Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s

Carla Taban

Summary
Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) is one of the leading figures of 20th century culture whose oeuvre spans several languages (mainly English and French but also German, Italian and Spanish), literary genres (poetry, prose fiction, novel, drama, criticism and translation), media (literature, theatre, radio, TV and film) and cultures (mainly but not only European). Beckett’s oeuvre enjoys a remarkable global reception across artistic, scholarly an intellectual fields. The research project of a monograph, exhibition and Internet website-cum-portal on 'Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s' aims at the systematic and comprehensive mapping of Beckett's pervasive presence in contemporary art practices and discourses in the last half century, throughout the world. The project's ultimate goal is to propose a paradigmatic model for understanding and studying cultural transmission phenomena across artistic-literary fields in the late 20th-early 21st centuries.

The project proceeds empirically by collecting (ideally) all available data regarding Beckett-conditioned contemporary artworks and discourses; by describing the data; by assessing and organizing it; and by eventually proposing, on its basis, a theoretical model. However, due to the sheer volume and dispersion of data, the stage of theoretical formulation will very likely not be reached before a three- to four-year time-span. Yet the activities of data collection, description, assessment and organization will be informed by a consistent methodological reflection on best available tools and practices. In this way, the project can already function as a methodological model, before becoming a theoretical one.

A further significant outcome of this empirically-oriented stage of the project is that Beckett-related contemporary artworks that are not yet documented will actually be recorded and made available. Many contemporary art practices rest on processual rather than objectual conceptions of art, being oftentimes ephemeral and not leaving behind either an artifact or proper documentation. Yet their significance for further artistic and cultural developments can be major. The present project improves contemporary art-historical documentation, in its specifically circumscribed area, for a range of potential uses: in-depth academic research, research conducted by arts professionals, teaching at various levels in/across different disciplines, consultation by the general public, exchanges and collaboration between the above.

Beckett's multidimensional oeuvre and its 'legacy' to contemporary art has been chosen as a case study that can potentially generate both methodological and theoretical research models because of its extreme complexity. There is no other creative figure in the 20th century whose 'outside legacy' to the arts is as continuous, extensive and varied as Beckett's. Besides artistic practices, Beckett's oeuvre also impacts the discourses of artists, art historians, theorists, critics and curators in ways that need to be specified as well. These discourses draw on Beckett references not only to discuss Beckett-related artworks, but also to interpret -- by analogy with oftentimes different and even conflicting understandings of Beckett's oeuvre -- further art works, practices, curatorial projects and/or art 'movements'. If a model can be devised to systematize our grasp of processes of signification, cultural transmission and appropriation in the case of 'Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s', one can quite confidently conjecture that this model is likely to apply, with minor revisions, to other less complex cases.
**Detailed Description**

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) is one of the leading figures of 20th century culture whose oeuvre spans several languages (mainly English and French but also German, Italian and Spanish), literary genres (poetry, prose fiction, novel, drama, criticism and translation), media (literature, theatre, radio, TV and film) and cultures (mainly but not only European). Configurative relationships fundamentally connect these constitutive dimensions of Beckett’s corpus in a complex multimodal network the nature and workings of which scholars are still endeavouring to comprehend in their full specificity, by using a variety of theoretical, methodological and (inter-)disciplinary approaches. Originally drawing on and transforming centuries of accumulated knowledge in the arts, humanities and even sciences, Beckett’s oeuvre enjoys a remarkable global reception across artistic, scholarly an intellectual fields, which is matched only by few other literary figures (e.g. Dante, Shakespeare, Joyce).

One field in which Beckett’s ‘legacy’ is particularly pervasive is contemporary art. (Other fields are contemporary literature, performing and dramatic arts, and music). The research project of a monograph, exhibition and Internet website-cum-portal on ‘Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s’ aims at the systematic and comprehensive mapping of Beckett’s widespread presence in contemporary art practices and discourses in the last half century, throughout the world. The project’s ultimate goal is to propose a paradigmatic model for understanding and studying cultural transmission phenomena across artistic-literary fields in the late 20th-early 21st centuries.

