

Royal College of Art School of Art & Humanities PhD Thesis

SPATIUM MONSTRORUM

performance-as-surface

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led Ph.D. thesis suggests a radical rethinking and re-making of performance art, moving away from traditional approaches which limit live art discourse within binaries, essentialism and fixed identities; contemporary performance is instead rethought of as surface, as field occupied only by intensities.

Through the examination of protocols of violence and protocols of written contracts in the performances carried out, the importance of protocols of governmentality in the production and distribution of intensities within live art, is emphasized. By regulating each performance-surface's topographical structure, protocols of governmentality initiate morphogenetic processes governing the thickness and the porosity of boundaries within the performer-audience encounter, as manifested through the repetitive use of the performer's body and its transmutation into flesh. Master and slave contracts as used in BDSM, are brought forward, both as examples of governmentality and as potential programs for the fabrication of a Body without Organs, indicating methodological tools on how to channel intensities within performances-surfaces. Within the suggested paradigm, repetition in performance art is now rethought of as repetition of difference and Eternal Return to trauma. Along this line of thought, trauma is looked at as corporeal trace and residue circulating within feedback loops. The risk required on behalf of the performer for the aforementioned move to take place, opens up a horizon for performance art to become a locus for truth to be exposed, with truth being rethought of as *parrhēsia*; as event of courageous truth-telling where the performer-parrhēsiast exposes both themselves and a life which is radically other.

Following from the above, performance-as-surface cannot but also suggest a radical rethinking regarding the production of images, that would dismiss

representation, symbolism, and linguistic signification. Images are instead looked at: (a) as pulsating differences emerging during the convergence and divergence among different series of images, (b) as residues of the recurring exercise of forces upon the performer's body, and/or (c) as shifting mechanisms within the flow of the performance's duration. Consequently, this research radically resituates both performance-making and art-led research methods. The methodologies employed, in combination with references to non-dialectical thinkers, such as: Lyotard, Deleuze & Guattari, Foucault, Kierkegaard, Klossowski, Bataille, Warburg, Barad, Hadot, Golding, Califia and others, dismiss the Dogmatic Image of Thought as expressed by Hegelian dialectics and show how performance art might engender thinking via non-dogmatic images-thoughts. In so doing, the thesis aims at disrupting the practice vs. theory binary and reveal the entangled affairs of images-as-thoughts and research-as-practice, from which itself has emerged. What essentially comes out of this delicate weave is a way of grasping an onto-epistemological move, brought into poetic performance environments, to resituate the logic of sense and update it to the 21st century. By rethinking performance art as surface, a further discussion about a new hermeneutics of the subject opens, with identity now being grasped as pulsating difference and fortuitous case submitted to Eternal Return. In addition, the potential of new ways of being with, via ideas of vulnerability and affectability, is enabled, after raising the urgency for a politics of intimacy and an ethics of care in performance art. In so doing, performance-as-surface suggests a revaluation of performance-as-philosophy, that is; as praxis towards life-as-surface, a life experienced in its full intensity and *in pure joy*.

DECLARATION

“This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art, supported by the Onassis Foundation (Scholarship ID: F ZL 027-1/2015-2016). I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.”

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and strokes, positioned below the 'Signed:' label.

Date:

28-09-2021

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1. TABLE OF WORKS

TITLE	duration	medium	apparatus / technology	approx. No of visitors	year	links
<i>Actio/Praxis</i>	10 minutes	live performance & moving image	written contract read aloud & perf. used by the audience (screen)	300	2020	despinazacharopoulou.com/actio-praxis vimeo.com/416314312
<i>Aphorism</i>	7 minutes	live performance & moving image	violence on screen (caning)	300	2019	despinazacharopoulou.com/aphorism
<i>Protreptic</i>	3 weeks	live performance	written contracts & perf. touched/used by the audience	6,000	2018	despinazacharopoulou.com/protreptic-1 vimeo.com/329903321
<i>Borderline</i>	3 hours	live performance	circulation of forces exposed through non-stop contorted movement	50	2018	despinazacharopoulou.com/borderline-1 vimeo.com/292771595
<i>Pudeur II</i> (d'après F.N.)	10 minutes	live performance & moving image	live violence & on screen (body stapling)	300	2018	despinazacharopoulou.com/pudeur-ii-d-apres-f-n
<i>Pudeur</i> (d'après F.N.)	10 minutes	live performance	live violence (body stapling))	50	2017	despinazacharopoulou.com/pudeur-d-apres-f-n vimeo.com/265869390
<i>Matter</i>	30 minutes	live performance	written contract & perf. touched/used by the audience	50	2017	despinazacharopoulou.com/matter vimeo.com/257666839
<i>Response-ability</i> (d'après K.B.)	2 hours	live performance	bruises exposed (cane)	100	2017	despinazacharopoulou.com/response-ability-d-apres-k-b vimeo.com/249951756
<i>D'après S.K</i>	8 minutes	live performance	bruises exposed (cane)	50	2017	despinazacharopoulou.com/d-apres-s-k vimeo.com/221403826
<i>Love *me*</i>	5 minutes	live performance	bruises exposed (cane)	50	2017	despinazacharopoulou.com/love-me
<i>Surface</i>	2 minutes	performance for the camera	whip marks exposed	-	2017	despinazacharopoulou.com/surface-live-to-camera-ii
<i>The most precious non-object</i>	6 hours	live performance	written contract & perf. touched/used by the audience	50	2016	despinazacharopoulou.com/the-most-precious-non-object vimeo.com/197275611
<i>Being a Threat</i>	2 hours	live performance	whip marks exposed	100	2016	despinazacharopoulou.com/being-a-threat vimeo.com/195880210
<i>Aftercare II</i>	1 hour	live performance	healing ritual after an extensive period of violence (bondage/asphyxiation)	100	2016	despinazacharopoulou.com/blank-1
<i>Aftercare I</i>	3 days (20 hours)	live performance	healing ritual after an extensive period of violence (bondage/asphyxiation)	500	2016	despinazacharopoulou.com/blank-1
<i>Corner Time</i>	7 weeks (324 hours)	live performance	live self- bondage/asphyxiation	50,000	2016	despinazacharopoulou.com/corner-time vimeo.com/197389133
<i>Introduction</i>	20 minutes	live performance	live bondage / asphyxiation	30	2015	despinazacharopoulou.com/introduction-hzztl vimeo.com/147328308

INTRODUCTION

[...] the monster is a process without a stable object. It makes knowledge happen by circulating, sometimes as the most irrational non-object.¹

Rosi Braidotti

The current practice-led research calls for a revaluation of performance art, dismissing existing attempts of grounding it upon universal concepts and representational schemas. Contrariwise, contemporary performance is looked at as surface inhabited and circulated only by intensities.² The starting point for problematizing around the questions raised has been performance practice itself, with the live pieces produced in the context of this thesis operating simultaneously as the research's subject, method, and output, supported by the study of non-dialectical philosophical texts.

The importance of working with the medium of performance art right here and right now coincides with a global shift that took off at the dawn of the current millennium, and which acquired the form of a growing interest towards body practices within the art world, still ongoing to the present day. This interest has not only been about investigating the question of what contemporary performance art is, but it has also been about re-defining it in relation to its own roots and legacy, especially body art practices developed during the late 1960's up until the late 1970s, a time period when

¹ Rosi Braidotti, "Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Differences." In: *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace*, edited by Nikki Lykke & Rosi Braidotti (London & New Jersey: Zed Books, 1996), 300.

² The notion of surface is used here to describe a one-sided topological entity, where there is no depth, no inside, nor outside. *Infra*: 13-18. Performance-as-surface should not be regarded as an undifferentiated abyss (*infra*: 56-60, 89-90), but as a pulsating heterogeneous topography where shapeshifting subjectivities emerge via successive intra-actions among bodies (*infra*: 204-212). Therefore, in performance-as-surface, identities don't pre-exist as such but emerge via processes of entanglement. Within the surface paradigm, history should not be seen as a linear trajectory, but as a sort of dimensionality nested within spacetime as multiplicity (on the idea of spacetime and nesting, see *infra*: 16-17).

performance art acquired its position as a stand-alone artistic genre.³ During the past twenty years, there has been a significant number of new books, exhibitions, events, organizations and academic courses, specialized in contemporary performance art, its bordering with other disciplines (e.g. dance, theatre, philosophy) and its relation to its own history.⁴

However, existing discourse and art making revolving around performance, exhibit an inadequate understanding of the complexity of this embodied artistic praxis, where generated meaning cannot but be *both* sensuous and discursive, at the same time.⁵ Unfortunately, the majority of the existing approaches as seen in current publications,

³ “Performance became accepted as a medium of artistic expression in its own right in the 1970’s.” In: RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011 [1979]), 7. Before the 1970’s, performance art served mainly as a polemical presentation of Avant-Garde art manifestos (e.g. Dada, Futurism) and/or as an auxiliary practice for other disciplines, such as painting or sculpture, in order for them to expand in space (e.g. abstract expressionism, action painting).

⁴ Indicative bibliography would include: Amelia Jones and Tracey Warr, *The Artist’s Body*, London: PHAIDON, 2000, Adrian Heathfield, ed., *Live: Art and Performance*, London: Tate Publishing, 2004, Catherine Wood, *Performance in Contemporary Art*, London: Tate Publishing 2018, Dominic Johnson, *The Art of Living: An Oral History of Performance Art*, London: Palgrave, 2015, the Performance Philosophy book series of monographs and edited collections, published internationally by Palgrave Macmillan (2014-2020) and Rowman & Littlefield (2020 -) etc.

Indicative performance festivals & events would include: SPILL Festival of Performance (Ipswich, UK), Performa (New York, USA), Performance Biennale (Venice, Italy), Tender Loin (London, UK), Frieze Special Projects (London/New York/Miami), AS ONE by NEON + MAI (2016, Athens, Greece), A Possible Island? by MAI and the Bangkok Art Biennale (2018-19), Performance Rooms by Kappatos Gallery (Athens, Greece), etc.

Indicative Organizations, Institutions and spaces dedicated to live art would include: Live Art Development Agency (London, UK), thisisliveart.co.uk/ (accessed 19-02-2021), Marina Abramović Institute (New York, USA), <http://www.mai.art/> (accessed 19-02-2021), Performa Institute (New York, USA), performa-arts.org/performa-institute (accessed 19-02-2021), Performance Philosophy Assoc., <http://www.performancephilosophy.org/> (accessed 19-02-2021),]performance space[(London, UK), performancespace.org/ (accessed 22-02-2021) etc.

Indicative Exhibitions would include: Marina Abramović, *The Artist is present*, long durational performance, 2010 (MoMA, New York), *Mona Hatoum*, Retrospective Exhibition, 2016 (Tate Modern, London), *Joan Jonas*, Retrospective Exhibition, 2018 (Tate Modern, London), Tania Bruguera, *10,148,451*, Turbine Hall Hyundai Commission, 2018-2019 (Tate Modern, London) etc.

Indicative Academic Courses would include: Royal College of Art Performance Pathway (for the years 2013-2016 as part of the MA in Sculpture and for the years 2017-2019 as part of the MA in Contemporary Art Practice), led by Professor Nigel Rolfe (2013-2019, London, UK), Live Art MA at the Queen Mary’s University of London and in partnership with the Live Art Development Agency, led by Professor Dominic Johnson (2018 - , London, UK), etc.

⁵ On meaning’s duplicity, see *infra*: 187-197.

exhibitions and performance works portray binary and essentialist views on performance art, even more so in regards to visceral performance practices that follow the aesthetic vocabulary of body art practices of the 1970s. Thus said, novelty and contemporaneity in performance art is often sought for, through the appropriation of fashionable ideological schemas, use of latest technology, appropriation of theatricality and dance, employment of colorful or sparkling costumes and props, without really challenging what is at stake. Polarities such as those of: subject vs. object, Self vs. Other, male vs. female etc., are often sustained in order to situate one's performance practice as: linguistic sign operating symbolically and/or metaphorically, statement and/or critique towards established institutional ideologies promoting stereotypes (e.g. in regards to gender, identity, politics, beauty, health, sexuality etc.), investigation of the in-between space of dualities, form of agency that would suggest the performer's body as the epicenter and limit of the live work.⁶ This binary approach cannot but restrict performance art's potential to an excluded middle of dialectical schemas, thus dismissing fluidity and obstructing any diversions towards unknown research trajectories.⁷

In Lara Shalson's book *Performing Endurance: Art and Politics since 1960* (2018), the author questions existing definitions of endurance based on ideas such as those of pain, duration and risk, and suggests instead a formalistic rethinking of endurance defined by "the intentional commitment to a plan whose outcome cannot be determined in

⁶ Indicative examples of this binary mode of looking at performance art may be traced in categorizations of performance works in current bibliography. For example, Catherine Wood in her book *Performance in Contemporary Art* (2018), by organizing her text in three main essentialist categories/chapters: "i: the individual," "we: the social," and "it: the object" reduces performance works to a sum of their segments. Amelia Jones, in her book *Body Art/performing the Subject* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) investigates 1960's and 1970's body art through the lens of psychoanalysis, feminist, queer and literary theory. Again, the artist's body is here presented as an autonomous entity where everything is played out. In both cases, looking at the performer's body as a sort of agent presupposes the existence of a unified self, with the body seen as property of that self.

