Performance and democratizing digitality

StudioLab as critical design pedagogy

JON MCKENZIE

Performance and digitality constitute an onto-historical[1] apparatus or *dispositif* reshaping cultures globally, yet our engagement with these performative circuits remains out-of-sync and ineffective, especially at the levels of knowledge and power, thought and action. Within higher education, modern disciplinary methods, arborescent institutional structures, and logocentric literacies inhibit the critico-creative syntheses needed to engage and resist neoliberal modes of performativity. In contemporary societies of control, universities around the world face daunting economic and political pressures to transform and innovate, while traditional forms of academic research and education struggle to contend with young people's attachments to mobile technologies, social media, and consumer-driven design practices. StudioLab is a critical design pedagogy that seeks to democratize emerging forms and processes of digitality by supplementing seminar-based *critical thinking* with studio-based *design thinking* and lab-based *tactical media-making*. In StudioLab, students roleplay as critical design teams to research and create conceptually-rich projects that address contemporary social challenges through a variety of media forms and events. Critical design teams combine cultural, organizational, and technological performances and learn ways to introduce values of cultural efficacy into structures dominated by organizational efficiency and technological effectiveness, thereby generating creative and potentially transformative micro-transvaluations in themselves and others. This performative matrix of valorizations helps to situate StudioLab's practices of de-

---

1 This term signals that history and ontology are themselves historical and ontological constructs.

mocratizing digitality and suggests new figurations of thought and action, new experiential architectures.

Methodological context: All performance is electronic

All P is E, all performance is electronic: Our abilities to study performance in a wide variety of different forms, spaces, and times – from bodies to machines, from theaters to rituals to outer space, from the past to present and future – are tied to Cold War research, as they date from the mid-20th century. It was then that anthropologists and artists, electrical engineers and rocket scientists, managers and sociologists began patching together concepts of performance and cybernetic feedback to understand behaviors of people, technologies, organizations, and systems in general. Indeed, the radical extension of performance measures and systems theory across all disciplines of knowledge was theorized *as* performativity by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, an event he dates from the late 1950s (cf. Lyotard 1979: 3). Lyotard situates performativity – the postmodern legitimation of knowledge and social bonds via optimization of input/output matrices – with the rise of computerized societies. It is not just that new methods of power and knowledge arise, but that all methods bend to a new set of legitimating parameters. Postmodern performativity is audit culture, networked society, the postmodern condition: be operational or disappear, perform – or else.[2]

And yet beyond its postmodern, post-disciplinary valences and thus operating at an entirely different scale, performance also enacts *digitality* by instantiating the emergence of a massive onto-historical apparatus (*dispositif*), one whose millennial coordinates can be mapped with those of orality and literacy (cf. McLuhan 1967 Ong 1982; Ulmer 2002). At this scale, performative digitality tears at the Western foundations of *episteme*, at its modes of conceptual training, its alphabetic media, its arborescent infrastructures. From a cultural perspective, performance emerges 'between' ritual and theater for a reason: performance enacts digitality just as ritual embodies mythic forces of traditional oral cultures

---

2   As I argue in *Perform or Else* (2001), performance is a challenging-forth of humans into a post-disciplinary formation of power/knowledge. This performance stratum can be understood in terms of Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition*, Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control", and Hardt and Negri's *Empire*. "Perform – or else" is the order word of this onto-historical formation.

and theater represents the histories and fictions of modern literate worlds. Performance quickens the oral repertoires and literate archives described by Taylor (2003) and more importantly the digital databases encoding them both. Digitality entails the performative reinscription of oral, literate, visual, and numerate traces within networked databases and electronically-processed media flows – as well as the enabling mutations in bodily formation, social habitus, and ontological set-ups. Performance and digitality immerse us as grand moiré patterns produced by transhistorical overlayings of ritual and theater, repertoire and archive, orality and literacy. The West's self-defining distinctions of *logos* and *mythos*, *eidos* and *imagos*, dialectics and mimesis, all become unmoored in this remix of onto-historical apparatuses, and it is within this flickering, transmedia milieu that Nietzsche's revelations, Benjamin's flashes, and Ronell's hallucinogenres[3] emerge as untimely modes of thought. If all P is E, what becomes of *episteme*, pedagogy, and method in their unsettling remix with *doxa*, initiation, and ritual?

