

# Performance Art and Performing Text

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This chapter draws on Lindsey Allgood's May 2014 participatory performance titled *Presence: A Performative Exploration of a Place That Will Soon Not Exist*. By considering the body as the medium, performance artists question where the creative process ends and everyday action begin. Through offering a detailed study of Lindsey's inventive process—including her sketches, notes, images, and first-person narrative—and her culminating delivered performance, we argue for a more expansive understanding of invention and delivery of text that hinges on the body as a central mode of meaning making.

Text: “participial stem of Latin *texĕre* to weave.”

—Etymology of Text, Oxford English Dictionary, n.1

## The Opening Scene: Performance Art and a Lumberyard

*In a hundred-year-old abandoned lumberyard, discarded wood beams and metal strips and poles rest in piles, semi-damp from a recent rain. Earthy smells of dirt and dust waft from scattered patches of overgrown grass. One can imagine these rotting materials' previous lives: a bench that heard secrets and recipes; the local drugstore countertop that felt coins still warm from a jean pocket roll across its surface; a family's well-worn kitchen table, proud of the child's etchings on one of its legs.*

*Off to the corner, in what could once have been a workshop or storage shed, wooden beams barely hang on to the framework, picked at by birds and mice. A few cats pounce about beneath the floorboards.*

*The words “Keep Door Closed” have been painted on the rusty, padlocked metal door. It hasn't been opened for years. Earlier in the day, children knocked on the flimsy door, and giggled as the door vibrated, letting out a playful wobbly echo. Some people held their ears to the door, as if something or someone would speak to them from the other side. Some people peeked through the tiny cracks between the wall's wooden slats. Some just stood, taking in the sights, sounds, and smells, turning circles to soak in the whole space and imagining its story.*

*Dozens of bright pink, blue, and green pieces of paper flutter in the light breeze, stuck to the corrugated door with magnets. A pen dangles from a nail, passed around from person to person. On each paper, these people—community members—have written what they imagine exists or existed behind the door in the past, present, and future.*



Our introductory narrative captures the embodied experience of a May 2014 participatory performance titled *Presence: A Performative Exploration of Active Existence in a Place That Will Soon Not Exist* by Lindsey Allgood, co-author of this chapter and an artist, writer, and current Writing Specialist at the University of California, Irvine, Writing Center. Lindsey's performance was part of *stART Norman* supported by the Norman (Oklahoma) Arts Council. Artists held performances in a hundred-year-old lumberyard slated for demolition. The city granted artists permission to reclaim the space temporarily to cultivate communal, cultural, and creative placemaking before demolition. Installations explored the idea of thresholds, which recall new beginnings and places of exchange. During *stART*, Lindsey offered a participatory performance exploring thresholds. Lindsey gave participants a map leading to locations in the yard. At each location, participants physically engaged with the space through writing and other activities. By engaging with artifacts and immersing themselves in the lumberyards' physical experience, Lindsey and her participants composed a text of their embodied performance. And this text, as our epigraph reminds us, was woven through the sensorial, embodied experience of performance.

Performance art, often called live art, is a time-based art form focusing on the body as medium, specifically the body as a destination and vessel through which, on which, and where art can occur. Performance art is rooted in the early twentieth-century Futurist and Dada movements, and it experienced a radically political reemergence in the 1960s (Goldberg, 2011). Performance artists often explore the liminal spaces between art and life and question the definitions: where does the creative process end and everyday action begin? Artists explore these queries through focusing on ephemerality, technology, and site-specificity via scripted or spontaneous, collaborative, and improvised performances. Performance artists often explore the body's ephemerality and sensorial perception through time-based practice (Banes & Lepecki, 2007; Manco, 2010). For example, in *The Artist is Present* (2010), Abramovic, one of the more highly-regarded contemporary performance artists, sat immobile at a table in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City for thirty-minute intervals, six days a week for a total of 736 hours. She stared into the eyes of whomever sat opposite her. This performance reflects the time-based practice of contemporary performance art and the unscripted, yet loosely guided interaction with participants. This practice's roots stretch back to performance art of the 1960s, particularly when Yoko Ono invited participants to cut away pieces of her clothing in her 1965 performance *Cut Piece*.

