual Emotion Project](#). Both are animated by our interest in the non-instrumental and the non-sensical and in the making of performative events. In this paper we present the work as practice-led research, which contributes to the understanding and development of what we identify as performative media art. This paper is an expanded version of a paper presented at E-Performance and Plug-ins, UNSW, 2006.

Our practice-led research contributes to a number of debates around emotion, affect, performativity, and the art/science paradigm in new media art. At a time when neuro-scientific understandings abound, we instead work with emotion as a motion in and between bodies, and explore what this means in networked situations and art works. In new media, many examinations of media performance focus on interactivity within the framework of technology and technological innovation; but we argue for performativity as a way to approach a media art work such as *Séance*. We work with performativity in Judith Butler's well known sense of acts that aren't "expressive" but that "constitute" (Butler 1988 in Bial 2004: 162). We also work with Alfred Jarry's concept of 'pataphysics as a figure and mode that takes us outside the limits of art/science discourse that currently prevails in much new media work and theory.

Process is particularly important in practice-led research and we investigate the process of making our glossalalic work and the performance event itself. Particularly useful is Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, which refers to works that set up and explore social relationships between people. Relational aesthetics is characterised by emotion, intimacy, inter-subjectivity and the ways that these shape the work. While Bourriaud's focus is specifically not new media, we suggest that it can be useful for thinking new media performance works, which are driven by a concern with the intimate relations between people and the work.

Presentation of practice as research is still an evolving form, much discussed in Australia at the moment and all the more complicated as it tries to find a place in the ever-changing labyrinths of university and government funding. How to present one's own practice in a mode other than that of the practice? Some prefer the exegesis which focuses on the process and the work as an 'object'. Others prefer to contextualise the work (and/or process) culturally and art historically. Still others work in a 'ficto-critical' mode, to animate the presentation with some of the poetics of the work itself, while also introjecting an academically sanctioned critical voice of contextualisation. The mode we have chosen here is somewhere between contextualising the work and a ficto-critical approach. We try not to completely abandon the essential poetic urge of the work. Recognising that the poetic is something that we "cannot fully translate," (Perloff 2001: 1) we look for the poetic in the writing and at times turn to the ficto-critical. However we also write in a contextualising mode to bring forward the research that went into the work and the ways that we see the work itself as research, contributing to various academic fields. Inspired by what Dick Higgins figured as inter-media, which worked between media, we attempt here to find an intermedial voice of presentation (Higgins 1978:12).

### The Perpetual Emotion Project

[The Perpetual Emotion Project](#) sets out to research emotions in digital culture and in particular what we figured as the relays of perpetual emotion. While researching that project, we became interested in the work of Etienne-Jules Marey, who was famous for his late 19th century machinic inventions, his motion studies, and for the role of his machines in the history of cinema. *The Perpetual Emotion Project* plays with Marey's machines in order to bring forth the emotions that were left out of his original motion studies: it brings to the foreground the intimate relation of emotion with motion or movement. *Séance*, as part of this project, aims to explore and experiment with emotions as motion rather than sentiment and, in particular, to track its movements across the network.

In the beginning our urge with *The Perpetual Emotion Project* was to find new emotions emerging in digital culture as people merged with their machines. We did this by interviewing subjects about incidents in relations with machines and then putting their audiovisual material through our virtual Marey machines, which we made as part of the project. Our work with Marey was both serious and ironic – what better time to revisit his work, predicated on the measurement of motion and located in a pre-Freudian moment, than the present, when measurement still and again predominates the neuroscientific study of emotion? In working with emotions as motion, we were concerned to work against an instrumentalist neuroscientific discourse and to contribute to the re-figuring of affect and emotion that was in the air in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

"The meaning, or redefinition of emotion in the postmodern world" is addressed by Steven Shaviro in a paper titled *The Life, After Death, of Postmodern Emotions* (Shaviro 2004: 1). Shaviro uses Andy Warhol and his work as an exemplary figure, foreshadowing and even ushering in the postmodern death of emotion. He relates the now iconic story of the moment of that death as Warhol himself tells it in his book *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*:

During the 60's, I think, people forgot what emotions were supposed to be. And I don't think they've ever remembered. I think that once you see emotions from a certain angle you can never think of them as real again. That's what more or less has happened to me. I don't really know if I was ever capable of love, but after the 60s I never thought in terms of love again (Warhol in Shaviro 2004: 1)

While other writers and theorists, like J. G. Ballard and Frederic Jameson have also noted this death of emotion in the postmodern era, unlike Warhol, they lament this turn of events. For Jameson it is the 'waning of affect' and it is a terrible loss.