Scholars deal with the topic of Beckett and/in art in mainly two ways. On the one hand, they discuss Beckett’s direct involvement with art during his lifetime as evidenced by: i) His art historical, critical and/or theoretical writings on contemporaneous artists, mainly the Dutch painter brothers Abraham and Gerardus Van Velde, but also on French painters André Masson and Pierre Tal-Coat (Beckett 1983); ii) His tributes to artist friends, again Bram and Geer Van Velde, but also Irish painter-graphic designer Jack B. Yeats, French-Israeli painter-draughtsman-printmaker Avigdor Arikha and French painter Henry Hayden (Beckett 1983); iii) His oftentimes unsigned, and hence unattributed, translations (or translation proofs) into English of essays on art by critics, historians, philosophers, writers and artists, such as Georges Duthuit, André Breton, Jean Wahl, Bram Van Velde and others, most of which were published in the Parisian magazine transition (Ackerley and Gontarski; Duthuit 1950 and 1952; Labrusse); iv) Beckett’s granting permission for the creation of numerous artists’ books comprising his texts, to artists such as: Avigdor Arikha, Hans Martin Erhardt, Max Ernst, Sorel Etrog, William Stanley Hayter, Delias Henke, Jasper Johns, Charles Klabunde, Louis Le Brocquy, Robert Ryman, etc. (Beckett 1958; 1965; 1967, 1968a; 1968b; 1970, 1971; 1972; 1973; 1974; 1976a; 1976b; 1979; 1983; 1984; 1989a; 1989b; 1991; 1998); v) Overt and covert art references in Beckett’s creative corpus, across genres and media (Albright; Bignell; Del Degan; Hartel; Herren; Knowlson 1996 and 2003; Lommel; McMillan; Mercier; Milz; Oppenheim 1999 and 2000; Taban); vi) Travel notebooks and letters giving evidence of young Beckett’s countless visits to art galleries, museums and private collections throughout Europe (Beckett 2009 and 2011; Lutz, Veit and Wichner; Nixon; Quadflieg; Tophoven); and finally vii) Archival material such as Beckett’s manuscripts, reading and production notebooks that facilitate the reconstruction of art allusions in his oeuvre (Beckett 1992, 1993, 1999b; Beckett 1999a).

On the other hand, Beckett’s ‘minimalist’ aesthetics is highlighted – especially due to Beckett’s participation in the “Minimalism” issue of the Aspen magazine edited by Brian O’Doherty in 1967 (Beckett 1967) – and it is related to the American ‘Minimalist’ movement of the 1960s and its different, even conflicting, interpretations (Bell; Brater; Oppenheim 2000).
Beside Beckett scholars, art historians, theorists and critics have also tackled on occasion the relationships between Beckett and contemporary art, by discussing not so much Beckett’s own ‘minimalism’, but his significance for ‘Minimalist’ artists. Exemplary in this respect are Rosalind Krauss’s writings on Sol LeWitt and Robert Morris that draw on extensive analogies with Beckett’s novels *Molloy* and *Watt* respectively. Along or beyond the import of Beckett for ‘Minimalist’ artists, Bruce Nauman and the impact of Beckett’s oeuvre on his artistic practice have also been quite often studied (van Bruggen; Chiong; Delaporte; Folie and Glasmeier; Lerm Hayes 2003; Schaffner; Tubridy 2007; van Tuyl), as has been the relevance of Beckett for Canadian filmmaker and photographer Stan Douglas, who organized the very first comprehensive exhibition of Beckett’s visual (TV and *Film*) work at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1988 (Bal; Douglas; Inboden; Watson), which circulated internationally. Art historians and/or literary scholars have highlighted further connections between Beckett and artists as different as Jasper Johns (Krauss 1976), William Kentridge (Krauss 2000), Steve McQueen (Carville), Doris Salcedo (Tubridy 2010) and Robert Smithson (Israel; Katz). Moreover, a number of contemporary artists have themselves discursively acknowledged – in their writings, statements, interviews, etc. – the relevance of Beckett’s work for them (Douglas and Enright; Douglas and Thater; Graham and Gerdes; Holt, Lippard and Smithson; LeWitt; LeWitt and Wilson; Morris; Nauman; Smithson), although they haven’t always explicitly clarified how exactly this interest is to be related to either particular artworks or to specific problematics informing their overall practice.