Not only does performance art trouble traditional understandings of author and authoring as Gerben (2015) recently argued, but we hold Lindsey's performance reshapes traditional notions of the invention and delivery of text by suggesting the

body as a central mode of meaning during these two processes. By detailing Lindsey's participatory performance, we argue for viewing performance art as a form of embodied text. Using Witte's (1993) definition of a text as an "organized set of symbols or signs" (p. 237) and tracing the etymology of the noun *text* back to the Latin participial stem for "to weave," we argue Lindsey's performance illustrates the centrality of her and her participants' bodies during the invention and delivery of the performance as text. Bodies that move, write, and think for an anticipated or present audience weave themselves into a greater cultural narrative (see also Gerben, 2015; Henry & Baker, 2015; Kurtyka, 2015). The space of and the tools for the performance also facilitate this weaving process. We build on Rowsell's (2013) argument that movement within such context as performance art "requires the body to enact text" (p. 110) by suggesting that during Lindsey's performance her and her participants' bodies were text while they were weaving text.

To create this argument, we offer a collage: current scholarship on the body and writing; Lindsey's invention process—including script-writing drafts, visual images, journal entries, and first-person narrative—and culminating performance; a reflection on how Lindsey's art offers compositionists new conceptions of invention and delivery.

## The Performing Body as Embodied Text

We situate our thinking about Lindsey's performance within composition research devoted to the body's centrality during composing (Arola & Wysocki, 2012; Fleckenstein, 1999; Knoblauch, 2012; Perry, 2012; Rifenburg, 2014; Syverson, 1999). Such work focuses on the fusion of the body and mind during composing, how our breathing and heartbeat impact how and what we write. As Fleckenstein (1999) argues "we write as bodies . . . We *are* our bodies; we are writing bodies" (p. 297). In the wake of Fleckenstein's claim, Perry (2012) asks, "How do we distinguish between the physical and conceptual work of composing?" Perry leaves her audience to ponder this question, strengthens ties between the physical and conceptual.

Activities where the body is a conduit for meaning making, such as performance artworks, strengthens these lines between the conceptual and the physical. Stressing the interconnectedness of the mind and the body, scholars have positioned writing as a method for facilitating and reflecting on bodily activity. For example, when teaching postsecondary ballet, Cooper (2011, 2013) assigns writing prompts as a way for her dancers to reflect on their bodies' movement within the dance studio. Not only does such reflective writing allow for metacognition and self-directed learning as Cooper suggests, but such writing highlights for dancers the interconnectedness of the mind and the body.

Extending Syverson's (1999) argument that "embodiment grounds our conceptual structures" (p. 13), we consider the conceptual structures of performance art, how Lindsey's attention to her body and her participants' bodies facilitate the invention and delivery of text, and what a close-analysis of the embodied actions taking place in a century-old desolate lumberyard in Oklahoma means for refiguring invention and delivery.

## Lindsey's Embodied Performance Art

Lindsey has performed throughout the United States and in the Netherlands. In her work, she explores the liminal spaces between physical, psychological, and emotional experience, particularly in terms of the feminine, and how these experiences help us navigate and shape our lived experiences. She is intrigued by moments of transition: when clean becomes dirty, and when gentle turns aggressive. In considering her audience, she imagines the psychological and emotional landscapes through which her performances will induce the viewer to travel. In her 2014 audience-oriented participatory performance *TouchTasteSmellFeel*, she invited gallery visitors to touch, taste, smell, and feel various objects: charcoal, chocolate, marbles, cinnamon, garlic, and flower petals. She audio-recorded the participants' responses of memories and emotions invoked by the objects, and she invited participants to interpret their experiences through sound with a variety of musical instruments.

Her *stART* performance necessitated a form of invention that required a real-time visceral experience as she visited the location, physically inhabited the space and sketched how her body and others' bodies could move and physically transform a soon-to-be demolished location. Below is Lindsey's narrative on preparing for this performance.

