IN MEDIA RES
Why Multimedia Performance?

Eric Dyer, Brooke O'Harra, and Alex Timbers in conversation with Steve Luber

Eric Dyer co-founded Radiohole in 1998, with Maggie Hoffman and Scott Halvorsen Gillette. Since that time he has been a principle collaborator and performer in Radiohole's nine original performance works and two video works, *Fast Girls at the End* and *More or Less Hudson's Bay, Again* (with Chris Kondek and Victor Morales). The company is currently in the process of creating its tenth work to premiere in New York City at The Kitchen in June 2008. Dyer has designed sets and lighting for Young Jean Lee, Richard Maxwell, Elevator Repair Service, 3-Legged Dog, and The Collapsable Giraffe, to name a few.

Brooke O'Harra is co-founder of The Theatre of a Two-headed Calf and a freelance director with an interest in new and experimental texts. Recent Two-headed Calf productions include Chikamatsu's *Drum of the Waves of Horikawa* at HERE Arts Center, Rafael Spregelburg's *Panic* at P.S. 122, Lisa D'Amour's *The Cataract* at Perishable Theatre, G.B. Shaw's *Major Barbara*, Henry Fielding's *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*, and S.I. Witkiewicz's *The Mother* and *Tumor Brainiowicz*, all at La MaMa E.T.C.. Currently Two-headed Calf is developing a *Macbeth* for Soho Rep. O'Harra directed for Ruth Margraff and is developing *Maria/Stuart* with playwright Jason Grote at the Soho Rep writers and directors lab. She is the recipient of the NEA/TCG Developing Directors Grant, a Harp Artist in Residence, and a Drama League Directing fellow. She teaches acting at NYU's Experimental Theatre Wing.

Alex Timbers is Artistic Director of New York-based company Les Freres Corbusier. Directing credits include *Dixie's Tupperware Party* at Ars Nova, *Gutenberg! The Musical!* at The Actor's Playhouse, *A Very Merry Unauthorized Children's Scientology Pageant* at New York Theatre Workshop, *Hell House* at St. Ann's Warehouse, *underground* at Brooklyn Academy of Music, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, and *Heddatron* at HERE Arts Center. He also wrote and directed *Boozy*, a comic fantasia on urban planning, which was named "Ten Best of 2005" by the *New York Daily News* and *Time Out New York*. His awards and fellowships include OBIE, two Garland Awards, Williamstown Directing Fellowship, Drama League Directing Fellowship.

This conversation took place in New York City on March 19, 2007.

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LUBER: Let's start with the big question: why use media in your pieces?

DYER: Well it seems like a natural thing to do. I remembered this huge thing in my life was when I was about 12 years old and I got a stereo. I had gotten this job and saved up all of this money to buy a stereo. There was this fascination with music and being able to play with it and in a way it kind of goes back to that.

O'HARRA: My interest in it comes basically because of the way we work collaboratively. I never thought, "Oh I want to work with a live band or a composer," until we were approached. We were approached by this guy who developed spy technology. Before approaching us he actually created a series of things that he thought might be interesting and showed it to me and then I gave him a script. So it was really just a way to work with an individual that seemed interesting to work with. Can't promise we're ever going to use any of this but let's give it a shot.

TIMBERS: It's a great way to dispose of the exposition.

LUBER: That's all fairly practical. So I'm sort of amazed that the term or the genre of multimedia theatre exists anymore because it just seems so second nature at this point.

TIMBERS: Yeah when two-thirds of the new plays on Broadway have projection designers. But theatre has always been a technical medium. Lighting is a technical medium and it's been used since time immemorial. So it's a weird issue to me why people sort of pay very peculiar and special attention to multimedia theatre, because it's all multimedia.

O'HARRA: Also as a director your biggest thing is focus and what you want the people to focus on. So you have all of this other media as a different means to control focus, and the more ways you have to control focus or manipulate focus or move the audience attention around, why wouldn't you take advantage of those?

LUBER: There seems to be an aversion to it because of this idea of theatre as a "live" art form.