Recent research undertaken in the last ten to fifteen years – in which scholars have started to cross the boundaries between different disciplines such as literary, theatre, film, media, visual, visual culture and cultural studies as well as art history – has listed in addition the following contemporary artists as having responded, at one time or another, to Beckett in their works: Gerard Byrne, Duncan Campbell, Janet Cardiff, Paul Chan, James Coleman, Atom Egoyan, Valie Export, Douglas Gordon, Dan Graham, Rodney Graham, Eva Hesse, Nathaneal Mellors, Juan Munoz, Tony Oursler, Richard Serra and Ugo Rondinone (Carville; Folie and Glasmeier; Knowlson 2003). The value of such a list, to which many more names can and should in fact be added (see List of References), is to begin to show the full range and variety of artistic responses to Beckett since the 1960s. What made it possible to draw up this list is the interdisciplinary border-crossing that has led to the recognition of the fact that Beckett’s ‘legacy’ to contemporary art is much more complex and diverse than an evaluation in terms of ‘Minimalism’ allows one to assess. Nonetheless, such interactions between disciplines are still an incipient and local/individual effort that the present project aims at developing and coordinating, so that the issue of Beckett’s pervasiveness in contemporary art can be dealt with in a comprehensive and systematic fashion. While the above list is a valuable starting point for research, in depth study requires, in parallel with further data collection, that the connections between Beckett and artists creatively drawing on his work be not simply itemized, but specified, supported and documented.

The project ‘Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s’ aims in its first phase at precisely such further data collection, specification and documentation. A considerable challenge to this task is the programmatic objectlessness of many contemporary art practices. Simply put, the challenge consists in the improbability of directly experiencing ephemeral Beckett-related artworks (due to geographical, temporal, informational, etc. constraints) and, correlatively, in the scarcity, unreliability and/or inaccessibility of their documentation. This circumstance is partly responsible for the common impression that Beckett’s presence in contemporary art practices is less substantial.
than it actually is. In fact there isn’t a major art ‘movement’ since the second half of the 20th century – from ‘Abstract Expressionism’ to ‘Conceptual Art’ passing through ‘Fluxus’, ‘Minimalism’, ‘Pop Art’, ‘Art & Language/Text’, ‘Video and Performance Art’, ‘Earthworks’/‘Land Art’, ‘Mail Art’, etc. – that doesn’t include at least one key representative working at one moment or another in response to Beckett. Among the quoted ‘movements’, more than half rest on processual rather than objectual conceptions of art, rejecting the validity of creative endeavors whose main or sole aim is the production of art objects (Lippard). Similar notions of art-as-process, art-as-activity or art-as-intervention also ground the praxis of a number of distinguished and ‘independent’ (i.e. difficultly assignable to a ‘movement’) contemporary artist figures that have produced Beckett-related works. Yet, in the absence of an ‘object’ of study proper, in this particular case art ‘objects’ with a ‘Beckettian’ dimension, the researcher’s task is considerably impeded.

A further challenge to the project is the fact that Beckett’s impact spans both artistic practices and art critical-theoretical-historical discourses. Sometimes it seems that art discoursers establish connections between artists’ works and Beckett’s oeuvre without the artists or artworks themselves necessarily or explicitly supporting these associations. Conversely, artists may draw not (only) on Beckett’s work directly, but (also) on its previous appropriative and transformative uses in both art practices and discourses. The intricacy of exchanges between and mutual conditionings of artistic practices and discourses becomes fully visible in the case of ‘Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s’. The project can thus function as a paradigm, i.e. a model with larger implications for the understanding of cultural transmission across literary-artistic fields.