### Embodying Invention

*The initial idea for this interactive performance came from my curiosity about how humans, as sentient and cognizant beings, fuse sensation and cerebral activity to make sense of their worlds, in both immediacy and asynchronous reflection.*

*During the brainstorming process, I spent many hours in the lumberyard. I lay on a rickety bench and sat in the grass; I pulled out old wooden and metal planks from giant piles and stacked them, improvisationally building abstract sculptures. I listened to the gravel and the creaks in the wood beneath my feet as I walked across the barn floor. I got my hands dirty, all while taking notes in a journal and drawing images that came to my mind about how I imagined people interacting with things and spaces in the yard. A few things became important to me during the experience: the variance between being inside a manmade structure and in the open, natural elements; the process of leaving*

one destination and arriving at another; and the importance of being still and silent for intermittent periods between note-taking sessions. All of these phenomena required an awareness of my muscles, skin, breathing and blinking, as well as the ability to develop a rhythm between listening, looking, writing and drawing. I realized this is what I wanted to invite participants to explore.

I chose various locations in the yard that would serve as destinations on the map for people to follow. The destinations consisted of a small nook where a wooden wall met a metal fence at a corner; a set of wooden stairs that led to a rotting, nearly nonexistent second floor; a permanently closed storage shed door; a chair in the grassy yard; a hay bale; and inside the large barn in which stacks of old wood and metal were stored years ago. I chose these destinations based on the personal saliency of my notes on how the spaces felt, smelled, sounded and looked most vivid, enticing, intense and emotionally or psychologically charged. I hoped to give participants the opportunity to engage the body in tandem with thought, memory, and imagination. I wanted participants to simultaneously charge and be charged by the spaces and materials.

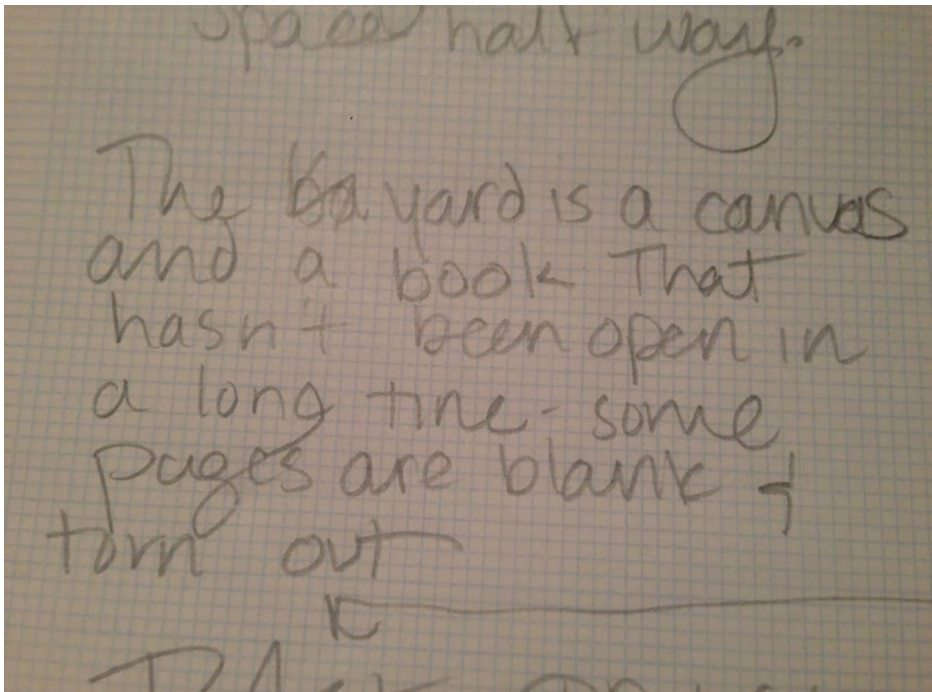


Figure 3.1. Lindsey's notes from her sketchbook (photo by Lindsey Allgood).

During my creative process, sensations and bodily expressions (and impressions) directly ground my brainstorming. In my studio, I generally talk to myself a lot when I'm inventing performances, along with scribbling stuff down on notepads or posters tacked to the wall, and rearranging materials in the room. Some might say it is a mess, but the

*various objects haphazardly scattered about are sensibly organized to me. As with most artists (and writers) I know, only through a little chaos can I play well and therefore create well. Only good play leads to authentic discovery. As Nachmanovitch (1990) contends in *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, uninhibited improvisational play and “spontaneous creation” is liberating and nutritional to any sort of creation, be it for a sculptor, writer, musician, or auto mechanic (p. 5). This type of creating grounds the body in the mind’s primitivity—where I believe the raw, unalloyed roots of idea lie dormant.*