⁷ On dialectics and how it creates exclusions, see *infra*: 184-187.

advance.”⁸ Through the analysis of both contemporary (e.g. Emma Sulkowicz, *Mattress Performance*, 2014) and historical performances of endurance from the 60’s and 70’s [e.g. Marina Abramovic, *Rhythm O* (1974), Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece* (1964), and others], Shalson suggests a theory of relationality among embodied subjects that “stresses objecthood as fundamental.”⁹ This ontological paradigm, regardless of the author’s intention to avoid Cartesian dualisms, not only is it still grounded on given presuppositions that limit its potential outcomes, but it also expresses a linear temporal paradigm defined by the stages of psychic development according to psychoanalysis (e.g. Freud’s formation of the ego and Lacan’s mirror stage).¹⁰ As a result, Lara Shalson doesn’t manage to avoid universalism, as she basically attributes to subjectivity pre-existing qualities by acknowledging “an inherent passivity in embodiment itself” (J. Butler), and by claiming objecthood as the precondition of subjecthood (S. Freud).¹¹

Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, in her book *Touched Bodies: The performative turn in Latin American Art* (2019), rethinks a significant shift in art’s politics that took place in Latin America from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s. The author’s main argument places the sexed body at the center of these artistic practices, by indicating “embodied experience of power” as their methodology.¹² Though Polgovsky Ezcurra’s argument contributes to the decolonizing of performance art discourse, by taking into account vulnerability, desire, gender, feminism and HIV-AIDS activism, so as to indicate the passage from grand political narratives to more fragile and intimate corporeal strategies, still, she

⁸ Lara Shalson, *Performing Endurance: Art and Politics since 1960*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 10.

⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰ Ibid., 18-19.

¹¹ Ibid., 18.

¹² Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, *Touched Bodies: The performative turn in Latin American Art*, (New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 5.

doesn't succeed in avoiding existing limiting views on subjectivity and ethics. By invoking Emmanuel Levinas' anthropocentric ethics of the face-to-face encounter, she posits the performing body as the limit and epicenter of the work, and its face as a negotiating intermediate zone "between self and Other."¹³



2. Maria Hassabi, *STAGING*, 2017, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Photograph: T.Poravas.

The investigation of in-between zones is the main area of research and practice of the New-York based, Cypriot artist and choreographer Maria Hassabi. Since 2009, Hassabi's work focuses on the idea of stillness via choreographed performances she calls 'live-installations' that follow a pre-decided script of movements and gestures performed in a very slow pace, thus made almost imperceptible. Describing her practice as situated on the cusp between dance and sculpture, live bodies and images, movement and stillness, Hassabi has been presenting her work in art galleries, museums, theatres and public spaces. Her goal as an artist is to encourage the audience to pay attention to:

[...] the spaces in between that we tend to ignore in our fast-paced lives, the spaces between places, the moments between actions, and even the stages of each movement.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴ Susana Montanes-Lleras, "Choreographing Stillness: An Interview with the Artist and Choreographer Maria Hassabi." medium.com/cma-thinker/choreographing-stillness-an-interview-with-the-artist-and-choreographer-maria-hassabi-bec69a5ff36 (accessed 25-02-2021).

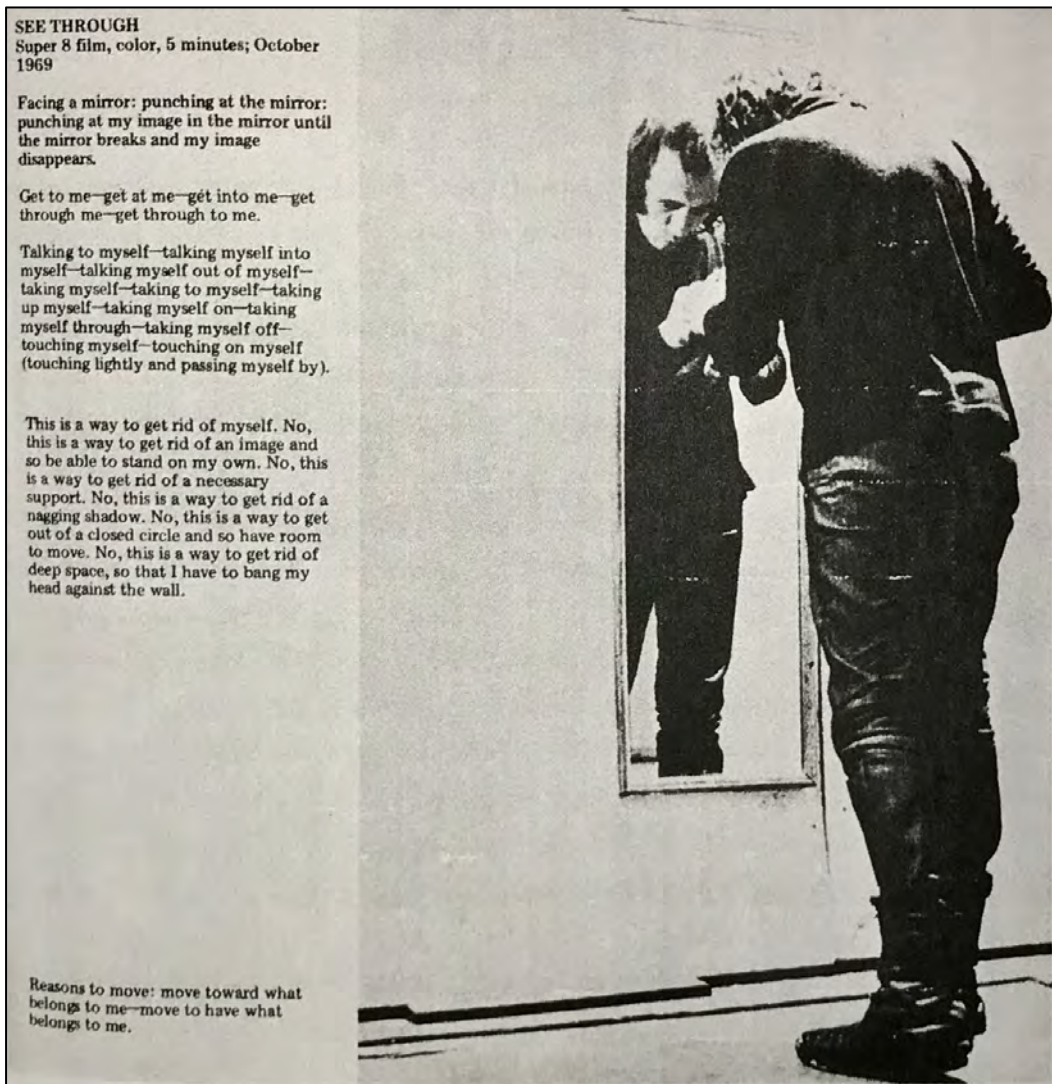
Another example of grounding one's practice in representational attempts to inhabit in-between spaces, would be Vito Acconci's historical work *See Through* (1969). Here, the artist was filmed and photographed while punching a mirror mounted on the wall. The work was performed without an audience and was presented through a series of photographs from the action, accompanied by a text written by the artist, including the phrases:

Facing a mirror: punching at the mirror:
punching at my image in the mirror until
the mirror breaks and my image
disappears.¹⁵

As in Hassabi's case, Acconci also creates a solipsistic, auto-referential representational system that the audience is invited to grasp mainly through vision. The artwork, here, becomes an illustration of dualities, such as: body vs. image, reality vs. reflection. The mirror, being an already symbolically charged item in psychoanalysis, is extremely difficult to evade connotations with the Lacanian schema of the mirror stage.¹⁶ Acconci's performance bears no exception. The artist's decision to place a body-size mirror on the wall to create his symmetrical double and attack it, indicates a reflective logic of zero-sum games, allowing no diversions within the performance's unfolding. Even more so since the audience was completely absent while the work was being created, thus excluding any external interventions by third parties to the performance's course over time.

¹⁵ Vito Acconci, "See Through," *Avalanche* 6 (fall 1972):15.

¹⁶ Lacan's mirror stage describes the moment when a child recognizes itself on the surface of a mirror, seeing its image as a whole, while physically experiencing its body in bits and pieces. "Lacan's theory of the mirror stage can be interpreted as his attempt to fill in the genesis of the narcissistic ego, whose adult residues Freud so convincingly described." In: Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan - A Feminist Introduction*, (London & NY: Routledge, 1990), 31.



3. Vito Acconci, *See Through*, 1969, in: *Avalanche 6* (fall 1972). Photograph: K. Dillon.

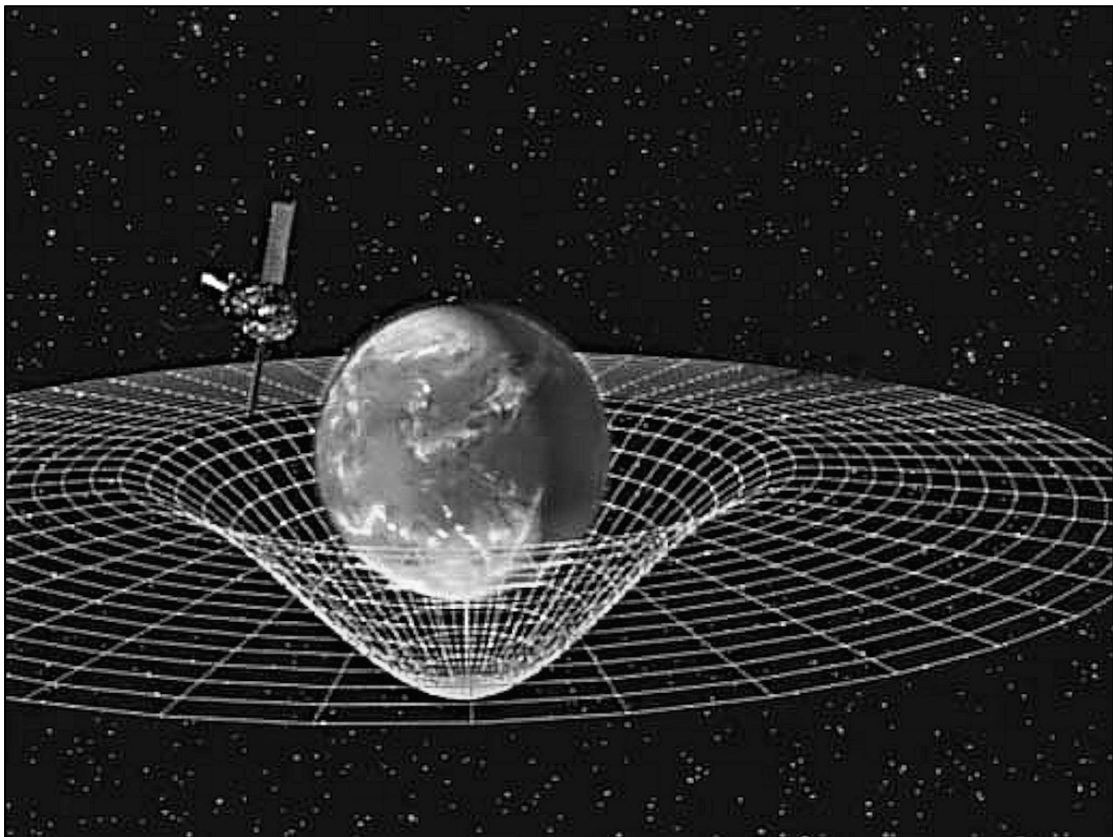
In the examples mentioned, the performer's body operates as the epicenter and limit of the live work, since everything begins and starts with what is being enacted (or not) by that body. Within this paradigm, the performance space is seen as an empty vessel, a Newtonian space as it were, where bodies, distinctly separated from each other, move or stand still at will. In any case, the artist's body is the central site of action, and the artist-agent, identified as a unified subject, adopts specific roles: object, sculpture, martyr, protester, victim, shaman etc. Subjectivity here adopts fixed hierarchical positions and values within the artwork, thus sustaining existing social power dynamics and dismissing art's potential to generate change.

