

Reflecting Light/Copenhagen Residency

Report Day 2/Tuesday Sept 27th

10h17 - Hauntology intro: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hauntology>

& Emese setting an example from how Hauntology functioned in her artistic collaboration before – where references from US lightdesign inspired her approach to the artistic content (the invisible work of the silkworms) of a project but also blocked the relation with the artistic team.

& **10h41 - collective reading Mark Fisher: Why hauntology?**

Derrida coined the term 'hauntology' in his *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. 'To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept,' he wrote. (Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, Routledge, 1994, p202) Hauntology was this concept, or puncept. The pun was on the philosophical concept of ontology, the philosophical study of what can be said to exist. Hauntology was the successor to previous concepts of Derrida's such as the trace and differance; like those earlier terms, it referred to the way in which nothing enjoys a purely positive existence. Everything that exists is possible only on the basis of a whole series of absences, which precede and surround it, allowing it to possess such consistency and intelligibility that it does. In the famous example, any particular linguistic term gains its meaning not from its own positive qualities but from its difference from other terms. Hence Derrida's ingenious deconstructions of the 'metaphysics of presence' and 'phonocentrism', which expose the way in which particular dominant forms of thought had (incoherently) privileged the voice over writing.

But hauntology explicitly brings into play the question of time in a way that had not quite been the case with the trace or differance. One of the repeated phrases in *Specters of Marx* is from Hamlet, 'the time is out of joint' and in his recent *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*, Martin Hagglund argues that it is possible to see all of Derrida's work in relation to this concept of broken time. 'Derrida's aim,' Hagglund argues, 'is to formulate a general 'hauntology' (hantologie), in contrast to the traditional 'ontology' that thinks being in terms of self-identical presence. What is important about the figure of the specter, then, is that it cannot be fully present: it has no being in itself but marks a relation to what is no longer or not yet' (*Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*, Stanford University Press, 2008, p82)

Is hauntology, then, some attempt to revive the supernatural, or is it just a figure of speech? The way out of this unhelpful opposition is to think of hauntology as the agency of the virtual, with the spectre understood not as anything supernatural, but as that which acts without (physically) existing. The great thinkers of modernity, Freud as well as Marx, had discovered different modes of this spectral causality. The late capitalist world, governed by the abstractions of finance, is very clearly a world in which virtualities are effective, and perhaps the most ominous 'spectre of Marx' is capital itself. But as Derrida underlines in his interviews in the *Ghost Dance* film, psychoanalysis is also a 'science of ghosts', a study of how reverberant events in the psyche become revenants.

Referring back to Hagglund's distinction between the no longer and the not yet, we can provisionally distinguish two directions in hauntology. The first refers to that which is (in actuality is) no longer, but which remains effective as a virtuality (the traumatic 'compulsion to repeat', a fatal pattern). The

second sense of hauntology refers to that which (in actuality) has not yet happened, but which is already effective in the virtual (an attractor, an anticipation shaping current behaviour). The 'spectre of communism' that Marx and Engels had warned of in the first lines of the Communist Manifesto was just this kind of ghost: a virtuality whose threatened coming was already playing a part in undermining the present state of things.

In addition to being another moment in Derrida's own philosophical project of deconstruction, Specters of Marx was also a specific engagement with the immediate historical context provided by the disintegration of the Soviet empire. Or rather, it was an engagement with the alleged disappearance of history trumpeted by Francis Fukuyama in his The End of History and the Last Man. What would happen now that actually existing socialism had collapsed, and capitalism could assume full spectrum dominance, its claims to global dominion were thwarted not any longer by the existence of a whole other bloc, but by small islands of resistance such as Cuba and North Korea? The era of what I have called 'capitalist realism' - the widespread belief that there is no alternative to capitalism - has been haunted not by the apparition of the spectre of communism, but by its disappearance.

As Derrida wrote: There is today in the world a dominant discourse...This dominating discourse often has the manic, jubilatory, and incantatory form that Freud assigned to the so-called triumphant phase of mourning work. The incantation repeats and ritualizes itself, it holds forth and holds to formulas, like any animistic magic. To the rhythm of a cadenced march, it proclaims: Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, and along with it its hopes, its discourse, its theories, and its practices. It says: long live capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism! (Specters of Marx, p64)

11h01 – digestion the reading, how does this resonates? And how do we want to work with it?

What is this idea of spectre? With Fisher hauntology is a negative pessimistic view, but we could also see it as sth very positive 'how can we learn from the past'.

How do I read it: personal perspective, or more societal perspective? Intuitively? To lighting design? Forced to work with led-light. What is the darkness in this: how can we unveil what is connecting us and how we act today is defined by unconscious fears on the future.