*As in the lumberyard, I often moved around, sat crisscross, lay down with limbs spread, hands on chin, flicking my pen, muttering to myself, drawing lines between objects with my fingers, closing my eyes, taking a break every five minutes to roam around or stare at the sky. For me, these actions induce “spontaneous and intuitive promptings” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 9), much like a child playing in the back yard is prompted to do a cartwheel or dive into a swing by something an adult can’t quite put a finger on. An innocence and vulnerability exists in this mind-body interplay. It is important for me to be willing to let the spontaneity and intuition choreograph my movement as my thoughts materialize and intersect. I believe whether I place my hands on my belly, forehead, or the ground directly guides how my ideas birth themselves.*

*My invention process demands a sensitivity to the interconnectedness of my body, my thoughts, and the space around me. These elements are not only fused, they rely on each other—embody and are embodied by each other—to compose further sense of the world.*

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Like any writer, Lindsey works from an invention process. This process will eventually give rise to her participatory performance and calls on Lindsey to immerse herself in the physical location where she and others will enact a text. With her sketchbook, pencil, and red marker, Lindsey jotted down ideas. These ideas manifested themselves as complete, even stylistic, sentences (e.g., “I can imagine us standing here with a hundred arms—reaching out to touch and caress every nook and cranny and particle of dirt here) or composed in such a rush that Lindsey didn’t even take the time to erase her pencil marking, instead electing to scribble through them (e.g., “The ~~ba~~ yard is a canvas and a book that hasn’t been open in a long time” [see Figure 3.1]). Her invention process also called on her to map out her performance. Though she is still engaging with inchoate ideas, Lindsey signals the importance of location to her art through spatially orienting her unfolding future performance on a piece of sketch paper. Lindsey needs to do more than pen quick sentences; she also finds herself needing to map out (in this case literally) the activity of her art.

Thinking about Lindsey’s performance as a text invented through the body speaks to conceptions of invention within composition studies in three important ways. For one, Lindsey immersing herself in the physical space in which she and others will deliver a text draws attention to the importance of location during invention. Central to Lindsey’s invention process was her direct interaction with the physical



location in which her art was to be delivered, what Reynolds (2004) calls the “*where of writing*” (p. 176). For Lindsey, this location was spatially and temporally bounded. She could not invent this performance while sitting in, say, a Starbucks in Texas or a library in Kansas. She needed to sit, reflect, and write in the lumberyard in Norman, Oklahoma. And the participatory performance as an embodied text was set to be delivered in a specific location on a specific date. Again, she and her participants could not replicate this performance as text at a different time and place and yield similar results. The location, month, time of year, weather, time of day, participant composition, and many other factors weighed in on the ultimate delivery of this performance. Lindsey’s invention process illustrates the centrality of not only the scene of writing for text construction, but the necessity of inhabiting the scene where the text will be delivered. The location of invention depended on the location of delivery.

Second, a focus on the location of Lindsey’s invention pays credence to theories of invention seeking to understand the larger contextual forces giving rise to text. LeFevre (1987) holds that the “thinking and inventing of any [writer] happens in large part because of the ways each has interacted with others and with society and culture” (p. 139). This argument expands the focus of invention from the individual to the larger ecology in which she invents. While LeFevre directs criticism toward Platonic conceptions of inventions, the emphasis on the individual writer during invention was shared by current-traditional rhetoric (Crowley, 1990; Lauer, 2004) and even the 1960s process movement (Bawarshi, 2003; Lauer, 2004). Though dated, LeFevre’s argument still resonates with current understandings of invention. For example, the *College Composition and Communication* poster page on invention in the June 2012 issue relies on LeFevre when arguing invention is “an activity of a single writer composing in a social context” (p. 715). Bawarshi builds on LeFevre’s push toward an ecological understanding of invention by arguing invention resides in “a larger sphere of agency that includes not only the writer as agent but also the social and rhetorical conditions . . . which participate in this agency and in which the writer and the writing take place” (2003, p. 51). Focusing on Lindsey’s invention process illustrates these “social and rhetorical conditions” suggested by Bawarshi. Such a focus also adds material conditions to Lindsey’s invention ecology to the two conditions offered by Bawarshi. Material objects such as pen, paper and her limbs and eyes, play a large role in Lindsey’s invention.