What is problematic with the aforementioned approaches is the fact that performance art is seen as representation, thus restricting live art's artistic potential to a limited spectrum of outputs and receptions by the audience. As a consequence, both performance making and performance-related discourse tend to look at, discuss and write about this specific discipline while focusing mainly on *what* is being represented/enacted by the performer. This existing methodology inevitably looks at performance art as an aggregation of material and aesthetic choices, hierarchically valorizing the performer's body and its actions. Within this condition, performance can only be viewed as an illustration of theoretical ideas, metaphor, critique, conviction and statement orchestrated by the artist, with the audience entering the work either as a viewer or, sometimes, as a participant. In any case, what the aforementioned views essentially present is a hierarchical spatio-temporal paradigm strictly geometricized and departmentalized by harsh boundaries.¹⁷ Within this paradigm, time and space are seen as separate entities, with time being homogeneous and linear, and space being a void of an empty vessel, inside which the performer's body is placed, along with the audience (or not). Both artist and audience members are regarded as pre-existing unified subjectivities that meet and communicate with each other inside the work. As a consequence, further divisions are sustained: matter vs. energy, art vs. life, action vs. non-action etc.

In order to exit the onto-epistemological limitations imposed on performance art, a radical move towards a new paradigm would be required, similar to those performed in the realm of science that challenged already established ideas on space, time, matter, form, movement and energy. By investigating performance-as-surface, this thesis invokes surface topologies, both as a new spatio-temporal paradigm and as an

¹⁷ The aforementioned spatio-temporal paradigm is called, after Deleuze, the Dogmatic Image of Thought. For a further analysis in the present thesis, see *infra*: 184-197.

onto-epistemological move that would allow performance art to exit representation and be seen solely as an economy of intensities.¹⁸ Science, in this case, should not be regarded as a ground justifying this endeavor, but as a potential methodological toolkit towards a radical rethinking of performance art. Surfaces are one-sided topological entities circulated by forces, e.g.: the Möbius strip, the Klein bottle, the torus (or donut), among others.¹⁹

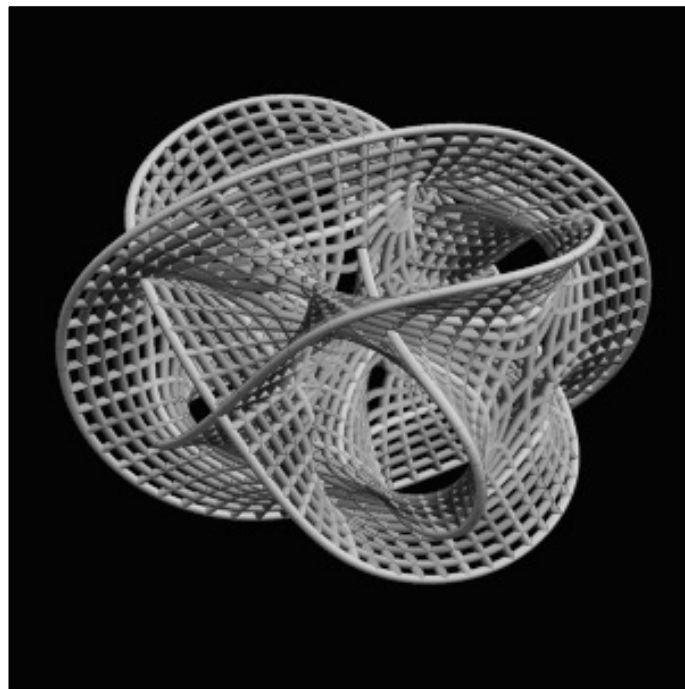


4. Artist concept of Gravity Probe B orbiting the Earth to measure spacetime. Source: NASA.

¹⁸ It should be noted that the terms ‘performance’, ‘live art’, ‘body art’, ‘audience’, ‘performer’, ‘spectator’, etc., as used throughout the thesis, seem insufficient to describe the paradigm brought forward. A first attempt to negotiate this insufficiency is made through the invention of the term ‘Spatium Monstrorum’. However, a further exploration of this problem in future research trajectories is suggested.

¹⁹ Surface in mathematical topology is a term used to describe a two-dimensional manifold. The area of topology in mathematics is preoccupied with the study of continuity as it appears in homeomorphic geometrical structures. encyclopediaofmath.org/index.php/Topology_general (accessed 11-05-2020).

A way to help one visualize such one-sided manifolds circulated by forces would be the fabric of spacetime, as envisioned by Albert Einstein in 1915.²⁰ For Einstein, spacetime was not an even surface, but it disposed curvatures that shifted and changed in relation to the concentrations of mass-energy in its fabric at any given moment. Recent scientific research in regards to spacetime and the quest for a unified theory, has led scientists to seek more complex surface models that could refine Einstein's four-dimensional fabric even further, so as for it to be applicable both in quantum physics (microcosm) and general relativity (macrocosm). One of such types of surfaces would be the Calabi-Yau manifold, as it appears in super-string & M-theory.²¹ The Calabi-Yau manifold allows one to start thinking of more complex surfaces than the stretched fabric of spacetime.



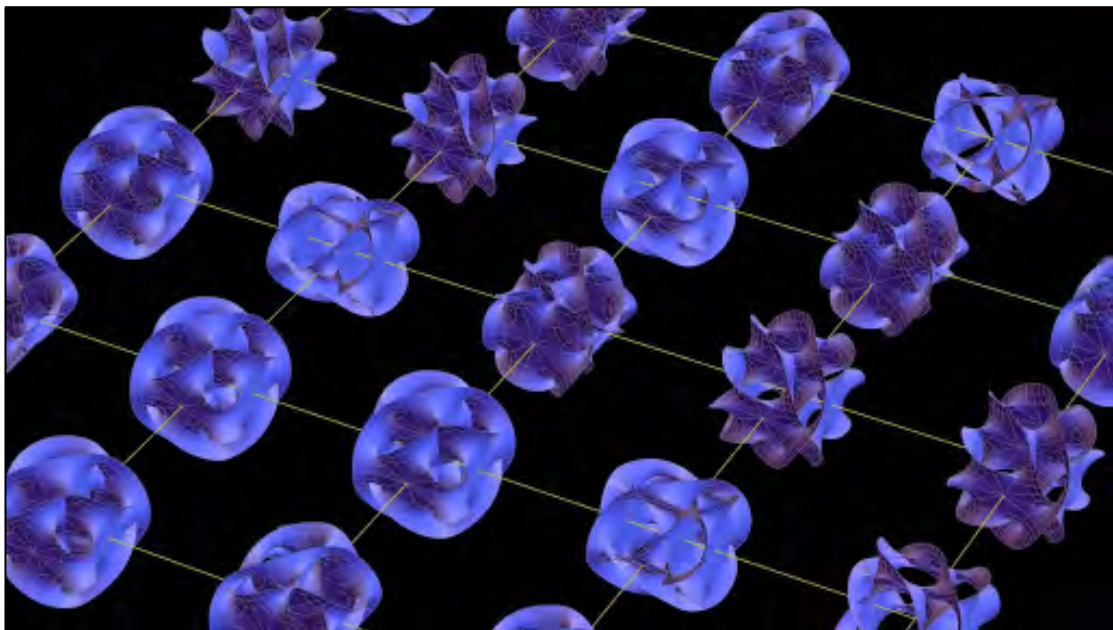
5. Calabi-Yau Manifold (n=4).

people.math.harvard.edu/~knill/3dprinter/exhibits/calabiyau/index.html

²⁰ In 1915, Einstein presented his theory on General Relativity where he proposed a geometrical model to meet his former views on time-space relativity, and to also respond to Newton's law of universal gravitation. Einstein refined Newton's law after suggesting a new model for the dimensions of time and space, now weaved all together in a fabric called spacetime. The topography of this fabric was that of a four-dimensional surface that would include time (t), apart from the three Cartesian space dimensions (x,y,z), an idea firstly introduced by mathematician Minkowski.

²¹ Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe: ...*, (2000), 207-209.

According to super-string theory, the entirety of the cosmos consists of vibrating loop strings forming a vast matter-energy continuum. Thus argued, the problem of the undecidable nature of elementary units, behaving either as particles or as waves, seems to have found an answer. Within this continuous field of vibrating strings, string theorists suggest that spacetime might nest even smaller dimensions in the form of manifolds, such as that of the Calabi-Yau shape. This decisive move of nested extra dimensions, allowed scientists to move even further towards a unified theory, since the vibration of strings within these hidden dimensions would make the same string behave differently in each one of them. This meant that scientists wouldn't have to shift to different systems of reference across different scales; one theory would fit all.²²

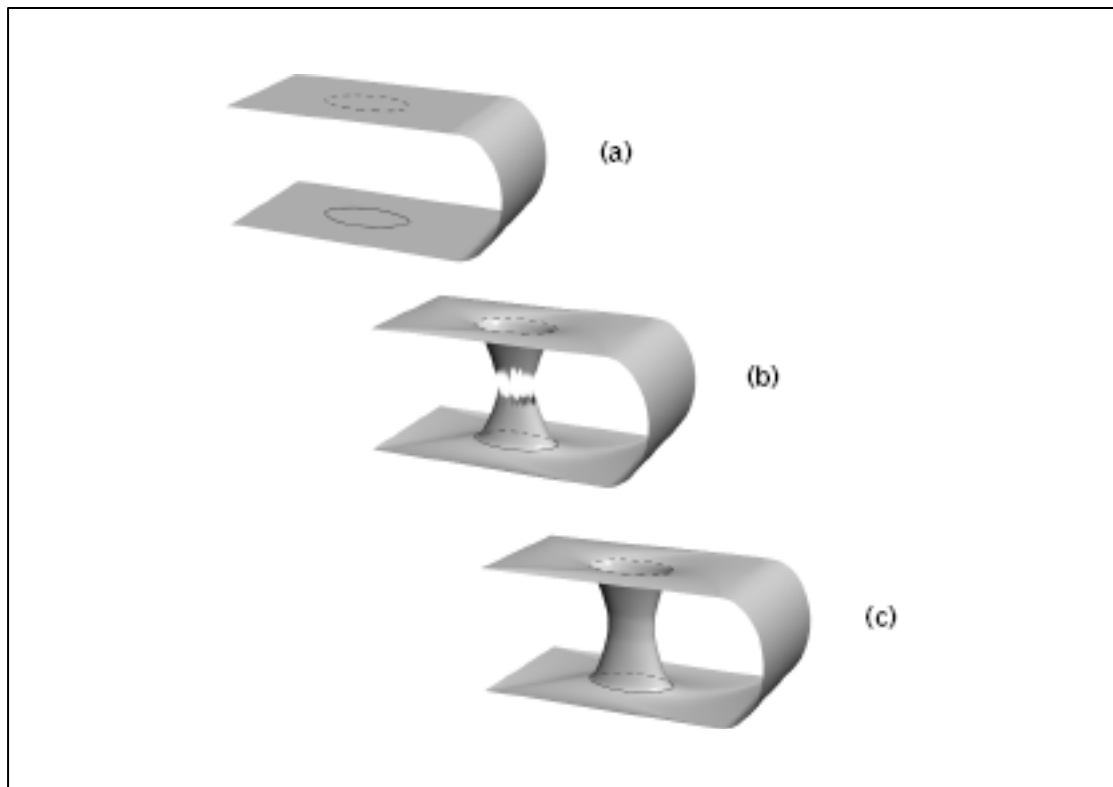


6. Calabi-Yau Manifolds nested within the fabric of spacetime. Image courtesy of Jeff Bryant.

Having said that, what is important to grasp, so as to also start visualizing performance art differently, is the cosmos as a continuum of an economy of forces of vibrating matter-

²² “By incorporating the dualities, all five string theories, eleven-dimensional supergravity, and M-Theory are merged together into a unified framework.” In: Greene, *The Elegant Universe: ...*, (2000), 315.

energy, channeled via different configurations-topologies shapeshifting in a ceaseless flow. Tensions circulating within these surface topologies may engender folds, creases and valleys, but also rips and tears that mutate and shift according to the way that forces inhabit those surfaces across different directions, in various intensities and nomadic distributions.²³ Thus done, surfaces might not only change shape, but they might also generate new singularities or even engender new surfaces from the singularities produced.