Given the complex and as yet unmapped state of affairs described above, the project proceeds empirically by collecting (ideally) all available data regarding Beckett-conditioned contemporary artworks and discourses; by describing the data; by organizing and assessing it; and by eventually proposing, on its basis, a theoretical model. However, due to the sheer volume and dispersion of data, the stage of theoretical modeling will very likely not be reached before a three- to four-year time-span. Yet the activities of data collection, description, organization and assessment will be informed by a consistent methodological reflection on best available tools and practices. In this way, the project can already function as a methodological model, before becoming a theoretical one.

Data collection will proceed (for it has already started) with a thorough research of abstract, bibliographical, index, database and – public and private – archival resources on all available supports, i.e. paper, audio-visual and electronic formats (see List of References). Art museums/galleries’ and periodic art exhibitions’ online collections and/or archives will also be fully searched, as will be art practitioners’ official websites. This step will be followed by the corroboration of findings via original document consultation on original support, on-site archival and collection research, and art practitioners’ interviewing, both in Canada and abroad. Major Canadian locations include Edmonton, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver and their respective relevant public and private art galleries, institutions, studios, etc. Major foreign locations include public and private contemporary art museums, galleries, institutes, organisations, studios, etc. in the USA (New York: e.g. MOMA, Guggenheim, Whitney; Los Angeles: e.g. Getty) and several European countries: France (e.g. Metz, Paris), Germany (e.g. Berlin, Cologne, Kassel), Italy (e.g. Milan, Rome, Venice) and the UK (e.g. Glasgow, London). Ideally Australian, Asian and South-American on-site verification research ought to be conducted as well. The team and personnel of the project need not be the only ones to carry out on-site research and thus travel to all

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these locations. Local volunteers with the project can become responsible for data validation. Moreover, art practitioners’ interviewing can also take place via CIT. The next step of the project consists in developing, on the basis of a substantial amount of data, criteria to organise, describe and assess it (see infra), and in actually carrying out all these activities.

A further significant outcome of this empirically-oriented stage of the project is that Beckett-related contemporary artworks that are not yet documented will actually be recorded and made available. Artworks that are ephemeral and do not leave behind either an artefact or proper documentation, may nonetheless be significant to further artistic and cultural developments. The ‘Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s’ project improves contemporary art-historical documentation and access to it, in its specifically circumscribed area, for a range of potential uses: in-depth academic research, research conducted by arts professionals, teaching at various levels in/across different disciplines, consultation by the general public, exchanges and collaboration between some or all of the above interested parties.

Previous attempts to assess the connections between Beckett and contemporary art have been carried out not only by scholars from different fields, but also by curators. A few exhibitions that have been organised since 2000 dealt exclusively with the topic of ‘Beckett and/in (Contemporary) Art’. While Samuel Beckett: A Passion for Paintings curated by Fionnuala Croke at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland in 2006, on the occasion of Beckett’s centenary, showed artworks (mainly paintings) that Beckett owned, saw and/or alluded to in his various works, alongside artists’ books comprising his texts as well as Beckett archival material related to art (Croke), the following shows focused mainly or solely on contemporary artists’ creative responses to Beckett (although some of them also included artists’ books and/or archival material), sometimes even commissioning new artworks: Samuel Beckett, Bruce Nauman, curated by Christine Hoffmann and Michael Glasmeier with the collaboration of Gaby Hartel at the Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria in 2000 (Folie and Glasmeier); not i, curated by Pieter Hensen at the Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast and Context Gallery, Derry, Northern Ireland, UK also in 2000 (Lerm Hayes 2000); aprèsledépeupleur/afterthelostones, curated by Michèle Thériault at the UQAM Gallery, Montreal, Quebec, Canada in 2002 (Thériault); 18: Beckett, curated by Séamus Kealy at the Blackwood Gallery, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada in 2006 (Kealy); I not I: Samuel Beckett, Philip Guston, Bruce Nauman, curated by Patrick T. Murphy at the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, Ireland in 2006 (Anon); and most recently Samuel Beckett curated by Marianne Alphant and Nathalie Léger at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France in 2007 (Alphant and Léger).

