[Re]Rendering the Real

Experiments in Phantasmagoric Intervention & Scenographic Reverie

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Signed by candidate Date: 07 October 2022

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Abstract

The research centres principally on the experience of wonder; specifically, exploring strategies for engendering moments of wonder, and allied experiences of intrigue, curiosity and fascination, in both audiences and makers.
This enquiry is particularly concerned with the pursuit of wonder in terms of the practice of scenography; understood broadly as the modulation of and play with experiential textures of light, space, sound and object through time. The research is thus embedded within contemporary scenographic context, imperatives and praxis.
Drawing on a rigorous theoretical bedrock spanning fields of theatre, architecture and the art of illusion, findings from concomitant research undertaken over the last two years is mobilised towards deepening an enquiry into wonder from a scenographic perspective. Using the notion of 'phantasmagoria' as an in-road into the research, I utilise performance and scenographic intervention to explore oscillations between the mundane and the extraordinary. A comprehensive analysis of the created performance, its conceptual roots and influences, as well as its position within the rhizomatic research output generated within the coursework forms part of the data that is thoroughly and reflexively analysed; opening up the possibility of noting the ways in which the experience of wonder and the practice of scenography might intersect. As such, the research aims to reflect on, react to and re-render the real.

Keywords

magic, wonder, enchantment, play, scenography, worlding, experience, liminal, ludics, animism, dream, anarchic, correspondence, making, surreal, fantasy, phantasmagoria, hypertrophic, mycelium, illusion

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A Case for Wonder

To practice scenography is a kind of conjuration.

It involves the weaving of worlds; to write[1] against the backdrop of our world, and against orthodoxies of place. This paper follows a fascination with the conjuration of worlds which hang in the space between the ordinary and the extraordinary; and which set the stage for the experience of wonder.

Before everything else, I am a magician. The art of magic[2] has coloured my world and the way that I make, design, and live. Early in my study of the art, I was lucky to read a book by a hermitical, elusive performer called Paul Harris – his book, *The Art of Astonishment*, radically redefined my understanding of magic and the nature of wonder.

As Harris (1996:7) suggests:

> *Astonishment is not an emotion that's created. It's an existing state that is revealed.*

The responsibility of the magician then, is to gently guide[3] an audience towards reencountering, even for a brief moment, "the therapeutic experience of our natural state of mind" (1996:7), unfettered by concepts and cogitations. Communing in that experience is the goal – illusions are merely tools to help arrive there. This model of magic presents a radically different possibility for the art than simple entertainment; as Harris notes, "You're using magical illusions to dissolve cultural illusions in order to experience a moment of something real" (1996:7).

My fascination with this alternate understanding of wonder, led me to view it as something generatively anarchic – that upends precious conceptual categories, topples binaries and restores our place within complex relational entanglements; as kin with soil and stardust.

To augment and precise this rendering of wonder[4], it is useful to consider Jane Bennett's (2001) contributions regarding 'enchantment'. Bennett uses the term interchangeably with wonder, characterising it in a twofold manner; first, as involving a surprising or unexpected encounter with something that one does not expect to engage with, but which is nonetheless

[1] 'Scenography' is connected to the Greek root 'graphos' which means to write; however, this sense of writing is more closely linked to action – specifically of making a mark – as when marking out the foundations for a building (Hann, 2019). As such, the scenographer can be said to write their worlds palimsestuously, in a particularly active manner.

[2] In this case, I mean 'performance magic' – the theatrical art of illusion, as opposed to what is termed 'natural magic', which relates to the supernatural (Landman, 2013). The use of techniques, technical and psychological, to induce an audience to witness something impossible, but not supernatural (During, 2002).

[3] This notion of 'guiding' or 'facilitating' experience is comparable to the manner in which di Benedetto speaks of the scenographer's position as organizing scenographic elements so as to "[stimulate an] experiential journey" (in McKinney & Palmer, 2018:166); terming the audience as "attendants" to score an encounter similar to attending a ritual.

[4] 'Wonder' appears to have its etymological roots in the Indo-European word for 'smile', while the Greek word 'thauma', associated with enchantment and magic, comes from the verb 'to see', (Daston & Park, 2001:16) emphasizing a mode of perception which 'opens up' and catalyses relational engagement with phenomena.

charming and pleasurable. Coupled with this is a feeling of 'unheimlich'[5] or the uncanny – a tension between the strange and the familiar, which disrupts ordinary ways of being. This is however a generative disruption, as Bennett notes, "the overall effect of enchantment is a mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness…" (2001:5).

A regard for the magical[6] beyond aporia, or puzzlement, and aligned more closely with enchantment, seems intrinsic to humans the world over; as writer Robert McCammon (1991:9) observes:

> *We all start out knowing magic. We are born with whirlwinds, forest fires, and comets inside us. We are born able to sing to birds and read the clouds and see our destiny in grains of sand.*

The above quote seems to speak to a mode of relationality to the animate earth, to the myriad sensible phenomena adorning our field of perception, that begins to recede with the passage of time. The occlusion of an attendance to the *life* in things. In his article, *A Plea for Magic*, Nigerian scholar Bayo Akomolefe makes a case for recuperating the inherent wonder of the earth around us, in a world that is increasingly obsessed with scale, speed, alienation and abstraction.

> *…But are there wilds beyond our fences? If we are not to lunge at the sun, is there virtue in this loamy dirt beneath our feet?*
> *What haunts our vacuous quests for onto-epistemological security […] By the world we supposedly left behind?*
> *Magic.*
> *The world is magical.*

(Akomolefe, 2016: n.p.)

The 'magic' to which Akomolefe gestures is that same sense of enchantment, located in deep engagement with the natural world. A jubilant wonder that proliferates through the everyday, for those who look closely and find ways to reduce distance from it.

Such statements about 'magic' are liable to draw criticism because they imply the supernatural. In a prevailing paradigm suffused with abstract mechanical thought, where the world should be neatly available to the enquiring rational mind (Akomolefe, n.p.), there is no room for such 'flights of fancy'[7]. Akomolefe asserts however, that this rendering of magic does not involve recourse to the supernatural and rather, opens up the possibility of seeing beyond societal strictures. As Akomolefe (2016: n.p.) notes,

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[5] A sense of *unheimlich* is not necessarily negative; it is an experience of tension which emerges in encountering something which appears familiar and yet strange at the same time. As Machon (2019:468) observes, "Where a situation feels uncomfortably strange yet strangely familiar, it can create threat or be pleasurably exhilarating."

[6] This rendering of magic although not linked to 'performance magic' and the art of illusion, coheres with Harris' understanding of astonishment, as well as Bennett's view of enchantment. In all descriptions of 'magic' as *adjective* in this paper, it is the regard for the phenomenological experience of wonder, as in a feeling or state of enraptured enchantment, that is emphasised.

[7] In the latter part of the 17th century, amid the burgeoning process of the Enlightenment, interest in wonder diminished as natural philosophers focused on "order over oddity" (Watt Smith, 2015:362) and the development of natural laws to explain the workings of the universe.

a case for magic is still not only compelling, but necessary […] We do not have to subscribe to unicorns dancing on rainbows to see that enchantment is not in short supply. Neither do we have to believe that everything we can think of is possible to see how critically limited and compromised our present ways of seeing are.

For Akomolefe, the distance we find ourselves at relative to the inherent magic of the world[8] necessitates a thorough critique of various epistemologies and ontologies which violently decenter the *more-than-human*[9] world; and involves not only destabilising neoliberal capitalism, but interrogating the anthropocentrism and alienation inherent in Eurocentric paradigms of thought.

