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The Properties of Consciousness: Performing the Thing in Contemporary Theatre

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The Properties of Consciousness: Performing the Thing in Contemporary Theatre

In *A Sense of Things*, Bill Brown writes, “Thoughts are no less physical than objects; thinking is no less physical than acting” (162). My research enquiry asks whether the actor can better connect the thoughts and actions of the character via early rehearsal work with stage properties. If, as Mark Johnson suggests, meaning and value are grounded in the bodily dimensions of human life, how can actors use stage properties as interlocutors between the character’s thoughts and actions? Using my recent production of Lanford Wilson’s *Book of Days* for the University of Montana’s School of Theatre & Dance as a practice-based case study, I hypothesize that the early rehearsal exercises with hand properties/objects helped give the actors a point of mediated access to the world of their characters. Borrowing elements from thing theory (2003) and Vittorio Gallese and Hannah Wojciehowski’s methodological framework of Feeling of Body (2011), I lay a new groundwork for phenomenological and neurobiological explanations of the *things* that help the actor illuminate the character’s human and social context within the word of the performance. In this introductory-level presentation, I will perform an example of work with an object for the development of a character while simultaneously playing silent video footage of a rehearsal technique used during *Book of Days*. I require a screen and a projector for the photo and video.