Figure 1: Teaching Nietzsche's double affirmation in an MBA program

Credit: Author

---

3   "Hallucinogenre" is Avital Ronell's neologism, a trippy tropic play on hallucinogenics and genres. Smart media, e.g., are modern *pharmakons*, monstrous mashes of different substances.

TEACHING THE UNTEACHABLE

While studying painting and film in the 1980s, I had a fantasy that would come to guide my pedagogical orientation: *how to teach Nietzsche's double affirmation in an MBA program?* This question overcame me while reading Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* and it struck me at the time as truly perverse: how to teach one of the most perplexing philosophical thoughts in one of the most reactionary of institutional sites: a Masters of Business Administration program in Reagan's America? How to translate Nietzsche's prophetic call to affirm both chance and necessity – chance *as* necessity – in a context where both are calculated according to inputs and outputs and driven by utility and the profit motive? How to challenge profits with prophecy?

Unbeknownst to me at the time, the perverse circuits connecting Nietzsche, teaching, and capital had been described decades earlier by Pierre Klossowski, who posed Nietzsche's quest to communicate his revelation of the eternal return in these terms: *how to teach the unteachable?* Klossowski elaborates this question in his comments on *The Gay Science*: "Nietzsche had a nostalgia for disciples and perhaps also for an active, but closed, community. He always dreamed a grand action, of social upheavals or disruptions of political institutions […] And, to the extent that he estimated the possibility of an understanding, of an affinity with others, he also set forth the infallible law of depreciation of a rare and authentic experience as soon as it enters the habitude of a number of minds […] But regarding this relation, depreciation has done its work by way of industrial standardization" (Klossowski 2007: 14). Changing gears, Klossowski contrasts two circuits, of phantasm[4] and utensil, of artistic simulacra and capitalist goods, of singular impulses and general communication, circuits whose intersection forms the live wire of one's existence: "Impulsive 'phantasm' – simulacrum; subsistence – utensil fabrication: two circuits which intersect with the individual unity, but which this same unity never manages to break, if only to postpone perpetually the urgency of one or the other circuit" (Klossowski, *Living Currency*, cited by Castanet 2014: 147).

Short-circuiting eternal returns with nervous systems, the quest of teaching the unteachable – along with his poetics of Dionysus and Ariadne, his manifesto of a gay science, and his role as the first typewriting philosopher – make Nietzsche a performative pedagogue of our digital futures. Within the context of performance and digitality, a gay science of teaching the unteachable takes on

---

[4] "Phantasm" is an archaic term used by Klossowski and maintained by his translators and commentators.

many concrete dimensions and raises numerous quests and questions. How to quantify the unquantifiable? How to account for the unaccountable? How to teach a performative transvaluation of values within existing performative values? How to democratize digitality within institutions whose structures, habits, and values are founded on logocentric exclusions and hierarchies that date back to Plato's Academy and whose modern instantiation as Cartesian ideation thereby informs our disciplines, methods, and truths? What kinds of infrastructures, spaces, and events are needed to think and act beyond the cartographies of *eidos*? What sorts of methods and media and bodies are needed?

STUDIOLAB AS CRITICAL DESIGN PEDAGOGY

My long-term research project is StudioLab, a transversal pedagogy that mixes seminar, studio, and lab activities to enable experiments in critical thinking, experience design, and media making. *StudioLab's onto-historical mission is to democratize digitality, just as public education has sought to democratize literacy.* A nomadic, decades-long experiment, StudioLab has traveled from institution to institution, taking different forms depending on the collaborators, infrastructure, and geography. Modular projects, flexible content, emerging technologies, and diverse student bodies have driven the development of its curriculum and spatial configuration. I first developed StudioLab in the mid-1990s at New York University by shuttling students between a Broadway performance studio and a computer lab off Washington Square. Subsequently, at University of the Arts (Philadelphia), Dartmouth College, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, StudioLab has developed an array of design frames, media workshops, and an architectural form called Media Studio, whose mobile furniture and light tech enable students to mix seminar, studio, and lab experiences within a single space.