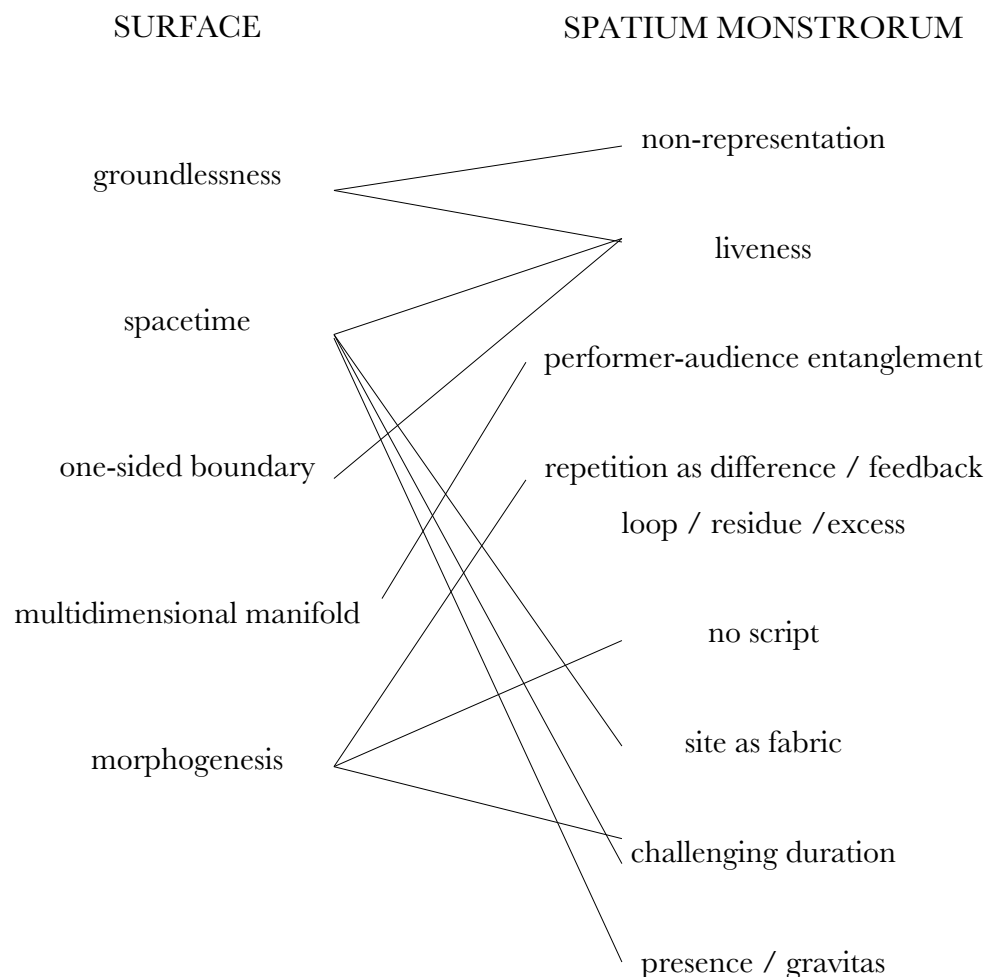
7. (a) In a "U-shaped" universe, the only way to get from one end to the other is by traversing the whole cosmos. (b) The fabric of space tears, and two ends of a wormhole start to grow. (c) The two wormhole ends merge together, forming a new bridge—a shortcut—from one end of the universe to the other.²⁴

²³ "Einstein's general relativity says no, the fabric of space cannot tear. [...] This has not kept imaginative theorists over the years from pondering the possibility that a new formulation of physics [...] might show that rips, tears, and mergers of the spatial fabric can occur." In: Greene, *The Elegant Universe: ...*, (2000), 263-264.

²⁴ 3D model and caption from: Greene, *The Elegant Universe: ...*, (2000), 264.

Whether all these scientific theories are proven to be correct or not, the consequences of this complex surface move in the way that one might rethink the world and performance art, are enormous. From now on, one is able to start looking at live art in terms such as those of: circulation, forces, groundlessness, morphogenesis, duration, multiple singularities and singular multiplicities.

8. DIAGRAM I: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE SURFACE PARADIGM & SPATIUM MONSTRORUM.



Methodological approach

For performance art to be investigated as surface it would be necessary to dismiss the theory vs. practice binary and seek for new methodological approaches. This practice-led research has been firstly and foremost conducted via the performance practice itself (research-as-practice) and has been in a constant dialogue of exchanges with philosophical texts that promote non-dialectical systems of knowledge.²⁵



9. Alberto Giacometti, *Project for a Passageway (Maquette)*, 1930-1931, plaster, 16 x 126 x 42 cm, Kunsthaus Zürich, Alberto Giacometti-Stiftung, 1965.

Due to the complex trajectories undertook, this research's questions and aims have been constantly mutating and shifting, since the practice-led methodology adopted took already from its outset the form of a *zētēsis* - *flânerie* motivated by curiosity, without pre-deciding its final outcomes.²⁶ Exploring unknown territories has been a shared

²⁵ An indicative bibliography invoking surface models in the area of philosophy would include: Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, transl. by Iain Hamilton Grant (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015/2019), Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. by Brian Massumi (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980]), Johnny Golding "Pariah Bodies," in: Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, eds., *Sexy Bodies the Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 172-180.

²⁶ *Zētēsis* is an ancient Greek term used to express an inquiry, a philosophical investigation or study, implying a sort of quest or wandering, where one is attuned with all their senses to the stimuli of the environment. The term *flâneur* is invoked here after Baudelaire's description of the artist as someone who finds pleasure in movement, while observing everything without presuppositions. In: Charles Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, Paris: Fayard, 2010 [1869].

methodology during performance making and the thesis writing process, with the latter taking off as an attempt to locate the logics governing the production of intensities and images in the performances carried out, to then proceed with an investigation of the logic of sense itself, along with its ontological, political and ethical consequences.²⁷ The first step performed (Chapter I: Protocols) was a categorization and analysis of the performances produced, according to the protocols governing the generation and distribution of intensities within each performance-surface. The next step followed (Chapter II: Generation of Images) was an investigation regarding how images get produced in the performances carried out. This move revealed a rationale grounded upon difference and repetition in the form of feedback loops that would engender images-as-residues.²⁸ Following from the two previous moves, the third step (Chapter III: Performance-as-Philosophy) was a problematization around the political, ethical and ontological implications resulting from performance-as-surface, after bringing forward ideas of care and intimacy, to raise the question of whether contemporary performance art could operate as a *mode de vie* (a way of life).²⁹

Individual summary of each chapter

The first chapter (Chapter I: Protocols) explores the two main protocols of generating and distributing intensities in the performances-surfaces presented, dividing them into two main categories: (a) works of violence, and (b) works of written contracts. In both

²⁷ The idea of a 'logic of sense' is used after Deleuze's *Logique du Sens* (1969) to designate all those mechanisms that govern the generation of meaning and thinking as such.

²⁸ Looking at images as excessive residues via processes of repetition-as-difference in the form of feedback loops, has been informed by Deleuze's ideas on difference and repetition, Bataille's and Klossowski's views on the idea of excess, and Mandelbrot's set.

²⁹ This idea of life as a way of living coincides with Foucault's notion of a stylistics of life led by the courage of truth, as indicated in: Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II, Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-1984*. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011 [Paris: Seuil, 2009].

cases, it is the repetitive use of the performer's body that transmutates it into flesh and makes the live works operate as surfaces. Repetition is here defined as Eternal Return to trauma, which keeps circulating as excess-residue in the form of a corporeal trace.³⁰ Thus argued, performances-surfaces are indicated as fields (*spatium* – *spatia*) occupied only by intensities, where truth becomes exposed (*monstrare* – *monstrorum*).³¹ Here, truth, instead of being seen as a fixed moral position resulting from a true/false binary, is seen as encounter, as event taking place within parrhēsiastic games.³² A particular focus is, also, given to the role of BDSM contracts as mechanisms of governmentality within Master and slave encounters.³³ The importance of the BDSM paradigm indicates how protocols under the form of written contracts, might actually constitute a program for the construction and maintenance of a Body without Organs, via the governing of the generation and channelling of intensities.³⁴

In the second chapter (Chapter II: Generation of Images), the generated images in the performances carried out in the context of this research, are seen as corporeal

³⁰ Repetition is seen here as difference, based on Deleuze's interpretation on Nietzsche's notion of the Eternal Return, in: Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, transl. by P. Patton, (London: Bloomsbury, 2004 [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968]), 52-53. The idea of the corporeal trace, is informed by Spinoza's use of the term designating the affective images created while forces are exercised among bodies. In: Benedict de (Baruch) Spinoza, *Ethics*, transl. by Edwin Curley. London & New York: Penguin, 1996 [1677]. On the idea of excess/residue, the argument presented is supported by philosophical texts written by Bataille, Klossowski, Lyotard, Foucault and Golding. The synthesis of these ideas presents a re-thinking of trauma in a non-originary way, now seen as an obsessive image generated by the effects and affects of forces exercised among bodies. These effects and affects are then seen as the excess-residue after the application of forces, which keeps circulating to set in motion further intra-actions among bodies and thus produce further excesses-residues.

³¹ The term 'spatium' is used to denote the meaning of a field rather than that of space, following from Deleuze & Guattari's definition of the Body without Organs, in: Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: ...*, (2013 [1980]), 177-8. In the present thesis, *infra*: 86-88, 107-108. The etymological explanation of the latin verb 'monstrare' means: to show, to exhibit to reveal. In the present thesis, see *infra*: 109-110.

³² Parrhēsia: Greek term indicating a mode of courageous truth-telling, investigated by Michel Foucault in his final lectures at the Collège de France, as indicated in: Foucault, *The Courage of Truth....* 2011 [2009]. In the present thesis, see *infra*: 92-94, 104-110.

³³ BDSM: Bondage & Discipline, Domination & Submission, Sadism & Masochism. *Infra*: 80-90.

³⁴ *Infra*: 88-90.

traces, residue and/or phantasm of forces exercised among bodies the moment of their encounter.³⁵ Images are, thus, that which emerges as the intensity of difference and/or as the difference in intensity during pulsating motions of convergence and divergence among different series of images. In long durational performances, the production of images is also seen as a ceaseless shapeshifting due to the continuous exercise of forces upon the performer's body. Thus argued, duration in performance art is rethought of according to its Bergsonian sense; as time lived.³⁶ Following from the above, performance as *Spatium Monstrorum* criticizes representation, after proposing a fractal aesthetic model based on the rhizomatic expansions of successive differences-intensities.³⁷

Given that there is always already an image-thought entanglement, the third chapter (Chapter III: Performance-as-Philosophy) investigates the conditions under which performance-as-surface offers the possibility of operating against the Dogmatic Image of Thought as set by the domination of the dialectical schema thesis-antithesis-

³⁵ The idea of the phantasm is borrowed from Klossowski (and then Deleuze) and is used to describe this obsessive image that keeps returning, demanding to be communicated, even though it is by default incommunicable. Also known as *Eventum Tantum* (The Event of all events); "[...] an event that stands for everything that can ever happen." In: Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, ..., (1997 [1969]), 66.

³⁶ "[...] pure duration, in which the flow is continuous and in which we pass insensibly from one state to another: a continuity which is really lived, but artificially decomposed for the greater convenience of customary knowledge." In: Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer, (New York: Zone Books, 1991 [Paris: Félix Alcan, 1896]), 186.

³⁷ The fractal model suggested here is informed by Mandelbrot's notion of fractal, used to designate all those entities that, due to being so irregular, cannot be measured or described according to the laws of Euclidean geometry. In: Benoît Mandelbrot, *Les Objets fractals: forme, hasard et dimension*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1973), 5. Likewise, fractal aesthetics cannot be described by rationality, and requires, instead, the appropriation of embodied forms of logic associated with ideas of intensity, sensuousness, attunement and care. Therefore, this research meets Golding's ideas on a fractal philosophy as seen in: Johnny Golding, "Fractal Philosophy: Attunement as the Task of Art," in: *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, edited by Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 133 - 154. In addition, a fractal aesthetic model inevitably follows non-hierarchical spatial expansions moving towards all directions at once and at the same time, thus creating affinities with Deleuze & Guattari's idea of the rhizome as "[...] a stream without beginning or end [...]." In: Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. by Brian Massumi, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980]), 26-27.

synthesis in the making of sense.³⁸ The need and urgency for embodied strategies of thinking and methodologies of carnal knowledge, such as those of intimacy and care, is raised, along with their ontological, ethical and political potential.³⁹ Performance research as *Spatium Monstrorum*, under the light of ideas such as those of entanglement and individuation, offers the possibility for a bold rethinking of new ways of subjectivation and of establishing kinships, without the need to reside to any external universal concepts.⁴⁰ It is in that respect that performance-as-philosophy revisits the primary function of philosophy as embodied practice and method, towards a life which is radically other, now envisioned to include qualities such as those of vulnerability, affectability, care and empathy.⁴¹ The importance of such a move becomes recognized while being in the precarious times that we currently experience, with individualism and fear already threatening the possibility of getting intimate with others.

The methodology of structuring each chapter is based on a delicate weaving between singular cases and more general investigations. As a result, the text, instead of being presented with a set of general ideas first, to be followed by specific examples, the reader will encounter a continuous writing flow of zooming out and zooming in. This means that investigations of general ideas might lead to examinations of particular performance pieces, which, in turn, might offer the possibility to look at further general questions raised within them. Then these broader questions might lead to other performances, and so on and so forth. Consequently, the general sense while navigating this text is that of a pulsating flow or signal. Sometimes, the same general idea might

³⁸ *Infra*: 184-187.

