

A few thoughts on streaming performance.

Annie Abraham's "[Angry Women](#)" couldn't not help but catch my eye (for it's title alone). Having survived the music business where women ride the full parabola over a number of years from empowered to numb to angry. After anger is a silence, because there has been no way to lock arms across time and space and let it blast worldwide, beyond any one incident. Maybe projects like "Angry Women" can be built upon.

To be on a web cam, struggling to project 'honesty', a naturalistic posture, revealing what you think you look like out from under the gaze, is mostly impossible. Web performance is an extension of theater unless the camera is hidden and then it is probably an expansion of documentary cinema or CCTV. It's just my opinion that nothing head-on with a camera aimed at you is honest in the way you intend, unless you have never had any experience with a camera before. You are performing even if you eliminated all mannered gestures, makeup and costume.

Just as you lose a large part of the audience for written information if you make them scroll too far, you lose the interest or others if even your 'attempted realness' seems unedited. What you feel hypnotizing you on your monitor is not purely narcissism, rather it is a visual equivalent to singing with a live audience while hearing your own voice in the monitors masked with delay/ dub echo. It can be mastered with a few tricks like holding a finger in one ear... to place that untreated, direct from the throat sonic vibration at the center of your mental focus. My background is that of being a musician, really a writer who presents as a performer/recording artist...most people in the music world who work as I do, don't like jamming but are comfortable with short periods of ad-libbing. Maybe a more nuanced directive for 'Angry Women' would have given an emotional 'call and response' relation to each other. The performers seemed to need a way to overcome the isolation of being side by side but not connected during a themed experience. Or maybe an open discussion, performed with some streams dormant, that can modulate into solo expression and back to silence would give the idea that we are watching interactive thinking among the performers. In that period of solo expression, in a single frame, and during that period of silence in the other frames, we might find the revealing lapse of conscious self-presentation. Well, maybe. It takes training to be able to broadcast thought, from the eyes alone, while framed as a talking head.

Strip away the 80's commercial direction in this video pop performance and just look at her eyes https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUiTQvT0W_0 It is the same sort of communicative power based in silence that Marina Abramovic uses in the durational piece "The Artist Is Present". The camera rebroadcasts what is there in the first place.

I also fall into the camp of those who believe that all performance is collaboration and it is only because we are now admitting it occasionally that there even is a debate. Then minute this is fully accepted, the division of rewards (and there will eventually be paid performances in webcast) will be another grey area needing scrutiny. It threatens the

hierarchical structure of large art projects and uncovers the value of each or the others involved.

What I find about web performance (for 5 years I've worked in aether9) is that I love the sensation of being in several places at once....the audio ambience of it all is a wonderful cipher of the 'big world' or even the 'unseeable world'. We are all finally acknowledging the several selves in each of us which function concurrently in different roles in our composite personality/our constructed reality. Web based collaboration among creatives who have never (or rarely) met works well. I can work with you, understanding the patterns of your thoughts without knowing the name of your husband or your cat. The intimacy with each other and the viewer that many performers in "Angry Women" seem to miss, rather the 'realness' everyone fears lost, is more easily spotted when alongside off-script moments during a scripted performance. Think of charming banter between songs or 'bloopers' during the filming process. Or the old interviewer's trick of not turning the camera off after the interview to capture the fear of silence, the unguarded moment/ the unintended revelation....but now the more sophisticated interviewees just get up and leave.

I am following the Dutch discussion on the de-professionalization caused by cuts in the state budget for the arts. Web-based live performance has the potential, if it can keep developing a cross-cultural language to communicate, by performing across the available technology; we have a near level 'field of play' to present a viable alternative to the powerful engine of advertising developed in the twentieth century. Pop art tried to 'go along and get along' with the advertising monster. We no longer need to absorb and reflect back. An all access multinational art stage can challenge it. The basis for that communication seems to be English, but not the English of a native speaker. I am learning to avoid art-speak and slang; for the sake of inclusion and clarity, I try to strip back to the basic bones of the Universal English spoken as a second language. De-professionalization affects not only the highly educated, who cannot financially profit from their art practice, it also strangles the self-taught voice from the street, those for whom time is money burning. So many jewels of culture have historically come from this quarter that it is reasonable to expect a renaissance if web based performance arts are made important to most people. My final thought for now is that theory has to be the hidden core of web performance; it cannot be center stage. It is the skeleton upon which broadcast is draped. No one wants to actually see the bones in the story, we'd much rather take theory like a 'how to' wiki on the side. I've enjoyed the 'Angry Women' project; I'll continue to think about it and watch for another performance.

Judy Nylon, 06 02 2013.