

Future (Re)turn, Future Reflections

A Radio Play

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CAST

In order of appearance: Narrator
FX
Future Reflections
Moderator
Diagram
Handout Script
Laptop
Dialogue
Temporality
Form/Content
Audience Member Anon

NOTE: **The *Future Reflections* character is the *Future Reflections Research Group*. The *Diagram* character is the *Future Reflections Research Group's Future (Re)turn diagram*.**

Future (Re)turn

ACT 1

Scene 1:

Narrator: Torres Vedras, Portugal, 18th of October, 2007:
The Future Reflections Research Group presented their emerging, practice-led research at the Desvios/Detours III: International forum on the relevance of the local for contemporary thought and art.

FX: FOOT STEPS, CHATTING AND SHUFFLING OF PAPERS.

Future Reflections: The room in the town hall where I presented contained rows of seats facing a stage, upon which there stood several flags and a long table wired up with microphones. The names of my members were printed on paper signs affixed to the table's edge, as is the customary conference style.

But I did not sit behind my names on the stage; I got divided up, triangulated in the audience.

FX: CHATTING FADES, FOOTSTEPS GET LOUDER, PAPER RUSTLING CONTINUES.

Narrator: The three group members prepared to present by situating themselves around the conference room. Clutching clear clipboards, they stood clad in grey lab coats with rectangular mirror broaches pinned to the left-breast pockets completing their uniforms.

FX: FOOTSTEPS SUBSIDE, PAPER RUSTLING FADES.

Scene 2:

Moderator: Yes, Diagram?

Diagram: (Snappy tone) The triangulation in the audience, the blank name, the coats...they were trying to perform me, on the cusp/centre of the collaborative/individual, but in actuality they only referred to me at the end of their presentation, is this not so Future Reflections?

Future Reflections: (Says flatly) Well, we referred to you throughout, albeit in an indirect manner.....

Diagram: Having my significance discounted, being marginalised like some common concept...had Future Reflections Research Group forgotten that I, diagram, am their map, their compass, their itinerary, their ticket? That in fact, *I am Future Reflections Research Group*. I should have been insinuated into every aspect of their presentation at Detours III. Instead, I was positioned at the edge of Future Reflections Research Group, but I wanted to be situated in the middle of the action, within the context. For, though I appear to have a pictorial symmetry, I am mapped in an asymmetrical constellation of meanings and words, yet I am both, in that I image words and words image me, betwixt myself.

Moderator: (Firm tone) Thank you, Diagram...but getting back to the discussion at hand, *the event*. I believe I said, "The next paper will be presented by Future Reflections Research Group. Entitled *Future (Re)turn*, it explores issues related to site, transparency and response in relation to collaborative art/research practices."

Narrator: (Casually interjects) Yes, you introduced Future Reflections...

Future Reflections: (Interrupts Narrator) Then we began our presentation by introducing ourselves—the members of our collaboration. We proceeded by asking the audience to follow the handout script contained in the conference pack.

FX: RUSTLING OF PAPER.

Handout Script: (Cuts in) Yes, I comprised the original script. I told the story.

Future Reflections: (Answers tersely) Hang on, Handout Script, that's not quite how the event unfolded. We in fact distributed the first two pages of the script to the audience as a gesture, acknowledging that parts of the presentation were scripted while others remained fluid, unscripted, and ideally responsive.

Narrator: (Announces) For the record, Handout Script contained a brief introduction to each of the researcher's individual research projects and the research group.

FX: MOMENTARY RUSTLING, SHUFFLING OF PAPERS AND WHISPERING FROM THE AUDIENCE.

Narrator: Some of the audience were going through the conference packs, some were following the script, some were listening and others were not.

Scene 3:

FX: SHORT MUFFLED CLICKING AND WHIRING BY LAPTOP.

Laptop: I crashed.

Narrator: Yes, Laptop crashed. Katrine and Catherine improvised the script and read Marsha's parts so she could attend to the PowerPoint.

FX: FAN AND CLICKS FROM POWER UP BY LAPTOP.

Laptop: After rebooting, I was instructed to play the video.

FX: DISTANT SOUND OF VIDEO AUDIO.