DYER: I think people are not really looking at how much things are already mediated. They're mistaking an actor standing there in the light as unmediated but they don't actually know that there's this thing going on up there in the tech booth that nobody knows about if you go to what is called a straight play, but it's mediated. At the very least an example of mediation would be by the medium of light. They look a certain way because the light has been crafted to give them that certain look. So I don't think people are really looking at that fully, what it really means. I think it's a very reactionary stance and not a very well thought out position.

Les Freres Corbusier. Top: *Boozy: The Life, Death, and Subsequent Vilification of Le Corbusier, and, More Importantly, Robert Moses* (2005), The Ohio Theatre, New York City. Photo: David Evans Morris. Courtesy Les Freres Corbusier; Bottom: *Heddatron* by Elizabeth Meriwether (2006), HERE Arts Center, New York City. Photo: Joan Marcus. Courtesy Les Freres Corbusier.

LUBER: This comes back to the idea of anything as multimedia: it's a part of the cultural literacy. People are just so used to their screens, like when you're walking around Times Square. To have multimedia just seems natural because this is how people read any sort of aesthetic experience.

TIMBERS: It's really interesting how your eye is really drawn towards any type of video screen and you have a small video screen during a Radiohole show or playing some type of loop that isn't very active, and you can have an actor standing four feet away from you but your attention is almost always on the TV. And it's interesting how you can manipulate scale in order to send focus. It's always a tough balance and a scary thing because I think your eye is always drawn to the moving image.

DYER: Your eye is drawn to light, particularly moving light. I think it's a physiological fact that you're attracted to that light. Honestly, I'm not all that particularly interested in video. That's another thing: people a lot of times assume it's about video and about the image. For me, the thing that I'm really interested in media-wise is sound and the potential use of sound. Not that I have no interest in video. Lately the use of these little tiny screens is part of the fantasy about fragmentation, but it's also playing with that attention. To put something up that's so small, it's really kind of hard to tell what your seeing on it—especially with these cheap LCD screens where depending on where you're sitting you can either see or not see—I become interested in making that unclear, making it hard to focus on basically and trying decentralize that and frustrate people's expectation, to have that be the focus of their attention. So often people use visual media to be that focus because it is such a natural thing for your eyes to be drawn to. I'm interested in playing with the antithesis of that.

O'HARRA: People are drawn toward movement or they start to watch the experience, like we put a camera at the end of a spring, so the actors wouldn't move at all, but because they're standing in front of the screen and the band is playing and the actors look like they are bouncing around. And I think it took the audience a long time to look at the actors and realize that they were totally still. That's what's exciting: how people watch.

TIMBERS: It's also interesting how people process video in terms of squares. When you see full-field video projection you see someone open up a Coke and suddenly a butterfly exits from it. You rarely see that sort of theatrical projection in America. It's almost always used in that kind of Québécois sort of theatre where it's the cheesy balloon and a girl who was seven and who died tragically dancing on the balloon. It's amazing how your mind is conditioned just to see video in squares and then when you see something otherwise in the theatre you can't tell what it is. Cheesy example: I saw *Tarzan*. *Tarzan* has some amazing integration of projection and light design where there are all these things with little fairy sprites that go up into the air and you think there's some sort of high tech go-go rotate thing, but the quality of the light has to be video and it's doing it in a completely non-patternable way. That to me is really exciting when it's the full on integration of the light and sound of video to make theatre magic and you have no idea where one ends and the other begins.

O'HARRA: Which brings it back to the idea of what you do with illusion and making theatre magic, because that's been part of theatre forever.

DYER: But there's also that element of if you can create the illusion you can also take it apart by your illustration of the camera on the screen. At first, like you said, it takes people a while to notice that the actors are just standing there but eventually they'll probably see what it is that's doing that and that becomes part of it. As opposed to when you seal the spectacle, like your example, you're not ever going to show anybody how that really works. No one is ever going to see how you do that.

TIMBERS: Even if you don't understand the source, the conundrum of "How did they do that?" becomes a part of the storytelling for them and what that moment is about.