11h20 – the interviews – and how to generate two axes from there.

"Attempt to create a landscape that defines current theatre history and see how in relation to that lighting futurism can be implicated. My idea is that I for sure but perhaps more of us tend to internalise shortcomings of theater and its strategies, and I would like us to create a net of objectivity, as much as is feasible."

- 1? What made you work in theatre? When and where did you start?
- 2? How would you describe th theatre you started with? What is great about it, what is difficult?
- 3? What did you base your artistic goals upon, what did you work towards?
- 4? Was there anyone whose work showed a landmark in lighting for you?
- 5? Can you recall a situation when your work has been particularly difficult?

6? Can you recall a situation when conditions were ideal for you?

7? How would you describe theater of today? What is great about it, what is difficult about it?

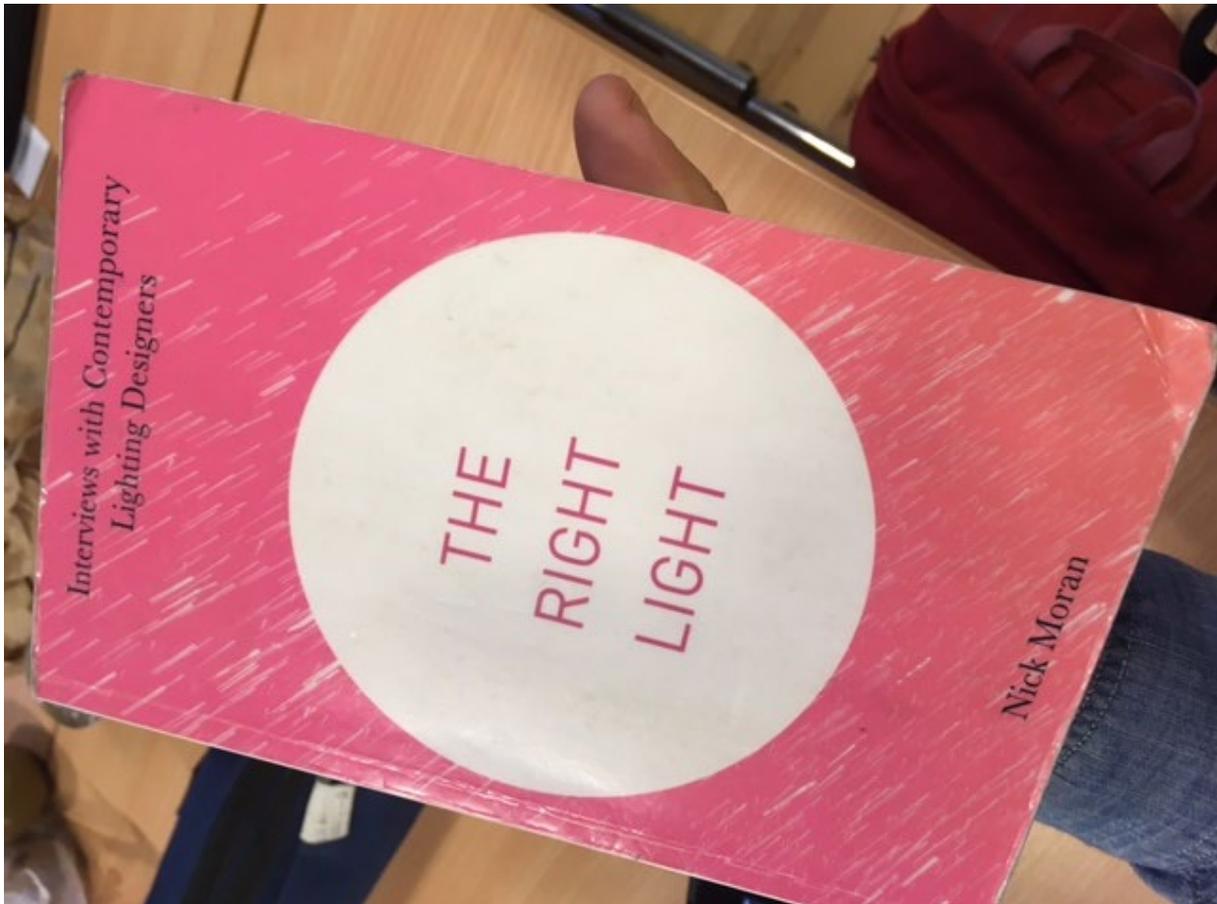
8? Is there anything I didn't ask and is it essential to the theatre work with/nurture/propose/create.

Exercise in collective answering on question 2 – and keep space for individual interviews with the ones that didn't do so before.

