



CALL FOR PAPERS:
SPECIAL EDITION OF
Image & Text

*Pointure: pointing, puncturing,
weaving & lacing in visual
representation & textual
discourse*

**EDITED BY LEORA FARBER AND
ANN-MARIE TULLY**

This special edition of the Department of Higher Education and Training accredited journal *Image & Text*, stems from the *Pointure: pointing, puncturing, weaving & lacing in art, design & textual discourse* colloquium convened by the Research Centre, Visual Identities in Art and Design (VIAD), Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg in August 2012. The colloquium was held in association with the *Pointure* exhibition curated by Ann-Marie Tully and Jennifer Kopping at the University of Johannesburg Gallery. The *Pointure* exhibition represented a visual foray into the terrain of 'Pointure practice' in which the curators gathered together an expansive and somewhat neglected area of contemporary art practice in South Africa, including but not limited to, media involved with stitching, suturing, puncturing, printing and weaving. In doing so they attempted to situate this practice within a broad framework spliced between the thresholds of art, design and craft, and framed within cultural theory rather than reductive art/craft dialectics. Images and further information on the *Pointure* exhibition (2012) is available at:

http://issuu.com/andrea.rolfes/docs/pointure_3_final_version_22072012_issu?mode=window&backgroundColor=%23222222
<http://ann-marietully.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/pointure-curated-exhibition-about.html>



POSITIONING STATEMENT

In 'Restitutions of the truth in pointing (*Pointure*)' (1978), Jacques Derrida (2009 [1978]:301-315) explores his prevailing discursive theme of the inside and the outside of a text in relation to Martin Heidegger's *Origin of the work of art* (1935). Heidegger's text is a philosophical exploration of etymological themes of presence in application to Vincent van Gogh's painting, *Oude Schòenen* (*Old Shoes*) (1886) (Payne 1993:220, 221). 'Restitutions' takes the form of a polylogue of self-reflexive voices, including those of Heidegger and Meyer Shapiro, who later wrote a reflective piece on Heidegger's theses, entitled 'The still life as personal object: a note on Heidegger and Van Gogh' (1968) (Payne 1993:224). Derrida's 'Restitutions' operates through a set of metaphors, a key one being that of *Pointure*, relating to printing in terms of the "small iron blade with a point, used to fix the page to be printed on to the tympan" as well as "the hole which it makes in the paper" (Payne 1993:228). The work of shoemaking, Derrida (cited by Payne 1993:228) notes, is also a practice synonymous with the term *Pointure*, referring to the stitching of the shoe. Derrida 'ties' this term to both texts and the represented shoes in Vincent van Gogh's painting; and in so doing, 'cobbles' together a complex critique and discussion of the act of reading paintings. He further connects the act of painting (and, by extension, visual representation and visual culture) to his textual mode of pointing at and through a text — in the sense that the painting 'punctures' and 'penetrates' the canvas with meaning. Derrida draws on van Gogh's assertion that, "truth is so dear to me, and so is the seeking to make true, that indeed I believe ... I would rather be a cobbler ... than a musician with colours" (Derrida's citation of van Gogh, cited by Payne 1993:228, italics in Derrida). Van Gogh's *Old Shoes* lingers as a potent image and thread in this multivalent discourse.

In his reading of Derrida's notion of *Pointure*, Michael Payne (1993:229) notes that, "language in its search for truth punctures the painting, not as one might take a knife to a canvas but as one might lace a shoe". In this sense the humble shoelace becomes a related dimension of the master metaphor, *Pointure* — pointing to the further dimensions of this action: 'relation' and 'restitution' of things otherwise separate (painting and language, cutting and sewing disparate elements together). In addition to these two poignant metaphors, Derrida points to a further meaning in the word 'lace'. The French word for lace, *le lacet*, can also mean 'trap' or 'snare' (Payne 1993:229). In this sense, van Gogh's empty shoes with open laces represent an empty trap, a vacuum of presence to delve into — *where only ghosts can be found*. 'Ghost' is the last metaphor in Derrida's *Restitutions*. For Heidegger, the empty shoes resonate with the ghost of a peasant woman, and in their 'unfilled' presence point to the ontology of all beings, non-being; while for Shapiro the same shoes remain an indexical portrait of van Gogh (Payne 1993:230). In a sense, Derrida's (2009) textual voices embody these present and past ghosts connected (laced) to van Gogh's shoes, as well as more recent spirits.

