Jones, S., & Dimsdale, E. (2018). Unsettling Materialities: The Indexical Relationship of Photography and Theatre in Bodies in Flight's Model Love. *Photography and Culture*, 20(20).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17514517.2018.1467086>

Peer reviewed version

Link to published version (if available):
[10.1080/17514517.2018.1467086](https://doi.org/10.1080/17514517.2018.1467086)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)
PDF-document

This is the author accepted manuscript (AAM). The final published version (version of record) is available online via Taylor & Francis at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17514517.2018.1467086> . Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>

UNSETTLING MATERIALITIES: THE INDEXICAL RELATIONSHIP OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND THEATRE IN BODIES IN FLIGHT'S *MODEL LOVE*

Simon Jones (corresponding author)

Professor of Performance

Department of Theatre

Bristol University

Cantocks Close, Bristol BS8 1UP

Tel: 0117 954 5481

simon.jones@bristol.ac.uk

www.bodiesinflight.co.uk

Edward Dimsdale

Senior Lecturer in Contextual Studies

Cambridge School of Art

Anglia Ruskin University

East Road, Cambridge, CB1 1PT

Tel: 0845 271 3333

edward.dimsdale@anglia.ac.uk

Instagram: @edward_dimsdale

Abstract

This co-authored paper considers *Model Love* (2008-2011), an intermedial collaboration between an experimental theatre company and a photographic artist. Positioning itself as a conversation arising from an on-going joint practice, the fragmented dialogic approach engaged in the writing reflects and refracts key salient attributes, as they were elaborated through a variety of performance contexts. In *Model Love*, the photograph became an *adpositional* object of performance: variously as foundation *for* performance, material *of* performance, documents *from* performance and objects *alongside* performance. However, the several manifestations articulated through the collaboration revealed a central relation at work which was never wholly resolved: between *to perform* and *the photograph*. The paper seeks to examine a number of discrete, albeit inter-relating, respective positions, between theatre and photography, arising from an appreciation of this unsettled – unsettling – relation. In so doing, what at first appear as countervailing positions emerge as closer affiliations, ultimately testament to the power of appearance.

The photographic illustrations and italicised captions are drawn from one particular performance context of *Model Love*, a durational installation at the Battersea Arts Centre, London, in May 2008.

Keywords:

Theatre; Photography; Indexicality; Intermediality; Collaboration

Author biographies:

Simon Jones, Professor of Performance (University of Bristol), is founder and co-director of Bodies in Flight (UK), which has to date produced 17 performance works and numerous documents of performance that have at their heart the encounter between flesh and text, where *words move* and *flesh utters*. He has been visiting scholar at Amsterdam University, a visiting artist at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Banff Arts Centre. He has published in Contemporary Theatre Review, Liveartmagazine, *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, Performance Research: *on Beckett*, co-edited *Practice as Research in Performance and Screen* and his work with Bodies in Flight features in Josephine Machon's *(Syn)aesthetics? Towards a Definition of Visceral Performance*. He recently led two major projects into the accessibility, preservation and creative re-use of live-art archives – *Into the Future* and *Performing Documents*; and is currently collaborating with composer Michael Ellison on two new operas.

Edward Dimsdale is a photographic artist, writer, and Senior Lecturer in Contextual Studies at the Cambridge School of Art (Anglia Ruskin University). As a photographer, he has worked in collaboration with a number of theatre companies, including The Engine Room Theatre Cooperative, Filter Theatre and Stan's Café. He began working with Bodies In Flight Theatre Company in 1990, producing photographic documentation of their productions, before working collaboratively with the company to produce *Model Love* (2008-2011). In 2014, he performed *Model Love Rekindled*, a further adaptation of the work for a solo performer, for the ACTS/REACTS festival, at Wimbledon Space. Since 2014, he has been writing for HOTSHOE, contributing essays on photography. *Stilled*, a broadsheet photographic publication on newsprint, was published by Stanley/Barker in 2017.