Yet an analysis of Lindsey’s invention does more than support Bawarshi’s and LeFevre’s projections of invention. Lindsey’s inventive practices illustrate the centrality of her and her audience’s body to the activity of invention and anticipated activity of delivery. During invention, Lindsey called upon her own physical abilities. In the lumberyard, she sat “crisscross,” talked to herself, touched her hands to her chin, and closed her eyes. She also “believe[s] whether my hands are placed on my belly, forehead, or the ground directly guides how my ideas birth themselves.” All these activities call upon a certain bodily action of which some may

be incapable. A bodily disability precluding Lindsey from engaging with any of these physical activities would change her invention process and change the trajectory and ultimate delivery of the performance. Additionally, the activities Lindsey planned for the audience to engage in also necessitated specific physical capabilities. She constructed activities that invited her audience to write, touch, hear, speak, and walk. One activity invited participants to tie or nail something they were willing to part with to an object in the yard. If we read her performance as an unfolding text, then we need to acknowledge how specific understandings of her audience's physical abilities construct her text.

Taken together, Lindsey's invention highlights the centrality of her body and her audience's bodies, how knowledge and future delivery of the performance as text are inextricably linked to the physical capability of the body and to the body in a physical location. Of course, the performance exists in the realization of her sketches, notes, images, and sitting crisscross. Tracing the trajectory of Lindsey's participatory performance art with attention to the body's role within this trajectory focuses attention to the text's delivery. We return, again, to Lindsey's words and images.

## Embodying Delivery

*For the performance, I provided participants a map (Figure 3.2) showing different colored dots that corresponded with signs marking the various destinations in the lumberyard. I also provided a few supplies like writing utensils, paper, string, and scissors they would need to accomplish the physical and writing exercises.*

*As their first task, I asked people to choose something that they were willing to part with, and nail or tie it to something outside. This act invited people to directly embed their personal narratives into the space, initiating a psychological and physical connection between the location and the participant. One woman cut off a hand-woven bracelet she had been wearing for years and buried it in the dirt. Before doing so she told me the story of where it came from: a dear friend made it on a mission trip to South America years ago. She said she was inspired to sacrifice something particularly special to her, not just a napkin from her purse, because of the way the activities pushed her to think about why she was where she was. In other words, being prompted to think meta-cognitively and act on those thoughts was a very emotionally charged experience for her.*

*Participants were free to flow through the yard at their own pace and choose their own pathway, not following any specific order. At the dark blue sign (Figure 3.3) nestled in a corner where a metal fence met a wooden wall, instructions invited people to spend time sitting on a bench paying close attention to what activated their senses. Then they were to write down what they imagined happened and existed there in the past and what could happen there in the future.*



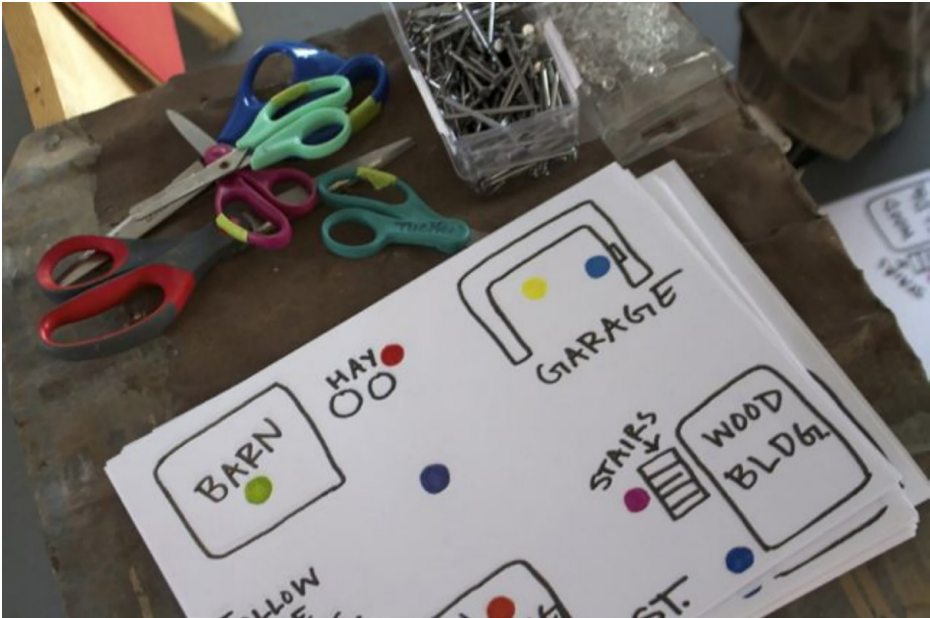


Figure 3.2. Participants used scissors, nails, and a map for Lindsey's participatory performance (photo by Lindsey Allgood).

