



Research article

A Queer Curation of Audience Participation

A Queer Curation of Audience Participation¹

By *Elvira Crois*

Prelude Constellations

Her bare hands, close to her body, stretched out in our direction. Turned into an invitation, they attract and divide the audience. September 2020, I arrive in Denmark to attend *Skatkammer* (Treasury), the final performance of the theatre company Carte Blanche co-created by Sarah John. We gather outside, looking upon a patch of grass while a pre-autumnal wind sporadically heaves and hauls at our limbs, umbrellas and tents. *Skatkammer* is announced as a collection of scenes and installations from the last fifteen years, assembled in a kaleidoscopic and labyrinthine universe. There are three main sections to explore. The first one that I enter is the 'picnic park'. With a group of seven people I follow a performer, who wears a white tuxedo, has mischievous eyes and a chuckling laugh, onto the grass. Our hands unfold as she approaches with a dispenser attached to her utility belt: a spritz of gel for each of us.

Out of the drizzle, in a small shelter, darkness surrounds us. Our shoes remain at the entrance, where the wind frolics with the canvas, revealing streaks of daylight. Huddled around a low table, we watch how the performer's hands straighten and smoothen out a sheet of paper and tear it into eight uneven pieces, which are spread out towards each of us. Like magnets, our gaze is drawn towards one tiny blank scrap, framed by the performer's hands, a single torch and a few words:

"This is me. I have a mother and a father but I don't have any brothers or sisters. My mom and dad live together but they live in Australia and I live here – in Denmark. I'm not married. I don't have a partner and I don't have any kids but I do have two very best friends and I'm lucky enough to live together with them. So we're in a way a little family. What about you?"

She passes the pencil to the person sitting next to her, who utters a small cheer of surprise. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven more stories follow, describing family trees and affective constellations: several mothers, several fathers (some still present, some gone), some siblings, two cats, lovers old and new, children (great and grand), in some cases theirs. Seven stories, including mine. We speak, we draw, we hum we laugh. Voices recount while a surround system of tones pulsates, moving in and out of our tangle of bodies and jackets. We write down a value that we are glad to have. We crumple the paper into a wad and (literally) blow *nysgerrighed* (curiosity), trust, to hold onto something, 'hug', *fantasi* (imagination), playfulness and dankbaarheid in life. Perhaps not the most corona proof thing we did – a realisation that sets in but only after enacting a deed we devotedly

1) I am grateful to Katrien Oosterlinck (spatie.info) and Sarah John (nhojharas.com) for welcoming me into their practices and reflections. Without their expertise and artistic ingenuity this research paper would not exist. Moreover, I want to thank them and all their colleagues explicitly in name of their audiences, including myself, for their perseverance in continuing to make imaginative pieces, even during the most challenging of times. Your work matters. Furthermore, I am indebted to Thomas Rosendal Nielsen for imagining the concept 'disattunement' during a conversation we had on my doctoral research. I also want to thank my supervisors Luk Van den Dries, Free De Backer, and Timmy De Laet, as well as Aline Verbeke and Raf Wollaert for our exchange of thoughts on care and cura. Utmost gratitude, as always, goes to my dear colleague Marieke Breyne, for her support in reflection, overall generosity and our complementarily attuned partnership.

committed to. “Thank you. Thank you. *Mange tak*”. The huddle disbands, shoes are reclaimed, and we move, once more, in all directions.



Introduction

This scene of *Skatkammer* leaves me with reflections on what it means to curate audience participation. Who is responsible for such curation: the performance maker, the dramaturge, or perhaps the performer? What are the intentions of the curation? Does the dramaturgy seek to perturb or dislodge the audience, does it intend to stir one's inner universe, or does it set up the conditions for the audience to connect to each other and to their environment? This article addresses these two main questions through the concepts of 'emergent curation' and 'queer curation'.

In the first part of this article, I elaborate on the idea of emergent curation, discussing the reciprocal relation between a curated dramaturgy and the role of the performer. After explaining the way in which the performer plays *on* and *with* the terrain established by the dramaturgy, I elaborate on the aesthetic zones of attunement, disattunement, and misattunement. Particularly the notion of disattunement is addressed as it is an aesthetic zone that knows little theorisation in the field of participatory performance. In the final section, I consider the notion of queer curation, which draws on the work of Jennifer Tyburczy (2013, 2016), to conclude my analysis of the work of Australian-Danish artist Sarah John and Belgian artist Katrien Oosterlinck. Building on John's scene in *Skatkammer* and Oosterlinck's performance *Tactile Talk*, I suggest that their work offers a queer curation of audience participation that ties in the role of the performer with the experience of oscillating together in and out of the different aesthetic zones.