Another kind of exhibition that deals exclusively with Beckett’s reception by contemporary artists is that of artists’ books comprising his texts. While Foirades/Fizzles: Echo and Allusion in the Art of Jasper Johns, curated by James Cuno at the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Wight Art Gallery, UCLA, USA in 1987 is the most comprehensive exhibition to date to display the various stages of the making of an artist book comprising Beckett texts (Cuno), Word and Image: Samuel Beckett and the Visual Text/ Mot et image: Samuel Beckett et le texte visuel, curated by Breon Mitchell and Lois More Overbeck at the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta/GA, USA in 1999 exhibited the so far largest selection of artists’ books created on the basis of Beckett works (Mitchell and Overbeck).

Besides exhibitions that focus, one way or another, solely on Beckett and art, a wealth of international exhibitions, biennials, art festivals, etc. which have been organized in the past ten to
fifteen years, either included Beckett as a participating artist, especially with his TV work and *Film*, or were placed under his conceptual patronage that favoured specific interpretations of his oeuvre and/or creative processes. The two best known examples of the first category are: *documenta X*, curated by Catherine David in Kassel, Germany in 1997, which screened as an artwork Beckett’s *Quadrat I & II*, a TV piece that Beckett himself directed at the Süddeutscher Rundfunk in Stuttgart, Germany in 1982 (Glasmeier 2000); and *Always a Little Further*, curated by Rosa Martínez at the 51st Venice Biennial, Italy in 2005, in which Beckett was both referred to in the curatorial statement and present as an exhibitor with his shortest dramaticule *Breath* adapted by Greek artist Nikos Navridis in the form of a video installation (Martínez; Grammatikopoulou). Using as their titles quotes from Beckett, *Total Object Complete with Missing Parts*, curated by Andrew Renton at the Tramway, Glasgow, UK in 2001 and *Try Again, Fail Again, Fail Better*, curated by Anette Kierulf and Mark Sladen at the 4th Nordic Biennial Momentum, Moss, Norway in 2006 best illustrate the second category.

While quite abundant, these various types of curatorial projects offer, just like the scholarly attempts discussed above, only partial and most of the time speculative glimpses into the complex issue of ‘Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s’. Although our project will undoubtedly benefit from these various efforts to assess Beckett’s ‘legacy’ to contemporary art, it requires at the same time that these efforts be systematised and supplemented, especially as regards the different historical-chronological stages of artistic responses to Beckett and their conceptual, thematic, problematic, medium-related and contextual dimensions.

Previous scholarly and curatorial contributions have, as a rule, endeavoured to circumscribe the relationships between Beckett’s work, on the one hand, and a given contemporary artwork, artist’s practice or art ‘movement’, on the other, by selecting and highlighting a limited number of structural, thematic and/or media-related ‘Beckettian’ features. This selective approach made it possible for Beckett’s work to be considered relevant for competing understandings of the same object of inquiry. A case in point is the ‘Minimalist movement’. Both the serialist-structuralist-rationalist interpretation of ‘Minimalism’ and its rival phenomenological-intuitionist interpretation argue their respective position (also) by resorting to Beckett’s relevance for ‘Minimalist’ artists and focusing only on aspects of his work that support this rather than that point of view. The same situation holds for other divergent interactions in contemporary art, e.g. between ‘movements’ such as ‘Abstract Expressionism’ and ‘Conceptual Art’ or between approaches such as medium-specificity and inter-/post-mediality, with Beckett being invoked and/or appropriated, paradoxically, on both sides of the divide. From the perspective of the ‘Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s’ project what is of interest and needs to be explained is precisely the capacity of Beckett’s work to be significant for *all* the past, present and oftentimes contradictory developments in contemporary art.