A pink sign (Figure 3.4) hung from a set of wooden stairs that led to a non-existent second story of the rotting wooden building.

Instructions asked participants to imagine what was and could be upstairs. One woman had to physically restrain her child from running up the rickety stairs. I found this endearing because the child's excitement compelled his body to move into the space he was (re)composing. He wanted to literally be in the story he was articulating to his mother.

Across the yard participants encountered a yellow sign nailed above an old rusty toolbox that I found in the garage. Instructions asked participants to imagine who once owned the box and what was once inside. Several people responded with stories of hard-working grandfathers, denoting how the object and this particular space are inextricably linked to the community's historical heritage: diligent, tired farmers building their lives from scratch after the Land Run of 1889. This is a story with which most Oklahomans feel some connection.

A light blue sign (Figure 3.5) marked the rusty metal door that read "Keep Door Closed," and instructions prompted participants to imagine and write what was on the other side of the door on colored Post-Its, and then hang their thoughts on the door with magnets.



*Figure 3.3. A participant engages with Lindsey's performance (photo by Lindsey Allgood).*





*Figure 3.4. Participants engage with Lindsey's performance (photo by Lindsey Allgood).*



*Figure 3.5. Lindsey invited participants to imagine what was on the other side of the rusted door (photo by Lindsey Allgood).*

*Adults and teenagers responded to this prompt energetically with poetic and wildly imaginative stories involving ghosts and skeletons. I noticed that people spent a significantly longer time standing here than anywhere else. I think the door seemed a frustrating barrier at first, but when someone was willing enough, the act of standing still at a closed door piqued a deeper level of genuine curiosity. I believe they stayed so long at this destination because the possibility of discovery (excitement) overshadowed the prompts' demands (challenge). A door can symbolize—or be—so many things for us.*

*I encountered hay bales in the yard and stuffed a red sign (Figure 3.6) into one that asked participants to pluck a piece of hay and put it somewhere else. This invited the person to interact with and reorganize the natural elements of the space in a reflexively playful way.*

*While I imagined people would tie pieces of hay in the fence or scatter the hay in the grass, most people interacted with the hay in more personally physical ways: a child stuck a piece in her hair; a woman simply blew on it and watched the single blade quiver with the pressure of her breath. She probably smelled the hay. At this location, people felt free to merge their bodies with the physical environment. Many lay on the hay bale. The writing activities seemed to prime participants to play and explore with the hay in more genuine, undistracted ways, not worrying if people walking down Main Street in downtown Norman would think them odd.*

*Finally, a green sign outside of the large barn invited people inside where wood scraps, tools, nails, paint and brushes waited inside for participants to use to build whatever they chose, adding to the barn's existing structure, or making their own sculptures (Figure 3.7).*

*A man built a horse out of wood planks. A wire butterfly perched on a workbench; a triptych made of old doors and paint became a makeshift wall that honored the "everyman" employee of the lumber supply company.*

*As participants responded, their written words, sculptures and gestures reimagined and (re)composed the forgotten narratives of a rusty, neglected place. Simultaneously, participants' willingness to engage with the locations and objects in playful, peculiar ways incited an evolved form of knowing and composing that aligns the rhythms of mind, body and material. The spaces, objects and participants essentially activated—and embodied—each other.*

*As the event unfolded, I wandered through the yard, sorting out small confusions and encouraging hesitant participants to approach the prompts from new perspectives. I acted as a guide and tutor. "What if we tried . . .? What if we wrote . . ." To this, most seemed intrigued, curious, and sometimes a little perturbed at being asked to contribute to "the art." I asked a lot from participants; they came to an art exhibition probably expecting a traditional gallery setting with art on the walls, and to play the role of casual observer. I challenged people to experience the space in a new way, to contribute to its essence and purpose, and to construct hypothetical and imagined meaning for the space's existence. The participants' active embodiment of the space demanded them to intermittently become embodied by the very fact that the yard is susceptible to human touch and thought. While we can mentally "step" into a still life painting, we can physically become elements of the art work when the canvas is a playground, or in this case, a lumberyard.*