Historicizing the Anthropocentric Eye: Decolonial Thinking and the Cost of Modernity

Rolando Vázques, a prominent decolonial theorist, observes that the period of modernity[10] in effect severed our connection to wider relational networks, establishing itself as "...the world historical reality, as the now of time and the here of space" (Vázquez, 2017:77), through the negation of other worlds. The history of Western civilization is itself predicated on the iterative suppression of other worlds (Vázquez, 2017) and the scribing of perception in terms of a very narrow ontology.

In a sense, modernity is implicated in our structures of thought, or to borrow a term from John Berger, our 'ways of seeing'[11]; as such, we could understand modernity's implicitness in our ways of seeing as, "how we have been made to see" (Vàzquez, 2020:4). Dogmas of Cartesian skepticism have "…invited us to see [the world] as fundamentally divided into 'things'[12], predetermined and pre-relational" (Akomolefe, 2016: n.p.), where one is warned to maintain a critical distance to garner a clear picture of reality[13].

We may, correlating this move with the genealogy of Western philosophy, read it in terms of a turn towards disinterested rationality, the acceptance of the Aristotelian Chain of Being, or the influence of Descartes' Mind-Body dualism (Abram, 1996) – all pillars of modernity.

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[8] It should be noted that centring the wonder of the natural world is not to venerate it as the only site of enchantment. Bennett (2021) observes that there are also many artificial, technological and scientific exemplars of enchantment.

[9] Term used by Abram (1996) in lieu of the anthropocentric 'non-human'. The term is connected to commentators such as Ingold, Bennett and Haraway among others, and troubles anthropocentric readings of human relationships to wider ecologies, beings and nature.

[10] Conceptualised generally as the "Western project of civilization" (Vázquez, 2020: xvii).

[11] John Berger's seminal text Ways of Seeing (1990) discusses the machinations of visual culture through analysing different media, from oil paintings to modern advertisements; his text helps to illumine the lens of our culture at various points, and how this lens affects processes of cogitation and meaning making.

[12] Philosopher Alan Watts, in a lecture titled "Reality, Art and Illusion", notes that the root word 'skijō' – is etymologically related to cutting or dissecting, and is where we derive such words as 'schism' and 'science'. Watts (1973) correlates this with perception in the advent of enlightenment epistemologies, which worked to impose a 'grid' of sorts on reality, in order to subdivide and measure it. With the imposition of such a schematic, phenomena are severed from their relational networks. It is as Giles Deleuze (1993:125) observes, "Sometimes we isolate, purify or concentrate the object; we cut all its ties to the universe, and thus we raise it up…". As such, epistemologies of critical distance, while valuable in some ways, may effect a kind of severing of phenomena from a "whole network of natural relations" (Deleuze, 1993:125).

[13] See additionally (Lauwrens, 2012; Pallasmaa, 1996; Classen, 1993) particularly with reference to ocularcentrism, the privileging of the eye in western epistemology.

However, Vázquez goes further – noting that the underlying factor to be considered is anthropocentrism.

As he states:

> *anthropocentrism, built on the separation between the 'human' and 'nature,' requires the negation of earth. Modernity's notion of humanity and civilization is produced as earthlessness.*

(2017:77)

The worlds which humans are alienated from in the modern era, is nothing less than earth itself. In losing the earth in this manner, we are cordoned off from a multitude of relational worlds (Vázquez, 2017).

What are the implications of this loss, and the embedded anthropocentrism of modernity in terms of design and scenographic practice? As Vázquez (2017:77) notes, "Design came to name modernity's way of relating to and producing the real [...] relating to earth, to others...", and it follows that design is implicated in the trajectory of modernity. It is highly likely therefore, that as designers in the Anthropocene[14], our ways of seeing are myopic. Vázquez gestures to this saying, "When we look [...] through the tools of the modern we become deaf and incapable of listening to other worlds"[15].

To open up perception against the grain of the dominant relational order and move towards a new ontology in scenographic practice, requires first an understanding and interrogation of established axioms within the discipline.

The Problem with Agency & The Recuperation of Time

Contemporary scenographic discourse has undergone what might be called an 'agentic turn' with respect to materials[16]. The movement of New Materialism has grounded materials as 'active agents', against a conception of matter as inert (McKinney in Bleeker et al., 2015). Both McKinney and Ingold are somewhat critical of this move to agency, because it is seeded with a kind of anthropocentrism[17]. McKinney has noted that it might be more useful to focus on the capacity of materials "to become active participants" (McKinney in Bleeker et al., 2015:126) which form a kind of scenographic ecology.

Vázquez is critical of the New Materialist ascription of agency to materials – as he states, "They [New Materialists] are trying to give agency to objects and materiality, but that agency is still very derivative of an anthropocentric view" (cited in Pannekoek and Dankert, 2018:152).

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[14] The 'Anthropocene' names our current historical epoch. Vázquez (2017) notes that the Anthropocene is inextricably linked to anthropocentrism; as such, scholars Donna Haraway and David Abram have offered alternative terms like 'Cthulucene' 'Humilicene' respectively.

[15] cited in Pannekoek and Dankert, 2018:149. It is important to note that a mode of *listening* instead of seeing, pushes up against ocularcentric epistemologies.

[16] See Barad (2003).

[17] Ingold has noted too that such moves toward agency tend to forward the view that "people and materials [are] all that is" (2007:S30).

For Vázquez, the view of agency is grounded on a metaphysics of presence, on immanence – the condition of the intelligibility of materials being 'present' within them. As such, "…materiality becomes the total horizon of intelligibility"[18]. As Vázquez sees it, the problem here is that a focus on immanence "eliminates time which is in excess of materiality, from the thought of the real. The questions that we address in decolonial practice belong not only to space and the question of land and earth but also to time"[19]. The realisation of the eclipsing of time inherent in New Materialist theories of material agency is immensely useful to scenographic discourse and practice, as scenography is a time-based form (McKinney & Palmer, 2017; Hann, 2019). Recuperating the dimension of time does more than just provide a sense of the historical traces[20] of materials and spaces, it restores a sense of their futurity; of the span of their existence.
Indeed, this echoes Schultz's understanding that "sharing a community of time […] every consociate participates in the on-rolling life of every other" (Ingold, 2013:106).

Up to now, scenographic theory has not provided an alternative ontology of materials, and for the reasons discussed above, an appeal to agency is not sufficient.

As Ingold asserts, "We need a theory not of agency, but of life" (2013:97).

Anthropologies of Wonder – An Animistic Lens

We find such a theory in the notion of animism, the philosophical orientation that views materials, animals and nature as alive, animate and sensing[21]. I will use the work of David Abram, eco-philosopher, cultural ecologist and sleight-of-hand magician, to briefly explore the notion of animism.

In his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (1996), Abram recounts travelling as a wandering magician through Bali. Here he met *dzankris* and *dukuns* – shamans of the particular area – and lived with them. Abram notes that the principal role of the shaman in such communities is as the interlocuter between the earth and humans; as stewarding and safeguarding the human community's relationship to the wider ecology. As Abram recalls:

> *I had rarely before paid much attention to the natural world. But my exposure to traditional magicians and seers was shifting my senses; I became increasingly susceptible to the solicitations of nonhuman things. In the course of struggling to decipher the magicians' odd gestures or to fathom their constant spoken references to powers unseen and unheard, I began to see and to hear in a manner I never had before. When a magician spoke of a power or "presence" lingering in the corner of his house, I learned to notice the ray of sunlight that was then pouring through a chink in the roof, illuminating a column of drifting dust, and to realize that that column of light was indeed a power, influencing the air currents by its warmth, and indeed influencing the*

[18] cited in Pannekoek and Dankert, 2018:152.
[19] cited in Pannekoek and Dankert, 2018:152-153.
[20] De Certeau (1988) explains 'trace' as the historical residues and resonances of an environment, which bleed into the current moment; as such, we may speak of the traces of a building or location in order to mark the teeming absences which populate the present.
[21] While Ingold uses the term 'animate' in some of his writings, and while much of his work can be said to align with the tenets of animistic discourse, he has not gone so far as to fully explore animism itself. Similarly, other scholars who register a vitality in materials, notably Joslin McKinney and Jane Bennett, have not dispensed with agency as a core concept.

whole mood of the room; although I had not consciously seen it before, it had already been structuring my experience.