The project is also relevant because responses to Beckett from the field of contemporary art succeed in casting a new light on fundamental constitutive dimensions of Beckett’s corpus and their configurative relationships, which may otherwise be much harder to observe or even remain unnoticed. If contemporary art responses to Beckett help to better understand contemporary art, they at the same time help to better understand Beckett’s own creative endeavour and processes. Some of the mutually dependent structure-, form- and medium-informing themes that contemporary art has highlighted in Beckett by appropriating, transforming and developing them are the following: sensation – perception – apperception – conception; structure – construct – concept –

These i) themes can be used – along criteria such as ii) chronology by decade since the 1960s, iii) art ‘movement’ characteristics/aesthetics and iv) art discipline/medium – as heuristic starting points in the organisation, description and assessment of contemporary art responses to Beckett. The following questions can further assist with the same task: What aspects of Beckett’s creative endeavour do contemporary artists/art discoursers consider particularly relevant to their own artistic and/or discursive enterprise? What works by Beckett do they favour and why? How precisely, i.e. at what levels, does the transposition – from Beckett to the art field – operate, since it oftentimes entails the passage from one medium, context and signifying system to another? What less obvious features of Beckett’s work does contemporary art help to illuminate? How does Beckett’s oeuvre participate in contemporary art discourses and practices?

At the present, contemporary artworks and discourses – inclusive of those that respond to Beckett – are the objects of study of various disciplines such as art history, criticism and theory, cultural and visual culture studies as well as visual and cultural anthropology. Beckett’s oeuvre is in its turn tackled by various disciplines such as literary, theatre, media and film studies. The interactions between art and literature have led to the creation of fields of inquiry such as word and image, art and language and inter-media studies. Curatorial practices, which ground various Beckett-related exhibitions, are mainly researched in museum and curatorial practice studies. Within each, or at least most, of these disciplines and fields there are several methodological and theoretical models at work, ranging from historicist and biographical approaches to formalist, structuralist, poststructuralist-deconstructivist, cognitivist, semiotic, reader/viewer-response, feminist, postcolonial, psychoanalytical, socio-ideological, critical-theoretical, philosophical-phenomenological, philosophical-analytical and philosophical-aesthetical ones, to name but the best known and most used (see for instance Bal, Bois et al; Belting; Cheetham, Holly and Moxey; Culler 2007 and 2011; Eagleton; Foster, Krauss et al; Fry; Haxthausen; Kibédi Varga 1989 and 2003; Preziosi 1989 and 2009). These various models have oftentimes come into existence and co-existence because previous models were considered insufficient to suitably account for specific cases/occurrences/contexts. The project ‘Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s’ will endeavour to understand the various methodological-theoretical perspectives from within which its objects of study – i.e. artworks and art discourses responding to Beckett – emerge or within which they are explicitly or implicitly set/embedded/framed, before attempting to propose new methodological-theoretical modelling. This actually means that the project will take stock of and fully show, again in its specifically circumscribed area, methodological-theoretical debates taking currently place in the disciplinary fields which it involves.

The Internet website-cum-portal component of the present project will be, due to the technological capabilities of the medium, more comprehensive, versatile and accessible than the monograph and exhibition components. It will be the first operational module of the project and it will continue to
function even after the completion of the monograph and exhibition, so as to record and assess new, on-going responses to Beckett in contemporary art. Besides recording and assessing both historical and contemporaneous data and thus function as a knowledge resource, the Internet module is also intended to become an exchange platform for artists, scholars, practitioners, educators or anybody else interested in Beckett’s work and its reception in contemporary art since the 1960s.

Beckett’s multidimensional oeuvre and its ‘legacy’ to contemporary art has been chosen as a case study that can potentially generate both methodological and theoretical research models because of its extreme complexity. There is no other creative figure in the 20th century whose ‘outside legacy’ to the arts is as continuous, extensive and varied as Beckett’s. Besides artistic practices, Beckett’s oeuvre also impacts the discourses of artists, art historians, theorists, critics and curators in ways that need to be specified too. These discourses draw on Beckett references not only to discuss Beckett-related artworks, but also to interpret – by analogy with oftentimes different and even conflicting understandings of Beckett’s oeuvre – further art practices, curatorial projects and/or art ‘movements’. If a model can be devised to systematise our grasp of processes of signification, cultural transmission and appropriation in the case of ‘Samuel Beckett and/in Contemporary Art since the 1960s’, one can quite confidently conjecture that this model is likely to apply, with minor revisions, to other less complex cases.
List of References

Quoted References
Samuel Beckett
---. *He, Joe, Quadrat I und II, Nacht und Träume, Schatten, Geister Trio... Filme für den SDR.* DVD. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2008.