Shaviro's discussion of the loss of a certain sort of emotion - a deeply felt, true, real, sincere emotion - is also a starting point for our project, *The Perpetual Emotion Project*. How to think about emotion after the death of emotion? If emotion has been revealed as not the essential and authentic feelings that we thought it was, what is it? For there is no denying that we all feel some sort of emotion, some movement somewhere in our bodies/spirits? If, as Shaviro, says "there are good reasons why we can no longer take emotions seriously" (2004:1) then there are equally good reasons for taking it very seriously. If the postmodern ushered in this era of the waning of emotion, then digital art, the most recent arrival, was considered an art form that lacked emotion. It is generally agreed that emotions are associated with people and that machines lack feeling and therefore emotion. In other words the machinic relationship is cold and affectless. But what if there is a sort of emotion that relays between people and through machines? What if the e in electronic could be transposed to the e in emotion? In this project we posit/imagine the possibility of a machinic emotion through the point of touch between computer and person - that is, the mouse and its accompanying cursor.

In *The Perpetual Emotion Project* our approach to emotions has been to emphasise this kinetic rather than purely expressive or sentimental aspect and to work with the sense that this motion of emotion is not just within individual bodies (we jump with joy, we recoil with fear and when sadness weighs down our hearts, our limbs turn to lead) but also relays between bodies and between bodies and machines. (By machines we are referring to objects - from tools to vehicles to media instruments - as well as Deleuzian assemblages of the organic and the mechanical). Emotion in its kinetic, machinic and connecting senses oscillates with the concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who were concerned with movement and with understanding forces and intensities rather than intentions or fixed meanings (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 254). They expressed their concern with "movement and rest, slowness and speed" particularly as qualities of machinic assemblages.

The plane of consistency of Nature is like an immense Abstract Machine, abstract yet real and individual; its pieces are the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations. There is therefore a unity to the plane of nature, which applies equally to the inanimate and the animate, the artificial and the natural.... It is a fixed plane, upon which things are distinguished from one another only by speed and slowness (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 254).

The figuring of emotion as motion, bringing forth poetically its etymological movements, is not new and, indeed, the connections between emotion, motion, and affect have long concerned philosophers, most famously but not limited to Spinoza via Deleuze and Guattari, through to Brian Massumi, in a rich literature that we cannot rehearse here, but that has been well summarised by Nigel Thrift (Thrift 2004: 59-64). It is also worth noting, here, the influential work of Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank who have revived psychologist Silvan Tomkins' concepts of affect as a way to make psychology, psychoanalysis and critical theory interrogate each other. They propound Tomkins' work for its "layering and constant mutual interruption of biological and machine models" (Sedgwick and Parker 1995 :15). There is a debate around such views of affect as essentialist that we cannot enter into here and we continue to use the term emotion instead, for its etymology and poetry. We would argue that emotion in this sense fits in with those understandings of affect, which emphasise the non-sentimental, or what Andrew Murphie and John Potts point to as "the very engagement between body and world from which these feelings arise" (Murphie and Potts 2003: 87). Similarly, Sara Ahmed:

...in examining ... affective economies, ... argue[s] that emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities - or bodily space with social space - through the very intensity of their attachments... In other words, rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and collective (Ahmed 2000: 10-11).

