

Accepted Proposal, PSI25 Calgary

<http://www.psi-web.org/past-events/psi-25-elasticity/>

*Bio:*

*Adelheid Mers is a visual artist who works through Performative Diagrammatics, a practice that includes elements of notation, consultation, carnivalesque, installation, and video. Her research explores cultural ecologies at multiple scales. She is Associate Professor at the department of Arts Administration and Policy at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. <http://usefulpictures.com>*

Technical support:

4-6 digital projectors, appr. 4' x 80' roll of paper, markers, tape. Sufficient wall space and/or rolling whiteboards to tape up to 4-6, 4' x 6' sheets of paper. If Océ printing facilities are available, templates could be relatively cheaply preprinted instead of using projectors.

Print file: [http://adelheidmers.org/intro\\_9\\_16\\_sub1/Mers\\_Braid.pdf](http://adelheidmers.org/intro_9_16_sub1/Mers_Braid.pdf)

Workshop:

THE BRAID workshop uses a wall-mounted (or projected) facilitation template to bring paired participants into a holistic conversation about their professional practices. Being mobilized by the invitation to mark up the template, workshop participants draw out their understanding of how they work, adjusting focus on their own, reflexive knowledge by refracting it through each other.

THE BRAID template visually evokes the realm of practice through a topological metaphor, a donut that stretches as needed without losing its internal coherence. The donut is traversed by a looped path, a trefoil. The trefoil marks three areas of artistic practice: Making, Mediating and Managing, or Poiesis, Publics, Power. These foci take advantage of a common proclivity to think in threes. What may be braided are, for example, studio work, grant writing, and strategic planning for a non-profit.

The template, along with several key terms it is dotted with, represents a consolidation of formal conversations with visual and performing artists about their practices, an international art research project initiated at the Banff Centre in 2008. This research showed a preference to address making and mediating. Managing is still a solitary knowledge, unless intellectualized as activism or critique, thus positioning cultural workers within systems imagined as rigid, often in savior or victim roles. To posit systems not as rigid, but as elastic increases agency. True elasticity relies on broader forms of jointly grounding oneself. <https://vimeo.com/channels/talkingwhiteboards>

Coda: In spite of working only a hallway away from Dwight Conquergood at Northwestern in 1999, I only learned about his work this year. Reading “Interventions and Radical Research”, I lamented institutional stratification with him, and found a late ally: “Performance studies is uniquely suited for the challenge of braiding together disparate and stratified ways of knowing. [...] at Northwestern, we often refer to the three a's of performance studies: artistry, analysis,

activism. Or to change the alliteration, a commitment to the three c's of performance studies: creativity, critique, citizenship." This workshop extends his approach, preferring Conquergood's 'citizenship' over Northwestern's 'activism' frame.