# Still Seeking the Audience

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## Abstract

The changing capacities to connect generated through contemporary media have implications for an understanding of the idea of 'audience'. This paper begins a new search for an understanding of the contemporary audience and seeks this through an engagement with a few key ideas that sign-post a reconsideration of my own understanding of what an audience might become. Massumi's idea of intensity, Bennett's use of assemblage and the focus on event to emphasize the dynamic nature of an audience help to guide my trajectory. Finally I attempt to apply these ideas to a personal experience of becoming an audience to see how useful they might be as I continue to question my own habituated conceptualisations.

**Keywords:** Audience, affect, emergence, assemblage, event.

## After Ang

This paper reflects my own search for an understanding of audience based on a strategy suggested by Clough 'a rhizomatic reading and writing, which brings conceptualisations from various writings together, assembling them on the same plane so that these concepts can be made to provoke a problematization' (2000:7).

I begin by discussing the catalyst for this search, Ang's attitude to her own search for the audience, some twenty years ago, as a means to encourage debate. I am not interested in furthering Ang's agenda, refining her arguments, or surveying the consequences of her work in related scholarship. I think her engagement was significant for a particular time and medium but things have changed. I do want to signal that the search for the audience continues in new manifestations as new mediated environments emerge and new audience engagements are shaped. I build connections with concepts that I believe develop an emerging notion of how I might find a sense of a contemporary audience for myself. Finally I illustrate my conceptual trajectory by attempting a small auto-ethnographic experiment, at the micro-level, of my own experience of an audience event. This latter is simply a tentative beginning of the pragmatic work of audience research based on the ideas I am considering

and is meant to operate not as a proof of these ideas but as a way of suggesting that there is potential for another way of understanding the event of audience (although much research and refinement remains).

Certainly this paper is speculative, hopefully a little provocative, and, although tentative at the beginning, as most seeking is, I assemble a platform that finally allows me to work with the concepts I consider and articulate my own encounter as audience participant on-line. I seek a problematization of audience that could, in itself, be a catalyst for further consideration both at the level of theory, and on a more pragmatic level open up new lines for empirical research appropriate for the very fluid worlds of contemporary audience experience.

Ang's engagement with the television audience, in her book *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (1991), was an inspiration for me with her questioning of habitual assumptions about the notion of what an audience might be. Amongst the issues she explored was the fact that the broadcast institutions needed to control and have confidence in an idea of audience – they needed to quantify and commodify this creature, taking a market orientated approach, to construct the audience as a measurable object that could be sold. Ang's objections included the fact that she thought many of the academic and critical engagements with audience assumed or accepted implicitly that the notion of audience was a collective of individual viewers and that their behaviour could be measured.

> If ratings discourse derives its effectivity from its assumption that "television audience" is a taxonomic collective consisting of the sum of audience members defined exclusively in terms of their measurable "viewing behaviour", this very assumption has also predominated in the search for knowledge about the television audience in academic discourse. (Ang 1991: 155)

Her response was to create a methodology that focused more on 'situational dependency' in terms at least of the need to look at situations that shaped audience practices and experiences more than as individual audience membership and their viewing behaviours. For Ang, 'actual audiences consist of an infinite and ever expanding myriad of dispersed practices and experiences that can never be, and should not be, contained in any one total system of knowledge' (1991, 155).

Implicit in her approach was the fact that there could not be a definitive or final concept of audience because of her belief in an expansive practice and experience. Ang looked for an alternative knowledge that had, for her, a political dimension in the fact that although she acknowledged that this new knowledge might not suit the objectification and predictive practices of the institutional and marketing focus and could not 'give rise to prescriptive and

legislative solutions to establish policy problems' (Ang 1991:166) it could encourage public debate, at least, about the current (at the time) ideas of audience.

Today, in 2011, I am seeking the audience again. Ang's inspiration moves me to be wary of my own academic collusion with measurability or a closure with definition and reinforces a hope that I also can seek an alternative knowledge, or at least conceptual possibilities, which again might help to enliven the debate about the online audience and the ways we understand what this might be.

