Scenographic Strategies and Communication

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Something peculiar is going on in contemporary scenography. The historian of theatre and scenography Arnold Aronson writes: "In recent years, scenographic and performative borders have shifted in ways so profound as to call into question the very notion of theatre and performance as it has been understood for over 2500 years."[1] Even in Finland, the artistic practices of scenography are going through a fundamental change, placing new demands on the established production system. Simultaneously, the artistic and professional identity of the scenographer is being redefined.

A part of this change is the boom of various process-based devising methods in which theatre makers refuse to make any detailed plans or design beforehand. Performances are made in creative cooperation during the rehearsals, and ideas are allowed to emerge and develop freely on stage through experimenting. Of course, this is nothing new in theatre history. Actors have always improvised and reacted to momentary impulses. Most modern directors have stressed the flexibility and transformability of all design. However, scenographers have traditionally been pretty much excluded from this kind of experimenting for very apparent reasons: the set usually consists of more or less material elements, the building of which takes time and money. You cannot just try out different constructions every time you hit a new idea.

Today scenic design need not be so slow, thanks to the development of new visual technologies. They enable a more flexible and immaterial scenography by means of lights, projections and digital image processing. The professional boundaries between set and lighting design have been blurred, and scenography has been more tightly tied to the live performance as a temporal event, structured by lighting changes or videos. Projected sceneries can also be switched very quickly, which makes it possible to try out different alternatives during rehearsals. Although scenography can never become completely virtual as long as it is part of the real-time event with embodied actors and audiences in physical spaces, the production process is no doubt undergoing a fundamental revolution, affecting the aesthetics and politics of the whole performance.

Moreover, young scenographers now look for innovative ways to participate in the unpredictable process as artists with equal value. They seriously claim that a designer can be an active agent in stage rehearsals, and develop his work within the collective process. Interestingly enough, their focus is often directed to embodied action on stage, although they use a lot of lighting effects, projection and videos. For example Milla Martikainen, a scenography student working on her MA thesis proposes a scenography made through physical exercises, carried out by the team. In her final production,[2] she gave short instructions for simple physical actions or movements in space without any pre-existing text or theme. The exercises produced material that

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[1] Aronson 2008, 23
[2] *WCWBF*, The Training Theatre at Theatre Academy, Helsinki, premiere 28 March 2012

was developed together into spatial structures or patterned behaviors. Martikainen described her method as a kind of "action scenography." It is an event that can be repeated according to a loose score, leaving room for unexpected things to happen. The scenographer's agency is moving from mere visual authorship into that of promoting a creative, collective process.[3]

Martikainen is not alone with her suggestion. Scenography is increasingly conceived of as event, experience, and action, rather than a set of physical elements, or representational or metaphoric images. This makes it possible for scenographers to adopt process-based methods as part of their professional and artistic discipline. It can be called a shift in scenographic strategies, as this concept is defined by Tobin Nellhaus:

> Performance strategies embrace the entire arena of materials and techniques that playwrights, actors, directors, designers, managers, and other theatre personnel use or assume when constructing plays.[4]

Performance strategies resemble discursive strategies that, similarly to an episteme analysed by Foucault, are embodied in processes, techniques and effects, and not only in verbally articulated theories and speculations.[5] Clearly tied to social structures and forces, strategies are approaches, practices and methods, "adopted within particular conditions resources and assumptions that limit options: it is not a choice made with an utterly free hand."[6]

Performance strategies, communication practices, and image schemas
Nellhaus's main argument is that performance strategies are closely related to the prevailing modes of communication. To me this makes sense. The performance event is always a communicative act in real time between live actors and audiences. The rhetoric of theatre must be sensible to the historical and cultural changes in communication practices, technologies and social relations that store and transmit knowledge. By communicating thought these practices affect the ways in which people understand the thought itself, and processes of thinking and reasoning. For example, are we used to finding answers to our questions by listening to our superiors, by reading books and periodicals, or by browsing the Internet? Oral speech, printed texts, or multimedia websites all create different experiences of access to knowledge and truth. Hence the communication mode becomes an epistemological image schema, embodying the established way of reasoning and information retrieval.[7]

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[3] Milla Martikainen: Presentation of the MA thesis at the MA-seminar in Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture, Department of Film and Scenography, 6 Feb 2012. By the permission of Milla Martikainen.
[4] Nellhaus 2006, 77
[5] Nellhaus 2010, 107
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*, 10-15