LUBER: Is there also a difference between doing what you are talking about, and sort of revealing the mechanism or making the audience aware of it, and something like *Tarzan* or the example I was thinking of, *The Woman in White* by Andrew Lloyd Weber? There was no set. The backdrops were projections. They were computer-animated projections but if someone had to enter through a door they would open a door in the background. It was just that intricate. So there's that mechanism at least trying to cover that up. There's that escape, that Disney magic that makes seeing a Disney show on Broadway different from a more experimental group.

TIMBERS: So you're saying that the layers of metatheatricality . . . it's not acknowledging the apparatus, but clearly within the theatre it's not representational?

LUBER: Exactly. It's the difference between trying to hide Tarzan's wires holding him up and seeing your running the lights and the sound from onstage or, visibly, offstage.

O'HARRA: It's different if you're just creating an environment and you're using it as just design as opposed to making it part of the language. Like the way in *The Mother* we were using video we had on the head and in the eyes of the character so that it was about perspective. When someone was being spoken to you were looking at their faces on screen and getting a close up of what it's like to be spoken to really closely by someone. But there's always the problem of people just watching the video and do they think about perspective or do they just need to feel close up?

LUBER: Do you have any particular process that you use to integrate different media into your performances, even if those media are different show to show or piece to piece?

DYER: Well we always have the same toys every show and we start with that, and those things are part of the process. It's not brought in from outside or thought of as a design concept. We don't think of certain strategies of how we're going to use media, we start with that and it evolves with the process of making the entire show.

Radiohole. Top: *Bender* (2002), The Performing Garage, New York City. Photo: Courtesy Chris Kondek; Bottom: *Fluke* (2006), P.S. 122, New York City. Photo: Courtesy Lisa Whiteman.

LUBER: So does the text sort of form along with how you use these toys?

DYER: Yes, well, it's simultaneous. We're using these and the text is happening, everything is simultaneous. We don't start with a text; we almost don't start with an idea or a very small idea.

O'HARRA: I think our process is more problem conscious. It's a rehearsal process. I think the problem of media is that we have these things and I have this person who wants to use these things in rehearsal and then it's, "How do you solve the problem and make it exciting?" It's like the problem of text and the problem of actors.

TIMBERS: A lot of young playwrights are into the idea of writing for media but they have never experienced media or worked with it so they don't actually know how to do that. So, helping writers who don't understand how to use it to help in the storytelling, that's how it works at my company. It's interesting to sort of lead people on that course and use the media purely for storytelling as opposed to, "We have these cool gadgets and we want to figure out how to integrate them into a piece or make a piece around them." To me it's very interesting as an idea and I hope someday someone will be interested in that.

O'HARRA: It's always about the vocabulary of whatever we bring in. So if we're bringing in video then I feel like one of our jobs is to teach the audience through the process how to read the vocabulary. And what the story of that vocabulary is and how it ties into the other vocabularies.

DYER: I think the process for us is not to teach the audience but to teach ourselves. Then if we start to sort of have a sense of it we start we just kind of assume that the audience will go with us. If we come to that understanding. It's interesting because I feel like personally we're probably creating the same show over and over again, but it feels like every time we start anew that I don't understand these things. I don't understand what it is to use these samples and this kind of thing, so it's odd being reduced each time back to that zero state. I'm sure I'm learning something along the way but I don't know that I can put my finger on it.

LUBER: So we talk about writers who are trying to write for performance and your trying to write for performance, how about the reception? Either from audience or critics, do you think they have this vocabulary or do you think they're at least willing to go along for the ride in terms of understanding it? I think that's one of the shortcomings of critics, and this sort of exacerbates that anxiety about media because they don't know what they're writing about.

O' HARRA: I feel like that actually gives me a lot of freedom. It's interesting because there are some video artists I know that have seen our work and who are much more fussy about what we're doing and what we're trying to do. My concern is that it's hardly ever how I'm using media, but it's how I'm making sure that media doesn't take over. It's not about having it be misunderstood; it's about having it become the end all be all of the experience.