Our gesture to re-figure emotion in this way, within 'affective economies', reflected our concern to re-locate media art within an art discourse rather than the art/science paradigm which seemed to be assuming hegemony in new media. We wanted to research incommensurability between art and science in this moment of art/science alliance, where the scientifically sanctioned aesthetics of the beautiful was prevalent. To do so, we turned again to the 'pataphysics and the absurd creations of Alfred Jarry. (We previously worked 'pataphysically as *rumorologists*, first in 2002 with *Journey to the C/enter*, a fictive blog and in *ICOLS* and then in *Museum of Rumour*, 2003, a networked installation.) Jarry, the French writer and inventor of the neologism 'pataphysics, did most of his work in the last decade of the 19th century. He wrote 'pataphysics, with the apostrophe before the p, as a critique of science and as a play on metaphysics, the science of being and ontology. In *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll Pataphysician: A Neo-Scientific Novel* Jarry defines his 'pataphysics as:

...the science of imaginary solutions and. ...above all, the science of the particular, despite the common opinion that the only science is that of the general. Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions,

and will explain the universe supplementary to this one (Jarry 1980: 192).

Christian Bök, in his monograph, *'Pataphysics: the Poetics of an Imaginary Science*, points out that “few critics have recognised that 'pataphysics actually informs the innovation of the postmodern, ... as well as setting the parameters for the contemporary relationship between science and poetry” (Bok 2002: 27). 'Pataphysics sits beside science playing with and against its truth effects. It 'rules out the rule', as Bök says, and revels in the fragmentary, the exception, non-sense and the anomalous (Miranda 2003).

In making *The Perpetual Emotion Project* as a 'pataphysical work, we created the Institute for the Study of Perpetual Emotion. (It is also another work in what we figure as the performance genre of 'lab-coat art works' – where the artists don lab coats – a genre reminiscent of Fluxus works in the 60s and 70s.) This was also a development of our practice-led research into fictive institutions, which may or may not appear to be authentic. Fictive, a concept developed by literary anthropologist Wolfgang Iser, usefully eschews the fiction/reality binary and argues instead for the triad of the real, the fictive and the imaginary. Iser explains the fictive as:

...an operational mode of consciousness that makes inroads into existing versions of world. In this way the fictive becomes an act of boundary crossing, which, nonetheless, keeps in view what has been overstepped. As a result, the fictive simultaneously disrupts and doubles the referential world (Iser 1993: xiv-xv).

The fictive is an important figure to engage with works that involve made-up worlds or 'as if' real creations (Iser 1993). The abundance of fictive institutions, personae, and events on the Internet, is, we would suggest, an effect of the fictive quality of the Internet itself. As most of us have now experienced, anything and everything can be faked on the Internet. Identities, both personal and institutional, are fluid and performative rather than fixed – they are fictive (Miranda 2003). This 'inauthenticity' of the Internet leaves a gap that is both productive and creative, allowing for one to play at the blurry edges. In the Institute for the Study of Perpetual Emotion it is this playful world-making that allows for many small segments and micro works to sit beside each other in an absurd *mélange* of invention - a collage of 'scientific' endeavour.

Thus we made the Institute for the Study of Perpetual Emotion as a mirror world of scientific research. And like its scientific counterpart there are a group of researchers with experience and expertise in their field - in this case the field of emotionography – which we defined as the study of emergent emotions in everyday life in the 21st century. The mission of the Institute is to make visible and audible, emotions that are undetected in everyday life. To do this we invented virtual machinic assemblages, inspired by Marey, with maybe a passing nod to the loopy creations of Rube Goldberg. These machines include the Marey Audio-Visualizer Machine, Perpetual E.motion Machines (or PEMs, which are portable 'labs' available for research outside the Institute), and the Séance S<t>imulator.

### Séance

One of the more emotional aspects of research is finding the unexpected, yet perfect incident. And in researching the very rationally minded Marey we were surprised and delighted to find that he attended séances. These séances included the participation of Henri Bergson, and Marie Curie who met to investigate “the manifestations of yet undefined forces through scientific investigations” by using Marey's graphing instruments (Braun 1992: 279). These investigations (or scientific performances) “attempted to measure the radioactivity and electrical discharge produced by hysterics, and studied mental suggestion, telepathy, levitation, and so forth” as well as holding séances (1992: 279).