(Abram, 1996:21-22)

As such, the animistic worldview registers the *presence* of things, it is attuned to the subtle happenings of sensible phenomena, and acknowledges the ongoing rapport between humans and the wider world. Vàzquez supports this when he notes:

The understanding of the mode of precedence, as relationality, as worldhood and earthliness, is a gift and a teaching from non-Western ontologies, it comes from listening to the epistemic outside of modernity, to non-Western genealogies of thought and their notions of existence[22].

(Vàzquez, 2017:87)

Such positions allow one to see beyond the horizon of thought, and the strictures of modern discursive frameworks which negate animistic modes of understanding the world. Abram notes that the way he related to materials, to nature and to animals was fundamentally affected by his time living with the traditional magicians of Bali:

It was from them that I first learned of the intelligence that lurks in nonhuman nature, the ability that an alien form of sentience has to echo one's own, to instill a reverberation in oneself that temporarily shatters habitual ways of seeing and feeling, leaving one open to a world all alive, awake, and aware.

(Abram, 1996:21)

This cursory foray into animism is complemented by momentarily considering the discipline of phenomenology. Phenomenology is the study of subjective experience, and reclaims the validity of subjective encounter as a site of knowledge, foregrounding the body in its formulation (Abram, 1996). The work of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty was instrumental to understanding perception in terms of a subject-object relationship that is non-hierarchical. In contradistinction to the 'disinterested observer' of modernity, Merleau-Ponty sees the viewer as encountering the world from inside "…the weight, the thickness, the flesh of each colour, of each sound, of each tactile texture…" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:114). His conception of 'reversibility', in which an intersubjective exchange occurs and "things pass into us as well as we into the things" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:123) illustrates a radical egalitarianism towards material and intersubjective relations, which McKinney (in Bleeker et al, 2015:120) argues, "points towards the possibility of a phenomenology of materiality with profound implications for understanding the role of scenography in performance".

In his later work, Merleau-Ponty arrived at the notion of the 'chiasm', the intertwining exchange of relations between seer and seen (McKinney in Bleeker et al., 2015:121). The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, spoke of the moment of *entanglement* within what he called the 'lifeworld' (Abram, 1996), the ceaseless happenings of the wider ecology of which we are a part.

[22] Here, the charge is not to venerate communities outside the West from a hierarchical and disingenuous position – as with the concept of 'the noble savage' (Fairchild, 1928). Rather, it involves assuming an orientation of earnest listening to locate what learnings might lie outside the Wests' epistemic purview.

These notions of chiasmatic encounters, intersubjective sensibilities and entanglements[23] bespeak the texture of the phenomenological perspective, which rubs up against limited appeals to agency, and sympathises with animistic thought. Abram explains the animistic quality of Merleau-Ponty's work – as he notes:

> *Merleau-Ponty writes of the perceived things as entities, of sensible qualities as powers, and of the sensible itself as a field of animate presences, in order to acknowledge and underscore their active, dynamic contribution to perceptual experience. To describe the animate life of particular things is simply the most precise and parsimonious way to articulate the things as we spontaneously experience them, prior to all our conceptualizations and definitions. Our most immediate experience of things, according to Merleau-Ponty, is necessarily an experience of reciprocal encounter — of tension, communication, and commingling.*

(Abram, 1996:43)

Thus, through Merleau-Ponty we are afforded a lexicon that affirms phenomenological experience and invites descriptions of the ways we may be 'filled' by a colour, or a certain texture may 'speak' to us. Merleau-Ponty said of material, scenographic traits like light, colour and space,

> *...[they] are there before us [...] because they awaken an echo in our bodies and because the body welcomes them*

(Merleau-Ponty cited in Collins & Nisbet, 2010:125)

All told, we might understand these 'echoes' as a particular mode of relationality subdued by normative ways of seeing, speaking and experiencing in the wake of modernity – and this proffers the possibility of exploring ways to reacquaint ourselves with occluded ways of seeing and being.

Awe as Anarchic: The Cost of Disenchantment

If a state of 'enchantment' implies a thick engagement with wider relational worlds, clearly, the condition of society is a disenchanted one. Alexander & Gleeson (2020), following Jane Bennett (2002), assert that disenchantment "…poses an ethical and political problem" (2021:17), seeing enchantment as a radical, even revolutionary act – crucial in the pushback against modernity and neoliberal capitalism. As they note:

> *...[the] concern is that the tendency of modernity to disenchant our lives has destructive social and ethical consequences [...] A disenchanted culture is one suffering the strange ache of malaise, the cause of which is difficult to identify, like a knot of anxiety that cannot be easily untied.*
>
> *(Alexander & Gleeson, 2020:3)*

[23] Such 'entanglements' are referred to as "onto-relational" (Faier, 2016:7) orientations. Latour (1987), Haraway (2003) and Barad (2007) have called these 'networks', 'relationships' and 'intra-actions' respectively (see Faier, 2018:7). As Beer (2021:36) suggests, such onto-relational understandings (far from effecting a kind of homogenisation) "…offer a way in which to resist nature/culture/human binaries in scenographic practice.

As such, radical enchantment becomes an ethical imperative.
Bennett suggests that any feeling of disenchantment[24] should act as impetus to move us closer in relationship with the world of which we are a part, noting that humans can be active in their acquisition of enchantment.

> *Enchantment is something that we encounter, that hits us, but it is also a comportment that can be fostered through deliberate strategies.*

(Bennett, 2001:4)

Bennett suggests that these strategies might include cultivating and developing a sense of play, as well as refining a sensory susceptibility or receptivity to the world around us.

Wonderwork: Strategies for [Re]Enchantment

Having examined at some length strategies for augmenting our relational entanglements, I now turn to those strategies which enable a closer engagement with material and enable a ludic orientation in scenographic practice. Bennett holds that enchantment can be generated through developing "tactics for cultivating an ability to discern the vitality of matter" (in Donald, 2014:118).

One way to cultivate this discernment in approaches to making, is to develop what Ingold describes as "a way of understanding and of being in the world characterized by openness, interconnectedness, and a perception of the environment as in perpetual flux..." (Donald, 2014:124). This amounts to an acknowledgement of the interdependence between humans and the more-than-human world (Donald, 2014), where humans, materials, animals and objects exist in relational ecology – and the scenographer works to attune themselves to the dynamic utterances and *lifeworld*s of the animate earth.

Seeing an interrelating ecology of materials as beings, along with ourselves, "...promotes an ecological perspective that profoundly challenges anthropocentricity" (Donald, 2014:124). This is a model that, extended to making, "[allows] matter its due in the performance's becoming" (McKinney & Palmer, 2017:17) – not simply from a perspective of agency, but of animism and of life.
Ingold (2013) has offered the suggestion that making be considered less a practice of the designer imbuing the form of their idea on 'inert' matter[25] but that making be recognized as a *growing*, where what is made emerges in earnest correspondence with materials.