Nellhaus bases his idea of image schemas on the embodied realism of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,[8] who argue that abstract concepts and cognitive thinking develop out of primary metaphors emerging from our sensorimotor and kinaesthetic experiences in early infancy. For example, we learn to link warmth with affection; size with importance; difficulty with weight, etc. To put it simply, thoughts first exist in our mind as bodily experiences that we develop into conceptual metaphors, by means of which we can grasp more complicated phenomena. It is largely metaphorically that we begin to categorize, reason, and make sense of the world. Image schemas grow out of this process, and they enable us to conceptualize things that we cannot perceive directly.[9]

However, since they develop in very early childhood, they must be in place before we really get into contact with cultural modes of communication. The image schema behind an epistemological model must therefore be based on very simple and early experiences, for example the reading of a book is like "opening a container" of thoughts.

Focusing more on the social and cultural impact, Nellhaus points out that historically some image schemas and metaphors seem to dominate at certain time periods. He suggests that the prevailing modes of communication play a central role in the selection of the dominant image schemas for knowledge and reasoning. To me it seems that a book contains fixed and permanent knowledge: the sentences are always the same and placed in the same order, whereas oral speech keeps changing. The metaphor for knowledge would thus be different in oral and literal cultures, since it would rest on different image schemas. If we think of knowledge as something to be stored and passed over to others, its "substance" might still differ according to methods of storage and delivery: e.g. we may associate written knowledge with solid pieces arranged in boxes, perhaps preferring something more fluid for oral knowledge.

In his own study Nellhaus shows how 18th century sentimental drama related to the emerging communication mode of that time: print culture and periodicals. Print culture developed an epistemological image schema in which the reading of a text equaled access to knowledge. Similarly, the visible stage was conceived of as a set of interpretable signs to be read by spectators. The faces, gestures and mime of the realistic actor were received as indicators of the inner thoughts, emotions, and motives of the character. This epistemological strategy was applied even to all social intercourse. Outer appearance became the representation of a person's inner quality. In terms of basic metaphors, the visible behavior was conceived as the container of the self, whose characteristics were reflected on the container's surface. This schema contributed to the empirical convention of the Enlightment depicting outer appearance as a source of reliable knowledge. [10]

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[8] Lakoff & Johnson 1999
[9] Nellhaus 2010, 100
[10] *Ibid.*, 103-111

According to Nellhaus, this had several consequences on the conceiving of knowledge, selfhood and agency:

> Circulating throughout these varied discursive strategies, then, are a few basic tenets generated by print culture: knowledge comes from "reading the signs", an image schema generalized to mean perception (especially vision): words are atomistic units that in the aggregate represent the mind, but must form linearly ordered and internally consistent sequences to do so; the logic (grammar) of such ordering is public and universal, even if minds are fundamentally private; and by reading one another through newspapers and other periodicals, these private minds founded an imaginary community. Connecting all of these ideas is an underlying methodological individualism, paradigmatically based on the image of a solitary, silent reader.[11]

This communication strategy has ever since penetrated all sectors of performance in realistic and naturalistic theatre, based on an empiristic epistemology. The visible stage has been conceived as a transparent surface, revealing trustworthy knowledge about its contents to anybody capable of interpreting the message correctly. Not only would the representation of the material and mental environment become the key explanatory factor in naturalistic set design.[12] Although 20th century theatre has widely rejected realistic representation, much of modern scenography can be characterized as a set of metaphorical images, in Arnold Aronson's terminology.[13] Here the scenographic strategy is based on expressing a verbal idea by spatial and visual means; by turning conceptual content into a perceivable form, which should then be recognized and interpreted by the spectator. The set serves as a container for the designer's idea and his personal ingenuity, and this guarantees its value as art.

Scenographic strategies

Apart from providing its key epistemological image schema, text also pervades modern theatre practice. The working methods of scenography have been strongly tied to the written drama and to verbal information. The first thing the stage designer usually does is a very careful reading of the play. The famous British scenographer, professor Pamela Howard writes: "Language is completely central to theatre, and my commitment has always been to use scenography to enhance and reveal the text and the story behind it."[14] She recommends that the play should be read aloud with the group: "The rule is that no one must let anything they do not understand pass, no matter how long it takes to find the meaning."[15] Later on, when the performance comes into contact with audiences, "[t]he test for the scenographer is to see whether all the preparation

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[11] *Ibid.*, 120
[12] Gröndahl 2004
[13] Aronson 2005, 13-14
[14] Howard 2002, 17
[15] *Ibid.*, 20-21

has been in balance, and the spectators have understood the vision and the intention of the production."[16]

We could think of modern scenography as a semiotic process of successive readings and writings: at first the scenographer reads the play and "writes" her interpretation of it in visual and spatial form; then the director reads the scenery and rewrites it by staging the performance there. Finally comes the spectator and reads the scenography as one integral part of the performance experience. The scenography is a visual text, generated through the reading of a verbal text.