Further to the narrative dimension of *Pointure*, the editors ascribe the following notions to the understanding of the term *Pointure*: stitching, spinning and weaving; fabrication and fable; practices of 'women's work'; folded and unfurling palimpsests of narrative and memory; (inter)laced tapestries. Intertext(tile) is another neologism to consider: intertextuality and reading between warp and weft; tufts and bunches dyed in sameness and otherness; alchemic metamorphosis; traditions put to the test; of (re)patterning and serial repetition; chirosofphy (hand-wisdom) and mechanical reproduction; moulded conversations; seamless, seamstress, sea(mistress).

Papers that reflect on the theoretical framework of *Pointure* as outlined above are invited. They may be positioned in relation to, and beyond, the following thematics:

1. Cross-stitched visual practice

- *Pointure* can be employed as a potential framework for redressing the binary limitations of art/craft, art/design, and craft/design discourses.
- ‘*Pointure* practices’ in contemporary South African and global visual culture exhibit a tendency for rhetorical irony, often repurposing ‘craft’ mediums to address ideological marginalities and conceits.
- The action of puncturing and stitching together discrete surfaces can be considered as a methodology for actual and theoretical manifestation of hybrid formulations.
- ‘*Pointure* practices’ take on many forms within the context of South African and broader African cultural production. These practices are in constant transition in response to the push and pull of socio-economic forces. This mutability befits a medium that can be defined by its inherent capacity to tie together discrete elements.
- The curated or solo exhibition concerned with sewing, stitching, weaving, embroidering and (inter)lacing in visual arts practices is a burgeoning phenomenon, deserving of close critical attention.

2. *Pointured* phenomenology

Derrida’s (cited by Payne 1993:229, 230) rhetorical styling of *Pointure*, in particular his trinity of ‘lace’, ‘trap’ and ‘ghost’, lends this theoretical idiom to discussions of metaphysical phenomenology as it is manifest in visual arts and culture practices.

- In his poetic musing on being and ‘Irishness’, John O’ Donohue (1997:66) proposes that, “we cannot seal off the eternal. Unexpectedly and disturbingly, it gazes in at us through the sudden apertures in our patterned lives. A friend, who loves lace, often says that it is the holes in the lace that render it beautiful. Our experience has this lace structure”. In O’ Donohue’s (1997:66) understanding of the word ‘lace’ (as a ‘frilly’ and ‘holey’ material), notions of transparency, fragility and transience abound. This understanding of ‘lace’ extends that of Derrida’s, proposing a quotidian object redolent in theoretical notions such as entanglement.
- How the ‘trap’ metaphor — a play on the French word for ‘lace’, which can also refer to a ‘trap’ or ‘snare’ (Derrida cited in Payne 1993:229) — can address individual phenomenological experiences such as entrapment, limitation, anxiety, alienation and paralysis, as well as broader imperial and colonial discourses of disenfranchisement that are often played out in visual media.
- The ‘ghost’ metaphor refers to the absent vacuum that Derrida (cited in Payne 1993:230) perceives in van Gogh’s images of empty shoes. By extension, it can be suggested that every act of *Pointure*, be it in the prick, cut, or incision, opens up this ghostly dimension, imbuing the term with a sense of loss and dispossession (*hauntology*).

- This notion of a ‘ghostly’ presence in the vacuum of shoes, and the hole left by a stitch (Derrida cited in Payne 1993:230), aligns with Hélène Cixous’s (cited in Bruno 2002:323) assertion that when one ceases to inhabit a dress, it becomes “an empty address, a coffin”. This notion of the indexical affect of *Pointured* objects and clothes is frequently echoed, for example in the talisman-like sensibility attached to bodily heirlooms and possessions.
- The following string of words and thoughts evoking further phenomenological sensibilities and experiences may be linked to the notion of *Pointure*: prick; sting; stitch; suture; tear; rupture; cut; embroider; point; appliqué; graft; weave; emboss; adorn; bedeck; gild; skin; skinned; blister; singed; scorched; stung; the medical and surgical body; as well as the symbolic/historical (penetrating) character of textile, paper, metal, painterly and ceramic media.

3. The fashioned mark

Pointure is arguably the method and ‘meaning’ of fashion practice; beyond the rapid pounding of the mechanised needle and thread, fashion and dress penetrate the social and individual sphere in both a ubiquitous and intimate manner.