This mode is similar to the notion of 'following the cut'[26]; which describes the manner in which an archeologist makes the first cut into stone and sand, and from this allows themselves to be led to the next. In this way, making unfurls through a continuing relational address with materials. Vázquez provides the concept of 'Decolonial Listening' which endeavours "...to form relational worlds beyond the hegemonic framework of Western

[24] Both Bennett (2001) as well as Alexander & Gleeson urge that we need not linger too long on the disenchantment effected by modernity. Indeed, they argue that resisting the narrative of societal and cultural disenchantment is a strategy to enhance enchantment.
[25] This top-down mode of creating is referred to as the hylomorphic model, or hylomorphism (Ingold, 2010).
[26] Edgeworth 2012 in Ingold, 2013.

modernity"[27]. For Vàzquez, to design from a mode of 'listening' requires a humbling of modernity, and to apply decolonial thinking to design "is about relating to the outside of your epistemic and aesthetic framework so that all your categories, your systems of thought, your senses become located, become humbled and open to real interactions and a growing with other worlds" (Vázquez, 2017:149).

Designing from a position of openness, of responsiveness and of the growing together that Vàzquez mentions, also resonates with Ingold's notion of 'correspondence'[28]. For Ingold, correspondence is a mode of relation akin to the reciprocal quality of making music with others, and is elucidated as such:

> *The players in a string quartet, for example, are not exchanging musical ideas – they are not interacting, in that sense – but are rather moving along together, listening as they play, and playing as they listen, at every moment sharing in each other's 'vivid present'*
>
> *(Ingold, 2013:106)*

Correspondence involves the type of 'listening' that Vàzquez expounds, of attuning or attending to a wider field of sensible phenomena. These concepts score a return to a 'withness' (Hann, 2019) in our modes of making and relating to materials – from 'looking at' to 'looking with'.

As an example of a practical approach to working in correspondence with materials, Ingold (2013) recounts the first exercise he takes his students on: a day-long activity of basket weaving. This slow, iterative but ultimately rewarding process is undertaken so that students might understand at an experiential level the 'feedback' given by materials in the process of making. The ensuant conversation between material and maker that exists in the methodical pulling and weaving of twine, a kind of coaxing of the material into its basket form, with an acknowledgement of the way that the basket, too, coaxes the maker with its own "force and flow" (Ingold, 2013:10). As Rajchman (2000:78) suggests, "…to make connections one needs not knowledge [nor] certainty […] but rather a trust that something may come out, though one is not yet completely sure what."

This orientation is responsive, visceral, sensate; where the practice of making is as the practice of weaving, bringing substances into relation with one another through an active process – what Ingold calls the 'textility of making' (Ingold, 2009:91). We might liken this way of working to that of the alchemist…as Ingold notes,

> *…to understand the meaning of materials for those who work with them…we have to remember how materials were understood in the days of alchemy…*
>
> *(2013:28)*

In this approach, the designer collaborates and engages with material based not on abstraction or some external attribution of the material, but as resolute entities with particular ways of behaving. Experienced, 'lived in' knowledge of the properties of

[27] cited in Pannekoek and Dankert, 2018:147.
[28] A term distinct from 'interaction', the prefix of which implies that entities are enclosed from one another and can only connect by means of a kind of bridge (Ingold, 2013:107).

materials does not come about by projecting knowledge onto them, "…but grows out of a lifetime of intimate gestural and sensory engagement…" (2013:29).

Within this mode of making, of alchemical conjuration, there lies an aspect of the ludic, of playful enchantment. As can be seen by this passage from the architect Peter Zumthor:

> *…I take a certain amount of oak and a different amount of tula, and then add something else: three grams of silver, a key – anything else you'd like?*
> *[…] we would look and see how things reacted together. And we all know there would be a reaction. Materials react with one another and have their radiance, so that the material composition gives rise to something unique. Material is endless. Take a stone: you can saw it, grind it, drill into it, split it, or polish it – it will become a different thing each time. Then take tiny amounts of the same stone, or huge amounts, and it will turn into something else again. Then hold it up to the light – different again. There are a thousand different possibilities in material alone. This is the kind of work I love, and the longer I do it the more mysterious it seems to become.*

(2006:23-25)

To work in the mode of the alchemist, with textility, or in correspondence, involves establishing a relation with the world predicated on "[opening] up our perception to what is going on there so that we, in turn, can respond" (Ingold, 2013:7). This way of working disrupts anthropocentric approaches to design, and offers a different means of collaborating with and coming to know materials.

Detouring the purely rational monolith of 'absolute truth', post-structuralist and feminist writers[29] have offered the concept of different *ways of knowing* that unfurl in synchrony with our engagement and experience of the world. Tsing (2015: viii) has termed these modes of knowledge 'entangled ways of life', describing the multifarious assemblages and interrelations that give way to new approaches to thought, like a polyphonic[30] symphony of alternate possibilities and ontologies. This offers many exciting possibilities for makers and audiences alike, and augments the processes and practices of the scenographer who is continually entangled within a set of relations with material collaborators[31], with scenographic elements like light, colour, texture and space – all alchemically comingling in the act of crafting atmospheres.

In gathering alternate ontologies, strategies, tactics, aligned with wonder and enchantment, curiosity is a crucial component. Tsing highlights curiosity by exploring the practice of mushroom foraging.

> *After the rains, the air smells fresh with ozone, sap, and leaf litter, and my senses are alive with curiosity […] Delight makes an impression: an impression of place. The very excitement of my senses commits to memory the suite of colours and scents, the angle of*

[29] See Gilligan, 1982; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Belenky, 1986.
[30] See also Bakhtin's conceptions of polyphony and dialogic relations (Dentith, 1995).
[31] Barad (2003) uses the term 'intra-actions' to dissolve the distance between subject and object – or maker and material – scoring the importance of what emerges within co-constitutive relationships. Haraway (2016) extends this, arguing that we must make 'oddkin' (2016:211) – befriending and collaborating with unconventional relatives, which might include the more-than-human world, and materials themselves.

the light, the scratching briars, the solid placement of this tree, and the rise of the hill before me.

(Tsing, 2012:141-142)

For Tsing, the scenographic tapestry of the forest floor is charged and vivified on encountering a mushroom, and ordinarily dispersed threads of attention are as pulled together, binding subject, presence and place. It is a wholly synaesthetic[32] engagement wherein eyes are sharpened for unusual colours, and extra-ocular sense faculties bristle with attentiveness[33]. Foragers must "…learn to traverse, translate, juggle, and toggle different ontologies and modes of discernment as they follow their desired objects across worlds of practice and modes of being" (Faier, 2016:10); clearly, there is something in this act that changes our phenomenological experience, of zoning into details usually passed by, almost as in a state of flow[34]. The practice of foraging entails "…following worldly entanglements"[35] and developing what Tsing calls 'Arts of Noticing' (2015:17) – an embodied sensitivity, honed through practice, to small and subtle gestures of the wider world, which might entreat those who look for them. The forager, follows their nose and their senses, usually ending up somewhere they would have never found had they been following a map. This strongly parallels the way in which Ingold (2013) speaks of working in correspondence with materials and reflects the organic 'pursuit' of ideas and material explorations within scenographic praxis. The scenographer, like the forager, must listen intently and follow their nose towards other ways of knowing.

Michel Foucault[36] speaks of curiosity in the following way:

To me […] it evokes the care one takes for what exists and could exist; a readiness to find strange and singular what surrounds us; a certain relentlessness to break up our familiarities and to regard otherwise the same things; a fervor to grasp what is happening and what passes; a casualness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of the important and the essential.

Curiosity utilised as a conceptual tool allows for a certain reflexivity with regards to the status quo, while also opening up space for the imagining of alternate possibilities; destabilising hierarchies and domains of power, as well as charging the familiar with novelty and freshness.