To reiterate, my approach to these questions is based on a speculative stance, rather than seeking a final and definitive closure. This is a 'what if?" approach, that follows Ang's example and isn't satisfied to necessarily reinforce established engagements with contemporary audience typologies such as 'media users' (Wilson 2009), 'interactive or participatory' (Mcnamara 2010) and 'spectators' (White 2006). I am neither critical nor do I want to take an oppositional stance with these approaches but I want to take a less direct route to the discussion of audience and track a number of different ideas that I believe, if bought together, help to suggest possibilities that orientate a different thinking to a discussion of audience. This is a thinking that taps into some contemporary ideas reflecting theorists such as Kennedy (2002), Shaviro (1993) and Bianco (2007) who have all developed similar ideas but predominantly about cinematic spectatorship. It is hoped my efforts to offer new trajectories for discussion and exploration add to these various engagements with seeking an audience.

I want to think of the audience in relation to the manner that Ang describes her own approach, which was to encourage public debate at least about 'the limitations of any particular institutional arrangement' (1991:166) and to further any particular academic theorising. This is a task that is probably impossible to complete as anything definitive but is nevertheless a task that might offer a different consideration of how we might think about the conditions prompting an audience to emerge.

## The Conditions of Becoming

Beginning this investigation I want to discuss a comparison between ice cubes and snowflakes that I found in a book by Sanford Kwinter titled *Architectures of Time* (2002)*. This is a way of suggesting how my search for the idea of audience is emergent rather than an attempt to impose a rigid or stable definition. In this instance Kwinter is talking about conditions of becoming and he cites the idea that an ice cube is shaped by a defined container that, under the condition of changing temperature, shapes ice in a particular manner. Each ice block within the container has the shape of the container and could easily be identified as belonging to the process of freezing occurring within that particular container.

I suggest that this is analogous to how we might understand definitions as containers rather than as the result of immanent processes emerging from actual experiences. A concept – such as audience – is shaped by its particular definition or container and is usually implicitly regarded as a substantive, a stable and defined concept that has a distinct meaning, something that can be applied in an abstract sense and as a general term applicable to many instances. For example, as Ang suggests, audience as measurable through ratings has shaped the concept of audience and this, of course, was her disagreement about academic ideas she considered derived from this approach.

I don't have anything against ice cubes or definitions, they are extremely useful, what I am suggesting is that our conceptualising is *always* part of the outcomes we produce through our thinking, researching and communication of that research. Maybe, and this is my hope, conceptualising differently will result in different research agendas because the object of our research will, following this line of thinking, be different.

For Kwinter the snow flake is a different type of becoming.

> One does not know in advance where or when such a crystal will begin to nucleate or form, but one knows it will emerge – apparently spontaneously- from a flux or convergence of flows, not in a prepared form or space. The form of the crystal, however, is not fixed from the beginning – it is merely an incarnated singularity, a speck of dust-ice that has been carried to a new level where it interacts with higher order flows – gravity, wind barometric pressure, humidity, other silicate dust, water, crystals, thermal and even acoustic flows, plus electrical and magnetic gradients. (2002:26)

I realise that I define things more often ice cube style rather than allowing the processual nature of the world to be accepted into my thinking. It's much easier to grasp an ice cube as a state formed by limited and analysable conditions rather than a snow flake; the dynamic nature of the multiple processes of the snow flake don't really offer stable identity and easy analysis because of the myriad of elements that condition its formation. In a snow flake there seems little fixity just a momentary actualisation, as snowflake, before it turns yet again into something else because of the changing conditions of its becoming.

There will be many ways that one could challenge this as not being an entirely justifiable analogy. A snowflake and ice cube of course are not necessarily the same as concepts, but, for me, it is a way of opening up to the possibilities that concepts can be a little more dynamic than we often assume and if that is all I achieve, then, at least, I have reminded myself of the traps that lay ahead in my search.

Based on this I want to ask: what then are the conditions (the higher order flows) that sort the singular human into being integrated into this condition of an audience? How do we as human beings become an audience? This, for me, goes beyond the situationism of Ang – because although situation might be an aspect of the conditions of audience, I would suggest that there might be other energy flows that also condition the becoming of an audience.

So what are the conditions for the becoming of an audience? For example how does the notion of energy help in my understanding of the audience? If we take another trajectory toward conceptualising the audience maybe this idea of energy might help in establishing a different understanding.

## Meaning and Intensity

Massumi states that 'the strength or duration of an image's effect is not logically connected to the content in any straight forward ways' (2002:24). For Massumi content means an 'indexing to conventional meanings in an intersubjective context, its sociolinguistic qualification' (2002:24). The impact, 'the strength or duration of the image's effect could be called its intensity' (2002:24).