*Figure 3.6. Participants engage with Lindsey's performance  
(photo courtesy of Samba Sanchez).*



*Figure 3.7. While Lindsey squats and helps a young participant, other participants engage with Lindsey's performance (photo courtesy of Samba Sanchez).*

As Lindsey notes, “participants came to an art exhibition probably expecting a traditional gallery . . . and to play the role of the casual observer.” Such a role suggests common, ancient western understandings of delivery (*pronuntiatio*), which, as the Latin word suggests, emphasizes “modulations of the voice” and “proper stance and posture of the body” during oral delivery (Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 22). The emphasis on delivery in ancient western schools of rhetoric was on the rhetor, not the audience. The rhetor trained in Aristotelian artistic proofs to generate an audience’s response. The focus on oral delivery and positioning the voice and body during delivery continued into the elocution movement, specifically through the work of Thomas Sheridan and Gilbert Austin in the eighteenth century and Hallie Quinn Brown at the turn of the nineteenth century. Again, the emphasis was on how the rhetor could facilitate a particular desired response in the audience through vocal cadence, hand gestures, and other bodily actions. Lindsey’s performance inverted traditional western understandings of delivery as being rhetor-focused by inviting the audience to collaboratively construct the maturing and unscripted text of her performance. Analyzing how Lindsey engaged the audience in the delivery of this unscripted performance and how the audience’s participation opened avenues Lindsey failed to consider during invention, sketches a richer picture of delivery within composition studies.

With the introduction of various digital platforms and the move from strictly print document design, scholars within composition studies re-theorized delivery



through case studies of how writing operates within specific communities of practice (Ridolfo, 2004; Rude, 2004; Trimbur, 2000). Building on this work, I suggest Lindsey's performance offers a case of how rhetor and audience jointly share the task of delivery. Instead of considering how to deploy the artistic proofs to persuade an audience or espousing a linear view of delivery as "getting [writing] delivered to where it needs to go" (Trimbur, 2000, p. 189), Lindsey's performance illustrates how audience and rhetor share the rhetorical task of delivery by collapsing the delineation between rhetor and audience: participants are invited to help give rise to the performance as text through nailing or tying a personal item to something outside; to imagine in writing where a set of stairs once led and where the stairs could lead; to rearrange an old hay bale. While Lindsey spent considerable time inventing the performance as a set of loose guidelines and preparing the space for the audience, once the performance began, it was hard to identify the receiver and deliverer of the performance as text. In the case of Lindsey's performance, rhetor and audience depended on each other to manifest delivery.

Through its participatory and unscripted roots, collaborative performance art flattens audience and rhetor into a singular performer. Such flattening can be maddening for a rhetor valuing authorial intent. Yet Lindsey's goal as a performer is not to dictate how action will unfold; instead, she seeks to create a space in which action can unfold. Lindsey provides the opportunity for performance as text to be delivered. She wants the performance as text to be delivered, an independent clause I wrote with an intentionally passive voice because a clear subject is unneeded. Lindsey is not dedicated to who delivers the performance and how—just that it is. Returning to Trimbur's (2000) understanding of delivery as "getting [writing] delivered to where it needs to go" (p. 189), Lindsey creates space for this "need to go" and does not lead the going. A focus on delivery with an emphasis on the audience's role in delivering text should be of particular importance to composition scholars in the wake of a proliferation of digital composing platforms and the push toward studying a text's circulation, a step many scholars project as the one after delivery.

In her *Computers and Composition* article "Iconographic Tracking: A Digital Research Method for Visual Rhetorics and Circulation Studies" (2013) and follow-up and award-winning book *Still Life with Rhetoric: A New Materialist Approach for Visual Rhetoric* (2015), Gries reports data from her five-year case study on the digital circulation of the iconic image Obama Hope, designed by Shepard Fairey and used in Barack Obama's successful 2008 presidential campaign. For Gries (2013), circulation studies examine how discourse is "produced and distributed" (p. 333) and how "once delivered, [discourse] circulates, transforms, and affects change through its material encounters" (p. 333). Often theorists conceptualize delivery as the final canon. However, Gries and others like Ridolfo (2015) are invested in following the text after delivery and are thus "pushing . . . to trace and follow things' dynamic movement" (Gries, 2015, p. 19). Circulation, for Gries

and others, is at the heart of understanding how a text operates within the public sphere. Yet just as performance art flattens rhetor and audience into a single authorial agent, I suggest an analysis of how Lindsey's performance unfolding through participatory interaction shows how delivery and circulation are flattened into a single rhetorical phenomenon.