StudioLab's contribution to the democratization of digitality lies in its combination of seminar, studio, and lab practices, which allows for the spatialization of conceptual discourses, their transmediation across diverse forms and situations, and the generation of thought and action through collaborative, engaged research. In practical terms, StudioLab has provided backend R&D for the general theory of performance outlined in *Perform or Else* (2001) and subsequent texts, as its courses and projects combine cultural, organizational, and technological performances. Indeed, alongside its mission to democratize digitality, *StudioLab seeks to resist global performativity by interjecting values of critico-creative efficacy into socio-technical systems dominated by neoliberal mixes of*

efficiency and effectiveness. The goal is to generate micro- and macro-transvaluations of performative values that move across visceral, affective, and cognitive realms to effect changes within larger socio-technical systems.

From a methodological perspective, StudioLab can be understood as critical *design pedagogy* for democratizing digitality, for inventing and disseminating new forms of post-ideational thought-action. Interaction designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby (2007) introduced the term "critical design" to describe design infused with a politically critical sensitivity, both for designer and end user. HCI designers Jeffry Bardzell and Shaowen Bardzell write that by "inscribing alternative values in designs, critical design cultivates critical attitudes among consumers and designers alike, creating demand for and supporting the professional emergence of alternative design futures". Bardzell and Bardzell (2013: 3299) draw upon Critical Theory and Metacriticism to open up Dunne and Raby's critical design practice for extension into their field of Human Computer Interaction (HCI). In the spirit of democratizing digitality, StudioLab likewise seeks to extend a specific mix of critical design across potentially all fields and social institutions. Like performance and media, design is a transdisciplinary and sometimes incoherent field of practice and study marked by disciplinary borders and territorial disputes. When viewed from the perspective of digitality, however, debates between specialists, as well as tensions between experts and amateurs, can be recast as effects of ideational infrastructures and institutional habits associated with literate, disciplinary knowledge. StudioLab's own metacritical move is to affirm such critical differences by devising creative syntheses across diverse bodies, media, and sites, thereby contributing to the emergence of critical design as a vector for democratizing digitality.

CRITICAL THINKING + DESIGN THINKING + TACTICAL MEDIA

StudioLab's approach to critical design pedagogy combines critical thinking (broader than Critical Theory), design thinking (broader than HCI), and tactical media (broader than writing). This stepping back or broadening of scope situates Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Metacriticism, and other methodological approaches within the larger, disciplinary context of critical thinking in higher education. In the US, *critical thinking* refers to the use of evidence-based, logical reasoning as a guide to ethical decision-making and action, and it is considered an "Essential Learning Outcome" by the Association of American Colleges & Universities. These Essential Learning Outcomes inform the evaluation and as-

sessment of academic programs across the US. The genealogy of critical thinking stretches from Socrates to Descartes to Kant to Marx, and it forms the foundation of disciplinary research and liberal arts education and is thus taught across the breadth of the traditional arts and sciences. From the perspective of digitality, critical thinking is literate, ideational thinking whose methods bring objects clearly and distinctly before subjects, a *dispositif* carefully set up in first-year writing courses. StudioLab's goal is not to replace critical thinking and writing but precisely to supplement and embed literate methods, subjects, and objects within the emerging apparatus of digitality, using media and collaborative problem-solving to connect them with new communities and situations. The *logos* of critical thinking and specialized knowledge remains operational but its efficacy has waned. Given the highly publicized and increasingly politicized crisis of the liberal arts in the US, revitalizing the forms, functions, and sites of critical thinking is crucial to reimagining higher education and advanced research beyond Platonic ideation. StudioLab starts with a simple step: connect the conceptual space of the seminar to the aesthetic and technical spaces of the studio and lab.