UNSETTLING MATERIALITIES: THE INDEXICAL RELATIONSHIP OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND THEATRE IN BODIES IN FLIGHT'S *MODEL LOVE*

In every event there are many heterogeneous, always simultaneous components, since each of them is a meanwhile, all within the meanwhile that makes them communicate through zones of indiscernibility, of undecidability: they are variations, modulations, intermezzi, singularities of a new infinite order. (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 158)

Model Love, Bodies in Flight's fifteenth performance work, made in collaboration with the long-time documenter of its work photographer Edward Dimsdale, attempted to make a show around three books of photographs. Commissioned by Arnolfini (Bristol, February 2008), re-presented as installation at BAC's Burst (May 2008) and DeDa's Quake (March 2009) festivals, as pared-down performance at Ustinov (Bath, April 2009) and Technologies of Transmediality symposium (Bristol, January 2011), as a collection of photograph books and short video work, and finally in a double-bill with Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Wickham Theatre (Bristol, June 2011), this collaboration continued our interest in working across media and incorporating them into the performance-event. We organized three location shoots in late 2007 – a pond in a wood, a hotel room, a library, within which a three-way love-relationship was played out between three performers, inspired by Antonioni's *Blow Up*.

Somewhere between soundbites, sonnets and songs, Model Love begins with a mysterious book of photographs – a lovers' manual – claiming to record that exact moment when two strangers' eyes meet and it's love at first sight. (Publicity copy, 2008)

Dimsdale then made three books from these photographs which became part of a dialogue of texts – images on the one hand, Jones's writing on the other – that were then used to make the performance. Working alongside collaborators Sara Giddens (choreographer) and

Sam Halmarack (singer-songwriter), we struggled to make this dialogue make sense. So much so that over the following three years the work underwent substantial revisions, moving towards a two-hander between one performer, Graeme Rose, and Halmarack, the musician. Various iterations reorganized the order of the books, moving Book One to the coda, adding an opening scene using self-generated phone-camera images. These multiple manifestations expressed a fundamental relation at work which would not settle: between *to perform* and *the photograph*: between moving and saying as modalities of action *and* the photograph as material object, as self-reflexive document of the very actions that seek to take possession of it and use it to their own ends. In *Model Love* the photograph became the object of performance, variously as foundation *for* performance, material *of* performance, documents *from* performance and objects *alongside*. Still moving, moving still: but not settling.

We wanted its very methodology to express this dynamic of being inbetween media, inbetween persons and events in the inter-relation between performer and image, image and spectator, audience and performer. The face-to-face encounter of flesh-to-flesh at the core of Bodies in Flight's practice is always already interpolated by a third, technology as *poesis*, as revealing the inbetween as inbetween – a central concern of Dimsdale's photography. So, we foregrounded the photograph as medium: we literally brought it from its previous role of documentation to the photograph as source; the technology as the middle before us, as medium poised between a documentary force and pure artifice. This irresolvable dynamic provided the project with its creative focus and energy, since we knew that the camera always lies, and yet we could not rid ourselves of the illusion it also gave us access to a concrete instance of actuality.

The first performance manifestation (Arnolfini) was in three very different parts, each with a book at its heart. With each part, the medium through which we viewed the images became more complex, the technology more present, the frame thickening, intervening and manipulating what is seen. The installation versions emerged from the performance because the photograph could not be settled on stage, amongst the other objects, alongside the performers: it was as if the richness of visual material demanded expression within a gallery setting away from the stage. This shifted the focus to the variety of photographic

formats and techniques used by Dimsdale throughout the project: large-scale photogravure prints, miniature images on wafer-thin Japanese paper, grabbed images from the internet physically embossed with texts from online postings. The very making of the photo-book became the central metaphor as printing images, sewing pages together and wilfully destroying a book articulated the work's fascination with what the photograph tells us about ourselves and its inability to stabilize those very images. Subsequent performance versions responded to these installations, in unmaking and making the image, sharing it with the audience. Finally, we placed *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) alongside *Model Love*, attracted by the resonances between our project and Beckett's insight into how technology intervenes and conditions how we realize ourselves through our relationship with its uncanny capacity to other us as image, as document, as archive.