This fanciful discovery suited our own directions as we had been interested in working with the Internet in a more networked performance way than we had in previous work and so we began thinking about a networked séance as the way to do so - not least for the suggestiveness of the word medium/media. Our interest in 'networking' was, we would note, an ambivalent one. At the time there was much talk about the power and universal benefits of networks, which was accompanied by a great dollop of libertarian cyber-utopian pronouncements. For us, *Séance* was a way to explore these sometimes extra-terrestrial longings by looking both forward and backward with a 'form' or interface like Séance - that itself had originated in the 19th century at another time of enormous technological change. We proposed *Séance* to ISEA2004 as a site-dependant, time-specific work for the ferry, which is where it was performed in August 2004.

[See video](#)

*Séance* was conceived as a multi-user performance event, which takes place simultaneously (midnight Baltic time) in a site-dependant location and on the Internet. Our idea with *Séance* was to have a networked performance where local and remote players communicated with each other and a medium, so that the emotions in the network could manifest through and as motion. Following earlier experiments, such as those of Marey et al, *Séance* uses the Ouija Board as an interface. One of the things that appealed to us about the Ouija Board was that it was an early (board) game, and actually enjoyed phenomenal commercial success. It was a popular 19th century parlour game for lovers, which could also be imagined as an early 'networked' event. Similar to the tarot cards it was both a fun game and a spiritualist tool. The original Ouija Board was also known as the Talking Board or the Message Board where one could search for answers from the spirit world. In other words it was an interface between the living and the dead.

Recently there has been a lot of interest in the way 'new' medias and especially communication technologies evoke the desire for some sort of spiritual transcendence and/or magical thinking. *Technologies of Magic: A cultural study of ghosts, machines and the uncanny*, edited by John Potts and Edward Scheer, for instance, explores the “curious field occupied by

both machines and magic” (Potts and Scheer 2006: vii). Erik Davis, in his seminal book, *Techgnosis*, charts a course through this mystical fervour showing how technologies of communication can often be fuelled by not just rational, utilitarian dreams of comfort and efficiency but also by our irrational dreams and desires for something more:

Regardless of how secular this ultramodern condition appears, the velocity and mutability of the times invokes a certain supernatural quality that must be seen, at least in part, through the lenses of religious thought and the fantastic storehouse of the archetypal imagination. ...technology embodies an image of the soul, or rather a host of images: redemptive, demonic, magical, transcendent, hypnotic, alive. We must come to grips with these images before we can creatively and consciously answer the question of technology, for that question has always been fringed with phantasms (Davis 1998: 9).

Given this context, one of the things we wanted to work with was audience expectation about networked performance. Calling it a séance, we anticipated that people would expect more in the genre of a spooky or utopian networking event showing off technological wizardry. We planned instead to make a work that was somewhere between performative laboratory experiment and a performance - a work that asked: Are there ‘unknown forces’ still at play? What happens when answers depend on a network of movement?

### The Process of making Séance

As we were working on *Séance*, looking at historical ‘talking boards,’ we decided that we wanted to make the *Séance* board actually talk. We thought that as the planchette (like the glass of traditional séances) was moved across the Board - through the relay of collective motion - and pointed to particular letters, the perpetual emotion behind that relay should become audible. (The movement was achieved through programming that effectively summed the individual avatar movements as they pointed to letters.) Each letter would be voiced in a number of the languages, which we had recorded - and their combined sound became a networked glossalalia. Glossalalia resonated for us because of the way we had wanted to play with the irrational and non-sensical aspect of emotions as a counter to the rationalistic and utilitarian thrust of post-industrial digital culture. Or perhaps not so much a ‘counter,’ but, as Nicolas Bourriaud would have it, a way to raise an ambiguity -- the ambiguity “between the utilitarian function of the objects [one] is presenting, and their aesthetic function” (Bourriaud 2002: 35 our italics).