To interface seminar learning with studio activities, the second component of StudioLab's critical design pedagogy is *design thinking*, a human-centered design approach to strategic thinking developed by the design firm IDEO and researched by the Hasso Plattner Institutes of Design at Potsdam University, Germany, and Stanford University, USA. Design thinking is a collaborative method for addressing complex organizational and social problems. IDEO CEO Tim Brown argues that designers must "think big", think beyond designing endless objects for meaningless needs and instead tackle complex problems facing individuals and societies, such as healthcare and climate change. Design thinking's transdisciplinary design method balances three constraints – human desirability, economic viability, and technical feasibility – constraints that correspond to the performative values of cultural efficacy, organizational efficiency, and technical effectiveness. Moreover, design thinking's human-centered approach prioritizes human desirability/cultural efficacy, focusing on empathy with various stakeholders to define and reframe the situation at hand. Although design thinking also stresses ideation or the creative generation of ideas as central to its iterative process, this ideation is post-Platonic in that it relies not on top-down, expert knowledge or *episteme,* but rather on empathizing with a variety of stakeholders, that is, on bottom-up, common knowledge or *doxa*. In that sense, it is already critical, though this criticality resides in a matrix of empathy gathered through ethnographic methods of interview, observation, and participation and composed of emotions, knowledge, and values. It is within this matrix that micro-transvaluations can occur at both individual and group levels, revalorizations that

produce not exclusions of effectiveness and efficiency but remixes in a different space.

Supplementing critical thinking and design thinking, the third element of StudioLab's critical design pedagogy is *tactical media*, which emerges out of artist activist events and groups in Europe and North America, such as Next Five Minutes (N5M), Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) and Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT): "The term 'tactical media' refers to a critical usage and theorization of media practices that draw on all forms of old and new, both lucid and sophisticated media, for achieving a variety of specific noncommercial goals and pushing all kinds of potentially subversive political issues" (N5M, cited by CAE 2000: 5). In *Digital Resistance* (2000), CAE situates tactical media within a comprehensive set of practices that go beyond street-based resistance against disciplinary institutions to function as digital resistance within our contemporary performative matrix. Tactical media-making enables StudioLab to supplement the traditional seminar study of argumentative and rhetorical writing with studio and lab work in a full range of media effects: from the Guerrilla Girl's poster, to Reverend Billy's performance protests, to EDT's FloodNet software, to Molle Industria's absurdist games. The digitalization and networking of embodied repertoires and discursive archives are producing forms of procedural rhetoric, diagrammatic semiotics, and transmedia persuasion whose circuits operate at scales too small and too large to perceive.

The elements of StudioLab's critical design approach supplement one another. StudioLab balances the epistemological force of critical thinking's *logos* with the collaborative empathy-driven *doxa* of design thinking and the radical, subversive potential of tactical media-making as *graphe*. At the level of production, critical thinking pedagogies produce individual thinkers and writers, whereas design thinking and tactical media entail the production of critical design teams. Both design thinking and tactical media-making rely on practice-based collaboration, and design thinking produces its own version of tactical media, the "shared media" of sketches and prototypes which emerge as part of its ideational process. Like tactical media, shared media do not report on things but make things happen: they are themselves performative, not constative, though they can become so through iteration. Of course, critical thinking too has its own tactical media: the alphabet, books, and archive, which students spend their entire school life learning. StudioLab is a crash course in designing transmedia thought-action.

The rapid development of design as a critical discourse in the US can be seen in academic courses and programs in *critical design thinking*, including a graduate degree at Virginia Tech University and an undergraduate initiative at Smith College, a small liberal arts college in Massachusetts. "The Smith brand of de-

sign thinking envisions design in service of broader social issues of participation, intervention and leadership. Design thinking can be used to question gender, power and ability as dynamics that shape who gets to participate in creating the world we live in." (Smith College 2016) StudioLab's mix of critical thinking, design thinking, and tactical media likewise seeks to intervene in institutions by injecting critico-creative values of social efficacy into processes and structures where values of organization efficiency and technical effectiveness dominate data collection and decision-making. Critical design thinking, in particular, offers students concrete methods for site-specific micro-transvaluations of value, and it is important to note that Smith College's inaugural projects include a campus-wide initiative to rethink the college's work and learning spaces. From StudioLab's perspective, challenging global performativity and democratizing digitality require changing values in order to transform the spaces, media, curricula, and organization of learning that empower students to approach knowledge and power in both critical and creative ways.