Let me try to not talk about us, to keep the infinitive split wide open. Allow me to attempt to remain (in)different; or to pretend, at least, that there was neither mingling, nor tangling, nor anything remaining to disentangle or unmingle. Permit the flow of remembering to continue to haemorrhage into the flood of the forgotten. And yet...that which was done can scarcely be undone. Because still, she sits, her back turned to me, but noting my arrival in a small mirror that sits on the table in front of her, as if cursed to apprehend the world through reflection alone...

ED: The impulse towards interdisciplinary practice is scarcely novel, with definitions of 'interdisciplinary' ranging from cases of individual artists seeking to hybridize disparate concerns in their own work, to divergent fields communicating, identifying and working towards common goals, purposes and ideas (Bal 2002: 2; Lyall, Bruce, Tait and Meagher 2011: 5). Such integrative endeavours are often claimed to be invaluable engines of both 'problem-solving' and innovation (Repko and Szostak 2016: 24). As interdisciplinarity has become a significant concept, however, so has it developed its own set of discourses, often characterized by notions of flexibility and 'adaptability'. Metaphors of journeying proliferate, from characterising 'navigational aids' and 'permits to travel' (Lyall et al., 2011: 62), to the production of 'rough guides' to as-yet-uncertain territories (Bal 2002: 2). These perspectives are a means of conceptualizing formerly solo travellers as co-venturing companions, charting fresh trajectories across problem-strewn landscapes, making common use of a re-calibrated compass. Assumptions of knowledge brokerage and boundary spanning become allied to means of enabling fresh awareness of uncertainty and ability to deal with change. Further to this, desires of disrupting disciplinary discourses, even transgressing disciplinary knowledge and boundaries, can result in ambitions of 'terraforming' (Lyall et al., 2011: 7), extending analogies of surveying and cartography to ambitions of world-building. In this conception can be perceived an insistence, often implicit, that an ultimate hope of interdisciplinary convergence is to seek out new, hybrid, formations.

The space is bisected with wires, upon which hang several dozen photographs. Presenting as fragments of an obscure, mythic, narrative, the setting is a lakeside, in woodland. Are the images witnesses to an instance of love at first sight? There are clues that might suggest, even, an allegory of photographic desire itself. For the present, they evidence but shattered potential, which only the semblance of sequence could begin to render more eloquent.

It might be said, however, that the more that interdisciplinary practice has become a discipline unto itself, the greater the extent that such approaches have tended to seek to establish or reinforce limits and boundaries, rather than to expand or breach them. In this instance, fresh conceptualizations of interdisciplinary practice may be required. A recently reconfigured notion of *inter-media* is perhaps one such example, in which the focus turns on the 'difference' of the 'inter' (Baetens 2007: 70). In this more deconstructive spirit, inter-medial approaches can prove to be practical laboratories for examining certain potentials: here, the focus is less on of the creation of new formations, brought about either through productive happenstance, arising from the collision of disparate practices, or deliberate strategies resulting in novel methodologies. Rather, the emphasis is on inter-medial practice as an acute means of examining potentials and perceived parameters *within* individual collaborating disciplines themselves. For me, *Model Love* was a series of

collaborations/collisions/collusions between theatre-makers Bodies in Flight and myself, a photographer, as a means of investigating inter-relations between differing forms of creative disciplinary practice.

Passing swiftly through the space, she moves past the photographs, reaching out to touch them every so often, before alighting on one in particular. Removing it from its suspension, she returns to her station, and begins sewing the image into a book. As each new page is affixed, she sets off once again, to select another photograph from elsewhere in the room.

SJ: In one sense, photography works in performance because it is so anti-theatrical: it stops the irreversible unfolding flow of the performance-event. It allows a return to a particular, captured instance, which is so quintessentially unlike theatre that it offers us another productive way of seeing *theatre as theatre*. In short, photography shows us what theatre is by way of what it is not.