³⁹ *Infra*: 197-204.

⁴⁰ *Infra*: 204-212.

⁴¹ *Infra*: 212-217.

appear in two or three different places in the text, to be investigated across different dimensions. Similarly, a specific performance piece might appear in all three chapters, to raise different questions each time. The reader, thus, might acquire a sense of being in a feedback loop since similar ideas or performances might recur in various places in the same chapter or across different ones. Whenever necessary, and to facilitate reading, footnotes will link some of those different locations corresponding to similar ideas or to the same performance piece.

The choice of using third-person phrasing ('the performer', 'the artist' etc.) while describing the performance works produced in the context of this research, has been deliberately done, to avoid any sense of confession, oversentimentality, or egocentrism, especially once juxtaposed to the already visceral character of the performance works presented. Contrariwise, quotations taken from performance diaries that had been written during the period of long durational works, stand as an exception, and keep their initial first-person phrasing, so as to communicate their more personal and intimate character.

CHAPTER I: PROTOCOLS

Generating and distributing intensities within performances-surfaces

The present chapter examines the two major categories of protocols for the production and distribution of intensities within the performances-surfaces presented: (a) protocols of violence, and (b) protocols of written contracts. In the first case, protocols are defined by the exercise of violence upon the performer's body, either during or prior to the 'actual' performance work. In the second case, written contracts constitute the protocols that would manage the thickness and the porosity of boundaries of the performer-audience intra-action, performed mainly via touch.⁴² In both categories, protocols govern the application and distribution of forces upon the performer's body, so as for it to be transmuted into flesh inhabited only by intensities.⁴³ In so doing, protocols essentially govern the repetitive use of the performer's body and, thus, manage the thickness and the porosity of boundaries within the performer-audience encounter. Protocols offer morphogenetic structures for the pulsating topologies of each performance-surface by distributing areas of greater or lesser probabilities for the emergence of potential events, without however dictating how these events might unfold. Therefore, indicating the importance of protocols as mechanisms of governmentality in performance art, over the application of instructions, is one of the major contributions

⁴² "The neologism "intra-action" *signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction," which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the "distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not absolute, sense, that is *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements*." In: Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007), 33.

⁴³ *Infra*: 30-31, 43-44.

of this research, marking the passage from representation to morphogenesis in performance art.⁴⁴

Following from the above, the chapter examines how repetition in the performances discussed is but a repetition of difference and Eternal Return to trauma.⁴⁵ Trauma, in this case, instead of being grounded upon an originary lack, as suggested by the psychoanalytic paradigm, is seen as a groundless, corporeal trace that keeps circulating in the form of excess-residue within a performance work or across different performances. Trauma is thus seen as a form of currency that circulates in constant flux within feedback loops, set in motion via the recurrence of affections and affects upon the performer's body, the moment of its encounter with other bodies. The ability of a body to be affected by and affect other bodies is named as: *affectability* or *vulnerability*.⁴⁶

In addition, a particular focus is made on the role of written contracts in performance art. After examining already existing examples of contracts and their role in the history of live art (e.g. personal declaration of availability, moral commitment, public statement of intent, advertisement, financial gain, ontological framing, etc.) this first chapter investigates how protocols of written contracts operate within performances-surfaces.⁴⁷ The difference between the use of protocols and that of instructions in performance art is emphasized, to indicate how the former operate as technological apparatuses of governmentality by offering morphogenetic structures for the distribution of potential events.⁴⁸ In addition, discussing the use of safe words and methodologies of giving one's explicit consent via performance contracts, new questions

⁴⁴ On morphogenesis, see *infra*: 41-42, 56-57. On protocols vs. instructions, see *infra*: 57-59.

⁴⁵ *Infra*: 40-49.

⁴⁶ *Infra*: 39-40.

⁴⁷ *Infra*: 49-55.

⁴⁸ *Infra*: 56-60.

are raised in regards to the consequences of such strategies upon the performer-audience encounter, the definition of the notion of the public in performance art, and the role of contingency and the mobilization of affects in the wider socio-political sphere.⁴⁹

By bringing in examples of Master and slave contracts from the BDSM lifestyle, existing ideas on how encounters might get established are challenged, both within performance art and society, to suggest potential strategies for getting entangled with each other via morphogenetic structures that would govern the distribution of forces among bodies. In so doing, Master and slave contracts reveal the potential of written contracts to function as mechanisms for the fabrication and maintenance of a Body without Organs.⁵⁰

Through the role of protocols of violence and protocols of written contracts as technological apparatuses in the performances presented, the double role of technology is brought forward, as that which reveals the world *as it is* while also concealing/protecting it. Consequently, a substantial shift is performed in regards to the performer's role; performer-slaves and performer-parrhēsiasts (who are basically one and the same thing) are suggested in the place of performers-martyrs and performers-heroes.⁵¹ Performers-slaves submit themselves so as to have their body used, and it is only through this submission and use of their body that they are able to exercise parrhēsia, a very particular type of courageous truth telling. In so doing, performers-parrhēsiasts are called upon to take the risk of exposing both themselves and their life which is radically other, so as to let the world *be as it is*.

⁴⁹ Infra: 64-79.

⁵⁰ Infra: 80-90.

⁵¹ Infra: 92-94, 104-110.

As a direct consequence of the use of the performer's body and its transmutation into flesh occupied only by intensities, issues of value, non-exchangeability, circulation and excess within aesthetics and ethics are raised.⁵² The performer's body, precisely because of its operation as a living instrument, sustains its value only *through* and *during* its use. However, this is not the case of an exchangeable value as met within the circulation of production and consumption of goods and transportable art objects. Performances-surfaces are loci of non-productive processes of use, thus cannot be evaluated nor can they be exchanged, since they are always abundant, aimless and excessive. Nevertheless, as indicated by Pierre Klossowski, the use of one's body, as in the case of pleasure, always requires a debt to be paid; a debt on the expense of one's unity of self. In the case of performances-surfaces, dissolution of the self and its transmutation to a fortuitous case of all possible selves that were and will be, is seen as a necessary predisposition and consequence for performances-surfaces to be sustained.⁵³

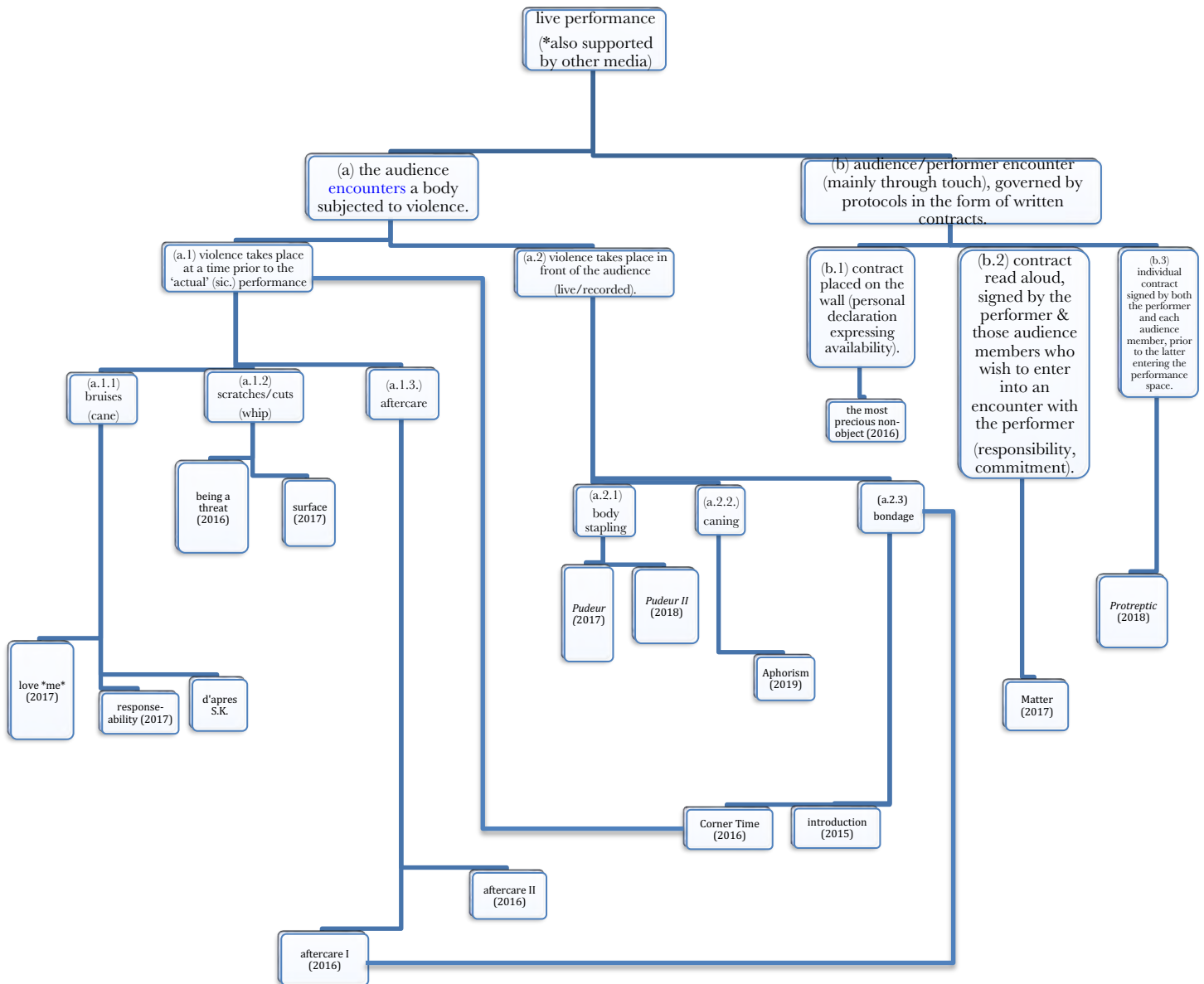


10. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 2016. Photograph: Kyveli Dragoumi.

⁵² *Infra*: 94-103.

⁵³ “*The philosopher is only a kind of occasion and chance through which the impulse is finally able to speak.*” In: Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, ... (1997[1969]), 4-5. “[...] embracing in a single glance the necessity of the Return as a universal law, I deactualize my present self in order to will myself in *all the other selves whose entire series must be passed through* [...]” *Ibid.*, 57.

11. DIAGRAM II: CATEGORIES OF WORKS ACCORDING TO THE APPLIED PROTOCOLS



The live performances supporting this research are divided into two main categories, according to the applied protocols of governmentality: (a) those where the audience encounters a body that has been or is being subject to violence and, (b) those where the performer-audience encounter (which takes place mainly through touch) is governed by written contracts. These two categories are not unrelated to each other, but essentially

refer to the same thing, that is; the governmentality of the forces applied upon the performer's body. What is at stake here is the repetitive *use of the performer's body*, and it's turning into *flesh* inhabited only by intensities. For the works of violence, the governing protocols are directly related to the technologies of the implements that would exert violence on the performer's body (whip, cane, body stapler, rope) and the qualities produced and defined by them, e.g.: rhythm of each blow/strike, pain depth/sensation, pain build up over time, post-violence body sensations, marks. For the works of written contracts, such protocols of governmentality are defined by the technological characteristics of the written contract *dispositif* (apparatus), e.g.: use of written language to indicate possible spectra of allowed performer-audience intra-action, consent, safe words etc.⁵⁴

The terms 'governing protocols' and 'governmentality' are employed here in order to indicate a set of diverse performance mechanisms that would initiate morphogenetic processes for the emergence and distribution of new singularities within each live work. 'Governmentality' is a term invented by Foucault as both a continuation of, and a shift from his former study on biopolitics.⁵⁵ Foucault's problematic on the 'government of self and others' marks a decisive moment of passage in his thought, from "[...] the analytics of power to the ethics of the subject," since governmentality designates all those "regulatory apparatuses (*dispositifs*)" that exercise power via protocols of economy and circulation, to engender new subjectivities.⁵⁶ Likewise, the use of the

⁵⁴ For a further elaboration on the idea of consent, see *infra*: 64-79. For a further elaboration on safe words, see *infra*: 77-78.