According to Massumi, then, the reception of an image has at least two parallel registers; those of intensity and qualification. Qualification is equated with sociolinguistic meanings while:

> intensity is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body …It is outside expectation and adaptation, as disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration, as it is from vital function (2002:25).

More importantly 'the relationship between the levels of intensity and qualification is not one of conformity or correspondence but rather of resonation or interference, amplification or dampening' (Massumi, 2002:25).

For Massumi, the experience of an image involves a complex intertwining of at least two registers that operate in dynamic ways sometimes enhancing the impact of each and, at other times, operating in ways that hinder their effects. He also believes that these both have an impact on bodies, manifesting in different ways and as different sensations. Further, Massumi's belief is that language also has a reciprocal and similarly complex effect when it too is mixed with the image. Language can both amplify intensity 'at the price of making itself functionally redundant' (Massumi, 2002:26) while on the other hand, when its role as expressing a meaning is dominant, 'it runs counter to and dampens the intensity' (Massumi, 2002:26).

If these forces are combined we could term this an expressive event consisting of an entanglement of multiple energies operating in various ways to condition this event, just as occurs with the snow flake. The index of meaning might be important in this event but so too is the effect of the multiple energies, including the energies generated by meanings themselves, which are entangled in the intensity of the event.

> Every event takes place on both levels – and between levels, as they resonate together to form a larger system composed of two interacting subsystems following entirely different rules of formation (Massumi, 2002:26).

Massumi believes that it is through intensity, the realm of the unexpected, that the expression-event becomes 'the system of the inexplicable: emergence, into and against regeneration (the reproduction of a structure)' (2002:27). This notion of the event is one that suggests a creative and challenging arena that is about habit and challenging habit, and ultimately offers a way to understand the possibilities of change.

This notion of intensity is 'equated with affect' (Massumi, 2002:27). The strictures of the meanings imposed by definitions might be extended to understand the audience event as one that is about both a) meanings in their multiplicity as well as energies or affects, in their multiplicities, and b) how these together are entangled in the experiences of the audience both reinforcing and inhibiting these experiences.

Affect then is about energy or various combined energies that act on bodies and actualize in these bodies as these bodies change. It is energy that pushes people towards pleasures and fascinations, while it can also operate to inhibit enthusiasms and desire to engage. These affects have the power to hinder or hasten and are often elusive and difficult to articulate, but are also present and expressible, actualised through the ways in which bodies act.

It is easy to bracket or marginalise these affects, to disregard them as being too difficult to articulate. There have been numerous people, not only Massumi, who are helpful in guiding us into this realm, attempting to place their own imprint onto the concept of affect and how it might be articulated as part of our experience. For example Clough, in *The Affective Turn* (2007), throws her own net over these ideas and defines affect as 'the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, to engage, and to connect' (2007:2). Further, according to Clough:

> the concept of affect resolves some of the difficulties of treating forces that may only be observable in the interstices between bodies, between bodies and technologies, or between bodily forces and conscious knowledge…such

that the body is thought of as a centre of action and reaction, a site of energy
flows and changes in intensity (2007:232).

Sedgwick in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003) takes a different
approach through her engagement with the psychologist Tomkins but adds, I think, to the
notion of affect as energy. For Sedgwick:

> Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations,
> relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things,
> including other affects. Thus one can be excited by anger, disgusted by shame,
> or surprised by joy (2003:19).

The energies of affect then are not necessarily predictable, not necessarily controllable, can
be disconnected from meanings, but they can also be a powerful catalyst for further action
or a potent inhibitor and suppressor of action. With the effects of affect the body becomes
an indeterminate zone embodying forces that are not only shaped by the structural
parameters of sociolinguistic correspondences but also by the multiplicities of the affect-
event.

Even if we accept these ideas as possibilities, more questions arise. If bodies affect bodies:
What are these bodies? What is the nature of these bodies? Are we simply talking about
human bodies or are we to venture toward non-organic bodies? All types of bodies? How do
these bodies make connections? What are the conditions for these connections? Are affects
simply between one body and another or could there be many to one connections, one to
many connections or even many to many connections? Further what roles do bodies play as
audiences? Are we considering here simply human bodies in the configuration of the
audience or are we to extend this to the influence of non-human bodies such as
technology?

The idea of affects and their implications as a force or energy does suggest, following
Clough, that it is about linkages or relationships between bodies, with affects establishing
relations as body is affected by body. And further that these bodies are cohering together in
some form of collective rather than being understood as autonomous and separate.