To better understand how the notion of curation applies to the work of John and Oosterlinck, I draw on a description by performance artist Greg Selinger of the Canadian improv collective Body Slam. In a contribution to *Curating Live Arts* (2019), he describes curation as gathering people with the intention to construct relationships between them for an event specific in time and space (2019, p. 217). Selinger mentions this in reference to the creator who invites other artistic

collaborators to take part in a happening. When placed in the context of participatory performance, this description takes on a new meaning and can be read as the artist who gathers an audience with the intention to build connections among them, ensuing various forms of audience participation.

In this article, I discuss audience participation as an artistic element that materialises through the interplay between the audience and the performer². Audience participation can assume many forms depending on this audience-performer interplay, across a spectrum of different degrees of attunement. In Sarah John's fifteen-minute scene, I discern an array of aesthetic zones through which we wandered: a differentiated attunement – when confronted with the varied households –, a rhythmic attunement – when we collectively blew our values into the world – but also many instances of disattunement or being 'in-between'. Not only do we fall into attunement or miss out. Being in search of such relations can equally be an aesthetic zone of audience participation. The experience of such variety of aesthetic zones is explored in this paper. More specifically, I address the aesthetic experience of oscillating in and out of zones of attunement, misattunement, and disattunement, crafted by a queer curation.

In John's scene of *Skatkammer* and Oosterlinck's *Tactile Talk*, I argue that a fluid aesthetic emerges through considerate curation by the creators who devise the dramaturgy as well as the performers who enact it. A curated dramaturgy in itself may incite an array of aesthetic experiences – as is the case in installation art. Yet, in the work I discuss, not only those who devise (i.e. the performance maker and dramaturge) take on a role of curation. The performer also plays an important part through their abilities to move (along with) the audience within the dramaturgical frame. Moreover, the work of the devisers and the performers feeds into each other. Not only does the performer move within the strategic scope of intention predetermined by the dramaturgy. They also move the scope of intention contingent on the audience's disposition and responses. In other words, the relation between the devised dramaturgy and the performer's mobility is one of progressive reciprocity.

Emergent Curation

In 2019, the British theatre scholar Rosemary Klich published an article called 'Visceral Dramaturgies: Curating Sensation in Immersive Art', in which she examines how designers of participatory performance function as "curators of audience sensation, deploying techniques and strategies designed to stimulate visceral response as part of the dramaturgy of performance" (2019, p. 185). Although the paper lacks critical reflection on the notion of curation, it serves as a stepping stone for this inquiry.

In the article, Klich draws the connection between the strategic frame of dramaturgy and curation. This link accords with the rapprochement between the fields of curatorship and dramaturgy of the past two decades, as has been asserted by Australian performance scholar Peter Eckersall and Puerto Rican-born and New York-based theatre scholar Bertie Ferdman³ (2021). Along with the

2) Although this article focuses on an aesthetic that emerges through audience-performer interplay, it can occur among a variety of bodies – that of the audience and the space, the audience and objects, the audience and a piece of storytelling, the audience and technology, etc.

3) Eckersall and Ferdman's observation about this rapprochement has proceeded in such a manner that they are now interrelated and overlapping practices: "It is no longer possible to talk about these practices in isolation. Rather, artistic practices are now seen in terms of a continuum and an interweaving of ideas and practices that are developed through curatorial strategies and dramaturgical thinking" (2021, pp. 13). Although there is a longer history of entanglement between the visual and performing arts, critical thought on curation and dramaturgy is relatively new. Especially the last decade there has been a stark increase of

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introduction of curatorship in performing arts, the perspective on the curator as “custodian of artifacts” (Pineda, 2019, p. 278) or “caretaker of objects” (McCurdy, 2019, p. 251) shifted to a definition of the curator as the person who cares for the living bodies who make and are the art (Body Slam Improv Collective et al., 2019, p. 218).

Along with the shift in perspective on curation, I want to distinguish two types of strategy, i.e. deliberate and emergent. These two types should be understood as two poles of a continuum along which real-world strategies lie. The deliberate pole refers to a strategy that is precisely realised as intended, whereas the emergent pole covers “patterns or consistencies realised despite, or in the absence of intentions” (Mintzberg and Waters 1985, 257).