TIMBERS: I also think from a critic's standpoint reading difficult language is just as difficult as reading difficult media use. If it's clear to a certain extent I think they don't get it as much as I don't get the way some writers write.

DYER: So often it just stops at the generalization. I don't know of anybody writing really well about technology in theatre from a point of view of understanding these things, and really critiquing that specifically. Most of what you see stops at a generalization.

TIMBERS: The only sort of in depth stuff you get is *Light and Sound America* and that's not critical, it's just, "These are the tools they use." It seems to me that after the Bob Brustein days of criticism and of understanding a piece of work by a company in terms of its back history and repertory and all that stuff, if that was today, if a critic exists like this, that would also include your design aesthetic and the evolution of that, and you would discuss the tools you use for that. But since no one does that there is no discussion other than in academia and it seems to me that academics aren't very interested in the actual technology.

LUBER: Well that brings up a problem for both sides of the equation in terms of academics and practitioners in the cycle of funding, especially in America. As an academic it's nearly impossible to do a book-length study of one particular group or person these days, and there's the same problem with media. In other countries there's a lot more funding for it, explicitly I should say, and here it's a lot harder for a smaller company because of money.

O'HARRA: That's something I never think about with media.

DYER: Well we approached it from a very different point of view. When we started it was about what we had. It was basically our stereo system, and to a certain degree we still approach things that way. We've accumulated more stuff as we've gone along, but we wrote our first grant about technology just a couple of years ago. But it was never about funding for really expensive projectors and super high-end sound packages and all this stuff. So we've never really looked at it from that money point of view.

TIMBERS: Money is always connected to trying to make a living and we specifically try to channel most of our funding basically into our pockets so we can stay alive.

DYER: Not that we don't spend money. I think that if we had it we probably could be like kids in a candy store.

LUBER: That's one of the reasons I wanted to talk to you specifically. You have a spirit about it that I really enjoy as an audience member. I mean, the Wooster Group—as fun and amazing as they are—they don't use robots like *Heddatron* and they don't use these spy cams like *Major Barbara* and they don't have these little, mechanical fishies or the Audio Spotlight thing like *Fluke*.

DYER: People take their technology seriously in a lot of cases. The Wooster Group sort of set this thing up or people set it up around them where technology kind of became the deity. The way that their work has evolved outside of them in the world people look at it as, "Oooh." But I don't think they look at it that way. There's no playfulness, the playfulness seems to be gone.

TIMBERS: Theatrical projection design in general is so cheesy that we thought it would be funny to see how much high concept-y for theatre surroundings we could do and then try to pull off a sort of slick dense kind of thing. It's amazing because then you have these actors that are getting paid nothing, and they are horrified because they see all of this technology and they think, "We're not getting paid because they're buying all of these projectors!" It's amazing what you can pull off for so little money that people just go crazy over. People don't know how much video costs.

DYER: This kind of slickness thing drives me crazy. So we had that rear projection in *Fluke*, which I was kind of ambivalent about. That was, as a collaborative thing, some things come from some people and that wasn't so much coming from me but I ended up really liking it. At first I hated it but then one of the things I loved about it was that Maggie [Hoffman's] grandfather had been in the Navy and when he crossed the International Date Line you go through this ceremony and the sailors get a little certificate that says they've crossed it. So her grandfather had this certificate that had this really cheesy border around it with stars, fish, and crabs and stuff. Maggie blew it up and photocopied it and made this ridiculous wooden frame that went around it and we put these flashing lights around it, just as a way to take away this kind of austerity, this kind of purity of image. You have this feeling that everything is framed and this frame is kind of irregular and the lights kind of mess with the color. It's a way to intentionally make it less perfect. There's something about video in particular that has this sort of obsession with perfection. You get into people who really know what they're talking about and they're talking about resolution and this many pixels and I'm like, "I don't know." I guess we enjoy bringing things down to our own terms the way we relate to them. We don't worry about that kind of specialized thing where you're just really trying to perfect.