[I]f photography seems to me closer to the Theatre, it is by way of a singular intermediary [...] by way of Death. (Barthes 1984: 31)

To say an image is performative is to confuse the performative in general with performance as an art-form; and so to miss theatre's decisive contribution to life. As a theatre-maker, the photograph as retro-spect becomes a tool in the process. It is useful, if not necessary, to be able to step away from the making and look back at theatre through what it is not – a captured instance, a grab of time, a slice cut from the flux of doing. Joel Anderson describes how Brecht's 'Modellbücher' were intentionally partial in their recording of a production:

In order to be useful, in fact, [the Modellbuch] must be 'by definition incomplete', with 'shortcomings' that 'cry out for improvement', prompting the (future) productions to take up the slack; rather than dictating the form of a production, the modelbooks might be seen as a provocation. (Anderson 2015: 85)

For me, this record or document of particular instances, taken from the point of view no maker occupied, has to be understood in relationship to the other non-theatrical refuge – philosophy. There, what Heidegger called "the serenity of the mastery of [philosophy's] imageless knowing-awareness" (Heidegger 2006: 42) thinks theatre entirely as generalized art without instance. This is the opposite of photography's retrospective seeing, realized through the instance: it is prospective seeing, looking towards the possible futures of theatre. Between these two, the image and the imageless, I can look askance at what I am making. I am in an inbetween time that is outside the time of theatre, between the instance and the possibility, the past and the future, outside of theatre's present.

...

ED: Only rarely, in the context of a live theatrical event, are still photographs ever called upon to contribute very much besides an element in scenographic design, background set dressing, on-stage 'prop', publicity material or performance documentation. This is not to question the central importance of any of these in and of themselves. However, as a still image, the photograph appears to represent the antithesis of performance, an absolute contamination of the quality of 'liveness' upon which performance tends to be predicated (Phelan 1993: 147).

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the space, hidden in plain view, he hunches, muttering over a small, thick, dense book, containing images of what appears to be a messy three-way tryst in something like a Travelodge suite, which rests on the brightly lit rostrum of a visualizer; the image from which is projected onto one of the walls of the space. Beside the viewing apparatus lies a pair of inspection gloves and a scalpel.

At the same time, the performance installation contexts enjoined in *Model Love* allowed for shedding of new light on (genuinely) performative aspects of photographic practice: for example, explorations of the productive affinities of surface textures of photographic images which can prove elusive to more conventional analytical approaches, but which became activated through the touch and the physical interactions of the performers. In this way, 'theatrical' staging provided a laboratory within which to stress test photographic theoretical concerns, re-invigorating a range of existing, often medium-specific, assumptions.

Now watch, as he slowly turns the pages of the book, and see how some images are dwelt upon, lingered over, physically caressed. He puts on examination gloves and takes up the scalpel. It's about to get forensic. Of what is this a post-mortem? Of the fatally doomed love affair pictured? Or the photographic image itself? The blade cuts deep into the yielding paper...

SJ: So, what I now think happened in *Model Love* was that I got lost in the image's unfathomable relation to the event it depicts – the concreteness of the indeterminacy of its image. As a maker, two kinds of memory compete for attention: one embodied remembering the time when the photograph was taken; the other the external record captured in the photograph I am looking at now. Unlike anyone else, such as the audience, who see these images from the outside of the process, I cannot speculate upon their meaning: I must oscillate between the two kinds of memory. I am caught between the materiality of the photograph's surface materializing an indeterminable superficiality of beauty and an unfathomable depth of what is depicted.

This makes me think, that if the photograph is image in essence, then the theatre does not produce images as such. It does something else: it produces an event of sensuous

