

Abstract

This thesis offers a critical reflection of posthumanism as seen through the perspectives of performance art. The first part of the text discusses the onset and development of posthumanism as a philosophical and cultural movement focused on the gradual convergence of the human and technology. The following second part then presents a reflection of thus conceptualized posthumanism in performance art. Posthumanism is conceived as a movement on the border between serious scientific discourse and fiction: Based on the mathematical theory of communication, as well as the legacy of cyberpunk dystopia, posthumanism offers a vision of a transition from human to the so called posthuman. The posthuman is seen as an offspring of technoculture, the synthesis of living and artificial, a loosely evolving entity without fixed ontological boundaries. The existence of the posthuman lies beyond dualistic categorization, has a processual character and refuses any essentialist approach. It is an attractive subject of science-fiction stories and a sexy postmodern slogan, but it is also a symbol of a transgression of actual predestinating categories such as race, gender or social status. More than anything else, posthuman is primarily a metaphor, adopted by a variety of narratives focused on the potential aspects of technologically extended life: From serious scientific investigations, through science-fiction, up to its numerous appropriations by the art world. The language of art, inherently open and independent, constitutes an ideal tool for articulating the posthuman discourse. The artist's perspective transforms the theoretical concept of posthumanism into a practical form and offers a suitable alternative of perceiving the relation of man and machine. This artistic perspective is also the main topic of this theses, which analyzes the various posthuman tendencies in performance art.