O'HARRA: I like that "the way we relate to them." That makes sense.

TIMBERS: We did [*Heddatron*] with robots and the robots never really worked. The first performance they didn't even make it onto the floor. We had this woman, Joan Templeton, and she wrote this book, *Ibsen's Women*, and we built the whole story line around that. We had these robots and we tried to make them work correctly but they would slam into walls and hit each other and sometimes they would hurt actors. And I remember afterwards—we had no idea who Templeton was and she had no idea that we had based this on her book—she was like, "It's just puerile—and the robots don't even work!" And it's beyond our critique of the well-made play. It's interesting that people want everything to be so tidy and perfect.

DYER: Those people don't enjoy our work at all.

TIMBERS: Yeah it's alive, it's messy, it's awkward, and it has to be. I think that's moving in any theatre piece. That's one of the wonderful things about the attempts to use really fancy technology with no ability to consistently control it.

DYER: We have a specific term for failure, the serious failure of a show, which is: "Let's go to the videotape." I forget where that came from but if somebody says that in the show it means we're really in hot water, like basically the show is broken. I remember once when we were doing *Bender*, all the lights went out and Scott [Halvorsen Gillette] goes "Goddamnit, you unplugged the show!" which I did in fact unplug the whole show.

LUBER: Acknowledging this love-hate relationship with failure and imperfection, what would you like to do with media in the future?

O'HARRA: I've had a really hard time balancing live performers and videos or having video be a consistent thing throughout a show and not feeling like it's there and then it's gone or that the vocabulary of it is constantly changing. So I've sort of put it aside until I can figure out how the vocabulary of it is more consistent.

DYER: Yeah, again for us it's a new process I think with the video aspect of it because now we have a couple of these things and if on some surplus site there are a couple of cheap LCD monitors I might pick them up; that idea of fracturing a piece more and attempting to kind of confuse the audience. I'm interested in working in two opposite directions: on one level, I'm interested in using it as a device specifically to confuse people; then, on the other hand, working to unify a show and bring people through that experience so that when they come out the other side they feel like they've been through this one unified experience. We're not looking at the narrative structure of the plots so we're kind of looking for a different way to unify that spectacle and at the same time fragment it. So I think with image and video that's where I'm interested in going. There are tools out there that we started using and things that we've gotten access to. So going back to the budget issue, if we couldn't afford them then we just wouldn't use them. But with sound we have these Audio Spotlights that are another interesting thing.

TIMBERS: And what are the Audio Spotlights?

DYER: They're basically devices where you can aim sound directionally and locate it. Again this kind of parallels this notion of some people being able to see this little TV and others can't, so people in our audience have these very different experiences. With those Audio Spotlights comes the idea of kind of telling secrets or giving different performances to different people. I had this whole expectation with those things that people would be like, "Wow, those were great," but then I realized that we used them on one level ambiantly and everyone knew that was happening but on another level we were telling people certain things—speaking something to you but not them over there—and nobody knew that they were hearing it through that so they thought everybody else heard it, too. So you're giving all of these little secret performances and secret shows to people. With sound there's something really fun-

damental and I think—I'm going to go out on a limb—but I think it's connected to our sense of being. That's why I still think there's something in there that's really fundamental and that moves us. I don't know what the word is for it. So with sound, that is basically what I'm interested in continuing to pursue.

TIMBERS: I've used video a lot for comedy purposes in terms of trying to figure out how to meld the high brow and the low brow or the high arts and the low arts and I'm not really interested in using video for that anymore, or representational imagery at all. I'm still so fascinated by the problem of breaking outside of these squares and these boxes and using video in more integrated ways. Just thinking of the next couple of shows I'm doing, that's the goal, exploring the full field of video and using weird kinds of angles.

O'HARRA: You know what I think was really kind of difficult for me in a good way? I saw a bunch of early John Jesurun stuff from when he was using video. He was using video so well 20 years ago I don't know how to explain it but it made me just sort of want to stop for a minute and then sort of rethink it before I go back into it because it really blew my mind.