CRITICAL PERFORMATIVITY
AND INTIMATE BUREAUCRACIES

The fantasy of teaching Nietzsche's double affirmation in an MBA program approaches full-scale actualization in the emerging field of Critical Management Studies (CMS), where researchers have introduced Critical Theory and poststructuralist thought into the discipline of organizational management. Like critical design, CMS explores more subversive forms of critical thinking and does so in institutions ruled by socially dominant values and practices that its scholars have explicitly theorized in terms of performativity. CMS is characterized by "its critical stance towards institutionalized social and intellectual practices, such as the profit imperative, racial inequality or environmental irresponsibility" (Wickert and Schaefer 2015: 108), and within the field, the concept of *critical performativity* offers a nuanced approach to both the efficiency-effectiveness and efficacy circuits of organizational performance.

Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) theorize critical performativity by contrasting critiques of Lyotardian performativity (input/output ratios) and resistant practices of Butlerian performativity, understood as subversive resignifications of discourse. "Approaching performativity as possibly subversive mobilizations and citations of previous performances, instead of as an overarching concern for efficiency" (Spicer/Alvesson/Kärreman 2009: 544), they argue for understanding and developing Critical Management Studies as a performative

and potentially subversive field, one whose own critical performativity operates through "an affirmative stance, an ethic of care, a pragmatic orientation, engagement with potentialities, and striving for a normative orientation" (ibid.: 546, see Table I).

Table I: An Overview of Performative CMS

Characteristic	Achieved through	Methodological Tactic
Affirmative stance	Location at close proximity to object of critique in order to identify potential points revision	Affirming ambiguous and mixed metaphors found in organizational discourse
Ethic of care	Providing space for respondents' views, but also seeking to subtly challenge them	Working with mysteries
Pragmatism	Working with particular aspects of an organization	Applied communicative action
Potentialities	Creating a sense of what could be by engaging latent possibilities in an organization	Explorations of heterotopias
Normative	Systematic assertion of criteria used to judge good forms of organization	Engaging micro-emancipations

Adapted from Table 1 of Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009: 546)

Rather than positioning organizations as objects of critique and researchers as outside performativity, performative CMS envisions workers as actively involved in liberating performative practices that produce resignifications, heterotopias, and micro-emancipations – practices which CMS researchers should actively engage with through participatory methods. The goal of critical performativity is "to not only engage in systematic dismantling of existing managerial approaches, but also try to construct new and hopefully more liberating ways of organizing" (ibid.: 555).

Performative CMS provides StudioLab important critico-creative models for combining cultural, organizational, and technological performances within the context of democratizing digitality and remixing performative values. Resignification entails the queering or refunctioning not only of discourses, but also practices and infrastructures and their simultaneous reinscription within newly imag-

ined heterotopias, spaces with alternative conceptual, physical, architectural, digital, environmental, spiritual, and even cosmic dimensions. Indeed, StudioLab functions as a heterotopia for generating heterotopias. Within this context, making micro-emancipations sustainable and scalable depends upon micro-transvaluations of performative values, augmenting the dominant circuits of efficiency-effectiveness with those of critico-creative efficacy. Here we see how methods of design thinking and tactical media supplement traditional methods of critical thinking by introducing collaborative creativity and interventionist media-making. *Beyond isolated critiques of the bad, collaborative creations of joy.* It may seem counter-intuitive to initiate joyful collaborations at the intersection of cultural and organizational performance, but as CAE argues, the development of tactical media best occurs within tightly-knit activist groups, which depend on the shared generation of ideas and projects, tactical if not strategic thinking, self-organization of diverse talents, and effective project management.

StudioLab approaches art activist groups – as well as artisan guilds, theory schools, rap groups, and other start-ups – both as objects of study and as heuristic models for democratizing the sociotechnical practices of digital culture. Students sometimes extend their model's direction of activism but usually head off in new directions, incorporating conceptual, aesthetic, technical, and organizational insights into their own projects and production processes. Art activist groups such as the Guerrilla Girls, Molle Industria, and the Yes Men, can be understood as *intimate bureaucracies*, a term Saper has coined for modes of "participatory decentralization" (Saper 2012: 1). Intimate bureaucracies enable collective action through common infrastructures, such as the streets, the Internet, and other public services. Saper cites Fluxus art and the Occupy Wall Street political movements and their respective sociopoetic use of the postal service and public parks as primary examples. "These forms of organization represent a paradoxical mix of artisanal production, mass-distribution techniques, and a belief in the democratizing potential of electronic and mechanical reproduction techniques. Borrowing from mass-culture image banks, these intimate bureaucracies play on forms of publicity common in societies of spectacles and public relations. Intimate bureaucracies have no demands, no singular ideology, nor righteous path" (ibid.). Saper highlights the paradox of intimate bureaucracies: the impersonal institutions and procedures associated with bureaucracies are detoured or recircuited by artists, activists, and other community members for more singular, intimate ends. Within the context of higher education, colleges and universities have themselves long served as common infrastructures, providing access to resources and services through libraries, central IT, and physical space,

and a large part of education involves teaching students how to use these and other infrastructures.