The deliberate strategy can be found in the traditional view on curation, e.g. a programmer who gathers different artistic works based on a conceptual link, or an artistic director who aligns people in a premediated direction consistent with their particular vision. In contrast, the shifted perspective on curation embraces an emergent approach, where the intentions of the curator are not entirely determined in advance. This can be illustrated by Selinger’s assertion that the curator’s intentions are dynamic and shift according to “all the ideas that different people bring to the table” (2019, p. 215).

In the case of participatory performance, audience participation is curated while it is also a highly fickle medium that does not simply conform to a fixed frame. Although it is strategically planned, every time an audience enters the performance, the devised course of action becomes increasingly dominated by uncertainty. Since the audience is not one monolithic entity, each encounter is shrouded in contingencies, which complicates the realisation of a deliberate strategy.



When curating audience participation, the deliberate aspect of one’s strategy are the rules. The dramaturgy is procedural (Nibbelink, 2015, p. 173), which means that the rules of play are devised but the play that unfolds within these rules is not. General boundaries, or rules, are set to let other agents, such as the audience and the performer, manoeuvre within them. Thus, the dramaturgy of John and Oosterlinck is ‘deliberately emergent’ (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985, p. 263): the artist as curator intentionally creates the conditions under which new strategies of the performer and

studies on performance curating. The impetus of this movement has been identified in a special issue of the magazine *Frakcija* dedicated to curation in the performing arts, in which art historian Beatrice von Bismarck puts forward the idea of thinking dramaturgically about curation and programming (2010).

audience can emerge.

In other words, I suggest that Sarah John or Katrien Oosterlinck not only invite an audience to run through the routine of actions. As performers, they move along with the audience and incite small shifts to how they and the audience alike carry themselves within these intimate interactions. The performer knows what is happening in the group: who is eager – perhaps even overbearing –, who feels lost – perhaps searching for a way in –, who is hesitant, resistant or already with one foot out the door. Erudite in participation, the performer is constantly looking for cues and clues of where people are. John elucidates, saying that each encounter with an audience is an attempt at precision in a searching way. When meeting someone, she tries to figure out who she has in front of her. Based on this judgement, she shifts herself with the intention to pull the audience in.

“Either through humour or confusing you or speaking as sincerely as I can or surprising you or disturbing you. Can I disarm you if you can hear that I am being honest, that I am revealing something? If I still cannot disarm you, then I will challenge you: ‘go on, you do it’. If you pull out, then I will question you: ‘so what about this, what about that? Don’t you have a mom and dad? Ok. What about your brothers and sisters?’⁴⁾

The way John responds to the audience resembles a minute scale, in which she combines an attentiveness to the overarching strategy, an awareness of possible routes, listening to what the situation needs and making sound judgments. Therefore, in the work of John and Oosterlinck, I consider the actions of the performer an important catalyst in the renegotiation of relations and the realisation of a fluid aesthetic of audience participation, i.e. an aesthetic experience of oscillating in and out of attunement.

Interlude *Tactile Talk*



In April 2021, we gather in Antwerp for an early stage playtest of *Tactile Talk*, a non-verbal participatory performance by Katrien Oosterlinck that is still in the making. One by one we enter the theatre hall. We are a group of nine people (five audience members and four performers) arriving in a world of multi-coloured foam rocks of all shapes and sizes. We amble in between the rocks that

4) Sarah John, interview by Elvira Crois, Viborg, September 16, 2020.

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are scattered across the space as if it were a field of spuds. We keep our distance and stand almost still while looking at each other. When the performers start building with the rocks, we instinctively follow suit. We heap the rocks scattered across the floor on top of each other and pull them closer together to make islands: small rocks on top of larger rocks, rocks next to each other, and a few in suspension. Slowly, we wander between them, letting our attention slide from the rocks to each other. These new constellations turn into our new playfield.

In this microcosm we go through several games of building, attracting, extending, leading, following, syncing, and conversing. We receive gestures from the performers – invitations to choose rocks and become part of a construction with our rocks and bodies. When looking at my own position, sometimes I become part of a construction and sometimes I am left alone. Once I choose to connect two lines, i.e. rock-human-sequences as drawn above, that were running separately. Another time, I remove myself and choose to be alone – although not really, because I am accompanied by my rock. Usually we engage in the games together, moving from one partner to another, sometimes one-to-one, sometimes with several people at once.