## Assemblage
I find that Jane Bennett in her recent work *Vibrant Matter* (2010) is insightful in these
matters. Her stated interest is that of:

> the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to
> impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents

or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own (2010: viii).

Bennett understands bodies to mean the entire plethora of the material world and that human bodies are not to be exceptionalised or given priority in terms of a particular perspective, but to be understood as one system of many, made up of multiple pre-individual bodies or partial bodies that operate within the complex systems of the micro and macro domains. Her understanding of the coherence of bodies is discussed around the notion of assemblage, an idea fruitfully developed by Manuel DeLanda from his reading of Deleuze/Guatarri.

The idea of assemblage is that there is an open configuration or collective of elements or groups of elements – further sub assemblages if you will – that have the capacity to connect and they achieve this in numerous ways. Also these elements or sub-assemblages can be subtracted from one assemblage and be part of another.
A useful diversion here is to note Latour's discussion relating to the confusion of using words such as bodies and elements and finding it more appropriate, in his case, to think of these as actors.

> Let us suppose now that someone comes to find you with an association of humans and nonhumans, an association whose exact composition is not yet known to anyone, but about which a series of trials makes it possible to say that its members act (Latour, 2004:75).

Latour goes further, however, and changes his term from actor to actant as a means 'to rid the word of any anthropomorphism' (Latour, 2004: 75). It is this idea of actant that I will also utilize in further discussion as it supports my contention that assemblages consist of actants that act because of the affects generated both by the actants that are contained within the assemblage and by actants that impact from outside the assemblage.

It is not so much the properties of the actants that are important here – their materiality and what they can achieve as separate entities - but the focus is instead on their capacities to connect and produce actions. These capacities can be different in different assemblages and this is where affect comes into its own. The linking or capacity to connect is shaped by the affects that condition these connections and the affects produced by these connections. It would be good to remind ourselves here that affect could be defined as 'the ("active") capacities of a body to act and the ("passive") capacities of a body to be affected or to be acted upon; in other words, what a body can do and what it can undergo' (Bonta and Protevi, 2004:49).

This process involves heterogeneous and multiple connections of actants and, therefore, supports Bennett's own consideration of the interconnectedness of organic and non-organic bodies as mentioned before. An assemblage then, according to DeLanda, is a dynamic and not entirely stable configuration lasting for a period of time that involves connective processes that can be enhancing, inhibiting or contradictory, either reinforcing or hindering the processes operating in the assemblage. This dynamic nature allows for an understanding of assemblages as both having a tendency for stability as well as having a tendency for undermining these stable conditions. The assemblage itself is a coherence of forces that operates as a productive grouping, producing through myriad affects both meaning and intensities. An assemblage makes something happen through its dispersed agency.

This multiple array of forces then parallels Massumi's conceptualisation of the registers of the audiovisual system, and the ideas of affect that we have been exploring. It also resonates with Kwinter's idea of the conditions of emergence expressed through the analogy of the snow flake. An assemblage assembles and disassembles *at the same time* and is the result of recurring processes driven both within the assemblage itself and from the context outside the assemblage. When these processes stop or change dramatically because of different affective conditions so too does the configuration of the assemblage.

According to Bennett, assemblages:

> have uneven topographies, because some of the points at which various affects and bodies cross paths are more heavily trafficked than others, and so power is not distributed equally across its surface…the effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, emergent properties, emergent in that their ability to make something happen…is distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone (2010:24).

I want to posit the idea of audience as an event of expressive and intensive possibilities operating as an assemblage over a distinct period of time that will finally disperse with different actants alone and in combination reconfiguring in new assemblages. This implies an understanding that accepts a processural approach, an approach that accepts that the audience event is one that has its own changing configuration, reliant on the connections energized by actants of the particular event and cohering together, either through augmentation or inhibition. Like the snow flake, 'audience' is to be understood through the multiple conditions of its becoming and each audience event is singular. There are recurrent processes that condition the audience event, sometimes driven through the action of human actants but always influenced by a range of nonhuman actants that are multiple and operating at differing degrees of intensity.

This approach to an understanding of audience focuses on a differentiating into a specific event that is conditioned by a mixture of expressive and material intensities. These forces can vary between being stable or unstable, being predictable or unpredictable, and this multiple range of conditions finally actualizes an emergent audience event. The utilization of the concept, event, is to stress the dynamic nature of the conditioning processes with these converging and interweaving and sometimes contradicting.