Glossalalia has long fascinated experimental radio makers from Antonin Artaud to Gregory Whitehead to Christof Migone amongst others, with its sonic intensities and suggestions of an excess beyond interpretation, meaning, rationality. Working artistically in a field that Julia Kristeva explores psychoanalytically, glossalalia works as a particular manifestation of the performative voice which “cuts across the domains of language, as semiotic and syntactical field, by introducing the excessive and deformed mutations of identity” (LaBelle 2006: 105). Glossalalia, according to Allen Weiss, who has written extensively on the work of Artaud and Gregory Whitehead, is:

...a type of speech or babble characteristic of certain discourses of infants, poets, schizophrenics, mediums, charismatics. It is the manifestation of language at the level of its pure materiality, the realm of pure sound, where there obtains a total disjunction of signifier and signified. As such, the relation between sound and meaning breaks down through the glossolalic utterances: it is the image of language inscribed in its excess, at the threshold of nonsense. Thus, as a pure manifestation of expression, the meaning of glossolalia depends upon the performative, dramatic, contextual aspects of such utterances within discourse and action; meaning becomes a function of the enthusiastic expression of the body, of kinetic gestural behaviour (Weiss 1990: 56).

Of, we would add, emotion. Glossalalia thus brings to mind (or should we say body) Georges Bataille’s excess or heterogeneity - things which are not productive in the capitalist sense - individual production that does not have to be sublimated to socially acceptable production (Bataille: 1985). So the glossalalic can, then, be heard as the excess, which has refused sublimation into language (narrative, meaning). Or, following Derrida, following Artaud, it is about “force before the form” - a theatrical performance not subordinated to narrative logic (Derrida 1986 in Scheer 2000: 65). Glossalalia in this non-sense is an expression of the singular self, which is not the bourgeois individual hero, constituted through mastery of the body and entry into the symbolic - of language.

The process of making the work, by working collaboratively across the network to make the Ouija board interface, helped shape it. We worked with Greg Turner (a computer scientist specialising in collaborations with artists) who was in Sydney while we were overseas. Working with the prototypes of Greg Turner’s and Alistair Weakley’s software, we would séance together, in the morning for us, and at night for them, and found ourselves expressing our emotions (mainly anxiety to begin with) and developing our ideas through a text chat-box. In this process, we realised that the chat box, which we called the Message Box, wasn’t just an instrumental and convenient way to communicate during the event but could be a performative part of the event for the players. How much the Message Box would be taken over by, and made their own by the players, however, we did not anticipate.

While playful, *Séance* is not strictly ‘game play.’ Neither the makers nor the players could predict what would happen. Each event is shaped by the emotions of the players that collectively determine the movement of the planchette. By this we don’t mean collectively as in a team sport, but more an uncanny collectivity that is outside any individual’s control. In other words each séance is an instance of the way that emotions are networked relays. So, the séance events were outside our control and also pushed against the expectations of game play for players’ control. This particularly played out with the avatars,

which were conceptually and actually a crucial part of the work. The most important, and strange thing about them was firstly their familiarity - the well-known arrow icon and, secondly, everyone's looked exactly the same. Indeed, they were exactly the same until they were performed. In other words, the only way to distinguish one's own avatar was by moving it - the motion of emotion. Through the programming, the combined motion of the avatars determined the movement of the planchette - both its direction and destination - as well as the intensity of the sound when it arrived.

This interactive or rather performative aspect of the avatars startled the usual player/avatar relationship. Unlike most avatars, they are not there so much to directly and transparently serve your needs or follow your commands as in a game context - but more as duplicitous doubles. Or rather digital multiples of the 'same', full of potential to be actualised as your very own avatar. Once you invest them with your emotion through motion they become your own, though they can slip away at any moment; that is, the avatar sleeps if it is not moved. The play with the avatars was a sort of play with the search for identity - elusive, slippery, repetitive - experienced as both individual and collective. In order to train people to work with their avatars, we put them through a series of finger exercises early in the performance - which also created a moment of esprit de corps.