LUBER: Well no one seems to be rethinking video like Nam June Paik used to do, actually challenging the form itself, something that elementary.

DYER: Another thing I should say is we were more interested in the kind of operational aspect of it. I mean, I see all sorts of technology in this room and you're pressing buttons and you're orchestrating your life with all of these buttons and to me exploring that aspect—which isn't very overt—but that's something that we're interested in, that it's part of your everyday life. So we approach it like that. I'm kind of glad that I haven't had that experience of seeing someone who did something so well that . . .

TIMBERS: That it was stifling.

O'HARRA: It's not that, I just wanted to rethink it and know it better. It's interesting now because we actually build all of our dance movements; like our kabuki movement in our play right now *Drum of the Waves of Horikawa* is actually taken off YouTube. Everything is directly gleaned from YouTube. So it's all of this old footage of The Slits and then we pull out what looks formal and what looks like kabuki and it looks like everyone's doing kabuki, but our source material is all from YouTube. So we're not making up any of our moves and we're not inventing kabuki and if anyone asks where it came from we can be like, "Oh, this is from this thing on YouTube done by The Slits." There is a use of technology in that way, which is that people made these really cheap, crappy recordings of these concerts with these women performers or these bands when most of the time the performers didn't even know they were being recorded. And what they're doing is completely arbitrary and natural and we're turning it into this codified thing that people are going to imagine is this historically codified thing.

DYER: So much of our material has a similar history, poking around the basement listening to old records, and that lineage isn't apparent when you get out to the surface. The surface of the piece is the performance you come to, that's the surface but it's incredibly layered. I think for us as artists this is what makes it so exciting, because if you could go right to the surface it would be kind of boring.

TIMBERS: That's actually another way that my company always uses media. Not that you're saying you're going to provide the context for the audience to understand but our shows deal a lot with academia and esoteric historical subject matter and I never liked the idea of director's notes. But it became interesting to me that if you're really going to understand the show it's going to have different levels of accessibility for different people's analyses. Then there's some basic knowledge you have to have to be able to appreciate the basics and concepts of the show. So we started this idea of pre-show videos that sort of took the piss out of it but that helped you understand the context, and maybe you watched it and maybe you didn't but you at least had the opportunity to get up to speed. I found myself often going to shows that are particularly mash-up shows and needing to prime myself beforehand a little bit and I find I enjoy it more. If you're not somehow in the marketing saying, "We need to know these things," that's something where media can help expose that knowledge in a really fun and easy way and in a more visceral way than something in your program that you'll never read.

DYER: Yeah, we're never really interested in explaining that sort of thing to people. We're interested in giving multiple access points. So for example in *Fluke* you don't have to know anything about *Moby-Dick*, and it's probably better if you don't know too much about it. But we do give people multiple access points so that they can relate to what 's happening on multiple levels so they won't have to be completely informed.

O'HARRA: It's a complicated thing. A sort of argument we've been having is whether to tell people that the movement isn't kabuki and that we're bringing in punk rock footage. Do we advertise the show as kabuki when it was only a kabuki text and then we changed a lot? We advertised *Major Barbara* as kabuki even though it's definitely not on most levels; it just validated it in terms of marketing. Anything you give—I mean that's sort of different from explaining it—but it's really complicated the way you talk about your work and the way you use all of these layers. When one layer happens to stand out how does it affect the way the masses read it and the way it's talked about?

TIMBERS: We're very interested—I mean it's very opposite—but we're very interested in didacticism and we're interested in treating it mostly as education first and entertainment second. So I think if you don't have any context it's a real . . . hopefully it's enjoyable to six-year-olds but it's a total failure for us.

LUBER: Do you have anyone, for example, see *Hell House* seriously?

Theatre of a Two-Headed Calf. Top: *The Mother* by S. I. Witkiewicz (2003), La MaMa, New York City; Bottom: *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* adapted from Henry Fielding (2004), La MaMa, New York City. Photos: Courtesy Theatre of a Two-Headed Calf.