Today it seems that the text is in crisis in the performing arts. In Finland this has culminated in a new way of making theatre, vaguely called *nykyteatteri* ("contemporary theatre"),[17] centrally characterized by its emphasis on performance as event and interaction. The stage happening generates unplanned experiences and meanings, instead of transforming pre-given ideas into perceivable and interpretable signs. Semiotics has turned into phenomenology: we do not read meanings in the world; we want to let the world appear to us in a continuous process of becoming. Instead of recognizing indications, we want to come into encounter with something unfamiliar, unexpected, and unknown.

According to dramaturge Katariina Numminen, the new methods of producing dramatic texts have inspired several concepts: *performance writing*, *devising*, *writing on stage*, *not-text-based* or *theme-based theatre*. What is crucial is working "on the floor", not at the desk. Text is generated through action on stage, and anything can serve as the starting point for the performance. As professional and artistic boundaries give way accordingly, jobs are mixed and every team-member works as a kind of dramaturge.[18]

> The text has changed from being the dramatic base of the performance into one element among others. … In drama theatre, the text was the foundation; supportive structure; given element, against which the performance played. In contemporary theatre the text plays, too.[19]

To some extent this goes for scenography, too. A traditional set designer in fact resembles the playwright since his active, creative work also takes place before the performance event. Both are responsible for writing a verbal or visual script that serves as the basic structure for the work of others.

With the new, process-based methods these structures are under construction all the time, and nobody "owns" his artistic territory any longer as an absolute author. Scenography, as well as the play-text, has become a kind of platform for a collective process in which all team members are allowed to make suggestions and comments. The scenographer's task is to sustain the platform by his activity, not necessarily re-

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[16] *Ibid.*, 108
[17] Ruuskanen (ed.) 2011
[18] Numminen 2011, 33-35
[19] *Ibid.*, 34, my translation

stricted to spatial and visual issues. (Some designers, like Elina Lifländer, have made their scenographic contribution by becoming performers themselves.)

Epistemology and metatheatricality

A wider change pertains to the epistemological strategies of producing and communicating ideas and knowledge in theatre performances, closely connected to the vague concept of postmodernism: coherent story-telling and consistent analysis, characteristic for modernism, have given way to parallel narratives, differing viewpoints and contradictory statements. Postmodern theatre urges the spectator to reflect on his own capability for perceiving perceive and interpret. The stage no longer provides access to certain knowledge but only partakes in a never-ending discourse with no absolute truth. Arnold Aronson has put this most appositely in his seminal essay on postmodern design already twenty years ago:

> the spectator of postmodern design is constantly made aware of the experience of viewing, and, at the same time, in the most successful examples, made aware of the whole history, context, and reverberations of an image in the contemporary world. … Postmodernism shifts the basis of the work of art from the object to the transaction between the spectator and the object and further deconstructs it by negating the presence of a representative objective viewer.[20]

Of course, when we look at theatre, we are always aware of the simultaneous presence of the real and the imaginary. Therefore the performance represents more than fictional agents and stories: it is also able to represent the representation and the theatrical event itself. This is generally called metatheatricality: the theatre can speak about its own functioning as a performance. It can make the spectator look at the act of looking, and even at the act of looking at himself looking.