By combining singularity and institutions, intimate bureaucracies open an infrastructural dimension to StudioLab's quest to teach the unteachable, to short-circuit singular impulses and general communication. In the language of Deleuze and Guattari: intimate bureaucracies function as desiring machines that have evolved from isolated bachelor machines into full-blown collective assemblages of enunciation, scaling up the creation of joy across different social planes by constructing referential universes and planes of consistency that enable sustainability and resonance with other movements. In the terms of design thinking: the creative constraints of human desirability and technical feasibility that define any social innovation find sustenance with those of economic or ecological viability, the ability to survive within a given milieu or environment. If design thinking brings the power of creative processes to large organizations, intimate bureaucracies bring the power of large organizations to creative processes. The student body is the site where these circuits intersect.

Figure 2: "Make a Toy" Exercise

Credit: Author

TRANSVERSALITIES, PROJECTS, AND DESIGN FRAMES

StudioLab's critical design pedagogy synthesizes traditional critical thinking, transdisciplinary design thinking, and interventionist tactical media by moving students transversally through seminar, studio, and lab activities. *Bodies learn differently in each space*. Students combine cultural, organizational, and technological performances and thereby gain hands-on experience engaging the values of efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness. At the heart of StudioLab are projects and design frames that integrate conceptual, aesthetic, technical, and social learning through individual exercises and larger collaborative projects. In an initial "Make a Toy" exercise, students use common household materials to design and create toys – tiny desiring machines crafted to generate joy in others – while learning principles of experience design, the shaping of interactions, emotions, and thought. Concepts are spatialized, taken back to the drawing board and connected with others, and explored through hands-on engagement. StudioLab's project-based pedagogy unfolds by juxtaposing studio exercises with seminar discussion, lab training, and time for fieldwork, presentation, and reflection. In a subsequent exercise, "Design an Activist Museum", students self-organize and scale-up their desiring machines into critical design teams, role-playing as intimate bureaucracies. Researching art activist groups and miming their different mixes of social activism and tactical media, critical design teams develop names, logos, and mission statements, while drawing on local public commons and transferring their research to issues and situations that resonate with their own lives. Like all StudioLab projects, "Design a Museum" is modular and portable: it can embrace potentially any topic, field, or community.

StudioLab's pedagogy moves people transversally in three ways and provides critical design frames all along the way. On a first, spatial level, students in a StudioLab course, workshop, or even a single, 3-hour class meeting might begin with a hands-on studio installation, then shift to seminar discussion, lab for software training, and conclude with open workshop or field work. To help students articulate these transversal thresholds, we introduce the CAT design frame (Conceptual-Aesthetic-Technical), which maps onto seminar, studio, and lab activities. Conceptual work follows traditional critical thinking methods – reading, discussion, and written synthesis of textual and other materials – supplemented with dramaturgical and media approaches: students generate notes, conceptual spreadsheets comparing different methods, and intellectual dialogues that gather and dramatize ideational arguments. Aesthetic studio work focuses on the transmediation of discursive and material practices, mixing arguments with physical, visual, aural, and environmental media while drawing on fields of performance,

graphic design, cinematography, installation, experience design, etc. Tactical media here include objects, storyboards, mood boards, user scenarios, posters, installations, and prototypes. CAT's technical dimension unfolds in computer lab space, with students learning and using digital software and hardware to support the conceptual and aesthetic activities. It is important to note that seminar, studio, and lab activities each have their own conceptual, aesthetic, and technical dimensions and they come to the fore in different ways. Over time, StudioLab's iterative process blends these dimensions precisely by incorporating their elements into the unfolding project. Students use CAT to both analyze and create, for it enables them to abstract and evaluate conceptual, aesthetic, and technical issues at any time in the creative process. In all cases, at this first level, student bodies are reshaped by transversal movement through distinct learning environments: seminar, studio, lab, field.

