

28<sup>th</sup> June 2009

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**Re: Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship to Zagreb (23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2009) to present the paper “Misreading photography – describing the photographer’s experience as a performance”.**

Dear LUTSF

I would like to thank you for awarding me with the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship to travel to Zagreb in order to present a paper at the conference Performance Studies International (PSi).

I travelled to Croatia on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June and returned on the 27<sup>th</sup> June. The conference unofficially started on the day of my arrival and I attended the National Theatre in the evening to see “Turbo Folk” by Oliver Frljic. I was presenting my paper the following day, which proved to be very interesting and helpful to my PhD studies at Brunel University. The presented paper was part of my thesis and it was very valuable to receive comments and questions afterwards, allowing me to verbally address and share the issues related to my overall study.

There were two panels to choose every day and the variety of subjects meant I could choose the ones which were relevant to my interests i.e. photography as well as the relationship between performance studies and visual cultures. Late afternoons and evenings were dedicated to practical works giving the conference participants opportunity to see art installations, performances and theatre works in progress.

As mentioned above, having a chance to present the paper at the conference has been helpful for the completion of my PhD thesis. As suggestions for future Awardees I would say it is important to plan the trip carefully but also be realistic about how much one can do in the certain period of time. It is valuable to see, experience and participate in as much as one can when abroad, but it is also valuable to leave some time for the immediate reflection on those experiences.

Once again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to travel to Zagreb and please see the report attached.

Yours sincerely

Karolina Bieszczad-Roley

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## **Report from my attendance at PSi conference in Croatia**

### **First evening.** <sup>[1]</sup>

I arrived in Zagreb in the early afternoon and went to the National Theatre to see the performance “Turbo Folk” by Oliver Frljic. Although prior booking was necessary – the information I had missed when looking through the online PSi catalogue – everyone interested was let in. The performance drew on the former Yugoslavian countries ethnic music dubbed “turbo-folk”. The spoken language in the performance was Croatian, however some parts were simultaneously translated into English on the wall projector. After the show, I had a chance to speak to a member of the audience who was Croatian and she explained to me that a great part of performance must have remained not understood by other nations because the performance was strongly rooted in the regional economical and social affairs of Rijeka. I did have a feeling that the main deeper message of this theatre piece was beyond my cultural knowledge of Croatia, nevertheless I enjoyed the show and found it a good introduction to my stay in Zagreb.

### **First day**

I presented my paper entitled “Misreading photography - describing the photographer’s experience as a performance” in the morning, as part of the panel “Photographic Distortion”. My paper focused on the study of the photographer’s experience during the act of photographing Butoh dance. It proposed to consider this experience as an ‘inner’ performance and provided its detailed description as alternative to the image captured by the camera. The topic of the paper was part of my PhD thesis at Brunel University. It was 20min long followed by questions from the audience. I found the questions very valuable and reassuring in the context of my overall study at the University in London. Although I presented only a small section of my larger research, the audience asked a lot of questions which related to other parts of my study. I enjoyed this conversation after reading the paper because it allowed me to verbally articulate aspects of my thesis, which until then were subjects of closed discussions between me and my university supervisors.

I also had a very interesting conversation with an academic who was presenting his paper at the same panel as me; he has been living in Taiwan for 9 years and visited Japan, where he met Kazuo Ohno – a founder of Butoh dance. It was interesting to go back with memories of my own stay in Japan, and exchange views about the places and people who were in the core of the beginnings of Butoh.

### **Second day**

I attended the panel “Performance and Its Dis-Functions: Unworking Subjectivity across the Fields of Dance, Performance and Visual Art. Prior to that I planned to listen to Adam Broinowski’s paper dealing with Tatsumi Hijikata – the second founder of Butoh dance – and his relations to Mass Student Process in 1968. The paper, however, was cancelled, which was very disappointing; I had met Adam before during last year’s PSi conference in Copenhagen and we shared many views on the Japanese dance and I was looking forward for the informal discussions with him.

Instead, I attended a presentation by an artist from Rio de Janeiro, Eleonora Fabiao, who talked about her art practice in the context of reconsidering the notions of the colonial body and the performative body. I thought it was one of the best paper presentations I have seen so far. Her reading of the paper was a performance in itself – dynamic, engaging and reflective. It was a great inspiration to see this presentation, and see how successfully one can combine practical research with the theory.

### **Third evening**

I planned to see an art installation entitled “Punishment and Crime” by Katarzyna Kozyra. Unfortunately, I was informed that there was a change in the program and her installation closed earlier. Again, I was very disappointed with another change; I have not seen before any work of Kozyra, however her art has been widely discussed in Poland in the atmosphere of a scandal. I was interested in observing the reaction from other cultural backgrounds.

Instead of seeing the installation, I went to another shift called “Dark Room: A Performance and Conversation about Torture”. Although the subject of the lecture/performance was very interesting, I had a feeling its potential was not successfully fulfilled. After the show I discussed the subject of torture with my twin sister, who is a PhD student in Psychotherapy, and another conference co-participant who is a PhD student in Philosophy. This cameral after-show meeting opened up a lot of questions on the subject of torture and served as a kind of compensation for the unfulfilled expectations from the performance.

### **Last day**

Because of the changes in my flight schedule, I had to leave Croatia early in the morning instead of late afternoon. This prevented me from attending a couple more panels. However, I had a feeling that the previous days were successful in terms of what I had planned for myself. I met inspiring academics as well as artists in the field of performance studies and photography. My first conference presentation went well, giving me self-confidence needed to successfully finish my PhD.

My experiences in Zagreb go beyond the frames of the conference. The stay was marked by the mixture of the academic world and personal stories. Zagreb, as a city is incredibly similar to Krakow in Poland, where I was born and grew up. Having lived in London for the last 5 years (and recently moving to Oslo) meant that the visit to Zagreb felt for me like going back with memories to my childhood. Moreover, my twin sister was also in Zagreb at that time and it was our first trip together during the last 10 years. We explored the city of Zagreb with the eyes of memories from Krakow, where we grew up strongly anchored in the socially and politically involved artistic environment of those times.

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[1] I am describing only selected events that I have participated in. The variety as well as academically and culturally rich program made it impossible to describe all the experiences in details.