According to Nellhaus, metatheatricality often arises during eras with major changes in social structures and modes of communication, like the Renaissance. When two or more different discursive orders are conflicting the established order of representation and conceptualization is at stake. This causes an epistemological crisis since no communicative mode appears to be a certain source of knowledge.[21] Metatheatricality "is a way to comprehend and perhaps resolve crises in agency, particularly when two (or more) models of agency are in contention."[22]

Metatheatricality enables us to discuss performance by means of performing, and even to contemplate on it as a social, philosophical, or cognitive phenomenon beyond the theatre. Nellhaus suggests that theatrical performance can double the social ontology of structures, agents, and discourses because it consists of corresponding theatrical, dramatic, and scriptive levels. Therefore it generates models for contemporary social ontology; for example the stage–audience relationship is a kind of image

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[20] Aronson 2010, 146
[21] Nellhaus 2010, 163
[22] *Ibid.*, 167

"of what it is to be a social structure."[23] Theatre is a very effective tool for that, since "embodiment, communication and agency all come together" therein.[24] By perceiving the spatial structure of a performance we can experience something fundamental about the ways in which social relationships are constructed through material conditions and human interactions in space.

We are probably living through one of the most radical changes in communication modes ever. Nellhaus remarks that 20th century metatheatricality has typically been *autotropic,* that is, representation of the performance's own real structures, agents and discourses – "theatrical self-presence, in which theatre refers to its present performance," while most previous kinds of metatheatricality have been *allotropic*, referring to theatricality other than itself (for example play-within-a-play structures).[25] Postdramatic and postmodern performances focus more on their own act of performing than on the story told or the message mediated. This also shakes the privileged position of verbal text and its openness to unproblematic interpretations.

Like most theatre scholars, Nellhaus talks mostly about the rhetorical strategies of addressing performances to audiences. The process of making the performance is little discussed, which of course is only natural given the lack of evidence from earlier history. However, a metatheatrical approach inevitably raises a more or less implicit question about how the performance is made. How has it been constructed? What kinds of strategies have been in operation, and to what effect could they have been different? Metatheatricality also urges theatre makers to reconsider their own artistic agency and pay critical attention to the prevailing practices that maintain their performance strategies. The activity of making performance becomes almost as important as the performance itself, and it is often left visible to audiences.

I think we should investigate not only the outcomes of artistic work but also the practical working processes, as elementary parts of the strategies. One important part of them is the communication among the artistic and technical team. There are actors, dancers, visual artists, musicians, and sound designers, technicians, carpenters, tailors, and usually a director managing the whole. These team members have to discuss and demonstrate their own ideas by various means: talking, writing, drawing, singing, playing, showing etc. They will also store and document their ideas in different forms, with different technologies.

Scenographic working methods are of course quite practically determined by the technologies available in the culture. And, like any media, they are no neutral vehicles just transmitting information. They constitute a discourse that maintains a shared understanding about the work, its aims, methods, and values. There are, of course, different ways of using them too. The choice between computer-based modeling and drawing by hand may also express the values of the designer. Although I believe digital technologies can never replace the old skills completely, theirs has been a revolutionary effect in enabling a quicker and more flexible design. They make it pos-

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[23] *Ibid.*, 157

[24] *Ibid.*, 95

[25] *Ibid.*, 174

sible to devise the set design on laptop during stage rehearsals, where everybody can see and give feedback to a 3D model of the developing set in process. This change in the scenographer's toolbox has called for a new way of communicating, promoting new artistic strategies and answering the needs of contemporary theatre.

In the second half of my paper I try to analyse how scenographers are used to presenting their ideas to others, and what changes are now taking place in this communication.

Communicating scenography in many directions

According to my experiences in average traditional theatre, the scenographer's work is divided into two phases: creative design and practical implementation. The first mostly consists of rather lonely work: reading books, looking for pictures, drawing sketches, making scale models, and experimenting with materials in your studio. Although you hopefully have intensive discussions with the director and lighting and costume designers, you work very much on your own. When the actors start rehearsing, you are supposed to present the outcome of your creative design and to give detailed instructions to the workshops. The rest of the process mostly consists in the executive work of carrying out the plans, and there is little leeway to major changes. However, this executive process always includes collaboration with other artists and technical staff, and it is often characterized by negotiations and compromises.

Apart from working in two different phases, the scenographer (like the director and other designers) also has to be able to communicate in two different ways: he must give very precise information to the technical staff, but should also keep his plans flexible with the artistic team. The technical information is mostly stored and communicated visually by scale models, drafts, pictures, and blueprints, while the flexibility is mostly negotiated on stage through oral discussions, embodied exercises, and experiments.

Although creative collaboration with the director and actors is elementary to all scenic design, the artistic and professional identity of scenographers rests on the visual talent manifest in their sketches and scale models. These are highlighted in their training, in various exhibitions and publications, and in the historiography of scenography – and no wonder. The oral negotiations and spontaneous experiments in rehearsals leave no visible traces that could be documented and exhibited. They are also too fuzzy and flexible to be developed into clearly articulated skills. The ability to work in a live process with unexpected problems is part of the scenographer's tacit knowledge.