Narrator: The video showed performative documentation of Future Reflections Research Group's contribution to the Art of Research Seminar at University of Art and Design Helsinki, October 1st-3rd, 2007. The sync sound of the original footage was replaced with a voiceover. Highly edited and repetitive, the video not only captured some of the group's reflections on its previous presentation it also documented the group's projections for work to come. In

this way Future Reflections Research Group's process of making work is located across time and space.

Moderator: In locating Future Reflection Research Group's working process across time and space, what makes this aesthetic structure so special?

Diagram: We did not say it was *special*—but I, Diagram, am Future Reflections Research Group's attempt at manifesting its aesthetic structure. As an image, I'm rendered in the form of a gesture; a simple but crucial emblem of this quotidian form; as a humble two dimensional signifier, a mere depiction, an ideogram. I can circumvent the grip of logocentrism. Yes, I too have words – but I cannot be reduced to these....

Future Reflections: (Slips in) Yes, originally our presentation sought to address the University of Art and Design Helsinki's dualistic position on Art and Research—the institution's perspective that Art and Research are two distinct fields, necessarily different. We tried to present a fluid understanding of these practices by enacting the art/research process through an experimental approach. The video's voiceover further elaborates this ideal.

Scene 4:

FX: WIND FLURRIES AS TEMPORALITY ENTERS, THEN FADES FAST.

Moderator: Future Reflections, could you elaborate on the relationship between the video and the event itself. How do these constituents figure in your overall *work*?

Future Reflections: Form/content may be useful in attempting to address this question because Future Reflections Research Group consists of many aspects. You might say I'm a "distributed artwork," to use Tim O'Riley's term (see Writers' Note)...

FX: WIND PICKS UP AS TEMPORALITY RE-ENTERS.

Temporality: (Interrupts Future Reflections) I wonder in and out of this paper; this reflective speech being written into and between these temporal sites/events with Future Reflections Research Group dialoguing between sites, on site, looking back at the architecture of previous sites and restructuring them. Take the voiceover for the Art of Research Seminar documentation for instance: It's a dialogue that looks/speaks back with projective

views/utterances toward Detours III; played at Detours III, the video mirages in this space as well. Where Future Reflections Research Group watched themselves, whilst watching others watching them simultaneously on screen and live at the presentation.

FX: WIND FADES OUT AS TEMPORALITY EXITS.

Future Reflections: (Irritated with Temporality) Temporality, you make my gaze, my hearing seem holistic, as though, it's a question between me and others. Yet, I comprise of a collective of individuals. I go between and on dialogue, a dialogue which sits between these different versions of me, with the apparatus, the screen, the audience and my selves all constituting my Form/Content in different ways in the presentation at Detours III. For, I both went through the lens and onto the screen, reflecting my selves somewhere else, through the loud speakers from another instance gone by...

FX: DISTANT CHATTER AS DIALOGUE ENTERS.

Dialogue: Forgive me, Future Reflections, when did you become so monologic?

Future Reflections: Quite right Dialogue, I need to re-enter your form, let me re-engage by introducing Form/Content....

FX: DISTANT CHATTER FADES AS DIALOGUE MOVES AWAY FROM FUTURE REFLECTIONS.

Form/Content: (Curtly steps in) Dialogue has left... This is where I, Form/Content, where Temporality escapes out, I reside
(Form/Content Continues Over)
where Future Reflections (Research Group) puts itself in, that being, under its own lenses, its internal specula reflection.

Future Reflections: (Interrupts) Which also...

Form/Content: (Cuts off Future Reflections) bringing the process of collaborative/individual art/research to the fore in Future Reflections Research Group, questioning the site of the audience; Future Reflections Research Group, generating collaborative art/research in response to sites/contexts/audiences whilst being its own audience. I, Form/Content, through addressing the context of this publication, this paper as another site again...

Future Reflections: (Interrupts Form/Content) Which could....

Form/Content: (Speaks over Future Reflections) Excuse me, Future Reflections, may I finish?

Moderator: Future Reflections let's proceed by taking turns. Having articulated the ethos of your approach, do you have anything else to add, Form/Content? One moment, it seems Future Reflections wants to say something—*again*.

Future Reflections: Thank you Moderator. Well the thing is I (we) have collaborated with Diagram here, so I (we) need to speak with/from/in relation to s/he/it... Diagram where are you going?