Tsing contends that curiosity upends teleological views of progress which erase the entanglements, the "…knots and pulses of patchiness" (2015:6) of the world and its relational nature. Curiosity sparks imagination and catalyses the drive to explore new ways of knowing, to follow lines of correspondence and make with verve and excitement – open to possibility. Cultivating curiosity automatically produces a disposition which enhances the process of making and researching.

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[32] Synaesthesis refers to the interlinkage of the senses, and has been used by Machon (2011) to develop the concept of 'synaesthetics', which describes a mode of experiencing and meaning making characterised by chthonic sensorial affect which inculcates the whole body.

[33] This coheres with Bennett's (2001:5) observation that when in a state of enchantment, "You notice new colors, discern details previously ignored, hear extraordinary sounds, as familiar landscapes of sense sharpen and intensify. The world comes alive as a collection of singularities."

[34] See Csikszentmihalyi, 1997.

[35] Tsing, 2015:137.

[36] cited in Daston & Park, 2001:9.

A final strategy available to us which I will discuss here, is play. In the book *Ludics: Play as Humanistic Enquiry*, Rapti & Gordon (2021) aim to make space for the embodied experiences and novel forms of knowledge acquisition which emerge through play, as a strategy for enquiry in the humanities.

The authors precise their understanding of playful enquiry as *ludics* – with its linguistic etymology in 'ludere' meaning 'to play'; the anthropologist Huizinga (1955:35) has observed that 'ludere' is aligned with "…non-seriousness, and particularly of 'semblance' or 'deception'[37]. Rapti & Gordon (2021) note that Huizinga's description belies a certain mischievousness in play, and "…alludes to its potential for new beginnings, setting into motion new realities, new inquiries, and new discoveries"[38].

For all its integrality in our humanness, as a bedrock of all learning and discovery, play has been viewed derisively as a 'retreat' or 'escape hatch' from serious matters of life[39]. Even the arts and the work of the artist have historically been annexed as a domain of frivolity (Rapti & Gordon, 2021). As Hannah Arendt[40] observes,

> *All serious activities irrespective of their fruits, are called labour, and every activity which is not necessary either for the life of the individual or the life process of society is subsumed under playfulness.*

Rapti & Gordon (2021:2) note, that in "…maligning play, society continues down its violent path of rationalisation." Clearly, within play there is a value which has often been overlooked: As Fegan observes of play, "We feel that something is behind it all, but we do not know, or have forgotten how to see it"[41]. One aspect may lie within play's potential for generative disruption. At the first, this is apparent in the way that play – as a 'nonserious' activity – subverts categorisation as 'productive labour' in industrial capitalism[42]. Sicart (2014) aligns play with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque, which speaks of work that

> *...has taken the carnival spirit into itself and thus reproduces, within its own structures and by its own practice, the characteristic inversions, parodies and discrownings of carnival proper…*
>
> *(Dentith, 1995:63)*

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[37] These components of nonserious semblance or deception correspond to playful misperceptions, mischievous or ludic encounters, rather than a malignant aim to 'trick' or 'deceive' as such. Subversive hijinks of this kind are, as Rapti & Gordon (2021) observe, generative in their capacity for mobilising re-renderings of reality, new questions and explorations.

[38] Rapti & Gordon 2021:3.

[39] Similarly, some people today will associate the experience of wonder, enchantment, or being astonished as a form of naivety. However, for much of human history, "wonder was thought an important response to life's mysteries" (Watt Smith, 2015:361). In the 19th century magical performance was viewed as 'intellectual entertainment', which pleasantly challenged the curiosity and perception of its audience. Illusions were viewed as respectable "edification by puzzlement" (2002:339).

[40] 1998:27.

[41] In Sutton-Smith (1997:2).

[42] Additionally, play resists the strictures of what Deleuze calls 'control societies' (1992 in Lavery, 2018:1) and their charge to be continuously productive.

The carnivalesque is associated with a celebration of the anarchic, as well as a mischievous proclivity for chaos which it mobilises "against the humourless seriousness of official culture…" (Dentith, 1995:64), celebrating non-linearity and subverting clear comprehension. For Sicart (2014), the carnivalesque nature of play involves understanding it as a kind of resistance; where playfulness involves a 'playlike appropriation'[43] of a context, space or situation not initially planned for play. Further to this, Sutton-Smith has noted how '…play is used as an oppositional strategy to fixed structures" (Rapati and Gordon 2021:5). Play therefore, can be viewed as is a strategy for intervening in established orthodoxies; and when aligned with site-specific installation work, or scenographic intervention which resists clear narrative ascriptions[44] the notion of material/scenographic play with the conceptual thrust of the carnivalesque, comes into focus.

While play is often acknowledged anecdotally as an approach to generating material in theatre in the wake of 'The Ludic Turn'[45], there is a paucity of research with respect to ludic methodologies in arts-based practice (Brussain, 2020). Within my own research, play has been essential in finding new ideas, initiating material devising and cohering collaborators. Reclaiming radical play is therefore crucial, as a subversive method not only for working with materials, but in structuring processes of performance making.

The above establishes those theoretical underpinnings of my practice which correspond to the philosophical matrix, or lattice on which practical work hangs. These involve troubling outmoded ways of seeing and engaging, as well as the importance of ontologies which catalyse prismatic apprehensions of the wider world, and wonder – which restores us within the thickness of wider ecologies.

Phantasmagoria: Working Between Worldings

I will now explore the notion of 'phantasmagoria' as a means of elaborating the final practical work which was undertaken.

phantasmagoria (noun)
a sequence of real or imaginary images like that seen in a dream

The word phantasmagoria derives from the ancient Greek words 'phantasma' – ghost; and 'agora' – assembly/gathering (OED, 2022). In modern usage, it relates to 19th century magic lantern expositions[46], and is defined as "a shifting series of phantasms, illusions, or deceptive appearances, as in a dream or as created by the imagination" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Perhaps more interesting than its denotative meaning, is how the word manages to hold the full scope of the fantastic. Here, the notion of the 'phantasmagoric' is utilised to map the theoretical territory of my practice.

Phantasmagoria is a prismatic concept – its strands include fantasy, illusion and oneiric shifts between worlds, underscoring the ways in which enchanting encounters arise and fall away.

[43] Sicart, 2014:27.
[44] See Hans-Thies Lehmann's conception of 'post-dramatic theatre', especially with regards to scenography (in McKinney & Palmer, 2017).
[45] Frissen et al., (2013).
[46] The Magic Lantern is an early optical instrument used to project ghostly or surreal images onto walls, with often eerie and astonishing effects (See Heard, 2006, and Jurgens, 2020).

A strong thread running through all practical experiments and performance pieces which I have worked on over the course of these two years, has been an endeavour of playing with the creation of hypertrophic[47] disruptions of quotidian space – by means of scenographic intervention – in such a way that a kind of fleeting 'peculiarisation[48]' is effected. Utilising wonder as a guiding principle and coupling scenography with the art of illusion as a methodological strategy has allowed for the exploration of how the extraordinary might emerge slowly, subtly, and unspectacularly; how it unfolds and infects the ordinary, spilling into quotidian space and time, refiguring conceptions of the real and expanding horizons of possibility. In essence, the research attempts to circle in on experiences which arise like a dream and thereafter recede back in to the ordinary, leaving the latter charged – centering scenography in this enquiry. I now turn to a discussion of the final performance piece in which I will broadly outline the concept and augment its explanation by means of pertinent theory, where necessary.

