

The Artist Will Be Present



PERFORMING PARTIAL
OBJECTS & SUBJECTS

Christopher Braddock

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for E & E

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Christopher Braddock

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except whereby explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

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ABSTRACT

The Artist Will Be Present explores objects as traces that stem from performed actions, and *my* body in performance. Part-sculptural objects, video and sound act as performance documents that expand on notions of the ‘live’ encounter. Interest lies in how we *get to* objects: *process* in variance to product or closure. And the question of how the body/s of the audience become participatory is at the forefront of these operations.

From this viewpoint the exegesis aims to broaden existing scholarship on performativity, liveness and the part-sculptural object, exploring the manners in which various cultural practices act to animate objects. I reconsider the Euro-American genealogies of performance/body art (Bruce Nauman, Lygia Clark, Ann Hamilton *et al.*) in relationship to contemporary art practices in Australia and New Zealand (Alicia Frankvich, Carolyn Eskdale *et al.*) through the lens of late 19th-and early 20th-century writing on sympathetic magical action. A legacy of cultural anthropology dealing with magic (that was privileged in establishing grounding aspects of structural linguistics) circulates around the British anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah whose thinking on persuasive analogy in ritual performance draws a crucial link between J. L. Austin’s performative utterance and James George Frazer’s notion of sympathetic magic. From such a perspective the operations of sympathetic mimesis—involving ambivalent similitude and contagion—are discussed in terms of performative and persuasive illocutionary force. This offers another model for articulating an authentic performative document as an encounter with the ‘live.’

A phenomenological method of enquiry, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the *chiasm*,—along with notions of mimetic incongruence—crucially tease out relationships between the live and the performance document and aim at resisting subject/object dichotomies whereby concepts of embodiment and indeterminate play between artist, objects and audiences are activated.

Applied to contemporary debates on performance and ‘objects out of action,’ part objects and images are transformed as partial ‘subjects’: metonymically part of larger wholes as trace (substitution) and contagious contact (liveness). What is lacking in the operations of sympathetic mimesis is precisely what ‘draws out’ the body/s of the

audience as they desire closure in object and duration. As these questions turn on the body of the artist/self and the audience/participant in performative installation practice, I offer an analysis of bodies in ritual exchange (donor/donee); subjects and objects as transformers: relations of *force* over form—liminal, reversible and redolent of lack—that emphasise encounter in difference to recognition. This is to speak of, in the words of Lygia Clark: “Tactile shocks to liberate the body.”