FX: FOOTSTEPS, THUNDEROUS WIND AND DOOR SLAMS AS DIAGRAM EXITS.

Temporality: (Aghast) This is ridiculous, I can't believe Diagram left like that! S/he/it is taking over my role as temporality...I may as well leave.

Moderator: (Ignores Temporality) Perhaps Marsha, Katrine and Catherine would like to say something about their respective positions?

FX: WIND FADES AWAY AS TEMPORALITY EXITS.

Future Reflections: (Sheepish tone) Unfortunately they are unable to comment at present. However, they will make an appearance in the following parts...

Scene 5:

Narrator: Returning, then, to the narrative at hand, I would like to point out that once the video had been shown, Marsha rejoined in reading the script.

Laptop: (Pipes up) Are we still talking about Future Reflections Research Group's participation in Detours III? I thought we'd moved on.

Narrator: Perhaps, it is apt to linger for a while over the subject of participation in Future Reflections Research Group, Laptop...

Future Reflections: (Sighs) Participation is fraught with problems in Future Reflections Research Group, but this does not make attempts at exchange with others negative, Laptop.

Besides, when was the last time you voluntarily participated in anything?

Laptop: Touché, but at least you *can* voluntarily participate, meaning you have the capacity to do so. What about those of us with limited agency, stuck doing your work—stuck following your directions?

Narrator: Following? *Forced to follow* more like it...

Moderator: Succinctly put Laptop! Let's follow Laptop's lead and discuss how coercive participation operates on various levels in Future Reflections Research Group. Form/Content would you like to respond to this?

Form/content: Perhaps it's the case that any form of audience participation is coercive, or at least manipulative in some way, a power hierarchy is immediately in place, furthermore, an individual choosing not to participate in audience participation can thus be co-opted into being seen as having taken part in a form of participation, as a negative equation.

FX: FADE.

Scene 6:

Moderator: This is getting rather confusing. I suggest we start the question and answer session?

FX: WHIRS, CLICKS AND FAN FADES AS LAPTOP SWITCHES OF.

Audience member

Anon: (Hesitantly) Well...taking the opportunity to, err, inter-ject, I don't regard what you've done as a *different* sort of presentation....

FX: RESTLES SHUFFLING IN SEATS, COUGHS AND PAPER SHUFFLING BY AUDIENCE.

Audience member

Anon: ... What I really want to say is... there was no "in" the audience or "on" the stage by Future Reflections Research Group, but more a sidestep of in/on/of/stage/audience... What kind of site were you aiming to construct? What is the work if not the movement of the spatial frame of discourse?

Moderator: (Irritated) I am not entirely sure if that was a description or several questions, per...

Audience Member

Anon: (Interrupts Moderator) Yes it's a bit of, umm, both...

Moderator: (Moderator cuts in) Thank you for your concerns, Future Reflections would you open out the issues just raised by the gentleman in the blue shirt, issues related to whether you consider the "movement of the spatial frame of discourse" as the process of the collaborative/individual art/research in Future Reflections Research Group?

Future Reflections: (Future Reflections hesitates) In answer to the gentleman's questions, yes...we do. May I remind you that we are *introducing* the themes here in this first act, but yes, this will be thoroughly addressed in both the 2nd and 3rd parts of this paper ("An Interview" and "A Dialogue"); where we will discuss the issues surrounding the discursive site/space in relation to the issue of the frame/perspective...

FX: DISCUSSION BETWEEN AUDIENCE MEMBER ANON AND FUTURE REFLECTIONS FADES.

Narrator: Audience Member Anon and Future Reflections carried on exchanging for some time.

Moderator: Unfortunately we are going to have to stop the Q and A
(Moderator Continues Over)

as we have run out of time. Perhaps you could continue your discussion in the break. It's now time to move on to our next speaker, I would like to present.....

FX: MODERATOR FADES.

Narrator: Future Reflections (Research Group) sat in/became the audience.

END.

Writers' Note for "Future (Re)turn"

NOTE: Tim O'Riley's term "distributed artwork" discussed by Future Reflections is taken from his paper "An Inaudible Dialogue" which was published by an online journal called Working Papers in Art and Design in 2006, this article can be found at:

http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/vol4/torabs.html
Last accessed on the 30th of January 2008.