TIMBERS: Yeah, like the final performance we had, for example, a group went through and a third of them were Latino men in their fifties who thought it was real, loved it and were weeping at the end, and then a third of them were this drunk bachelorette party who were screaming with laughter, and a third were girls from Williamsburg in big boots just making snide comments and their experiences of it were completely—they all enjoyed it—but their experiences of the production were just completely different. So for that we actually did provide dramaturgy outside that explained what the production is: this is the frame around it, don't burn down the theatre. But we were still protested by gay rights groups, we were still protested by evangelicals—evangelicals that still went through the whole thing and were weeping and loved it. There is an argument that it doesn't matter if they actually believe that it was, if they knew it was a put on, but I think these people read all of this stuff and they still did believe that we were evangelicals . . . in DUMBO, which is really strange.

DYER: For us it becomes another layer, that dramaturgical aspect. If you were to come in and be confronted with an instructional video on how to deal with this Radiohole show it would already be messing with your mind. It would be misinformation mixed in, because some of it's true and some of it's not true. Like in *Fluke* I think there was a lot of, "What's about Moby Dick, where does Moby Dick fit in?" and there's a lot of little places but there's a lot that has nothing to do with it as well. That's part of the game; part of what I think makes it enjoyable too.

O'HARRA: But it's interesting the way media is being used. It can be so manipulative.

DYER: To my mind that's the same thing as the *Tarzan* example: we try to create this seamless illusion of spectacle, to unify this spectacle. We're surrounded by the illusion of a unified world, which is fed to us all the time. And on some level I think we do this for ourselves. We have to unify and make sense of the world around us. We tell ourselves our own story about what the world is and we find our ways of making sense of it and joining it together. But there's something so sinister about it, especially in a city like New York, a city that produces a spectacle. I think that's part of my compulsion towards this idea of fragmenting, to not be part of that.

O'HARRA: So it's like everything that we see on video is manipulated and you choose what you want, put it together and you edit it. So by fragmenting it you're just taking away the deceits.

TIMBERS: But even if you know, "Okay, well this has just all been edited together," there's a wearing down by attrition. So much of it is fed to you that eventually you start to just take it as the way things are even if you are aware of it and self-conscious about it. It's almost impossible to parse that out of you.

LUBER: That's why I like the use of media in performance, that it really takes it out of this typified economy of supply and demand in terms of media and in terms of the regularity of it. It takes it out of context, ironically enough.

DYER: Well, it puts it back into a form of free play where it hasn't all been predetermined. All of these things have this use value. One of the most fun things we were doing was we had a TV in *Bend Your Mind Off*. We had a two-thousand-dollar video camera and I'd fall on the floor with it and we'd purposely make it look like it hit the floor and we had a television that would make it look violent. That was kind of a little too obvious but it's just using these things in the wrong way.

TIMBERS: It's funny in a show like yours or any show where you have those cords out and people are spending the whole time obviously tracking the cords and then you trip the camera and break it up. People don't worry about that in plays as much but when you have all of this media, people are putting price tags on all the elements of your production: "I hope they don't break the TV!"

LUBER: Well I just remember one of my biggest reactions was during *Radiohole is Still My Name*, the scene where you're just gorging yourselves with Budweiser and canned green beans . . .

DYER: Green bean juice and chicken grease.

LUBER: Chicken grease all over the floor and I thought, "They're going to electrocute themselves and break everything and it's all going to come crashing down!" There's this beautiful moment about excess and binging and I'm worried that everything is just going to die.

DYER: It might. I remember in Norway we were doing that show and it was kind of boring, we just didn't have the energy and they weren't responding to it. And it came to that moment and we get down there and the footlight that we used exploded. It just exploded and glass went everywhere. All of a sudden the show was completely energized and people started to freak out about it and now we've got chicken and beans and juice and broken glass in our food. But it was this moment of things going haywire and it woke everybody up.

LUBER: So we have our answer. The future of multimedia performance: Blow stuff up.

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