What was great/what was difficult:

- Dynamic/vibe/engagement vs. lack of means – and the connection between them.
- Cocreation – and sharing with an audience
- Preceding artists haunting you in a theatre.

12h09 – references



Ed. 2016: “How do theatre lighting designers decide what is 'the right light' for each moment of a production? What informs their choices? Why does the audience respond more strongly when the lighting feels 'right'? By interviewing nineteen prominent lighting designers and weaving their insights through his own narrative, Nick Moran aims to answer such questions. This book considers practice across different types of theatre, including opera, dance, musicals and drama. Rather than being a technical manual, it allows lighting designers to contribute contrasting and complementary

ideas about how to approach lighting design. Moran argues that the best stage lighting is made with emotion, passion and soul, by creative artists willing to take risks.”

14h19 - The first summary/an – not so - active listening:

A dynamic manifesto: from a collective writing, as a *charter* annex to the ‘model’-contracts.

Projection of the beginning – professionalisation as a recurrent topic. But also: the *ghosting* of the first approaches in nowadays practices.

Archeological way of designing: how building upon traditions – the gain of knowledge.

Preparation of the work – prework: process-based working as nowadays way of working – fear of *killing* the proces.

Choosing the methods of working. Each work needs to find its own process – defined by what it is about. Taking a ‘free’ position – choosing the method to be working. Hacking a process, a now and there – and giving continuity to it.

Independance? A point of making your own circumstances – to the point of thematising and trashing ideas pending on group decisions. Consequences of collective working – how to create in solitude/loneliness.

Lightdesigner as the independant figure in a creation – also read as such by the artistic team.

Personal and professional.

What is the space that we take and how do we take it? Long lasting artistic relationships – as creating your own circumstances, as a strategy.

Accesibility? Making things possible – scale of the theater – time differs in the theatre: negotiation to take the space.

What do we take for granted? What are the stage-rules? And what are the extremes: no presence of tech vs repertory plot as total flexibility vs rigidity? To be questioned.

Lack of understanding: how do you communicate/where are the lines drawn – and how are we made into a characters – and how do we read them ourselves?

Lighting design – as a problematic nomalisation. ‘design’ is too applied: proposing solutions – posing light as a communicator – with a ‘commercial’ hint to it. Cfr. Grouptalks day 1. – name the media. Comes to:

14h43 - discussion on authorship – finding similar positions such as graphic designers. Co-authorship in a final stage: giving it a final layer.

Ref. Eva Moelaert ‘Dear Reader’/book on handwriting – design represents the content.

PhD Tomi Humalisto?

Inverse the roles: ask choreographers to make a performance for a lightdesigner?

Describe what you are doing – as in audiodescription – ref. unavailability of the theatre: off-stage working on lightdesigner? Loss of communication or *Can we learn from this towards vocabularies?* But it implies a strange abstraction – in making it specific in words?

Ref. Factual description of light – describe what you see as an onset on *preliminary lightdesign*: describe what you want to do/see.

- And shall we keep doing it: enriching to do – as it fills a lack. Spend a day on factual describing light during Gangplank? – and exercise it before each of us.

Involve 2d year of performance – shared agenda in seeing performances: Jonas Chéreau/Réverberer.

And why do we do it? To gain vocabulary *and* viewpoints – cfr. Antropologist stand-point description and DASarts method ‘as a ... I ...’

- Contaminate stage-critics by sharing this practice.

Choosing the facts – will be interesting – do we write about *the paint, the brushes, the canvas, ...*

It’s about the *phenomena* – what is it that i see.

Ref. Donna Haraway – on the concept of *objectivity*

Add an awareness of the functioning of physiology.

15h42 – a start from the collegial aspect: not a singular work – but a contribution to a whole, creating meaning.

The discourse not reflected/disconnected from the work – ref. the six beautiful words.

Politicalisation of the theatre: the untamed theatre shifts to political (correct/positioned) theatre.

Unapologetic art – vs mainstream culture.

Artivists – is theatre more connected to the world/in research – not in presentation, move away from the product – in searching time to reflection. Value of research.

How became luxury and *an alternative view* become oppositions? – *Scarcity aesthetics* – and squeezing lighting design in festivals – leaving two discussion – ethics and industrialisation of the tools.

Theatre is forgetting its skills.

Generosity in recognising the skills of each other – at the hart of this research.

But also acknowledge the expertise from other disciplines – and refer to them, accumulation of knowhow.

What do we do with this? An exercise for the fanzine: write a (full) text with the quotes? A *rizomatic* disours with multiple viewpoints merged into one text.

16h30 open session ‘Futuring Lighting Design’

Opposites chosen: expert vs co-creators/abundance of tools vs scarcity of tools