In other words the longitude, latitude and contours of my audience map are the mixtures of expressive qualities (significance) and the material sensations (intensities) as energies that condition the event of the audience. Each audience event, like the snow flake, is the result of these active forces and their creation of an emergent but singular configuration. Taking this approach, then, there is not an audience defined as a general and stable structure, but a multitude of differing audience events.

How then is the audience event maintained? Utilizing the notion of assemblage I suggest that the flows or forces making up the audience event have capacities to connect or disconnect with bodies and as long as there are connections then a heterogeneous group of actants can be maintained as active participants in the audience event. The event itself could be understood as a singular and particular event which has a specific temporal duration. When the conditions are such that the capacities to maintain connections are no longer in operation, or if the forces to disperse and disconnect the assemblage are stronger than those that maintain connections, then the dispersal of the audience event will occur.

Finally what happens after the audience event is over? Actants that leave an audience event continue to organize themselves and are organized into new assemblages but take with them traces of the expressive and material forces that they have engaged with and these traces are actualized as memories. That suggests that actants can learn from each event and with repetition build habits of connecting and disconnecting and, therefore, develop particular trajectory profiles through their encounters as audience participants in multiple events.

What use is this game – especially for those who have a more pragmatic and empirical bent and who might suggest that the map offered is neither focused on audience membership per se or particularly interesting in its vague generalities? I want to suggest that for me the concept audience is problematic – especially as, however we define it; it shapes the research outcomes we produce. For myself I want to seek a more dynamic conceptualization of audience and have appropriated contemporary ideas that help to orientate my thinking to the conditions of emergence rather than the strictures of other types of definition. I am more interested in utilizing the possibilities of the snow-flake than the ice-cube.

## An Audience Event

However, an application of these ideas might help to clarify this discussion and so I have endeavoured to track what I will term an audience event that occurred recently on-line after a friend of mine had spoken of the death of the German choreographer, Pina Bausch, whose work I have been interested in over a number of years. Already it can be suggested that my previous relationship of friendship, the knowledge and memories of my interest in Pina Bausch because of that friendship, and the fact that a significant moment occurred concerning Bausch, created a catalyst that conditioned my behaviour in ways that affected an audience event for me.

This was the motivation to enter into the electricity + computer + monitor + keyboard + mouse + hand + body + catalyst + MozillaFirefox + Google + Pina Bausch + death, assemblage. My previous interest in Bausch's work was energy enough for me to initiate the assemblage and find out a little more of what had occurred. I entered the words 'Pina Bausch death' into the Google search engine, using this configuration of words as actant to activate the assemblage and begin my search through Google which in turn offered further configurations of words as suggestions for action. These included other combinations of Pina Bausch with the words 'died', 'news', 'cancer' 'obituary' or 'dead', but these I ignored to continue with the initial combination. I can articulate this situation utilising the conceptual terminology I have introduced by expressing that these other actants did not have the requisite energy for me to consider as either an augmentation or inhibition of the search. In this situation I suggest that the energy of the first combination had the strongest impact and initiated the particular trajectory through the assemblage that in retrospect I will map out in this paper.

In the menu on the first page there were ten different options and I chose 'AFP: Groundbreaking German choreographer *Pina Bausch* dead', [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i1rBfB428OwIqQaYTSoMEPBy5Q-g](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i1rBfB428OwIqQaYTSoMEPBy5Q-g), because of the word 'groundbreaking', a word that resonated with my own previous opinion of Bausch's work and suggested to me that I would be entering a site that would connect, in some way, with my own appreciation of Bausch. The word, or actant, had both a meaning for me in terms of its sociolinguistic significance and intensity for me in relation to the connection I had already processed through my previous interest in Bausch. The meaning of the word and its intensities were inextricably interlinked.

The web page itself could also be described as an assemblage with a combination of actants both in text, image and architecture including a number of hyperlinks that led to quite disparate new connections. An analysis at this level, of the web page as assemblage, could be undertaken in terms of the potential for actants, both expressive and material to make connections or disconnections. These actants are multiple and work both in terms of the effects of meaning and in relation to the potency of affects, but in this particular exercise,

for this paper, I want to track my pathway through the assemblage at a level above that of a particular focus on one web page as I believe this will offer a better suggestion of the audience event, produced by a particular assemblage, that I am trying to describe. Again, however this expresses the idea of assemblage as made up of sub-assemblages and these in turn are able to be articulated on other levels if this is appropriate.