At a second, existential level, StudioLab's next design frame, UX or user experience, draws on fields of rhetoric, design, and performance to teach students ways of transforming people internally by moving them spiritually, conceptually, imaginatively, emotionally, sensually, and/or viscerally – experiences that unfold in schools, museums, churches, community centers, theme parks, or online environments. StudioLab's UX frame focuses on *experience design* or the crafting of experiential interactions, *information architecture* or the spatiotemporal structure of these experiences, and *information design* or the look-and-feel at any moment of their unfolding. Using the UX frame both analytically and synthetically, *students design transformational experiences for multiple stakeholders: community collaborators, target audiences, the general public, and themselves.* To this end, they learn how early ACT-UP members transformed their own anger and fear into love and action using social activism and tactical media, creating direct actions designed in turn to transform the feelings, thoughts, and actions of their target audiences and the wider general public. In our "Transform a Paper into an App, Service, or Social Movement" project, students scale up their intimate bureaucracies toward collective assemblages of enunciation where transformations of larger social systems become possible. At this second level, students use the UX frame to engage internal, "experiential architectures" of different stakeholders. These experiential architectures form the building blocks of the emerging heterotopias and provide the platform for micro-transvaluations of value.

At a third, sociotechnical level, StudioLab's critical design pedagogy moves students transversally across different social fields as they connect and engage people across disciplines, institutions, and communities. We draw on design thinking to tackle intractable, "wicked problems", using social activism and tactical media to connect students to community, culture, and history. In a recent

"Museum of Interactive Media" project, teams researched and proposed activist installations for an under-utilized space in the Wisconsin Institute of Discovery, a transdisciplinary research center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The center is built on the former site of Rennebohm's Pharmacy, known for the storytelling of founder Oscar Rennebohm, who later served as state Governor. Inspired by Reverend Billy's Earthellujah project, the KAMG student design team composed of Miranda Curry, Aaron Hathaway, Keegan Hasbrook, and Grace Vriezen interviewed current and potential WID visitors and aligned their research with the university's own legacy of environmental research and art activism. Their proposed reCLAIM Cafe offers a post-apocalyptic experience for both reclaiming personal space and measuring one's extension into ecological systems: at the VR Bar, patrons can view impacted environments and download a mobile app to track their waste habits, energy consumption, and water usage, while Trash Chutes visibly recycle consumer objects all around them.

Figure 3: "Rennie's Corner" redesign

Credit: Miranda Curry, Keegan Hasbrook, Aaron Hathaway, Grace Vriezen

In StudioLab, ideas function as the means rather than the ends, entering an open, iterative process where collaborative problem-solving and innovation unfold via shared media and the posing of counter-factual possibilities and alternative worlds. Ideas become collective thought-action figures by moving from virtual to actual across different spaces as teams apply DT's transdisciplinary process of empathy, definition, ideation, prototyping, and testing.

An essential element of StudioLab's critical design approach to democratizing digitality is digital media itself, especially the production of *smart media*, emerging scholarly genres such as video essays, theory comics, and multimedia presentations which supplement traditional media forms of books and articles. Thought-action figures take shape via the circulation and sharing of smart media, whose genres mashup instruction and entertainment, *logos* and *mythos*, *eidos* and *imagos*, *episteme* and *doxa*. Everyday media forms such as public presentations, posters, and YouTube videos carry powerful communicative force, while search engines, wikis, and other tools have transformed knowledge discovery and empowered communities to connect locally and globally. At their very best, even the most derided of media forms, such as PowerPoint, can produce intelligent, sensitive effects for audiences intimate and massive: one thinks of Al Gore's 2006 *An Inconvenient Truth*, effectively an Oscar-winning PowerPoint presentation, or Chai Jing's 2015 *Under the Dome*, a powerful, censored documentary downloaded by hundreds of millions of viewers. StudioLab's critical design approach uses smart media to forge connections across spaces, disciplines, and communities. Yet while TED talks, digital storytelling, and similar media forms have become ubiquitous in the early 21st century, what is lacking is a *language* for analyzing them and a *practice* for creating them in saleable, sustainable ways. Together, the CAT, UX, and DT frames provide a transmedia language and transdisciplinary practice for combining critical thinking, design thinking, and tactical media at both intimate and infrastructural scales.

