



Call for Proposals

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Proposal deadline: Monday 2nd September 2019

The aim of this issue is to scrutinize both the epistemological and aesthetic potential of the notion of 'microperformativity' (Hauser 2006, 2014). The concept denotes a current trend in theories of performativity and performative artistic practices to destabilize human scales (both spatial and temporal) as the dominant

plane of reference, and to emphasize biological and technological micro-agencies that, beyond the mesoscopic human body, relate the invisibility of the microscopic to the incomprehensibility of the macroscopic. Investigations into microperformativity redefine what art, philosophy and the technosciences actually consider a 'body' today, in times when *performance art* shifts towards generalized and pervasive *performativity in art*. Agencies of genetic sequences, cellular 'machineries', bacteria, fungi, enzymes and other proteins and so forth are no longer conceived of as mere functions, but staged as aestheticized actions, employed to either act as identity proxies, or to stage non-human agencies in relation to performative techno-scientific systems, thus addressing contemporary dynamics linking the machinic and the organic (Salter 2010). This tendency to include 'aliveness' at all levels completes the scope of the previously ambiguous term 'live arts' (Heathfield 2004).

Microperformative positions enquire how artistic methods can engage critically with technologies that exploit life on a microscopic and molecular level to merge bio- and digital media, including for global capitalization (Spiess and Strecker 2016, 2017). In parallel to algorithmic finance and high-frequency trading, the instrumentalization of sequential micro-transformations in bioindustrial production lines marks society's shift from human and machine labour to increasingly pervasive forms of microbial manufacturing and computerized bio-optimization. Meanwhile the anthropocentrism of 'artificial intelligence' in its preference of computational approaches to model human-like capacities and consciousness has come under critical scrutiny, microperformative postures may search for 'natural intelligence' in an eco-systemic logic within a larger bio-semiotic web. Such postures insist on the production of meaning and mutual interpretation between organisms in their environments, thus bringing the field of biosemiotics into play as a new modality for contemporary performance studies. With regards to both artistic production and perception that subvert the mesoscopic tradition in which human phenomenological considerations are still rooted, we look for contributions that demonstrate how performative art forms and discourses can inform these processes to think biopolitics and necropolitics in relation to the dystopia of economy and the utopia of ecology alike.

We invite to apply the notion of microperformativity as an interdisciplinary 'travelling concept' (Bal 2002) that synchronically crosses disciplinary and cultural boundaries, and diachronically links a given context to earlier epistemological contexts, while paying 'increased attention to its material and medial foundations' (Neumann and Nünning 2012: 9) in the light of the emerging arsenal of associated discursive and symbolic relations. This encompasses post-anthropocentric notions of performativity—including material, affective, scientific and natural-cultural hybrids and 'epistemic things' (Rheinberger 1997)—and addresses artistic explorations at the vibrating threshold of aliveness and living matter (Bennett 2009), challenging current understandings of aliveness as such. Through the lens of the performing arts in their broadest possible definition, this issue welcomes submissions for theoretical essays, interviews, manifestos, artistic research and process documentation, as well as performance reviews.

Suggested topics include (but are not limited to):

—**Dramaturgical approaches:** If performances engage microperformative flows of dynamic systems and materials dramaturgical tools need to expand. But do Aristotelian poetics or models of mimesis become obsolete in narrations, compositions and material transformations beyond the human? We are looking for criteria in dramaturgy that consider the processes' ethics, aesthetics and techno-ecological entanglements as crucial to the materiality of production (Trencsényi and Cochrane 2014).

—**Microperformativity through the lens of biosemiotics:** Biosemiotics study the meaning and interpretation of signalling processes between an organism and its environment. They have never been approached expressly from the perspective of performance studies up to date. We encourage articles that highlight an understanding of the relation between *Umwelt*, technology, living organisms and their performative agency from a biosemiotic viewpoint.

—**Historical layers of microperformativity:** We are looking for art historical analysis that highlights contemporary artistic practices of microperformativity: Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy as well as medicine conveyed complex theories about the circulation of bodily fluids and inanimate matter. In early modern times the science of alchemy showed differentiated forms of rituals and theatricality. A modernist embrace of biological concepts from Dada and the Situationists to non-representative theatre concepts following Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, Happening and Fluxus Art, or bio-cultural narratives in Viennese Actionism may have paved the way for post-anthropocentric artistic methods, entangled with microperformativity.

—**Reception aesthetics:** Theories of reception emphasize the meaning making by the audience. How does a recipient comprehend, decode and appraise artistic practices that foreground microperformative processes? Aesthetics asks for new modalities of *microperformative perception* and associated modalities of co-corporeality and proprioception. Within performative (biological) artworks, the relation between audience, technologies, living matter and the artistic content shows characteristics of Simondon's concept of *associated milieu* (2000). Related schools of thought also address ways in which humans relate affectively to technical objects in relation to living matter.

References

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Issue contacts:

All proposals, submissions and general enquiries should be sent direct to *Performance Research* at: info@performance-research.org

Issue-related enquiries should be directed to the issue editors:

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General Guidelines for Submissions:

Before submitting a proposal, we encourage you to visit our website (www.performance-research.org) and familiarize yourself with the journal.

Proposals will be accepted by email (Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format (RTF)). Proposals should not exceed one A4 side.

Please include your surname in the file name of the document you send.

Please include the issue title and issue number in the subject line of your email.

Submission of images and other visual material is welcome provided that all attachments do not exceed 5 MB, and there is a maximum of five images.

Submission of a proposal will be taken to imply that it presents original, unpublished work not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

If your proposal is accepted, you will be invited to submit an article in first draft by the deadline indicated above. On the final acceptance of a completed article you will be asked to sign an author agreement in order for your work to be published in *Performance Research*.