I read part of the opening text but my eye was quickly drawn to the image of Bausch's face on the left hand side of the page and I clicked on this for an enlargement. This image then, as actant, had an intensity that motivated me to focus on it and choose this connection rather than continue reading the text. The intensity of the image was initially generated for me by the configuration of the eyes but then also because of what I considered, on reflection, the grace of Bausch's face, for me a striking beauty that affected me powerfully, much more so than any of the words I had read in the text. The actant then was not necessarily the entire face but parts of the face that catalysed the act of clicking.

I clicked back to the initial page as there were no other links to implement and then quickly returned to the main Google menu. This in itself is a useful moment to signal the limits of assemblage, that there was only a one-way return pathway because of the nature of the architecture of this particular page.

The next option I took was to click on http://imomus.livejournal.com/470239.html, and the decision to do this was motivated solely by the fact that it was the last menu entry on the page. The actant in this case then was to do with primarily the composition and layout of the page itself and possibly a waning in interest levels on my part, rather than anything related to the combination of words in the menu entry. Initially I was attracted to another image of Bausch that again resonated with the first image I had seen but this was only momentary as I scrolled further down the page and clicked on an image that initiated a YouTube clip http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6n94eLlTVI&feature=player_embedded#, 3 mins 48 secs in length [*Editor's note: this link to a Youtube video is no longer active as the content has since been taken down – we are leaving in the link as it reinforces the author's argument. Other inactive links below were removed*]. I watched this clip captivated by the movements of the dancer and the sounds of the audio track. The movements and sounds of the audio track were potent actants that maintained my interest, an interest much more about the energies or intensities of these movements and sounds rather than any explicit meaning that they might have either in themselves or in anything that I might interpret as being significant. In other words in this instance the intensity of the movements and sounds dominated in the register of meanings and intensities and these were manifest in sensations through my body.

I then clicked on a further You Tube video motivated by another image of Bausch that again had similarities to the first two that I had seen. Again the actant was energized by the memory of the first two images that, at this time, had been potent sources of energy and therefore, potent actants. This video, which was 5mins 29 secs long I played for approximately 2mins before I became distracted from the sequence of repetitive movements of the dancer, these movements in themselves as actant were boring and that sensation inhibited the connections occurring and, therefore, motivated me to click on to a further video. This choice was activated by the title: 'Pina Bausch: A coffee with Pina' as it suggested to me that it might offer a more personal portrayal of Bausch. The combination of words offered an idea of the intimacy and personal level that occurs when drinking coffee with a friend. This video turned out to be a fascinating and unexpected choreography mainly of Bausch's hands as she spoke through voice-over. I watched this video, some 3 mins in length, to the end, fascinating as it was because of the intensity of the imagery and further energized by the fact it wasn't at all what I had necessarily anticipated.

With this clip completed the screen offered five different alternative clips to view next and I chose to view one simply called 'Pina Bausch' and this was entirely motivated by the length of the clip 1min 27secs; the shortest clip in a selection of clips that lasted between 2mins and 8mins. http://youtu.be/Jm70fMM3JAk. The actant then had energy because of expediency meshed with the energy levels of my body that were suggesting to me I was losing interest in this particular audience event. As I viewed this clip I was distracted by someone entering my office to ask if I wanted a coffee and when the clip was completed soon after I exited the computer and the audience-event ended but with traces retained as I discussed this event with my friend as we went for coffee.

If we examine aspects of this event – the beginning catalysed by a particular trigger (the knowledge of Pina Bausch's death), and the ending framed by the new event of someone wanting to drink coffee and begin another assemblage - aspects of the theoretical agenda can be discussed through a concrete experience. The catalytic moment could be understood both on an emotional level with my interest in the death of Pina Bausch and also on a more impersonal level through my interest in choreography and especially contemporary or even non-traditional approaches to dance.

The first thing of note for me is to realize that this event does have a beginning that can be identified and that it has an ending, but the length of time that this event takes is potentially variable. Certainly it was artificial in the sense I was using this event as a way of illustrating the efficacy of my ideas and further that it suggests a fairly linear trajectory with only one theme, Pina Bausch, as motivating the energy of the assemblage, when in an often common scenario a much more complex assemblage could be in operation with numerous software options all available at the same time. For instance I could also be on Face Book with my

friend when discussing Bausch and be searching as well as conversing with a variety of people on and off-line.