According to Gries (2013), the text's distribution is central to circulation. For performance art as represented in Lindsey's performance, text is delivered through distribution. The delivery *is* the circulation. Often delivery is seen as the explicit handing-over of text from the rhetor to the audience, and circulation is the "spatio-temporal flows" (Gries, 2013, p. 335) through which a text moves, the action of the audience passing the text along. However, during the *stART* performance, through blurring the distinction between rhetor and audience, Lindsey allowed for an expansive understanding of delivery to include evolving circulation.

Finally, the audience and Lindsey collaboratively authored text through engaging and improvising with material objects. In *stART*, through emphasizing what Micciche (2014) calls "writing's 'withness'" (p. 495) (i.e., stressing the need to compose text with material objects), Lindsey did not deliver a text to an audience who then turned around and circulated it linearly. Lindsey and her audience collaboratively gave rise to a text through engaging with everyday material objects. When new participants entered the "textual site" (Micciche, 2014, p. 498) of the lumberyard and followed Lindsey's written and oral directions, another text arose, then another. The text of this performance—the myriad moments of giving rise to language through embodying an organized set of symbols—was delivered through the body and with the body's interaction with material objects. Through watching and hearing participants struggle and make sense of the participatory performance, other participants found a foothold for engaging with the objects Lindsey provided and the objects that were already a part of the lumberyard.

Taken together, our analysis of Lindsey's May 2014 participatory performance reveals five points regarding invention and delivery:

- Invention is tied to physical location where the text will be delivered;
- Invention is constrained by the rhetor's and audience's physical capabilities;
- Delivery flattens the distinction between the rhetor and the audience;
- Delivery encompasses circulation; and
- Delivery is facilitated through a pairing of the body with material objects.

## Bowing Out

Performance artists, like all artists, offer their work as a bit of talk in a longer and ongoing conversation. We take up this admirable gesture at the close and instead

of offering a confined and completed conclusion, we offer an open-ending, one asking for, maybe imploring, further conversation so that this work, our field's collective work, can continue. We concluded our final section with five bullet points as summations of our argument. We offered all five in the spirit of inviting future conversation, thought, and writing on theories of invention and delivery. As we end our performance, we find ourselves especially wrestling with the fifth one: Delivery is facilitated through a pairing of the body with material objects.

In "Around 1986: The Externalization of Cognition and the Emergence of Postprocess Invention," Lotier (2016) asserts inventional researchers began sketching an externalist philosophy of the mind at odds with the long-dominate Cartesian ontological and epistemological foundation of I think therefore I am, which privileged an internal philosophy of the mind. Lotier moves his argument in an insightful and surprising direction when he suggests such an externalist viewpoint paved the way for the postprocess era. Yet for our purposes, we are drawn to how Lotier links externalism, seen in ecological and posthuman theories, with invention. After walking through the work of ecological and posthuman theories and describing their indirect but salient contributions to invention, Lotier writes "cognition [is] a necessary plural act . . . accomplished by an indefinite number of human and non-human actors that have become localized and functional in collaborative effort" (p. 373). Lotier's persuasive perspective on externalist invention calls out to us at the close. We wonder how invention for Lindsey is a messy assemblage of what Lotier calls "human and nonhuman actors." While Lotier keeps the focus on invention, we also see space for extending this discussion into externalist delivery. We wonder: if a messy assemblage of people and things give rise to the performance, don't these people and things *do* the performance? On posters and websites, Lindsey Allgood is credited with the entirety of the May 2014 performance *Presence*. But that isn't the whole story. As the images and journal entries and Lindsey's own narrative attest, many objects—some animate, some not—facilitated the invention and ultimate delivery of this performance. Our focus in these pages was on the body and not external material objects. But we can't ignore the work of the hay bale, the rusty nail, the creaky stairs leading to . . . who knows where? Our time is up, the actors have bowed, the houselights are on, the ushers are escorting you out. But it is good. It is time for another performance, another conversation about how the people *and* things co-construct thoughts and action.

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