This is not to say that we couldn't and shouldn't make exact models and blueprints of the set. Quite simply, we need unambiguous information if we want to build anything. The carpenter must know exactly where to cut the plywood. And there is no better way of demonstrating a non-existing space than a scale-model with tangible elements.

My point here is that we (older) scenographers are used to thinking of our work mainly by means of drawings and models, which can be seen as kinds of visual texts,

transmitting interpretable information. The tacit knowledge of discussing, negotiating, and developing ideas together with other artists is too easily forgotten, and new scenographic methods are now attacking this blind spot.

Dialogic communication as the basis of scenography

The new process-based methods of scenography are dialogic since the creative part of the work is increasingly shared with other artists. The designer can no longer come to production meetings in order to present ready-made models and drafts. The scenographic "text" cannot be written before the performance, rather it is rewritten throughout the rehearsals and sometimes even in front of the audiences. The designer can and should still use miniatures and drawings to visualize his ideas, but rather as convertible tools for discussion than as exact models to be reproduced on stage. In fact, I believe you need your technical and representational skills more than ever in such process-based productions. You must be able to quickly demonstrate different suggestions so that everybody in the team can immediately grasp what you are talking about. You also have to develop them into realizable construction drawings rapidly, since there will always be a hurry to get the real elements on stage. Thereby you also have to have a very good general idea of what can be carried out within the existing timelines and budget.

The more that new ideas can emerge during the rehearsals and be adapted to the performance, the more the scenographer has to negotiate with other team members and leave things open for others to decide. The better he must also be able to communicate and cooperate: he has to present his own, still unfinished thoughts clearly, while still receptive to others' ideas. Hence, an emphasis on social skills: on the ability to listen and understand, on flexibility and willingness to accept sudden changes, but also on persistency, patience, and the ability to persuade others to agreeing with one's own ideas. The urge to understand other team members' viewpoints and special needs has certainly furthered the blurring of professional and artistic boundaries, e.g. by motivating scenographers to join in actors' training and to try out their experience of being on stage. Today's scenographer also designs with his body.

It is certainly no coincidence that process-based production methods have arisen simultaneously with aspirations to audience interaction and participation. Both are based on a conception of art as an experience, bound to embodied agents, temporal situation and framework. Reception also becomes creative. It can never be reduced into one correct interpretation, nor can the author master his text alone. Ever new readings and rewritings are bound to escape whatever original intentions there may have been.

The interactive and hermeneutic character of a work of art also means that the work can never be completely finished. If we think of art as encounter and experience, we can never catch it as something fixed and final, since it is always being renewed in each encounter and experience. No finished work of art can exist or be "given" to an audience, given its completion lies in their reception and response.

The active role of the spectator as a co-creator of the performance can also be turned the other way round by suggesting that, especially in collective art forms, the artist also has a receptive role as an audience for the emerging work of art – from the first suggestions and drafts of other team members, to the slowly developing embryo of the common performance, constantly being composed through the shared process. Each individual artist in the team participates in the process by experiencing these things and responding to them by new suggestions. There is a continuous movement between passive exposure to artistic experiences, and active actions and initiatives.

The epistemology of new scenographic strategies
Returning to Nellhaus's theory about performance strategies and their epistemological linkage, I suggest that the process-based method is constituted around a new kind of image schema of knowledge. Instead of working on the performance as if it were a text to write and read, the team builds a kind of common platform, upon which they can discuss and share ideas, not only verbally but also through bodily exercises and experiments.

The aim is not to formulate a fixed interpretation of a given text and transmit this interpretation to audiences but to open up a never-ending process of questions, statements, and utterances. The platform does not appear as a source of fixed knowledge but rather as a process of developing common understanding through experiments, bumbling ideas, and negotiations between contradictory elements. Besides verbal texts, the process also consists of live, embodied agents with all their experiences and activities. There is thus no abstract, absolute knowledge separable from the knowing subject, posited in certain environment and a certain situation with his body.