At one point, the performers and audience go into a one-to-one scene. The performers go and fetch two small bags each, filled with foam pebbles. They invite one audience member to sit down in the rocky landscapes and start to plot a field with the little stones. A performer approaches me and another audience member. We are invited to sit down. The other audience member receives a bag and starts plotting while I am invited to watch the scene. However, to me it is unclear that this is the proposition, and eager as I am, I want to join in. I reach out but receive a clear ‘no’ from the performer. I cannot join in with the stones. I am to watch but I do not feel like doing that, so I decide to opt out of the duo. Still, I want to be involved and start to search for my way into the scene.



I turn around to face another duo who has created their spud field behind me. I watch how they move in the negative space between the foam stones – following each other, passing along leadership to one another and syncing their movements. I look and wait. I am uncertain what is appropriate and what to do. I scan their game while I sometimes glance at the other duos. I wonder if I should go over to any of the other pairs to explore what they are up to. Could I join their game? Will they invite me in if they see me searching? The duo close to me shifts from playing with their hands between the stones to moving the stones rhythmically: I see an entry. I cannot reach their field as we have to keep the appropriate distance but I creep a little closer. A pile of rocks separates me from

the duo and their playfield. However, this mound does not merely operate as a barrier. It provides me with an opportunity: it offers me a wealth of different rocks. Along with the duo, I start to move some of the stones from the mound. I replace them slowly, one after another, then we pick up the pace. We move them towards one another, towards the sides, even throw them softly. And I realise: I have found a direction, I have moved out of disattunement.

Mis-/Dis-/Attunement

The account above provides an example of how an audience member can move through different aesthetic zones of audience participation. In this section, I want to elaborate on the zones of mis-, dis-, and attunement as a stepping stone to my analysis of John and Oosterlinck's work as a queer curation.

Attunement refers to an awareness of togetherness. It is a form of communication in which both parties come to know something of the experience of the other, even if they cannot put it into words yet. It is a passage in which people find themselves tuning in to a shared mood or disposition (Churchill, 2012).

Drawing on the work of the British human geographer Julian Brigstocke and anthropologist Tehseen Noorani, who discern four traditions of attunement (2016), I suggest that various types of attunement exist. Attunement in the work of John and Oosterlinck not only coincides with harmonious modes of interconnectedness and synchronisation through similarity – as has been particularly popular in writings on participatory performance (Zerihan, 2006; Machon, 2013; Crois, 2015; Heddon and Johnson, 2016). As I argued on a previous occasion, the work of Katrien Oosterlinck also incites an experience of attunement through difference (Crois, 2019). I asserted that rhythmic and differentiated attunement can both occur during one performance. This co-existence stems from the shift in relations between the audience and the performer throughout the show.

In this paper, I build on this dynamic conception of aesthetic experience to introduce yet another aesthetic zone, i.e. the disoriented and disorienting experience of 'disattunement'. Whereas misattunement, following the view of American psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin (2018), refers to an unwillingness to relate, disattunement is a zone of wanting to, of showing up with a willingness, but moving at different frequencies (Levine and Levine, 1995). Thus, being out of sync does not automatically equal misattunement but can reveal another zone as well.

To further define the term disattunement, I draw on the thought of British-Australian feminist scholar Sara Ahmed on disorientation in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006). The aforementioned descriptions of attunement show a kinship to Ahmed's understanding of orientation, which she perceives as feeling at home or the feeling of having arrived, whether in terms of one's embodied subjectivity or one's relation to place. Orientation is related to how we reside, how we inhabit spaces and with whom (2006, p. 9). Whereas orientation and attunement are about "making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space", disorientation, according to Ahmed, "occurs when that extension fails" (2006, p. 11).

Disorientation is the experience of being out of place, out of step, or out of tune. Instead of being in sync with another, it is "the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home"⁵ (2006, p. 10). It is a type of attunement that

5) This description resonates with 21st century queer critique and particularly the scholarship of José Esteban

Brigstocke and Noorani describe as “strange, uncanny, and uncertain—transient achievements that bring us into contact with lost futures, haunted presents, and even different versions of ourselves” (2016, p. 1). Although Brigstocke and Noorani categorise the experience of disorientation as attunement, I use the term disattunement for this affective zone.