The final practical piece is a performance of sorts, with the working title '*Widdershyns*'; an old word meaning to go anticlockwise; it is often associated with the hijinks of pixies or sprites in fairytales, who would dance in the direction opposite to the movement of the sun[49]. To go 'lefthandways' also scores the interventionist or disruptive quality of enchantment as expressed by Bennett (2021) and the capacity of scenographics to intervene in established spatial orthodoxies[50], to interrupt the real.

Widdershyns explores the vitality and animateness of material, as well as the character of wondrous encounters which arise and then recede back into the ordinary, charging spaces with an afterglow of enchantment.

After lingering in the outside quad and foyer area beside the theatre, the audience moves into the theatre space, wherein they view a performance inspired by the experience of wonder, emphasising a sensate, ludic engagement with material.
The work makes use of eight large floor fans which, when turned on, form a whirling vortex of air[51], allowing various materials to hover in space, with which a performer interacts.

Even more crucial than the perceptible event, is the space before and after.
We move together, from the ordinary, into a moment of conjured peculiarity, a visceral out-of-the ordinary (or more accurately, beside-the-ordinary), organised through scenographic elements, and indeed, elements acting as scenographic. We shift between worldings.

My fascination with wonder, enchantment and with strategies which can unveil it – rests in a fascination with designing experiences, moments, journeys, which in some way shift our normative ways of *worlding*.

Worlding, simply, is "an individual's whole-person act of attending to the world" (Palmer & Hunter, 2018: n.p.); the process of opening different ways of being in time and space, of

[47] See Hann, 2019. A more detailed outline of the concept of hypertrophy follows at a later stage.
[48] See Hann, 2019.
[49] Daston & Park, 2001.
[50] See Hann, 2019.
[51] A configuration of fans in a circle with some such material in the centre has been used by 'air sculptor' Daniel Wurtzel among others and acts as inspiration here. I became interested in seeing what it might be like to work with different materials, and include a person inside the vortex, to explore scenographic material exploration and entanglement by means of performance. Wind has also been used by the Russian clown Slava Polunin to create a particularly spectacular snow storm.

rendering our realities in the thickness of each moment. As Palmer & Hunter (2018: n.p.) note:

> *Worlding is informed by our turning of attention to a certain experience, place or encounter and our active engagement with the materiality and context in which events and interactions occur.*

Scenography, as innately entangled with materiality, places, and encounters between different subjectivities, offers an apt lens with which to consider worlding. The capacity for enchantment to destabilise worlding orientations[52], to write over the ordinary with the shimmer of magic, is alluded to by Bennett, when they note:

> *To be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday.*
>
> *(2001:4)*

To explore oscillations between the profane and the extraordinary, it is necessary to establish an 'ordinary' space, against which the magical might emerge and play. I decided to use the university campus itself and the theatre space – as a 'shared' ordinary that the audience would be familiar with; working within common spaces of the university, and considering the theatre at *site* utilises the most immediate shared ordinary we have. The outside quad and the foyer, where the audience linger, represent a not only a democratised space, but one that is 'betwixt and between'[53]other spaces, which is passed through on the way to somewhere else. For our audience, it is a site of the quotidian, the everyday. Registering the qualities of this given ordinary, its rhythms, its experiential cadences, the characters which normally inhabit the space and those actions which ordinarily occur there, allows for the fashioning of a simulacrum of the ordinary against which a *hypertrophic* extraordinary might emerge.

The concept of the 'hypertrophic', is first outlined by Victor Turner. This term comes from biology, wherein a cell that is hypertrophic enlarges and becomes distinct from the cells that surround it, before reverting back to its previous state. The metamorphosis of hypertrophy is necessarily fleeting, emerging only for a time, before this reversion takes place.
The temporal dimension of the hypertrophic relates also to Fischer-Lichte's (2008:179) writing on the transformative capacity of liminality[54],

> *The transformations caused by liminality are predominantly temporary; they take effect but for the duration of the performance or for limited periods of time within the performance.*

As an example, we might imagine the glimmer of a moonbeam on lake, such that it creates paths of pale light across the water which – with the coming of daylight – evanesce into just so many shimmers of the sun.

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[52] Worlding orientations describes the way subjects are 'orientated' to the world, particularly regarding scenographic and atmospheric influences (Hann, 2019).
[53] Turner, 1967:94.
[54] Liminality refers to the 'liminal phase', from 'limen' meaning 'threshold'. It is associated with the work of Victor Turner and refers to an 'in-between' phase of experience which holds the possibility for transformation (Turner, 1982).

These paths of moonlight could be understood as 'hypertrophic', a part of the ordinary that emerges, becomes peculiar, distinct, highlighted, before drawing away. Hann (2019) notes that scenography as an act of staging and making place, involves creating spatial hypertrophies which usurp normative orthodoxies of space (Hann, 2019). As such, scenographic elements can be organized to peculiarise ordinary spaces, or mark the shifts between worlds.

The timbre of the shift in worlding between the 'magical' and the 'real' is perhaps best expressed by considering of the literary genre of Magical Realism. Magical Realism has its genesis in the writing of Latin American authors, and is well represented in the global South; the hybridisation of the magical and the real, "…combined with the inclusion of different cultural traditions, means that magical realism reflects…the hybrid nature of of much postcolonial society (Faris, 2004:1). Embedded within the genre is a move to destabilise and disrupt hierarchy and orthodoxies of power, by means of the magical; and as a result, it has "served as a particularly effective decolonising agent" (Faris, 2004:1). In this genre, magical occurrences emerge within the quotidian; as Faris notes,

> *magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them.*

(2004:1)

As Cooper (1998) notes, interweaving spaces of the 'magical' and the 'real' "…is to exist in a third space[55], in the fertile interstices between these extremes" (1998:1).

The main tenet I would like to draw out from this genre is its capacity for destabilising or fissuring the ordinary. As Erikson (1995:428) observes, a central aim of the genre is to create work that in some way "…ruptures the coherence of a systemised empirical world". The genre also works to destabilise ontologies predicated on enlightenment rationality, that preclude a tumult of relational entanglements, as discussed earlier[56]. Alexander & Gleeson (2019:5) have "...discovered that enchantments can disturb, and disturbances can enchant", emphasising the way in which inversions of the ordinary offer the affective potential of enchantment, which works to generatively shift, reorganise or destabilise quotidian experience[57]. In this way, enchantment is a space of liminality "caused by the destabilisation of […] the world, and its norms" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008:179). 'Phantasmagoric Intervention' can be understood as a practice which utilises scenographic elements to effect a peculiarising of spatial orthodoxies, writing hypertrophic enchantments over ordinary space. In this way, it could be said to participate in what Osborne (1979:116) calls a "super reality" as it works to intertwine the real and the imagined.

The performance establishes a dialectic of two plateaus[58] – one magical and one *real*, which influence one another bidirectionally. In the case of *Widdershyns*, the fact that it

[55] 'The Third Space' is a concept that comes from the work of Homi Bhabha (cited in Rutherford, 1990), to articulate the hybridity of postcolonial identity. This concept also works to destabilise and disrupt colonial hierarchy.
[56] Faris, 2004.
[57] This capacity is also related to the concept of 'defamiliarisation' as described by Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky (Fischer-Lichte, 2008).
[58] While first used in the context of Cornish theatre, the notion of 'plateau' has seeped into general conceptions of the performance space as in some way elevated from ordinary life. See McEvilley, 1986 cited in Hann, 2018:94.

begins in a prefigured 'ordinary', the quad/foyer area, which operates via different spatial orthodoxies than the black box theatre[59], introduces an opportunity for shifting the way participants are orientated to curated worlds, and marks distinctly the oneiric slippage between reality and fantasy[60]. The student entering with a venue key, as if coming into a rehearsal, further emulates the 'ordinary' codes of engagement within the space. Here, the magical reacts against the quotidian, rubs against orthodoxies of the real, and arises as a fleeting, momentary event before receding back to normality.

