

Laura CULL

***An Education of Attention:
The Perception of Change in Bergson and Performance***

A number of thinkers across the disciplines have referred to the notion of an ‘education of attention’, including William James, J. J. Gibson and more recently Tim Ingold. In this paper though, I will be focusing on what this concept might imply for both Henri Bergson – in the context of his broader conception of philosophy as involving an extension of the faculties of perception – and for the (un-)artist Allan Kaprow, particularly in relation to the 1970s participatory performance events he referred to as his ‘Activities’ (as distinct from his better known ‘Happenings’). In terms of the conference theme of ‘visual learning’, the paper will reflect on both Bergson and Kaprow’s discussions of the relationship between seeing and doing, juxtaposing Bergson’s concern for the utilitarian and limited nature of a perception bound up with action, with Kaprow’s attempt to think beyond a spectator/participant binary in his evaluation of the specificity of ‘watching in the midst of doing’. Throughout though, I will be thinking less in terms of the visual as a discrete realm, and more in terms of attention and learning as fundamentally embodied activities. In turn, drawing from Deleuze as well as Bergson and Kaprow, I will be concerned with art and philosophy as (potentially continuous) instances of education, where learning is understood less as a transition from non-knowledge to knowledge mediated by recognition and common sense, and more as an encounter with change, difference or the new.

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