**Figure 1: Participants performing finger exercises during *Séance*, ISEA ferry, 2004.**

These exercises, which started as a play on how teenage girls prepare for séances, then became a way for people to work with their avatars, and ultimately became a more performative part of our own performance. For the planchette to move, the audience had to work together, they had to 'perform' networked audience and networked emotion (in the sense of 'performative' -- making it happen). In a way this reminded us of how Samuel Weber, following Walter Benjamin, notes the importance of 'training' the audience - typical of (new) media (Weber 2004: 118, 179).

The séance events were very different each night, bearing out the theories of the effects of emotional relays in the room. The message box in particular played a different part each time. One of the interesting things that happened was people using it to try to make sense and nonsense of their avatars:

anybody there?  
 hello  
 which is the planchette?  
 who has got the joint?  
 yo  
 this rox  
 whats the minimum cpu for this?  
 feeling seasick  
 feeling tired  
 now what?  
 Lilly legs  
 nop  
 nop  
 hi everyone  
 I cannot find my cursor  
 hi  
 emote motion  
 vibrations  
 movem ents that exist as relays, networks and vibrations  
 wiggle your cursor lij  
 i found it  
 effect  
 spund  
 Flow and relay  
 sound  
 flow  
 I like these words. I will let them flow.  
 My avatar is an arrow.



Will it fade?  
which one is me?

### [Extracts from Message Box](#)

In one way we went into the séance cold, not quite sure what would happen - which as Nicolas Bourriaud points out, is typical of encounter based works – though we experienced this as somewhat terrifying until laughter broke the performance anxiety (Bourriaud 2002: 40). Later we came to think about it not so much as a standard performance work, but, as Weber says, as a “laboratory” where each singular instantiation takes precedence over the genre (Weber 2004: 117).

Following the finger and chanting exercises, we called up the medium – and our call was answered by the spectre of Marshall McLuhan who, many would argue, haunts the net (Weber 2004: 181). We then asked the players to pose questions, decided on one to ask the board, and the séancing began. (Some of the séance questions and glossalalic answers can be accessed [here](#). Next, we asked participants to decipher the strange alphabetic sounds by writing their thoughts and ideas in the Message box. One actual prop that we supplied was a Chinese fortune cookie. These fortune cookies were brought to the Baltic from Australia by Greg Turner and we placed our own digital sayings inside the cookies along with its original message - these were placed in front of each seat. Online players were sent virtual cookies to open. After listening to the results from the Board - the glossalalia of many different alphabets - we encouraged people to open their fortune cookies to help them with the decipherment. This, too, added to the cacophony. They included the following:

Too many clics spoil the link.  
Let sleeping avatars lie.  
She who swims with web'd feet can travel a thousand leagues.  
She who moves the mouse with a light touch connects to the deepest e.motions.  
The connections that you seek are a klik away.  
He who seeks to connect must plumb the depths of e.motions.  
She who seeks to coexist with her avatar must follow the straight and arrow.  
To find love on the internet you must vibrate frequently.

### [Cookies](#)

#### **Revisiting the Work**

The cookie break might be seen as reminiscent of the works of Rirkrit Tiravanija, one of the artists Nicolas Bourriaud finds exemplary of relational aesthetics, which brings us to the last section of the paper revisiting the work through Bourriaud's relational aesthetics. But first, we'll place networked performance in the context of other performative digital art.

In July 2005, the Emyre list had a month long discussion of networked performance. Chris Salter's posts were particularly relevant to our work because, like us, he works with Guattari's sense of the machinic - “not just referring to technical systems (although they obviously play a big role) but all kinds of apparatuses that have a kind of enunciative power-that is, they have ability to force change or make marks in the world” (Salter 2005). Salter was interested in the “the co-entanglements that occur between us humans and machinic systems in artistic-aesthetic contexts” (2005). It is not surprising that the questions Salter addressed are also questions that animated Séance: “How do the machines deployed generate affect, both on the side of the creators and the public? How and why does that affect matter?” (2005).

One of the key issues for the Emyre discussion for Salter, and for us, was the question of how networked performances are different from other digital art. For Salter it was that:

it involves coordinating and choreographing all sorts of messy, uncontrollable things like space, time, human beings (both spectators and 'players') as well as electronic-mechanical-material-computational technologies; things that can't be rendered, represented or reduced to the level of inscription (or code) (2005).