Widdershyns: An Examination of the Practical Explication

The student walks through the foyer and enters the theatre. They cross the threshold and enter this new space, and, as if going through the motions of a daily rehearsal, place their belongings and the key to the venue down. A crumpled, discarded piece of plastic lies in the centre of the stage, and the performer begins to interact with it, picking it up, spinning it around; yet it remains lifeless, falling to the ground. Just the student leaves the circle in frustration, the fans turn on gently, allowing the plastic to seem to come to life, beckoning back.

As our performer once again steps into the middle of the vortex of air, there is a sonic as well as a sensorial feeling of rapture, of rising on the updraft of wind. This moment alludes to the chthonic, bodily affect of enchantment. It is as Bennett (2001:5) observes:

> *To be simultaneously transfixed in wonder and transported by sense, to be both caught up and carried away — enchantment is marked by this odd combination of somatic effects.*

Here again is a moment of visceral synaesthetic effect, which works on both audience and performer. This sense of things 'rising up' on the air resonates with the emergent quality of the hypertrophic; characterised by a slow and steady tippling of the strange into the ordinary.

The most apparent experiential component at this point, is sound. The sound of the fans fills the space, a drone which rises out of an auditory emptiness. Marshal McLuhan has noted how sound manifests an 'auditory space':

the essential feature of sound is not that it has location but that it be, that it fill space. Sound is an envelope […] It is not pictorial space but dynamic, always in flux; creating its own dimensions moment by moment.

(Marchessault cited in Hann 2019:94)

Similarly, Ingold (2011:139) notes that, "sound is pervasive, encompassing, and uncontainable. It reaches through and beyond matter, engulfing or 'ensounding'". Therefore, sound as a totalising entity enables a means of 'making space', operatively – as

[59] As Hann (2019:86) notes, "…the intention of the black box is to reflect nothing, to allow the ritual of drama to emerge from a performed nothingness". It is constructed as a void, where "society is kept at bay" (Wiles, 2003:256 cited in Trubridge, 2012).
[60] Bachelard (1969:287) observes that 'inside' and 'outside' form a powerful dialectical divide, which in and of itself delineates a shift in phenomenological experience.

an effusive force which enfolds and dynamically shifts spatialities in situ. Following McLuhan's conception of auditory space, defined "in terms of time rather than boundary" (Hann, 2019:94), sound also works to punctuate the shifts between ordinary and extraordinary in the performance. The sound of the fans bookend what might be described as the 'enchanting' moment of the piece, arising and so sonically transfiguring the space, before turning off as the piece dissolves back into normality. In *Widdershyns*, sound works like the 'refrain' as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari, it

> *turns back on itself, opens onto itself, revealing until then unheard-of potentialities, entering into other connections, setting [things][…] adrift in the direction of other assemblages.*

(in Bennett, 2001:8)

These 'other assemblages', understood as clusters of scenographic traits, include the plastic, which hovers like a phantasm on the air. The process of devising allowed for the invocation of the strategies outlined previously; a ludic, curious engagement with other materials – including a parachute, a length of black ribbon, and the performer's own hair – which gave way to multifarious images and interactions. Devising is led to some extent by a finding from previous practice-as-research[61] work, namely that it is possible to use an illusion as a meta-structure in the piece, informing the form and experiential dramaturgy of the event. In this case, the emotion of wonder is utilised as a prompt in engaging with material. Deriving the piece by working in correspondence with our materials, and led by an imperative of wonder, coheres with Bennett's view that enchantment "…requires active engagement with objects of sensuous experience; it is a state of interactive fascination"[62]. As such, play, fascination and curiosity, when united with sensuous engagement, generate enchantment and wonder.

Desiring to foreground scenographic elements, instead of developing a dramatic narrative as such, could be said to align with Hans-Thies Lehmann's conception of 'post-dramatic theatre', especially with regards to "objects taking precedence" (McKinney in Bleeker et al, 2015:124), or otherwise performing themselves[63]. With active material engagement, interpretive elements of the performance are "…superseded in performance by the way the materials respond to the physical capacities of the stage and the way that performers have to improvise with them" (McKinney & Palmer, 2017:12). This is particularly the case when working with an unruly[64] scenographic 'material', like wind. As Ingold (2007) notes, we cannot interact with wind directly through tactility, only through a kind of *mingling*. Wind cannot be entirely controlled; it is unwieldy (McKinney & Palmer, 2017) and establishes itself as its own entity in the performance. Working with wind and floating materials produces a doubling of the 'forces and flow' which Ingold (2013:10) finds in material collaborations. Collaborating in correspondence with them as they dance on the air allows us to explore the ways they fall, form, conceal; how they diffuse light, their iridescence…and so

[61] See Barrett & Bolt, 2017.
[62] Bennett, 2001:5.
[63] Fischer-Lichte notes that 'movement', including the movement of material, is oftentimes rendered invisible onstage; they observe that the mise en scène – the gamut of visual components, often organised by the scenographer – "…works towards making movement appear" (2008:186). For Fishcher-Lichte, the act of 'staging' in a scenographic sense, allows movement to become visible. Clearly, this is evident in 'Widdershyns', which works to stage and centre the dynamic motions of material components.
[64] See Donald, (2014:124) regarding working with unpredictable elements like wind.

on; yet all these elements of emerging from the materials are modulated and augmented at the same time by the wind, which has its own clear forces and flows[65].

One pertinent aspect to consider, is the space itself – the billowing, playful plastic which climbs high into the theatre's vertical volume of space, as well as the large, unfurling parachute which pours itself out towards the audience, makes space visible and demonstrates spatial mutability with each rise and fall.

Pringle (2002) historicises the attribution of space with active qualities like "…flowing, leading, inviting, shifting, embracing, and shimmering…" through an examination of the art and principles of the stage magician. They contend that illusions held embedded within them ideas that "prefigure […] thoughts, desires, and fascinations that are still at play in contemporary spatial culture" (Pringle, 2002:334), scoring the way scenographic design might regard space as 'plastic', 'light', or herald its capacity for spatial transfigurations.

The sense of spatial or 'scenographic reverie'[66], as evoked in the floating materials in *Widdershyns*, coheres with Pringle's (2002:335) idea that "…fascination with spatial operations is part of a current willingness, even longing, for space to play with us; to respond to us; to trick, tease, and disturb us; just as we, as designers, speak of playing with it." This denotes the texture of a ludic, sensate engagement with space and material in scenographic intervention.

Whirling Wind – An Invisible Collaborator

In the same way that sound fills the space, so does air. It is invisible and yet everywhere[67]. Indeed, Ingold (2007) has referred to it simply as 'the medium' to emphasise the way in which we are connected to one another and the wider sensible world, through collective immersion in the substance. As Ingold notes, the movement of air, inward and outward, in the process of respiration[68] – is vital for life. He observes that many languages share commonalities in their words for life, breath, or wind.

> *Our English word 'animate', for example, from which the notion of animism is derived, comes from the Latin 'animare' (to give life) and 'anima' (breath), both in turn derived from the Greek 'anemos' (wind).*

(Ingold, 2007: S31)

It is for this reason that I was first interested in working with air scenographically, as well as the fact that it is invisible, yet is able to influence other phenomena in an almost magical way. Ingold notes that 'the medium' of air is almost always in constant flux and flow. Sometimes its oscillations are near imperceptible, and sometimes they are particularly forceful[69]; it is in this sense that we know them as wind (Ingold, 2007: S29). The wind is neither 'object' nor 'material' in the usual sense…

[65] These aspects can also be understood as what Veltruský (1964:88) calls 'action-force' in theatre.
[66] Which Pringle refers to as 'spatial thrill' and 'spatial collective dream' 2002:340.
[67] This coheres with Gernot Böhme's (2017:148) conception of atmospheres as "the overwhelming fluidium". Böhme also notes that sound can radiate out and be felt spatially.
[68] In the flow of breathing, "Inspiration is wind becoming breath, expiration is breath becoming wind" (Ingold, 2007: S31).
[69] As (Serres, 2000:29) observes, wind is "order and disorder at once".