By terming this zone disattunement, I do not mean that the experience of this zone is necessarily “confusing and troublesome” or “unyielding and destructive” – to use the words of Irish-British performance scholar Fintan Walsh (2016, p. 324). Walsh acknowledges that in facing the strange or the new, disorientation emerges from not quite arriving at the objects of one’s desire. At the same time, Walsh posits that disorientation “is also ripe with the kind of promise and potential which can be life-giving” (2016, p. 324). He asserts that these disoriented and disorienting narratives, dramaturgies, affects and phenomenologies often offer a “vitalising charge” that is produced by searching uncertain routes (2016, p. 314). In other words, they may offer opportunities for “creative movement and redirection” (2016, p. 324). It is at this crux of the in-betweenness and potentiality that my interest in disorientation as an aesthetic experience is situated.

To draw a line back to *Tactile Talk*: Whereas at the beginning, the games have clear codes set by the performers, the rules become increasingly blurry throughout the performance. Concordantly, the audience no longer waits around until they are sure of having permission to do a specific action. Towards the end of the performance, the audience is more likely to be familiar with the rocks, each other, and the possibilities of the communication between them. Yet, before they get there, each of the audience members, at a different time, has to enter and go through a zone of disattunement. Since *Tactile Talk* offers a non-verbal environment, the performers cannot simply tell the audience to start playing with the rules and language. Therefore, the audience and performers tend to collectively stumble and struggle in (tacit) communication. Still, even if the performers were to use words, would the audience actually feel entitled to venture into experimentation or would it lead to overentitlement? In order for the audience to discover the option of inventing their own rules or devising the rules together, they have to allow themselves to engage with disorientation.

In part, this is something the audience has to do on their own. The performers accompany the audience on their journey in disattunement but cannot entirely lead them through it. Depending on how the audience acts – with caution or curiosity, warily, audaciously, provocatively, eager to follow or perhaps trying to be the ‘good audience’ by doing what they think is expected – the performer tries to respond in a way that makes the audience feel seen, guiding them to and through the experience of facing multiple directions. Passing through this zone may only take an instant; the audience may dwell in it for a longer period of time, or it may linger throughout the entirety of the performance. If so, the performance is not ruined: it is simply a reflection of what the environment – the rocks, sound, light, the other audience members, the performers – evokes at that moment.

Queer Curation

In the work of John and Oosterlinck, I argue, emergent curation and fluid aesthetics converge in the notion of queer curation. Coined by American scholar in feminist studies Jennifer Tyburczy (2013, 2016), ‘queer curatorship’ refers to a tool for exhibitions. Tyburczy posits that the same

Muñoz, which Tyburczy seizes on for the notion of queer curation. Through reflection on the performance of utopia as imbued with a sense of potentiality, Muñoz defines queer as a “not yet here” (Muñoz, 2019, p. 99). This sense of potentiality brings about a zone of multi-directionality. Although potentialities may already be present, they “do not exist in present things”, but at the horizon (2019, p. 99).

object can confirm or subvert an already existing normative frame of understanding depending on the display. In the case of queer curatorship, alternative discursive and spatial configurations are staged to question normative dynamics between bodies. Drawing on the work of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Tyburczy deems the potential of a display according to its ability to alter the meaning of what is shown; it “not only shows and speaks, but does” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991, 1998, p. 6). She questions how the display can renegotiate relations between the objects on display and the bodies that are conditioned to move around and toward those objects in specific ways (Tyburczy, 2016, p. 41).

According to Tyburczy, the potential of such renegotiations entirely “depends on the practices of meaning-making enacted by bodies moving in, around, and through museums” (2016, p. 6). In the case of a museum, the processes of meaning making are traditionally guided by what Tyburczy calls a “general itinerary” (2016, p. 6), such as a floor plan, which correlates to a fairly deliberate strategy. Yet, in the case of queer curatorship, queer principles are put in practice through tactics of display, disrupting the normative ways of presentation. This is reminiscent of Sarah John’s constellation scene in *Skatammer*, where the potential disattunement does not lie in the presentation of a queer storytelling in itself but in how the audience relates their own story to the invitation. The display of households is accompanied by John who underscores the diversity in family constellations as something that should not be taken for granted.

What poses a particular challenge to John are homogeneous groups of children whose awareness of the possible multi-directionality she has not quite figured out how to bring about. When everybody has exactly the same constellation, John says, it becomes a bit boring since a sincere revelation of the feeling of authenticity never comes up. In this case, the children often react as followed: “I have a mom, a dad and a brother, duh, doesn’t everybody? What is so interesting?”. When no one in the group implicitly disrupts the homogeneity of the stories, John accounts that she has not yet deciphered how to challenge them other than to try to stress that this is not something obvious.