appearances, plastic, insubstantial, unapproachable, non-indicative, non-indexical, that is, un-point-at-able, which are in a constant process of appearing, in effect – per(through)-forming, continuously approaching a shape as a kind of pre-image, or prehension of the possibilities of what any one particular image-instance might be, then passing through the image *itself* with velocity and uncertainty, literally blink and you miss it (or maybe you were looking at something else happening on stage at the same time), an exit trajectory projecting this sensuousness towards another becoming, carrying with it a residue of what it fleetingly might have been, had anyone been looking, as after-image. This process passes through these multiple “points” of action as trajectories or inflexions or turns in a flux of energy that circulates excitedly between performers and auditor-spectators. At no point does the image actually appear *as image*, upon which a punctum could pierce the eye of the beholder. There is no focus, thence no pulling of focus, thence no legibility nor intelligibility: theatre’s image-making realizes an impossible point of appearing, of coming upon knowing (as opposed to a not-knowing). This is the forgotten point of coming upon the word, of being suddenly able to make sense, or rather – the assuring illusion that any sense of this chaosmos can ever be made. And as such, it is also the forgotten point of coming upon one’s self: it is becoming-self, so much so that theatre, in this mechanism, describes how each person appears to themselves, in Michel Serres’ terms, as an image apprehending itself as image: the annunciation in which the apparition and the incarnation apprehend one another *face to face* (Serres 1995: 111). So, theatre is always moving towards and away from multiple planes of background blur and foreground clarity; and each turn in the discontinuity of its un-glimpsed showing points simultaneously to both pre-position and exit-trajectory, its very own past and future, a before and after, a coming and a going, an inheritance and a gift: a space-time in-between idea and mood, text and texture.

The long second scene of *Model Love* goes through the machinations of trying to find this image: yes, we see the photograph; but we cannot find the image. The scene demonstrates that in performance, unlike in cinema, images cannot be made to appear. Here the photograph itself is transformed back, literally reversed engineered, into theatre. In the performer’s febrile manipulation-machination, the image progressively disappears, vanishes in his hands, under the magnifying gaze of the visualizer, amongst the torrid speculations of his imagination. What he touches is not image, but sensuous surface, a dematerializing of

the photographic matter under the gaze of theatre, and its rematerializing as sensuous, plastic plane, across which the performer's hapless interrogations are scattered, finding no focus, no object of attention, frustrating both his and the spectators' desires to see what did actually happen in those locations, to see *it all*.

The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond* – as if the image launched a desire beyond what it permits us to see: not only toward 'the rest' of the nakedness, not only toward the fantasy of a *praxis*, but toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together. (Barthes 1984: 59)

And this should be no surprise. Think of *Camera Lucida*, in which the words stumble in their inadequacy to describe, their inability to approach the image. This is not merely a failure to translate the meaning of the photograph – in terms of content or aesthetic: it is an ontological incapacity to phrase the affect of *looking at* the image. Barthes is rendered speechless; and words give way to the reproduced images, silently juxtaposed with the theory, as an unbridgeable gap between the idea of the punctum and its actual affect. So much so, of course, that even this transmedial assemblage fails, since the punctum can only ever be felt personally: what Barthes claims he found in the image will never be rediscovered by anyone else. The photograph cannot rise up to meet the challenge of the description and consequent thought, since what can be said and written about the image, can never be, in theory, where the punctum appears.

By ruse or impotence, small matter – the calligram [picture—poem] never speaks and represents at the same moment. The very thing that is both seen and read is hushed in the vision, hidden in the reading. (Foucault 1983: 24-5)

That is outside thought and lies in the eye of the beholder, not in the communicable and so communal circumspection of the critic. Only in fact in flesh, never in discourse in prospect: only now-here, never no-where.

Now, even and especially if the image is somehow the *limit* of meaning, it permits us to return to a veritable ontology of signification. (Barthes 1985: 22)

Or as François Laruelle states it:

The essence, properly speaking, of the image and very particularly of the photo, is to be found in that power of appearance that cannot be explained by the representational content. (Laruelle 2011: 110)

...

ED: *Model Love* sought to stage a two-way conversation: performance and photography, each variously in dialogue with one another; each set of practices providing the other with challenges to core assumptions; and each delivering (soliciting) discrete shocks to the constitution of the other. The inter-relation finds correspondence in Victor Segalen's 'Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity', in which the French writer and traveller developed a theory in particular respect of the encounter with the Other: an 'Exot' (Segalen's term) should rely on an awareness of the shifts that the self undergoes when it is confronting something unknown to itself (Segalen 2002: 8). Anyone with the ability to do this would then be better aware of the sharp difference between himself/herself and the Other.