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**Samuel Beckett and Art**


Delaporte, Marie-Laure. “Samuel Beckett/Bruce Nauman: Un nouveau lieu de création spatio-


Kealy, Séamus (Ed.). *18: Beckett*. Catalogue of an exhibition curated by Séamus Kealy at the


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**Art and Literary Theory and History**


**Consulted References (Selection)**

*Samuel Beckett Criticism*


Laws, Catherine (Ed.). *Performance Research. A Journal of the Performing Arts* 12, no. 1 Special

**Samuel Beckett and Art**

Bochner, Mel and John Baldessari. “Outside the Box”, *Artforum* 45, no. 10 (Summer 2007): 101-102.
---. “The Thinking Eye in Beckett’s Film”, *Modern Language Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (June 1975): 166-


Prinz, Jessica. “*Foirades/Fizzlies/Beckett/Johns*”, *Contemporary Literature* 21, no. 3 ‘Art and Literature’ (Summer 1980): 480-510.


**Art History and Theory**


Art Resources: Abstracts, Bibliographies, Databases, Indexes, Museums, Galleries, etc.


Tate: www.tate.org.uk.
Knowledge Mobilization Plan
The main knowledge mobilization strategy of the proposed project is its Internet component, since it will be continuous, freely accessible and it will include a social media element. This component will also be the first operational one. Operation is planned to start by the end of the project’s second year, with subsequent ongoing development in terms of uploaded content in the third year and beyond. The exhibition and monograph components of the project will also contribute to knowledge mobilization, although in a less continuous fashion. They are planned to take place and respectively be published at the end of the third year of the project. It is likely that these two components’ reach in terms of number and type of audience (age, profession, geographical location, etc.) be more limited than in the case of the Internet component. Nonetheless, if partner organizations will be found, the exhibition can have international circulation. Measuring the number of people that access the Internet and exhibition components is quite easy, via hit counting in the first case and ticket counting in the second. The quality of the interaction between the audience and these two components will also be evaluated, via surveys and questionnaires.

Knowledge mobilization methods will also include participation in both academic and art professional conferences, workshops, meetings, etc. The knowledge mobilized on these occasions will be not only outbound, from the project to the audience and peers, but also inbound, from the audience and peers to the project. The project will have enough flexibility, at least in its first year and a half to two years, to integrate and adapt solutions that it may not come to generate itself. Subsequent participation in such activities of knowledge mobilization is likely to be more outbound than inbound, at least as regards the best possible way for designing the website-cum-portal and organizing its content. Anybody interested will be able to contribute web content, especially once the website-portal is launched, a process which will be nonetheless moderated. Volunteers around the world can also participate in data verification.

Further modalities of knowledge mobilization include the publication of journal articles, book chapters and reports of at least two kinds: in-depth studies dealing with specific aspects of Beckett-related contemporary artworks and discourses that it is neither the monograph nor the Internet component’s function to tackle in detailed manner. The second kind of publication which also is out of the range of the project’s three components – Internet website-cum-portal, monograph and exhibition – and which will find its best dissemination venue in journals, book collections, etc. is the in-depth description of the project’s various stages of development, as well as its methodological, theoretical and logistical challenges.

The project has the capability of facilitating exchanges between individuals, organizations and individuals and organizations both within and outside academia, that were previously unaware of their shared interests. It can thus consolidate interest communities and facilitate the development of new collaborative projects of which it itself need not be a direct part, other than having enabled mutual knowledge. Pending the project’s resources it itself can collaborate in other projects that are relevant to its scope.

The project’s overall knowledge mobilization strategy is to respond – as time and personnel resources allow – to requests of presentation and instruction/training from any interested party, be it art professional or academic organizations and groups, educational institutions, media, etc. It will also endeavor, at least in its first stages, to signal its existence to these various parties. Later and if the need arises, it can train trainers.
Expected Outcomes Summary
The proposed project will generate several kinds of benefits/outcomes.