It is clear that this event was singular and discrete as if I was to enter into this same assemblage again the likelihood that I would follow the same pathway would be minimal because different actants would offer different intensities and thus instigate acts of connection and disconnection different to the original process. In other words the conditions would be different and like the snow-flake a different 'shape' would actualize. The audience event is marked by a temporal length, and a singular manifestation, meaning that each event is different. However, also just as with the snow-flake there could be multiple manifestations of this event because of slightly different conditions, that is different actants that directed me to connect with other actants in the assemblage. Instead of understanding this process as offering a coherent system of possibilities, definable and predictable, it could be understood that there are multiple discrete trajectories produced by this assemblage connected by the capacities of actants to connect or disconnect with, in this case at least, only one of these trajectories actualized. This trajectory was produced by the assemblage and the particular energies of the actants that established this audience event.

The second aspect obvious in this exercise is the variety of energies and actants that trigger new connections. In this very brief and simple example a number of quite different actants are noticeable ranging from the choice and combinations of words that could be utilized as part of the search and the selection of web pages; to the potency of an image or partial image and their resonances in other images; to the position of addresses on the menu page; as well as the indicators of time of the video clips that could be chosen. Again this suggests that each event is singular and driven strongly by affective energies that can and will change with each choice and the triggering effects of these affects are not necessarily predictable or controllable, although some degree of manipulation through design decisions is possible. This latter idea suggests the need to consider aesthetics as a composition of energies or affective production.

The concept of assemblage is shown to be a very versatile one that can operate as an analytical device in relation to different levels from that of the initial computer + mouse + keyboard + Mozilla Firefox + Google + hand + body + catalyst + Pina Bausch + death assemblage to sub-assemblages such as image + text + architecture of a web page or a YouTube site with its multiple linkages and potential choices energised by a remarkable range of actants. These actants can not only augment new connections but can also hinder connections or trigger changes in the flow of a particular sequence within a web site or a singular web site in a range of web sites. For example in this case the repetitive sequence of movements in one of the videos created a disconnection from that sequence before it had completed.

The concept of assemblage, then, operates as an analytical and synthesising device that focuses on the collective operation of numerous actants actualising in a variety of modes, not all of which are implemented by a human subject. For instance the capabilities and structures of the computer and software programmes have a direct influence over what is achievable. Certainly the role of myself as actant was essential for the assemblage to actualise a particular trajectory of connections and this fits well with Bennett's notion that assemblages 'have uneven topographies' (2010:24) which suggests not every actant is equal, but also suggests that the human energy as actant is not always dominant as there can be times when either the architecture of the page or even difficulties with software or hardware operate to inhibit particular trajectories. A power cut would be an obvious negative actant for this particular audience event, but software errors or hardware malfunctions are more likely possibilities.

The ending of the event also leaves a remainder and participates in further assemblages which in this case would include my conversation with my friend as we walked to have coffee, but also in the mapping of this event for the process of developing a simple example for this paper. The event also advances my continuing interest in Bausch and her style of choreography.

It should also be noted that my use of the concept affect is not synonymous with emotion although it is possible that emotional intensity must be included within the range of actants available. The catalyst that initiated this assemblage was due to an emotional connection with Bausch but this dissipated as the trajectory through the assemblage was developed. Aspects of the assemblage including sensations, composition, temporality, interest levels and other distractions outside of the assemblage also offered potential actants.

Hopefully this simple example offers enough as an entry point into the possibilities of this different mapping of, at least, the online audience and its emergence through the audience event. My strategy has been to offer a new approach by simply beginning a search for this audience utilising some alternative conceptual tools. This approach I justified by believing that the conceptual conditions I offer would shape new discussion of the audience and that these in turn would create a platform to catalyse debate about this new emergent phenomenon. I have offered a conceptualisation of audience as the actualising of an audience event through the conditions of both meaning and intensity produced by a particular assemblage and this base-line conception is meant to act as a generator for more debate. My illustration of the viability of these ideas operated on a personal and micro-level and much work remains to develop a more substantive theory of audience event shaped by the ideas of assemblage and affect. Ang's search and her desire for alternative knowledges, and a more open debate about the audience, has in itself sparked my own endeavours to search, not in the hope of actually finding the audience, but through my consideration of an

alternative conceptual assemblage I am hoping that I will at least continue to energise that search.

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