CODA

To teach the unteachable, to learn the unlearnable, the body becomes a test site of moiré patterning, the pulsating intersection of two circuits composed of impulses and markets, desiring machines and sociotechnical systems, idiosyncratic performances and general performativity. The fields of affect theory, experience design, consumer behavior, and micro-marketing all attest to the contemporary urgency of this vast yet discrete test site. As we have seen, performative digitality can itself be figured as the onto-historical overlaying of orality and literacy,

ritual and theater, repertoire and archive, of two massive *dispositifs* for conducting these circuits' alternating currents through generations upon generations of bodies. StudioLab's overlaying of seminar, studio, lab, and field spaces attempts to democratize emerging modes of digitality by combining critical thinking, design thinking, and tactical media in order to tap into these circuits and intervene in the contemporary performative matrix.

Learning StudioLab's design frames through sustained project work can be transformational, empowering students and communities to bring critical design perspectives to other situations, including career and life decisions. The CAT frame enables students to augment conceptual making with aesthetic and technical making and thus redesign bodies of knowledge. The UX frame provides a language and practice for making such experiential transformations at intimate, interpersonal levels, while the DT frame provides a formal, ready-made process for attuning values of economic viability/efficiency and technical feasibility/effectiveness to those of human desirability/efficacy, as well as scaling up micro-transvaluations to the macro-valorizations of collective assemblages of enunciation. Moreover, DT's crowd-sourced, transdisciplinary ideation process is post-Platonic, making it a powerful force for democratizing digitality. Displacing the lone figure of the Romantic genius, StudioLab operates through intimate bureaucrats whose means and media of transformation are both idiosyncratic and common, impulsive and infrastructural. Critical design thinking produces not simply arguments or artistic expressions or technical objects as in traditional siloed learning spaces, but rather cognitive-perceptual-affective constellations of thought-action generated and arrayed in proposals, presentations, diagrams, prototypes, objects, apps, and other tactical media. At stake is not just critical analysis but creative making, and not just media-making but the building of transformative experiential architectures whose performance design extends from the internal dynamics of intimate bureaucracies to those of collaborating groups and communities. Emerging from seminar, studio, lab, and field spaces, from past, present, and future time zones, such experiential architectures give concrete form to the heterotopias envisioned by Foucault and provide intimate and common platforms for the transvaluation of performative values.

REFERENCES

Bardzell, Jeffrey/Bardzell, Shaowen (2013): "What is 'critical' about critical design?" In: CHI '13 Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, New York: ACM, pp. 3297-3306.

Castanet, Hervé (2014): Pierre Klossowski: The Pantomime of Spirits (A.R. Price, trans.), Oxford: Peter Lang.

Critical Art Ensemble (2000): Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media, Brooklyn: Autonomedia.

Dunne, Anthony/Raby, Fiona (2007): "Critical Design FAQ." April 1, 2016 (http://www.dunneandraby.co.uk/content/bydandr/13/0)

Klossowski, Pierre (2007[1963]): Such a Deathly Desire (R. Ford, trans.), Albany: SUNY Press.

Lyotard, Jean-François (1984 [1979]): The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (G. Bennington/B. Massumi, trans.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

McLuhan, Marshall/Fiore, Quentin (1967): The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects, New York: Bantam Books.

Ong, Walter (1982): Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word, London: Routledge.

Saper, Craig J. (dj readies) (2012): Intimate Bureaucracies, Brooklyn: Punctum Press.

Smith College (2016): "The Design Thinking Initiative." May 15, 2016 (http://smith.edu/design-thinking)

Spicer, André/Alvesson, Mats/Kärreman, Dan (2009): "Critical performativity: The unfinished business of critical management studies." In: Human Relations 62, pp. 537-560.

Taylor, Diana (2003): The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Ulmer, Gregory L. (2002): Internet Invention: From Literacy to Electracy, New York: Longman.

Wickert, Christopher/Schaefer, Stephan M. (2015): "Towards a progressive understanding of performativity in critical management studies." In: Human Relations 68/1, pp. 107-130.