This "platform" image schema shows knowledge as something transformable, always in process, constituted by experiences and action. I quote Mark Johnson, who writes about art- and practice-based research:

> The key is to stop thinking of knowledge as an abstract quasi-entity or a fixed body of propositional claims. Instead, knowledge should be a term to praise for success in a process for intelligently transforming experience.[26]

Leaning on the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, Johnson claims that the locus of knowing is in experience, including physical objects, states of affairs, and "also everything that is thought, felt, hoped for, willed, desired, encountered, and done."[27] Experience is always constituted as an interaction between organism and environment; in other words, it is always in a process that is reformulating itself and changing. As Johnson points out, Dewey's pragmatism challenges the traditional conception of knowledge as something fixed, an eternal aspiring for certainty.[28] It is rather a way of handling the problems we face in interacting with the world:

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[26] Johnson 2011, 142
[27] *Ibid.*, 146
[28] Dewey 1999/1929

So Dewey urges us to turn our focus away from the substantive term *knowledge* (as a noun) and to focus, instead, on *knowing* (as a verb). In this way we emphasize the character of the *process* of inquiry instead of some final *product* construed as a body of knowledge.[29]

Instead of equating them to the reading and writing of texts, the processes of making performances could be seen as collective processes of knowing: joint discussions, journeys, experiments – something unfixed, embodied, and fluctuating.

Is there a parallel between this change in strategies of scenography, and the emergence of new electronic and digital modes of communication? That would be the case, if Nellhaus is right in his proposal about the linkage between performance strategies and a society's communication practices. Quite practically, the new digital technologies have changed the ways in which a scenographer can communicate his ideas. However, the connection to cultural and social modes of communication seems to be more important here. The collective, self-directing process is actually very similar to what happens on a website where people can participate, and contents are created in a common process that nobody can master alone or even perceive as a complete whole. The electronic mode of communication creates a network of divergent agents, who both send and receive messages, and react to them. Various and even contradictory statements can exist side by side. Unlike in print culture, no particular text appears as capable of telling the truth. Artistic agency has also shifted: in print culture, a work of art was the product of an ingenious individual artist, while those of our current culture of networks often appear as something constantly reshaped, collectively and even anonymously. The analogy seems plausible, although it certainly requires more investigation than is possible here.

Summary and some suggestions

In this paper I have described how new, process-based methods of scenic design have altered the strategy of producing and transmitting content and thoughts by means of scenography. The conventional text-based method assumes that the contents are to be found in the playtext, "translated" into visual and spatial signs, and read out of them by the audience. In Tobin Nellhaus's terms, the "epistemological image schema" haunting such notions is that of text as the dominant container of knowledge.

Postmodern and postdramatic theatre have turned this strategy upside down: the creative, process-based team work serves rather as a platform that allows new, unexpected ideas to emerge from the here-and-now situation on stage. Process-based working methods seem to rest on the epistemological belief that knowledge is not something fixed, to be found in a text, but rather emerges amidst heterogeneous discourse – constituted in a hermeneutic cycle, it is constantly reforming and changing in a discourse of embodied, situated agents.

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[29] Johnson 2011, 147

The postmodern performance strategy moves the focus to the spectator's perceptive and interpretative apparatus, and prevents an unambiguous reading of the stage. In terms of communication strategies it means that artists do not send clear messages to receivers, but rather offer a bunch of possible perceptions, the meanings of which can vary depending on the perceiver. The spectator produces the content as much as the authors do. This no longer fits the image schema of firm text as knowledge, presupposing a stable container of thoughts that now is replaced with an open platform for several discourses with changing ideas. This resonates strongly with how the Internet works, compared to books and other products of print culture.

Is it possible that new communication technologies are developing a new kind of image schema for our access to knowledge? This may be too much said, but we are certainly getting used to completely new practices of communicating and searching for knowledge. It must also have some effect on the ways in which we think of theatre performances as communication and as containers of ideas. Hence it also affects the ways in which we make performances and constitute ourselves as theatre artists.

Contemporary scenographic strategies are based on communication practices in which contents are not carried by a solid text, but emerge in a continuous process and collective discourse. Neither design nor performance is thought of as a container of thoughts, ideas or knowledge, as if they were solid packages. Rather they constitute a common play field that generates new kinds of situations. The relationship between author and spectator is not that of a sender and receiver, as both participate in a joint game. The internal relationships of the artistic team are not hierarchical, and the process is not subordinated to the director's leading idea. It is a dialogic negotiation with a two-way interaction.

If this tendency continues, we need to research and develop new kinds of working methods, abilities, and attitudes, both for training in scenography and for the field of professional theatre.

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