In terms of knowledge creation, the project will discover and delineate the extent of its object of study, i.e. contemporary art works and discourses drawing on Beckett’s oeuvre. Methodologically, it will employ and further best available approaches for data collection from both recorded and (hitherto) unrecorded sources, in its specifically circumscribed area. It will also employ and further best available practices for the description, organization, analysis and assessment of its object of study. Theoretically, the project will not only lay out the methods and theories that already ground or are embedded within its very object (see Detailed Description), but it will also eventually propose a model for literature-arts appropriation and transmission processes.

In terms of knowledge preservation and dissemination, the project will function – especially, but not only through its Internet website-cum-portal component – both as a hub for its object of study and as a gateway to connected resources (such as artists’, art practitioners’, art discourses’, galleries’, museums’, etc. websites). Furthermore, it will record and make available as yet unrecorded and/or difficultly accessible information. If through its multi-authored monograph and exhibition modules, the project will give a largely static account of its object of study at a given moment in time, its Internet component will allow it to function as a ‘work in progress’ that will keep growing with every new and pertinent (in terms that still need to be defined) Beckett-connected artwork and discourse.

In terms of audience, the project will be relevant, as a knowledge resource, to researchers interested in further in-depth study of particular aspects of its object. It will also be relevant to artists, art practitioners and discoursers, as well as researchers, who can use the project not only as a knowledge resource but also as a platform for exchange (the latter especially via the Internet component). The project can be also used for teaching purposes at various levels and it can be in fact used by any member of the general public with an interest in it. Furthermore, assistants – both waged/salaried and volunteers – involved in the development of the project will benefit from it in terms of gaining various kinds of research and professional skills.

In terms of effects and implications, the project can become a model on several levels: collaboration between researchers in various disciplines; collaboration between academia and professionals, organizations and institutions in the field of arts; research training, turning research into practice training and professional skills training for the assistants participating in the project and other constituencies; as well as use of integrated digital arts & humanities and social media.
Proposed Student Training Strategies
The project will hire 2 doctoral students and (the equivalent of) 2 undergraduate students each year.

These students will be responsible for carrying out the following duties:
- Collect data via extensive bibliographical researches in a variety of published, audio-visual, electronic, public and private archival resources, so as to find Beckett-related contemporary artworks and art discourses: undergraduate and graduate.
- Travel for data collection and verification (i.e. research travel): graduate.
- Record, transcribe, translate (into English, possibly also French) and annotate data: undergraduate and graduate.
- Familiarize themselves with specific theoretical-methodological models underlying the data (as explained in the Detailed Description): graduate.
- Participate in the process of developing criteria for organizing, describing, analyzing and assessing the data: graduate.
- Database operation and/or creation: undergraduate and graduate.
- Write up both summaries and shorter or longer descriptions of individual Beckett-related contemporary artworks and art discourses, as well as summaries and descriptions of groups/classes of such, once taxonomic criteria will have been established: undergraduate and graduate.
- Participate in the elaboration and conduction of interviews with art professionals (artists and art discoursers) on their Beckett-related work/interest: undergraduate and graduate.
- Secure image and text rights (usage and reproduction) from publishers, museums, art galleries, artists, writers, scholars, etc.: undergraduate and graduate.
- The Internet component of the project presupposes additional duties such as website updating and social media, possibly also participation in website design and maintenance: undergraduate and graduate.
- The exhibition component presupposes additional duties such as lending and insurance contracts, event organization and publicity: undergraduate and graduate.
- Travel for the purpose of participation/presentation in scholarly and art professional conferences, meetings or workshops: undergraduate and graduate.
- Travel for the purpose of exhibition research/organization: graduate.
- Publication of research findings: graduate.
- Mentor undergraduate co-workers and volunteers on the project: graduate.

The project will also be open to students, both undergraduate and graduate, who want to volunteer with it at the administering organization. It will also be open to volunteers around the world, via its Internet component. Volunteers will be responsible for some of the above duties. Salaried students – and to a lesser degree volunteers – will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with many aspects of knowledge creation, mobilization and implementation. The student’s activities with the project will complement their academic training which oftentimes foregrounds mainly/only knowledge acquisition.