- As fashion and fashion theory move increasingly into the ‘fuzz’ of interdisciplinarity (between art, performance, anthropology, sociology and a myriad of other disciplines), the social, semiotic and intrinsic relation between the body and its mantle is often foregrounded — affording identity construction, subcultural inflection and performance/display broad visibility. However, little attention is paid to the sublimated unit of the fashioned body, the stitch, textile and collaborative practice of fashion (*Pointure*).
- As with Derrida’s (cited in Payne 1993:230) concept of a ‘ghostly’ presence in the vacuum of van Gogh’s shoes, his further interpretation of ‘lace’ and ‘trap’ can be linked to dress phenomenon and fashion practice. Numerous fashion practitioners and historical/ contemporary dress/art phenomenon reflect on the indexical and ‘mortal’ quality of lace textiles.
- Subcultural and idiosyncratic dress configurations are a pervasive phenomenon in urban life. These *Pointured* forms are devices through which desired identity is constructed (fabricated). That is to say, the exterior garments draw from ‘invisible threads’ connected to ‘interior desires’: “fashion is an interior map in reverse ... a two fold projection” (Bruno 2002:324).

4. ‘Pointured’ image & text

Pointure is a term complicit with post-structural methods of ‘writing the image’ in visual culture. This ruptured and interlaced approach is a relevant textual device for contemporary writing on representation and art historical practices.

- The artist’s book is relevant to the notion of *Pointure*, as it often combines image and text in a manner that unhinges literary structure, deconstructing and reconstructing pages, incising, cutting, stitching, drawing over and punching through the logic of the page.

- Heidegger (2009:293) posits the importance of his observations on the ontological nature of the artwork in the image itself. In pedagogical fashion, Shapiro (2009:296) critiques Heidegger's lack of specific image observation, pointing out that Heidegger never specifies which of van Gogh's images of shoes he is referring to in his discussion. Also somewhat at cross purposes, Shapiro (2009:298) debunks the subjectivity of Heidegger's reading of van Gogh's shoes as peasant shoes, pointing to a more biographical reading of them as the artist's shoes. Is this aging dialogue still relevant to how the artwork is 'written'? Contributions that consider contemporary examples of authorial subjectivity in 'reading' the art object or the artist's practice/biography are invited.
- Derrida's mode of *écriture* [writing], which has had a notable influence on the *écriture féminine* of the French feminists, is a deliberate form of 'writing in circles' (a mode of resisting the tyranny of reason). He employs this pedant expression in deconstructing texts and theories ('poking' through their premises and opening up ruptures in their arguments). This *Pointured* form of writing suggests ways in which authorship in visual culture can move towards an *écriture* of marginal identities and dissent.

5. *Pointure* & Matrixial theory

It can be argued that *Pointure* has limitations in terms of addressing a field of visual practice strongly allied with notions of 'women's work' and 'femininity'. Being that the conception of *Pointure* emerges out of the responses (set apart by time) of three male scholars of literary theory, metaphysics and art history, this concept may be understood as an idea associated with the figure of masculinity and western conceptions of philosophy and aesthetics. *Pointure* can therefore also be considered in close association with Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's matrixial theory, which is characterised by an interstitial relationship between art-making and academic writing that challenges the phallic structure of western aesthetics and discourse (Giffney, Mulhall & O'Rourke 2009:1).

- Griselda Pollock (2009:13, 28) notes that matrixial theory in its intrauterine web of subtle and fragile relations, presents a structure to re-think social interaction, aesthetics and ethics, without avoiding or disavowing feminine, histories, presence or relations. In terms of *Pointure*-type visual practices, often associated with 'women's work', matrixial theory offers significant possibilities as it allows for a complex 'weave' of subjectivities.
- Ettinger's neologistic writing style that "weaves" together languages (Pollock 2009:10), and entangles practice and theory (Giffney, Mulhall & O'Rourke 2009:2), suggests a further manifestation of Derridian *Pointure*. Her use of "interwoven theory" and visual practice is evident in her artist's books, which she calls "note-drawing books" (Giffney, Mulhall & O'Rourke 2009:4).

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SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS

Abstracts of **no more than 350 words** should be submitted by **Friday 29 March 2013** to:

Ann-Marie Tully, VIAD Research Associate & Project Manager: viad1@uj.ac.za and
Leora Farber, Director of VIAD: leoraf@uj.ac.za

Authors will be notified of outcomes by **30 April 2013**.

Please note that neither late submissions nor abstracts of more than 350 words will be considered.

Abstracts must be accompanied by a list of sources cited/references in the text.

Abstracts should be in word format (not PDF), with the following information, in this order:

- a. submission date
- b. author(s)
- c. affiliation
- d. contact details
- e. title of abstract
- f. body of abstract
- g. 6-8 keywords

A first draft of the completed paper is due by **15 July 2013**. After one set of editorial comments, the paper will be sent to subject specialists for double-blind peer-review. The *Pointure* edition of *Image & Text* is scheduled for publication early in 2014.

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Image credit: Pia Staff, 2008. Detail of *Cyborg*, Rag Doll series, recycled bed linen, sewing and embroidery.