However, according to John, in most sessions listening to each other’s story is already enough for the children to take notice since the constellations tend to display differences. John says that almost every time, without fail, there is at least one person who does not have a mother or a father. Some people mention specifics, such as that they are deceased, but other simply say: “I do not have a dad. I do not have a mom.” or “I do not have any brothers or sisters but I have these five people I grew up with...”; or the next kid who takes the pen may say: “Actually, I am born in India and I never met my biological parents but I have two parents here and I love them and dadadada”. At such a moment, John says, she can see the other kids go “Ohw!”. In this type of situation, John only has to make sure the other audience members are paying attention.

Tyburczy’s notion of queer curatorship is reminiscent of a twofold understanding of the notion of curation, as suggested by the German dance scholar Gabriele Brandstetter’s, i.e. as a present and a poison (2019). The more common view on curation, as hinted at throughout this article, stems from the Latin word *cūrātus*, which etymologically means ‘to care for’⁶. Brandstetter links this to the idea of curation as a gift. Yet, she continues to reflect on the German term *‘curare’*, which refers to a poison that causes muscular paralysis. By inquiring into queer curation, this article has built on this double meaning of *curare*, or, as Brandstetter suggests, “a homeopathic dose of “gift” (a gift

6) For more information on the way in which I perceive care to be present in the work of John and Oosterlinck, I refer to Crois (2020), where I elaborate on the ontology of care by American political scientist Joan Tronto (2013, pp. 22–23, 2010, p. 160).

of “poison”) that attacks fixed patterns of perception and thought” (2019, p. 346).

As mentioned, although queer curation can be deployed for the disruption of normative presentation, it not only refers to what is shown but also to how what is exhibited is approached: “Central to the notion of display as a form of queer praxis is the repositioning of the body in relationship to the objects on exhibit” (Tyburczy, 2016, p. 4). This accords with the assertion by American scholar in arts education Eli Burke that to be queer is “to be in a constant space of negotiating oneself among other individuals, institutions, policies, and spaces” (2020, p. 403). In my view, this negotiation and repositioning is at the core of how Sarah John and Katrien Oosterlinck offer a queer curation of audience participation.

In other words, this paper does not foreground a queer poetics in which meaning emerges through the representation of queer lives but considers the performer’s ability to oscillate with the audience through aesthetic zones as the source of a queer curation. It is not the divergence in people’s stories that offers John’s scene a queer curation but, as suggested before, the way in which the audience and the performer (re)negotiate the relations between them. This may be interwoven with a queer poetics – as is the case with the constellation scene – but can also stand on its own – as illustrated by Oosterlinck’s *Tactile Talk*.

The oscillation between different aesthetic zones can go in different directions. In John’s scene, for example, the children of a homogeneous group may at first feel attuned through their similarity, then become startled by the story of someone else and afterwards move out of disattunement towards a feeling of connection through difference. Or, an audience member may not at all feel present in the performance but gradually move towards a zone of disattunement, in which they are at least curious to engage. Many different shifts are possible, and in each encounter, specific in time and space, it is a constant search for the performer how to get from a ‘mere’ gathering of people to an encounter where something genuine emerges through the negotiation of relations.

Postlude

This article examined how the participatory work of Sarah John and Katrien Oosterlinck offers a queer curation of audience participation, which chimes with the view on curation of British art theorist Irit Rogoff and German art historian Beatrice von Bismarck as not allowing things to harden (2012, p. 23).

Not only the artist curates audience participation by devising a dramaturgy that is able to hold a multiplicity of audience behaviour. Also the performer plays an important part, because when the dramaturgy is enacted, the creator loses their control over the curation of audience participation. The performer steps into the deliberately emergent framework, they orientate and re-orientate the audience, allowing them to relate in different ways to their own bodies, to others and to elements from their environment. This has been illustrated by the performance work of Sarah John and Katrien Oosterlinck. Their practices allow for an oscillation through different aesthetic zones, such as attunement, disattunement, and misattunement.

The way in which this oscillation in and out of tune can be considered a queer curation of audience participation has been elucidated by Jennifer Tyburczy’s notion of queer curatorship (2016, 2013), which refers to staging alternative spatial configurations in order to question normative dynamics between bodies. Queer curatorship, according to Tyburczy, repositions and renegotiates relations among bodies – not only showing and recounting alterity but in fact altering those relations. Thus, when I suggest that a queer curation in the work of John and Oosterlinck engenders a fluid aesthetic,

it points to the renegotiation of audience-performer relations, specific in the time and space of the performance, which is manifest in their movement through different aesthetic zones.

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