Salter went on to talk about the concept of performativity - in Judith Butler's sense of something that doesn't just describe or represent but performs or activates, acting as “a material force to change something” (2005). For Salter performativity is a key figure to think media and performance, especially networked. John E. McGrath writing primarily about surveillance space and also of course following Judith Butler, extends this, describing how space works in the performative which creates a particular space of performance and thereby implicates the viewer/auditor in a particular way:

whereas non-performative representations allow the viewer an external relationship to the represented via representation, performative space brings the viewer into the space constructed. As in performative language, in which one of the key factors in 'happiness' of the performative utterance is the status of the auditor, so in performative space, the space does not exist without the viewer/auditor's implication” (McGrath 2004: 142).

This is also how we have been using the concept performative and is very important for understanding the way *Séance* worked. As a digital artwork, it was certainly dependent on code and programming and the presence of computers; and interactivity and familiarity with networking were ‘skills’ or habits the audience brought with them. But as a performative

event, animated by the emotions between the players in a specific time and space, it went beyond digital art's interactivity and interaction, which tend to be defined and confined within the bounds of the technological. Thus, it was animated by performativity more than interactivity, or in other words by performing séancing, the participants made the performative event of 'theatre as lab experiment' happen.

We'll conclude by briefly discussing Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics which we found very relevant for *Séance* - after the fact, we should note - because it foregrounds inter-subjectivity and 'being-together'. While Bourriaud distinguishes this from theatre, it is nonetheless, we would argue, very useful for thinking performance or performative media art (Bourriaud 2002: 15-18). The works that Bourriaud talks about include "meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals and places of conviviality" where "inter-subjectivity and interaction [are] ... a point of departure and ... an outcome" - "the main informers" of the works (2002: 28, 44). While many examinations of mediated performance focus on technology, we suggest that a networked media performance such as *Séance* makes more sense when understood through the prism of relational aesthetics, where what matters is the way the people at the event related to each other, through the network, rather than the technical wonders (or failures!) of the server and internet connection.

By relational aesthetics, Bourriaud is referring to the way that works focus on setting up and exploring relationships between people - the social aspects that result in a work - or, as he puts it, the way "art is made of the same material as... social exchanges" (Bourriaud 2002: 41). Relational aesthetics is characterised by emotion, intimacy, inter-subjectivity and the ways that these shape the work. While Bourriaud's focus is specifically not new media, (2002: 68) we would argue that it can be useful for re-thinking as performative those interactive new media performance works, which are driven by a concern with the intimate relations between people and the work. It allows for a focus on the people involved and the specificity of the time and place when the work takes place. Remembering Duchamp, Bourriaud says that the dialogue of art as encounter is a "temporal process, being played out here and now" (2002: 41). In a moment where the discourse of the net is often utopian and the ideology of mass communication can be felt as an injunction, Bourriaud presents an understanding of exchanges as microclimates - where relationships with the world are rendered concrete by the art object (2002: 44, 48).

So how, at this point of revisiting the work do we think of *Séance: a networked glossalalia* - Is it a modern day séance? A postmodern day séance? Or a post post-modern day séance? Perhaps the latter begins to get there, and again, Bourriaud points to the way that in the post post-modern era, what happens is not so much an appropriation of forms nor a parody of them, but an "inhabiting" of them:

Artists today program forms more than they compose them: rather than transfigure a raw element (blank canvas, clay etc) they remix available forms, and make use of data... When Tiravanija offers us the experience of a structure in which he prepares food, he is not doing a performance; he is using the performance-form. His goal is not to question the limits of art: he uses forms that served to interrogate these limits in the sixties, in order to produce completely different results (Bourriaud 2000: 11).

Inhabiting seems a most appropriate trope for a séance. In this sense, we would say that in *Séance* we inhabited the forms of séances, networked chat-rooms, and the research laboratory collaborative experiment - and each performance event was somehow the nodal point of connection between the three.

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