Segalen termed this desirable state ‘diversity’. He believed being able to develop an aesthetic of difference could generate supremely illuminating epiphanies. In the inter-medial context of *Model Love*, the attempts to perform the photograph raised awareness of particularities and peculiarities of performance and the photographic respectively, with each party experiencing what Segalen termed ‘the journey to the strange’ (Segalen 2002: 18).

See as he pastes and collages the newly excised images directly over the projection of the now eviscerated book from which they came. Newly liberated from sequence, the photographs appear to gain in consequence, only to recede, once again, into indeterminacy. As he strives to come to an understanding of the mess of his own making, the undoing of the book is, perhaps, his very own unravelling as well.

This raising of awareness afforded a moment of reflection, in turn, for each of the respective media, in ways that might be conceived as medium-specific. The resulting interactions led to a re-confirmation of the diversity already existing within each medium (‘the return to the homeland’). In this way, Segalen’s conjectured operations of the exotic are a ‘conceiving otherwise’ – a moment of reflection that produces difference rather than similarity – in which both vision and philosophical undertow are enticing (Segalen 2002: 66). All too often,

perceiving something as exotic instigates a distance, operating as a buffer between ourselves and whatever it is that we might be nervous of: we tend not refer to entities as exotic if we regard them as familiar. Segalen was looking to re-cast such thinking. For him, the power of the exotic is a positive force, and the resulting 'diversity', experienced as subtle graduations rather than stark contrasts, replenishes both individuality as well as a politics of difference.

Turn your attention to a third presence in the space: a musician. Surrounded by a sea of lonely-heart self-portraits, he sings their songs. Once their desires have been spun, watch him select one of the many anonymous portraits and take it over to a table. Finding there a relief printing plate appropriate to the posting he has just sung, watch as he brings text plate and photograph together between the blankets of a press, so that the two are indelibly fused. Conjoined, the image/text/text/image is affixed onto the wall, keeping company with all the other lonely singers and all their lonely songs.

The essay in which Segalen sought to extol the operative power of difference exists only in pieces, written over a fourteen-year period and scattered across various notebooks, letters and scraps of paper, and was published for the first time only after his early death in 1919. The fragments of writing are often cast in the future tense, projecting forwards to what the essay *should* be like, what the book *will* be. The overall impression is one of potentiality, in which the form itself is characterised by heterogeneity, producing diversity and difference

for the reader. From my perspective, the intermedial relations within *Model Love* operated similarly, working in ways that staved off the suffocating forces of homogeneity. Despite the frustrations and failures to cohere, even to co-operate, the interactions enjoined within *Model Love* produced a power of strangeness and the productive effect of difference. There was no hybridising between the intermedia, although a model for intermedial collaboration emerged, nevertheless – one that might best be termed *adpositional*: in which the function of collaborating media is to indicate, highlight, draw out relations between each other; and where one medium helps qualify terms and qualities of the other. It is not that notions of hybridity are entirely discounted, however, just that their potential is located elsewhere, occurring *within* the practice of the individual practitioner involved in the collaboration, albeit triggered (anticipated, precipitated) by the inter-medial interactions. This is a model that might equally begin to find echoes in Jean-Luc Nancy's conception of *being-with*, the mutual exposure to one-another that preserves the freedom of the "I", and thus leading to the development of a community that is not subject to exterior or pre-existent definitions (Nancy 2000: 98).

And if you stay in the space long enough, you will see the man and woman dance together (it might be disco, it might be tango), and hear the musician sing torch songs to whomsoever may happen to be listening. You will have witnessed one book in the process of creation, another in the process of

destruction. Some unassuming cabinets contain more images: tiny little broken down photogravure pictures of desire and death and the commonplace on yellowing newsprint, pinned in amongst the decaying debris of an ancient butterfly collection. The lonely-heart postings, one or two at the beginning of the evening, become a clamouring swell by the end. The songs continue to sing of hope and love and loss and hope, and they are singing for us, and they are singing for the photograph. Stay long enough, and you will hear them all singing together – this time, they sing about light...