As the fire is its burning and the cloud is its billowing, so the wind is its blowing.

(Ingold, 2007: S30)

The wind is inextricably tied to its animateness; what it does, how it *moves*.

In his most recently published book, *Imagining for Real*[70], Ingold discusses 'whirling' – which he sees as the animate action of life. This spiraling motion turns in on itself over and over again – not like a circle with a given centre – but a dynamic point of stillness around which it travels. Ingold (2022:43) notes that in the action of the whirl,

...movement and form co-constitute one another: movement turns into form, and form into movement. The whirl's revolution is generative, it is a movement of growth.

As such, the whirl is in constant transfiguration, resisting fixity. In this way, all scenographic elements, be they material, elemental or human[71], are constantly arcing into alternate possibility, "veering off course […] turning into that which remains unknown" (Ingold, 2022:42).

With every whip around, the whirl conjures up eddies and vortices – it is as a current that fashions the new as it rolls out the old, that continually recurs, continually becomes. This ferment of potentiality reflects not only the dynamic whirls of floating and twisting materials rapt up on the wind, but also the way in which our *human* performer, standing in the centre of the vortex, works in correspondence with these scenographic elements. The scenographic ensemble evoked here – of material, wind, and 'entangled' subject, resonates with Fischer-Lichte's (2008:186) view that,

Artistic and technical means have the task to enhance […] the ecstasy of things; they direct the spectators' attention to their phenomenal beings, and they render this phenomenal being conspicuous. Thus, the body of the actor and the objects appear and show themselves to the spectators in their own ephemeral presence.

Scenographic staging as in *Widdershyns* allows materials to radiate their ecstasies[72] (Böhme, 2017); in this way, scenographic entities are *framed* so as to demonstrate their presence, to demonstrate themselves *as is*.

At the end of the performance, the moment dismantles itself and things drift back down into the ordinary. Even here however, there is capacity for aesthetic experience (Fischer-Lichte, 2008:179-180) and enchantment. As Fischer-Lichte notes,

When the ordinary becomes conspicuous, when dichotomies collapse and things turn into their opposites, the spectators perceive the world as 'enchanted.' Through this enchantment the spectators are transformed.

(Fischer-Lichte, 2008:179-180)

[70] Ingold, 2022.
[71] McKinney & Palmer (2017) also acknowledge that bodies themselves exert scenographic influence.
[72] Böhme speaks of 'ecstasy' spatially, as the ways objects exceed themselves, spilling out and extending into space – and so becoming present (2017:8).

In this case, it is the disassembly of a scenographic fabulation that punctuates the moment. The arresting experience of arriving at the other side of a dichotomy of enchantment – when fans switch off and the fervour of the whirlwind settles into nothing more than what existed at the start… we hardly notice that the performer is gone too.
This is the hypertrophic at work – and its trace, its afterglow works on the audience even after what appears as the end.

Perhaps here, there is potential for a transformation, a re-rendering.

It is as Nondumiso Lwazi Msimanga[73] suggests:

> *Transformation in performance takes place through the creation of a new reality, a new time, a new space that puts the world of the performance in immediate dialogue with the real world of emotion: magic.*

Conclusion: The Afterglow of Enchantment

At the interstice of wonder, worlding, and the charge to consider more seriously the entanglements in which we are a part, a space opens up which thereafter resists closure.

We all hold resonances of wonder. Often it exists in some place beyond words, in soft and secret rememberings of reverie; to be conjured up in chthonic wisps by the arrangement of the stars, the lilt of rustling leaves, or in moments of simple ecstasy.
While we may not be able to get out of life alive, we clearly cannot get out unenchanted.

Oftentimes, the fantastic is subsumed amid the on-rolling everyday. We exist for long stretches in a world without magic; and forget ways to see it.
However, the whirl of wonder does invite us to participate in its turning – it entreats us to take it up and add to the revolution, by means of whatever eddies of enchantment surround.

Bennett (2008:174) leaves us a clue,

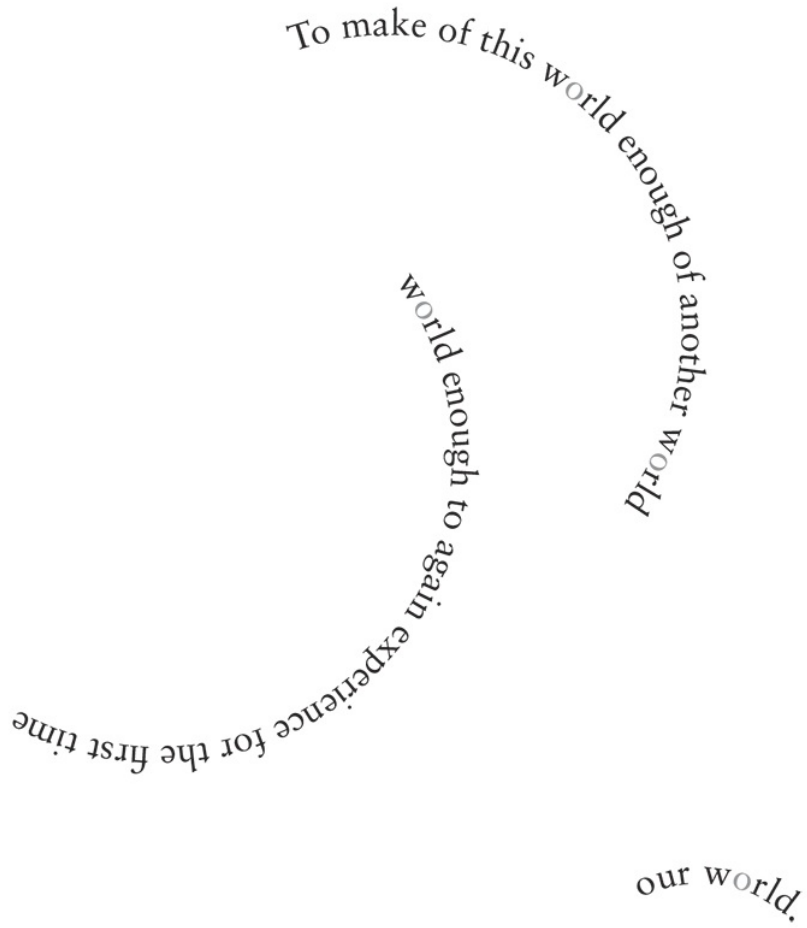
These enchantments are already in and around us.

Perhaps they can be located by a practice of sitting quietly and moving from a state of busied thinking to one which seems more like a *listening*; or to play, cultivate curiosity, or forage even the forests of city, parking lot, cupboard and windowsill; to find what small wonders wait to be noticed.

In the fleeting parenthesis of wonder, there is an opportunity for re-rendering; to create new and shimmering worlds in the shell of the old; to grow in and through orthodoxies which scribe perception – and to begin, gently, to restore the entanglements of our lives.

Ultimately, this work seeks only to approach the same whirling wish that is offered at the beginning of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* (1969:19):

[73] in Pather & Boulle, 2019:165.


To make of this world enough of another world
world enough to again experience for the first time
our world.

[10 644 words]

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