⁵⁵ For Foucault, biopolitics was a "general framework" employed "[...] to treat the 'population' as a set of coexisting living beings with particular biological and pathological features, and which as such falls under specific forms of knowledge and technique." In: Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, transl. by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007 [Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil, 2004]), 367.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 370. "Government," in this context, then takes on the strict sense of "the art of exercising power in the form of an economy [...]." *Ibid.*, 379.

term in the present research, not only displaces one's focus from ideas of total control over one's actions during a performance work, to those of distributions of potential events, but it also reveals the ethical and ontological implications carried along with such displacements, towards a new hermeneutics of the subject under terms such as those of flux, intensity and contingency in performance practice and research methods.⁵⁷



12. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Introduction*, 2015, video still. Camera: Jeroen Van Dooren.

Works of violence

Starting from the first category of performances, that of works of violence, it is important to define how the term 'violence' is being used throughout the thesis; *the term 'violence' is used to define any force exercised among bodies at the moment of their encounter, with its effect having a severe impact on the bodies upon which it is applied.* Within this category we then distinguish two further subcategories of performances: (a.1) performances in which violence takes place at a time prior to the performer's appearance in front of an audience (*Corner Time*,

⁵⁷ Infra: 204-211.

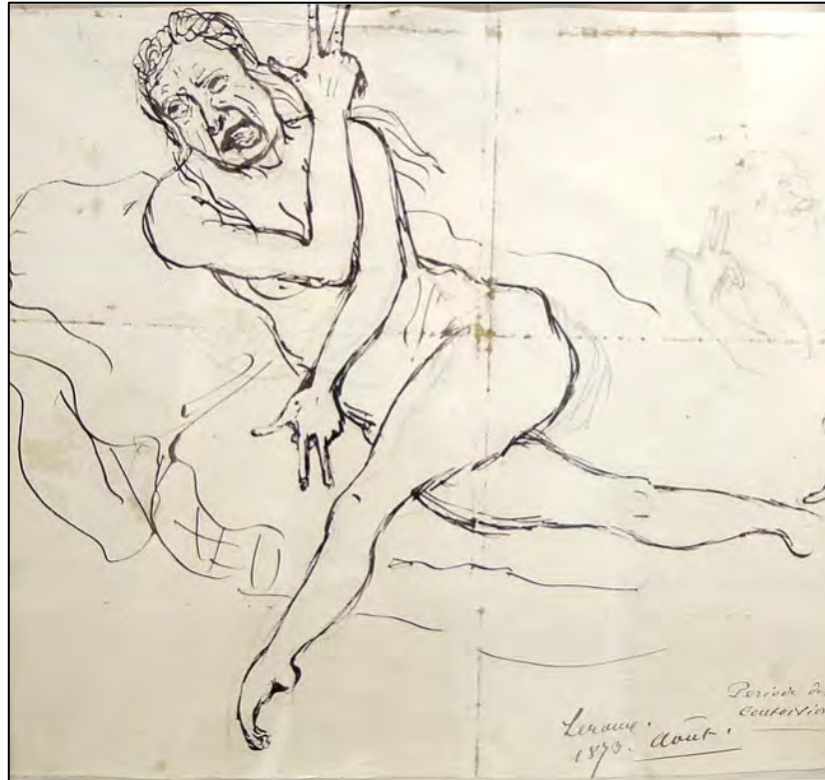
2016, *Aftercare I & Aftercare II*, 2016, *Being A Threat*, 2016, *Surface*, 2017, *Love *me**, 2017, *d'après S.K.*, 2017, *Response-ability*, 2017,), and (a.2) works in which violence takes place during the 'actual' performance, either live (*Introduction*, 2015, *Corner Time*, 2016, *Pudeur*, 2017, *Pudeur II*, 2018), or in video format reproducing an action (during a performance piece or within a private consensual environment) that has already happened in the past (*Pudeur II*, 2018, *Aphorism*, 2019). In the first subcategory (a.1), violence is presented either through marks left on the performer's body as a trace/remainder, e.g., bruises, imprints and/or abrasions, or is implied through rituals of care - now constituting the 'actual' performance work - called upon to manage violence's traumatic remainder.



13. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 2016. Photograph: Natalia Tsoukala.

Corner Time (2016) is a performance that belongs simultaneously to both subcategories of works just described, since, due to its long duration (8 hours per day / 6 days per week / for 7 weeks / 324 hours in total), any scenes of violence, performed mainly through Japanese bondage techniques (shibari), sometimes took place in front of the public, while others not, depending on whether there were any visitors in the performance space at

that particular moment.⁵⁸ Depending on each bondage scene's duration, intensity and area of application, it was often the case that there were rope marks on the performer's skin, thus testifying the preceded event of restriction, to those members of the public that entered the space after the 'actual' event of violence was over.



14. Jean-Martin Charcot, *Dessin d'observation*, 1873.

Following from the definition of violence as *any force exercised among bodies the moment of their encounter, with its effect having a severe impact on the bodies upon which it is applied*, it would be necessary to investigate how one might actually grasp this 'severe impact' in the performances discussed. In the following examples of works, this impact is usually read via its residual expressions, that constitute proof, testimony and memory of the event of violence. Such residual expressions would include:

⁵⁸ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 7-week (324 hours) long durational performance commissioned by the NEON Organisation and the Marina Abramović Institut (MAI), Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece, 2016. despinazacharopoulou.com/corner-time vimeo.com/197389133 (accessed 12-04-2021).



15-16. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Being a Threat*, 2016. Photograph on the right: Ania Mokrzycka.

1. The intensities produced and distributed in the work, accompanied by the production of images of a body *in spasm* assuming positions and generating images, that would be impossible to be produced without the application of forces on the performer's body and without the mediation of pain (*Introduction*, 2015, *Corner Time*, 2016, *Pudeur*, 2017, *Pudeur II*, 2018).⁵⁹

2. The creation of marks on the performer's skin, such as: imprints (e.g. rope marks in *Corner Time*, 2016), bruises (*Love *me**, 2017, *d'apres S.K.*, 2017, *Response-ability*, 2017),

⁵⁹ It is in a similar way that Francis Bacon looked at violence and became interested in the body in spasm: "The violence of sensation is opposed to the violence of the represented (the sensational, the cliché). The former is inseparable from its direct action on the nervous system, the levels through it passes, the domains it traverses [...]." In Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, transl. by Daniel W. Smith, (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017/2019 [Paris: Édition de la Différence, 1981]), 30. "[...] what interests Bacon is not exactly movement [...] it is a movement 'in place,' a spasm, which reveals a completely different problem characteristic of Bacon: *the action of invisible forces on the body* (hence the bodily deformations, which are due to this more profound cause)." Ibid. 31.

abrasions (*Being A Threat*, 2016, *Surface*, 2017), or even breakings of the skin tissue (e.g. using body stapling in *Pudeur*, 2017, *Pudeur II*, 2018).



17. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 2016. Photograph: Christina Bratuska.

3. Rituals of care following the effects and affects of the violent forces exerted in a time prior to the performance work, including their residue-as-trauma (*Aftercare I & Aftercare II*, 2016).



18. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aftercare I*, 2016. Photograph: Janina Anja Lange.

Regarding those performance works where the audience encounters a marked body, the viewer seems to ethically oscillate, not knowing exactly where to place themselves towards the artist. In this case, the audience cannot really discern whether they should feel sorry for the performer, protect her, feel threatened or excited by this *body-flesh* inhabited only by intensities that are then channelled inside the work as a nexus of hedonism, trauma, abandonment, availability and indifference.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ For a further exploration on the subject of encountering bodies in pain, please read: Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London: Penguin, 2003. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in pain: The making and Unmaking of the World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Sontag focuses on the constructed character of the 'awareness of the suffering' (p.17), whereas Scarry problematizes around the 'inexpressibility of physical pain' (p.3) and its consequences.



19. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Being A Threat*, 2016. Photograph: Ania Mokrzycka.

Being a Threat (2016) was the first performance within a series of works of marks.⁶¹ The performer, having her entire body covered except her back, was crawling along the perimeter of the gallery space, her face turned against the wall or the floor. Her marked back was left exposed to the audience, full of whip marks caused the night before by third parties within a consensual environment. During the performance, the artist's back became her 'face'. For two hours her body slid slowly and sensuously along the perimeter of the exhibition space. However, the body presented to the audience was not a victimized body; it was a piece of traumatized and hedonistic flesh, a body that seemed to be floating within a surface circulated by intensities. Once the performer reached the gallery's exit, then, quasi-human and quasi-animal, she got up and left the space.

⁶¹ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Being a threat*, 2-hour performance, Performing Identities Exhibition, Dyson Gallery, RCA, London, UK, 2016. despinazacharopoulou.com/being-a-threat vimeo.com/195880210 (both links accessed 12-04-2021).



20-21. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Being A Threat*, 2016. Photographs: Ania Mokrzycka.

Using *Being a Threat* as an example, one might wonder what the difference between a performance that requires a repeated exercise of violence on the performer's body as part of the work's preparation, and a performance where the artist would execute the same trajectory and movements in space without the violence preceding it, might be. Should violence not precede the action, the result would be a body simply navigating space, with the project being exclusively about the gallery's inhabiting by the performer. Whereas should violence be part of the performer's preparation for the work, the marks on the body would indicate the existence of forces already exerted upon the artist, producing and distributing intensities during the performance. In the second case, the testimony of a body that had been affected by and marked during its encounter with other bodies, would indicate *the ability of this body to affect and be affected by other bodies and forces*. This ability would be named as: *affectability* or *vulnerability*. What is at stake here is a body presented to the viewer that is open to be affected by and affect other bodies; it

is a vulnerable body, a body ready to accept any touch, no matter how violent or even traumatic that touch might be.



22. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aftercare I*, 2016. Photograph: Janina Anja Lange.

Repetition

Repetition is a condition of action before it is a concept of reflection.⁶²

Gilles Deleuze

Across all performances belonging to the category of works of violence, repetition is manifested by the reiteration of consensual violent acts upon the performer's body, either during or before each project. Repetition is not to be understood here as repetition of the Same, but as both the visible and invisible work within each performance piece, characterized by the recurring exercise of forces upon the performer's body. These forces

⁶² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, transl. by P. Patton, London: Bloomsbury, 2014/17[1968], 117.

could be exerted either prior to the ‘actual work’, by other people within a consensual environment (caning, whipping, bondage), or by the artist herself or third parties during the performance piece (body stapling, bondage, caning). Throughout this range of works of violence, each performance work is essentially the remainder of an ever-going repetition of forces that keeps circulating from project to project in the form of a feedback loop, as indicated by Mandelbrot’s set:

$$z \Leftrightarrow z^2 + c$$

If z stands for step 1 within a morphogenetic process, and z^2 stands for the repetition of step 1, then step 2 not only contains the repetition of z , but also a sort of excess or residue c , which stands for the very morphogenetic process itself during the realization of the passage from step 1 to step 2. The symbol ‘ \Leftrightarrow ’ stands for the phenomenon of the feedback loop. Its double direction indicates that every step within the process of a feedback loop always already includes its own process of [future and past] becoming, in the form of a remainder from all previous realized stages.⁶³ It would also be fair to argue that Mandelbrot’s set also coincides with Lyotard’s use of the French term ‘*circonversion*’ [metaconversion in English] as “[...] the condensed ‘powers’ of conversion without upper limit, since any case of M^1 is also a case of $M^2 \dots M^n$.”⁶⁴ Consequently, Mandelbrot’s set, also written as $f_c(z) = z^2 + c$, indicates that for each value of z , a singularity governed by the type $f_c(z) = z^2 + c$ gets produced. This singularity being an

⁶³ For more information on Mandelbrot’s set, see: Adrien Douady and John H. Hubbard, *Étude dynamique des polynômes complexes*, Orsay: Prépublications mathématiques d’Orsay, 1985. For more information on morphogenesis and fractals, see: Benoît Mandelbrot, *Les Objets fractals: forme, hasard et dimension* (Paris: Flammarion, 1973). For a further elaboration on morphogenesis in the present thesis, see infra: 56-57.

⁶⁴ Iain Hamilton Grant, “Glossary”, in: Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, (2015/2019 [1974]), xv.

actualization and solidification of forces in a single form of the performance work at a given moment.

Lyotard's idea of metaconversion as well as Mandelbrot's set showcase a repetitive process, in which every round simultaneously superimposes its own past and future in a form of a multiplicity or fractal, that already includes its own morphogenetic processes and excesses. *Repetition in performance art* - thus, repetition of violence in performance art - *is here examined as a certain process of revisiting a state of pure becoming*.⁶⁵ Thus argued, the present thesis contributes to a more nuanced grasping of repetition in performance art, which in contemporary discourse is almost exclusively looked at as repetition of the same gestures via scripted scenarios.