At a time when much conceptualization of art and media practice concerns itself with delineating the limits of what can be achieved, demonstrated or articulated, this collaborative project posited that intermedial practice, conducted in a dialectical manner, can make room for productive contradiction, frustration, and even failure, proposing itself as a way of examining those self-same limits and boundaries, even suggesting new potentials for exceeding them: a productive collaborative space where *beside* is every bit as valuable as *betwixt*, and the possibility of a *beyond* becomes newly configured.

We are the inconstant, fragmentary things/ We bleed/ We spin and burn/ And give everything to light unstinting/ Its lustre/ Its hues/ Its dusks and its dawns/ Its loveliness to behold...

SJ: So the photograph disappeared in *Model Love* as the performer appeared, in much the same way that we do not stare at Yorrick's skull even though Hamlet is transfixed: we focus on the actor, on how he is saying the lines. Even in the so-called Theatre of Visions of Robert Wilson, the image disappears in its figural, plastic unfurling, transforming, crossings across shapes, in its moving, dissolving, re-forming – all because of the three-dimensional ocular *experiencing* of the scenographic space-time. As photo-theatre experiment, *Model Love* demonstrated that the materialities of performer/flesh and image/photograph are essentially different in kind, so much so that the two media can neither be reduced the one to the other, nor made to play in the “same” gallery/theatre: they cannot be seen in the same instant (as if) upon the same stage. Citing Foucault's injunction against the hear-see of reading as opposed to viewing Magritte's painting, *Model Love* shows how the photograph disappears into prop-iness *in performance*, as the performer recedes into background as the photograph's factotum or adjunct *in installation*.

As a coda to the performance of *Model Love*, we invited audiences on to the stage to get a closer look at the photo-books. I now understand that, as the audience each individually handled the books, this was the first time, explicitly after the performance was done, that Ed's images appeared in the direct contact needed between photograph and viewer, no performer interposing. I realize that what each medium can do in relation to the other is to point out in their (non-)appearing in their very difference the other *as other indexically*. They could not speak to each other; appear on the same stage: they stalked one another indirectly in an essentially indexical relation. With the performer present, the photograph became his prop: its materiality disappeared into *prop-iness*; its image dissolved into the problem of the performance, that is, into the medium of performance – the performer's actions and speech, his *fleshiness*. By accident, this coda revealed the essence of *Model Love* as photo-theatre ambi-work: the performance *required* the installation to come into being in order for it to be fully itself. And the proper relation of viewer and photograph as object was only restored when the performers had left the stage and the spectators were invited to take their place on it. Only then could the relation of material *as material* and image as concept as photographer's will be set up, and Ed's images finally appear.

Man is the *cause* of the photo only in-the-last-instance, a cause that *lets it be*.
(Laruelle 2011: 115)

REFERENCES:

Anderson, J. (2015) *Theatre & Photography*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Baetens, J. (2007) 'Conceptual Limitations of Our Reflections on Photography' in Elkins, J. (ed) *Photography Theory*, Abingdon & New York: Routledge.

Bal, M. (2002) *Travelling Concepts in The Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Barthes, R. ([1980] 1984) *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard, London: Fontana.

(1985) 'Rhetoric of the Image' in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1994) *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Graham Burchill, London: Verso Books.

Foucault, M. (1983) *This Is Not A Pipe*, trans. & ed. James Harkness, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Heidegger, M. (2006) *Mindfulness*, trans. Parvis Emad & Thomas Kalary, London: Continuum.

Laruelle, F. (2011) *The Concept of Non-photography*, trans. Robin Mackay, New York: Seagrave Press.

Lyall, C., Bruce, A., Tait, J., Maegher, L. (2011) *Interdisciplinary Research Journeys: Practical Strategies for Capturing Creativity*, London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Nancy, J-L. (2000) *Being Singular Plural*, Stanford: Meridian/Crossing Aesthetics.

Phelan, P. (1993) *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London: Routledge.

Repko, A, and Szostak, R. (2016) *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, London: Sage.

Segalen, V. (2002) *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity*, Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Serres, M. (1995) *Angels, A Modern Myth*, trans. Francis Cowper, Paris: Flammarion.