For example, in Eirini Kartsaki's monograph *Repetition in Performance: returns and invisible forces*, the author not only fails to rigorously define repetition in performance art, but also approaches its subject via examples of scripted performances and dance choreographies only (e.g. by referencing the work of Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker, Trisha Brown etc) leaving outside paradigms of non-scripted, visceral performances from the realm of fine arts. Drawing from a philosophical framework deriving mainly from phenomenology and psychoanalysis, Kartsaki is interested only on those examples of repetition that have a certain type of effect on her body as a viewer (e.g. by making her feel on the edge, desiring more of what she sees) with her whole argument presented as purely subjective and grounded upon Lacan's theory on desire and his notion of jouissance.⁶⁶ Her view on repetition in performance could be summed up in statements, such as:

⁶⁵ "It is not the fact of *being there* that fascinates Nietzsche in this moment, but the fact of *returning* in what becomes: this necessity - which was lived and must be relived - defies the will and the creation of a meaning." In: Klossowski, *Nietzsche & the Vicious Circle*, ... (1997[1969]), 65.

⁶⁶ "This book argues that repetition in contemporary performance is a source of some possible pleasures. [...] Pleasure may arise in: the experience of repetition as jouissance (Chap.3), the experience of a sense

The experience of repetition in theatre, I suggest here, may resemble the experience of holding a contorted posture. [...] This is also, perhaps, how I experience repetition: I feel unsettled, ready to flee, on the verge of something, on the verge of what is about to happen.⁶⁷

In this book, I open a discussion about pleasure of repetition that derive from a process of desiring. I discuss wanting things, desiring repetition to keep going.⁶⁸

Finally, I use the word ‘repetition’ to denote repetitive movement, speech or structure.⁶⁹

While distancing ourselves from the aforementioned type of arguments which define repetition in performance art as “repetitive movement, speech or structure,” the live works supporting this thesis, look at repetition as a reiteration of acts and application of forces in order to bring the performer in a state of pure becoming, through the transmutation of the artist’s body into *flesh*.



23. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 2016. Photograph: Kyveli Dragoumi.

of being in the present moment (Chap.4); the process of returning to performance (Chap.5); the perpetual process of desiring (Chap.6).” In: Eirini Kartsaki, *Repetition in Performance: returns and invisible forces*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 16.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 9

⁶⁹ Ibid., 15.

For example, in *Corner Time* (2016), the performer was repeatedly using the materials of rope and chalk upon her own body, for eight hours per day, within the course of seven weeks (three hundred twenty-four hours in total), through techniques such as those of: Japanese rope bondage (shibari), restriction, isolation of the senses, suffocation, long hours of immobility or non-stop movement. During the seven weeks that the performance lasted, and on a daily basis, some of the spectators took the initiative to enter into an encounter with the performer mainly through the gaze, or touch. As a result, apart from the performer's application of forces upon her own body, she had been also repeatedly tied up, untied, hugged, kissed, caressed, touched by members of the audience. It was via these recurring actions that the artist's body was allowed to dismiss any given subjectivity and transmutate into flesh inhabited by intensities. This was also the purpose of any consensual whipping or caning that the performer had to endure as a preparation for her works of marks.



24. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aftercare II*, 2016. Photograph: Prof. Nigel Rolfe.

In the cases of performances of care (e.g. *Aftercare I*, 2016 and *Aftercare II*, 2016), repetition of rituals of care aimed at managing violence's residue, in the form of trauma, resulting from preceding long durational work(s) (e.g. *Corner Time*, 2016).⁷⁰

Trauma

If trauma is the persistent ongoing recurrence in the present, of violent impacts of bodies on other bodies, the moment of their encounter, then trauma can only continue to exist as trace and excess, circulating in the form of currency. In the works of violence, trauma continues to circulate, as 'the secret' that renders them with meaning, sometimes making its presence more explicit, others remaining to haunt the work as a ghost.⁷¹ Through the constant repetition of violent acts and intense intra-actions, trauma is always the residue that keeps circulating in the projects to come. How can contemporary performance art manage trauma? Does this move imply any kind of morality or ethics?

According to psychoanalysis, mourning and depression are the two main ways of managing trauma, categorizing the former under the moral definition of normality, and the latter under the accusation of psychopathology.⁷² In Sigmund Freud's emblematic text "Mourning and Melancholia," the father of psychoanalysis located the source of melancholy at the ego's autophagic attack towards itself, as a gesture of anger

⁷⁰ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aftercare I*, 20-hour (3 days) long durational performance, RCA Fine Art Research Exhibition: MATTER, Royal College of Art, 2016. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aftercare II*, 1-hour performance, BEING DOING, RCA Performance Pathway, Asylum Caroline Gardens Chapel, 2016. despinazacharopoulou.com/blank-1 (accessed 12-04-2021).

⁷¹ On 'the secret' as that which cannot be signified but can only be shared via attunement, see infra: 105.

⁷² "The correlation between melancholia and mourning seems justified by the overall picture of the two conditions. Further the causes of both in terms of environmental influences are, where we can identify them at all, also the same. Mourning is commonly the reaction to the loss of a beloved person or an abstraction taking the place of the person, such as fatherland, freedom, an ideal and so on. In some people, whom we for this reason suspect of having a pathological disposition, melancholia appears in the place of mourning." Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in: Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, transl. by S. Whiteside, (London: Penguin, 2005), 203.

resulting from an accusation that cannot be addressed to its actual recipient, which is the lost object of desire.⁷³ Trauma in this case is a wound marked by a severe loss that cannot be recuperated, thus the only ‘healthy’ way to recover from it would be to accept loss through mourning.



25. Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*, 1514, gravure, 24,1 x 19,1 cm, The MET, NY.

For Melanie Klein, trauma and melancholy characterize all human beings *in statu nascendi* since birth itself and the newborn’s dependance on the maternal breast

⁷³ “Their laments [Klagen] are accusations [Anklagen] [...] because everything disparaging that they express about themselves is basically being said about someone else [...]” Ibid., 208.

followed by its forced detachment after a few months time, inevitably lead to primary melancholy after the loss of the most desired object, which is the mother's body.⁷⁴ For Klein, it is the beginning of our lives that is itself traumatic, and needs to be repaired along the stages of one's psychic development, otherwise, melancholy might persist in adult life as well, should the initial trauma repeat under other patterns of attachments and detachments.⁷⁵ Thus said, it becomes clear that, for psychoanalysis, trauma not only is situated in a time past, condemned to be always inaccessible by memory, but is also regarded as a wound that needs to be healed.



26. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Love *me, 2017. Photograph: Prof. Nigel Rolfe.**

The present research offers an alternative view on trauma, now seen as driving force that needs to be repeated again and again so as to allow one to experience life as pure

⁷⁴ Melanie Klein, "Love, Guilt and Reparation" (1937). In: Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and other works 1921-1945*, (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 306-343.

⁷⁵ "Because our mother first satisfied all our self-preservative needs and sensual desires and gave us security, the part she plays in our minds is a lasting one, although the various ways in which this influence is effected and the forms it takes may not be at all obvious in later life." Ibid., 307.

becoming. In the performances mentioned, repetition of trauma through events of violence or rituals of care, does not offer any redemption in order to create *performers-heroes*, nor any fixation on trauma for the production of *performers-victims*. What takes place and gives meaning to the work, after constituting itself as a kind of ‘groundless ground,’ is the repetition of trauma, so that the performer loses all subjectivities.⁷⁶ Thus argued, trauma is no longer placed in the past, as a primary wound or as an immobile, untouchable reference point, but is instead looked at as a dynamic multiplicity of events that is fluid and susceptible to transmutation via processes of repetition.

In the performances presented, this process of the trauma’s eternal return through the ceaseless repetition of acts of violence and of intense intra-actions among bodies, does not constitute a repetition of “the same,” but a *repetition as difference* in the way that Deleuze defined difference and Nietzsche grasped the event of Eternal Return:

Nietzsche meant nothing more than this by eternal return. Eternal return cannot mean the return of the identical, because it presupposes a world (that of the will to power) in which all previous identities have been abolished and dissolved. Returning is being, but only the being of becoming. The eternal return does not bring back “the same” but returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes. Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself. Returning is thus the only identity, but identity as secondary power; the identity of difference, the identical which belongs to the different, or turns around the different. Such an identity produced by difference, is determined as “repetition.” Repetition is the eternal return, therefore consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different. [...] Only the extreme, the excessive returns [...].⁷⁷

Repetition as Eternal Return to trauma, resituates trauma away from its psychoanalytic understanding as a primary loss that keeps affecting us without, however, being able to be fully revisited. Therefore, trauma grasped through difference and repetition, now

⁷⁶ ‘Groundless ground,’ from: Lee Braver, *Groundless Grounds – A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, London & Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014 [2012].

⁷⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, ... (2014, 2017 [1968]), 52-53.

becomes a non originary entity that keeps circulating the moment it returns, to define identity as difference and pure becoming.

Works of contracts

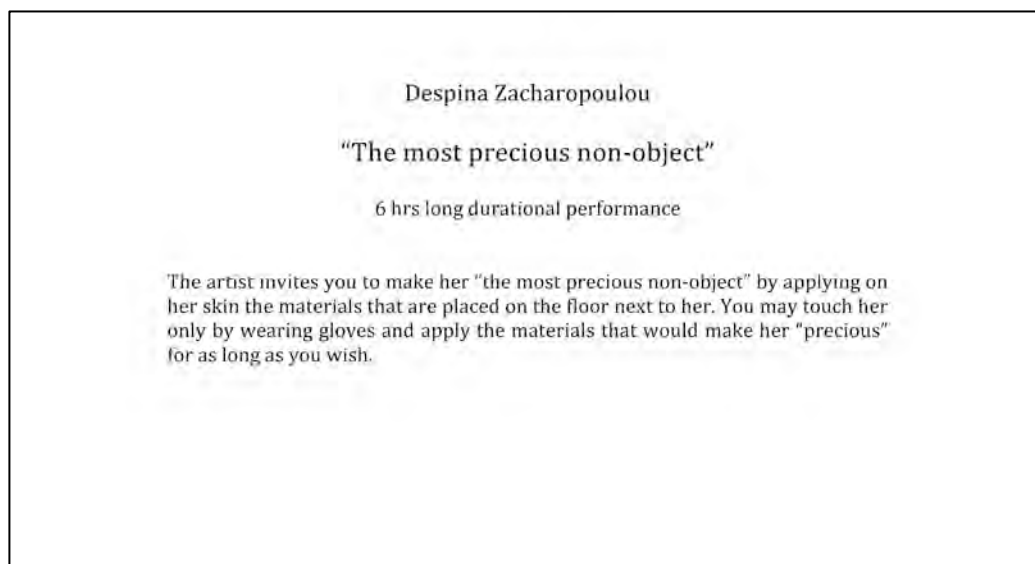
Moving on to the second general category of performance works according to diagram I, that of works of contracts, *The most precious non-object* (2016) was the first project of the artist employing protocols in the form of written contracts governing the thickness and porosity of boundaries of the audience-performer encounter.⁷⁸ The performer placed herself on a wooden crate for 6 hours, and invited the audience through a written contract on the wall, to apply on her body honey and glitter from the vessels placed right next to the crate, after they had worn latex gloves.



27. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: Félicie Kertudo.

⁷⁸ Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 6-hour long durational performance, ME/YOU YOU/ME, supported by the RCA Student-led event competition, Gallery Sensei London, 2016. despinazacharopoulou.com/the-most-precious-non-object vimeo.com/197275611 (both links accessed 12-04-2021).

Here, the contract took the form of a personal declaration of availability, so as the audience would know from the performance's outset the protocols to be followed, should they wished to enter into an encounter with the performer. The use of a written personal statement on behalf of the artist, functioning as a sort of contract with the audience, has been a strategy already found in the history of performance art, usually serving as a moral commitment towards the audience and the artistic community, but also as a public statement of intent in regard to the creation and/or execution of a future project.

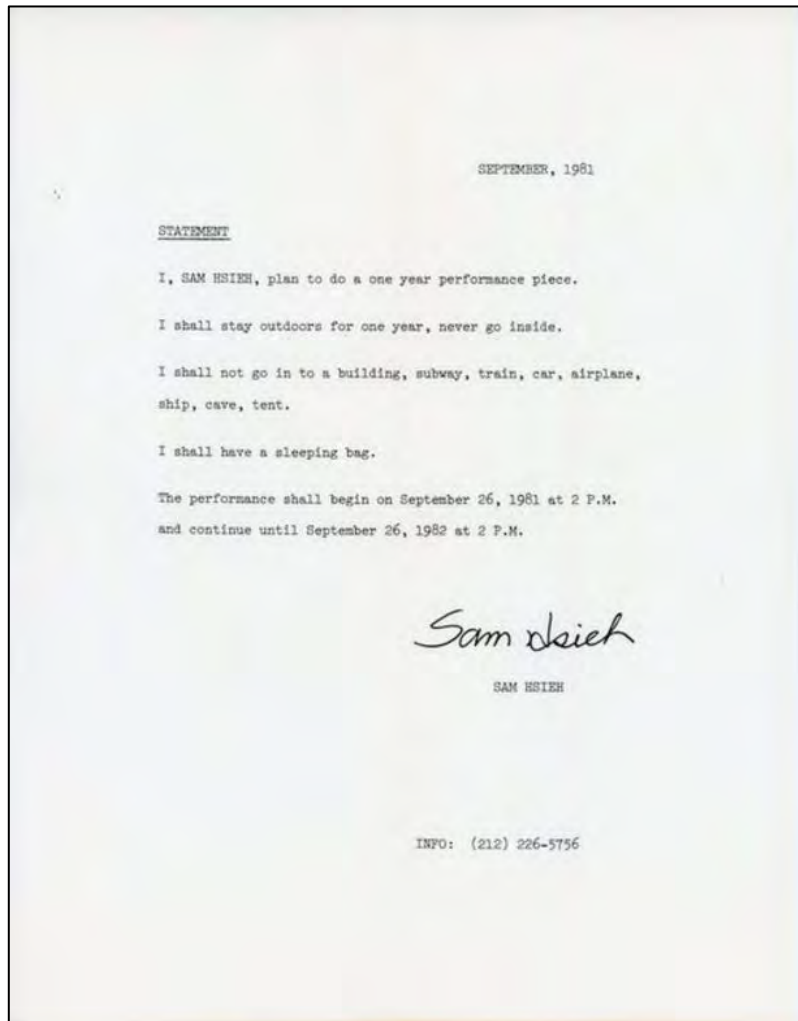


28. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Contract (The most precious non-object)*, 2016.

In the works of Tehching Hsieh, a signed personal written statement/contract was used and published before each of his five one-year performances that took place in the 80's, always adopting the following structure:

1. Date.
2. "STATEMENT."
3. "I, Sam Hsieh plan to do a one-year performance piece."
4. Brief description of action.

5. The exact date and time of the start and end of the performance is stated.
6. Artist's name and signature.
7. Contact details (telephone/gallery address).⁷⁹



29. Tehching Hsieh, *Outdoor Piece Statement*, 1981-82.

Hsieh's signed statements, though lacking any legal force/application, nevertheless signified the artist's commitment and declaration of consistency with the instructions set to himself by himself from the outset of each project. Communicating these documents

⁷⁹ For Tehching Hsieh's written statements/contracts used in his one-year performances, see: Adrian Heathfield, and Tehching Hsieh, *Out of Now: The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh*, London: Live Art Development Agency / Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015 [2009].

to the press of the time through the gallery that represented him, Hsieh, in addition to advertising his upcoming projects, managed to give validity and value to his performances, after stressing the importance of a performance artist taking responsibility for the consistent execution of their work. In addition, he managed to render performance art valuable - though a 'traditionally' non-exchangeable art genre. In Hsieh's case, the contract functions not only as an explicit commitment on behalf of the artist, but also as a sort of advertising/teaser, creating mystery and expectations to the public. These expectations could be even more in cases when the performance project to follow happened in such a way that it couldn't be immediately accessible by the audience, either as a whole or in parts. In addition, after the completion of each performance, its corresponding statement/contract would function as a tangible proof of the work and its successful character (given that the artist managed to meet the expectations created), and as a sort of documentation to be presented in exhibitions and publications to follow.



30. Marina Abramović, *Rhythm O*, 1974, Guggenheim NY.

Another example regarding the use of contracts in performance art, would be Marina Abramović's *Rhythm O* (1974). Here we have the case of a contract in the form of a written announcement/declaration, through which the performer invited viewers to choose any of the 72 objects placed on a table and use it on her body at will:

R H Y T H M O

I n s t r u c t i o n s.

There are 72 objects on the table that one can use on me as desired.

P e r f o r m a n c e.

I am the object.

During this period I take full responsibility.

Duration: 6 hours (8 pm – 2 am)

1974

Studio Morra, Naples.⁸⁰

The text written by Abramović was placed on a table along with other 72 objects. As can be deducted from the text itself, here the role of the contract was twofold. On the one hand, and in the text's first part entitled "Instructions," it provided guidelines for the audience's actions within the project. According to the instructions given, the gallery visitors were allowed to use on the performer's body any of the 72 items lying on a table inside the gallery space: feather, whip, knife, polaroid camera, gun, lipstick, etc. On the other hand, and in the second part of Abramović's contract/announcement, entitled "Performance," the artist expressed both an ontological judgment by identifying herself through the sentence: "I am the object," and a moral judgement through the phrase: "During this period I take full responsibility." The ontological aspect of the text resides in the artist's decision to adopt in advance a certain kind of subjectivity within the work - that of the object - thus sustaining binary essentialist categories, e.g. the dichotomy subject v.s. object. This choice on behalf of Abramović not only ontologically framed

⁸⁰ Marina Abramović, with James Kaplan, *Walk Through Walls: A Memoir* (London: Penguin, 2016), 68.

her performance, but also limited the performer-audience encounter to a passive-active one-directional schema, thus restricting the performance's potential outputs. Here the text interpreted the role of both the artist and the audience from the very outset of the live work, carrying along with it all the implications that such harsh distinctions within the philosophical tradition of dialectics may carry: already existing, separate entities, given meaning from the very outset, having a specific role, without the possibility of any deviation from it. As far as the ethical perspective of *Rhythm O's* contract/declaration is concerned, by claiming full responsibility upon all actions exercised towards her body, the artist raised questions regarding the principles according to which the audience-performer encounter could be established. The contract, here, served as a practical tool governing the thickness of boundaries between consent and violence, in this sense forming part of all the pacts that regulate people's social relations' dynamics and ontological nuances. At the same time, the fact that Abramović took full responsibility for any act within this project brought forward the issue of civil legitimacy within performance art, after raising questions as to whether the force of juridical law could be applied or not within the realm of art, and whether this application should be compatible with the work's artistic protocols. In addition, questions revolving around whether there could be any ethical or legal boundaries – and what could these be – concerning the use of the performer's body by the audience, were raised.

One of the ethical limits applied to any relationship or action taking place among the citizens of a lawful state, is the safeguarding of freedom and equality of its members. This limit was set in the 18th century, through the *Social Contract* [*Du Contrat Social*, 1762] written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, according to which people would be able to establish a political body once every human being agreed to lose their 'natural' freedom for the community's benefit, thus acquiring a different kind of freedom; a political one. Through

consensus on the terms of the *Social Contract* for the protection of freedom and equality, people would then establish the state's laws according to the general will, which should always secure the common good.



31. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: Félicie Kertudo.

Likewise, in *The most precious non-object*, the written contract/statement essentially functioned as the main mechanism governing the thickness of boundaries in regards to the consent-violence entanglement within the performer-audience encounter. Thus, the phrase “You may touch her only by wearing gloves and apply the materials [that are placed on the floor next to her] [...] for as long as you wish,” not only expressed the performer’s availability to be touched by the audience, but also defined the protocols on the basis of which such an action could be actualized (i.e. the mandatory use of gloves), without, however, specifying which types of touch would be allowed and which would not.

Morphogenetic structures

Consequently, the written contract's role in the works informing this research, would not be to provide a list of actions that would be allowed, while excluding others as forbidden. On the contrary, each written contract would provide the morphogenetic structures according to which each performance project would unfold, without predetermining its final outcomes. The terms 'morphogenesis' and 'morphogenetic structures' were initially used in chemistry by A.M. Turing, to describe phenomena of biological systems that fall out of equilibrium and continue evolving in a chaotic manner, that would develop its own logics of growth according to patterns emerging with the arrow of time:⁸¹

It is suggested that a system of chemical substances, called morphogens, reacting together and diffusing through a tissue, is adequate to account for the main phenomena of morphogenesis. Such a system, although it may originally be quite homogeneous, may later develop a pattern of structure due to an instability of the homogeneous equilibrium, which is triggered off by random-disturbances.⁸²

As stated by Turing, the terms 'morphogen', 'morphogenetic', 'morphogenesis' are used in order to "[...] convey the idea of a form producer."⁸³ Apparently this comes from the etymological root of the term, originating from the combination of the Greek words '*morphe*' (μορφή) and '*genesis*' (γένεσις), meaning 'form' and 'birth,' respectively. As analysed in Turing's paper, morphogenetic structures appear once a formerly homogeneous, symmetrical and stable system breaks down (due to various reasons/triggers) to become unstable. Via a chain of chemical reactions unfolding over time, a morphogenetic system

⁸¹ A. M. Turing, "The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis", in: *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London Series B Biological Sciences* Vol. 237 No. 641 (August 14, 1952): 37-72.

⁸² Ibid., 37.

⁸³ Ibid., 38.

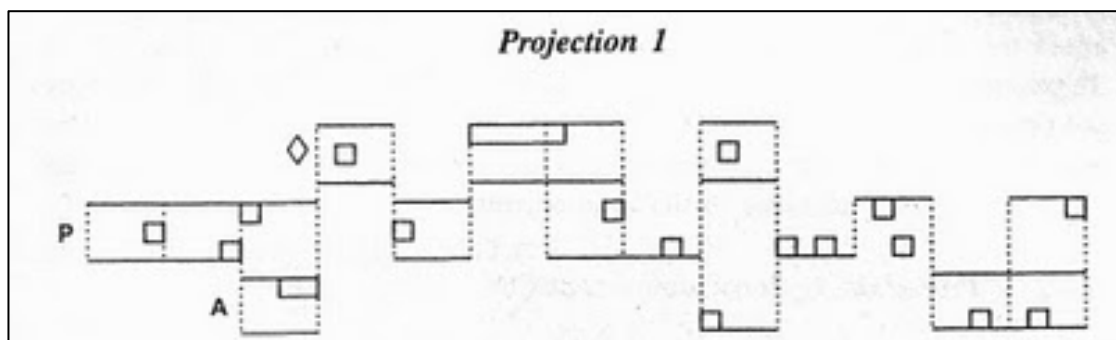
starts to develop a series of patterns that are recorded and repeated during the process. These patterns lead to reformations of the system in new structures of dynamic equilibrium. For example, a ring of cells might be rearranged to polygonal structures. The crucial move made through the study of morphogenesis, is the argument made that the spectrum of potential structures to be engendered during morphogenetic phenomena, is already present as a spectrum of possibilities within the genetic information carried by the participating cells, with their realization depending upon the complex intra-actions that would take place during each phenomenon.

It is in light of the aforementioned analysis that the term ‘morphogenetic structure’ is used in the performances of written contracts presented, so as to designate that, though not scripted nor predecided as such, these performances carry with them a certain kind of sensuous logic, of structural disposition or tendency, organizing disparities of potential events. The contract would then be the apparatus engendering these morphogenetic structures, through the establishment of protocols of governmentality. In order for one to grasp how protocols operate in performance art, the differentiation between protocols and instructions should be explained through the differentiation between:

- a) the function of governmentality, through any technological mechanism - apparatus that produces horizontal structures for the determination of areas with lesser or greater probabilities of occurrence of events, and
- b) the homogeneous and total implication of the Law (e.g., *the great Zero*, the Father, the Superego, the state, religion, society, the family, etc.), through orders-instructions given within institutional structures, governed by vertical

hierarchies, organized through departmentalizations-fragmentations into segments and organs-as-functions.⁸⁴

An example that would provide a better understanding of the differentiation between rules and protocols, would be that of classical versus diagrammatical music notation. In the first case, the score would be translated by a musician with each note performed corresponding to a note written on the music sheet. Here, the melody produced would have already been noted and foreseen in its slightest detail (tonality, intensity, duration) by the composer, to such an extent that a person with adequate musical knowledge could even imagine how the piece of music would sound like only by reading its score.⁸⁵



32. Morton Feldman, *Projection 1*, (c) 1961 by C. F. Peters Corporation, New York.

In the second case, that of diagrammatical music notation, the score instead of acting as a structure to be interpreted in a one-to-one mirror representation, would function as a diagram setting the boundaries within which spectra of different tones and/or

⁸⁴ The great Zero: “[...] the ontological motif imposed on desire, forever deferring, re-presenting and simulating everything in an endless postponement [...] this zero is itself a figure, part of a powerful *dispositif* [...] a metaconverting *dispositif* [*dispositif de circonvension*][...]” In: Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (1993 [1974]), 22-23. “Laws exist because of our need to *calculate*. Only *quantities of force* exist.” In: Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, ...(1997[1969]), 140.

⁸⁵ It is in a similar manner that the choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker translates music sheets of composers such as Bartók or Reich, to dance works. In: Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker and Bojana Cvejić, *A Choreographer's score: Fase, Rosas danst Rosas, Elena's Aria, Bartók*, Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2012.

temporalities could be performed. Here, the final result played by a musician would not be predicted by the score but would exist only for the time of it being performed. For example, in Morton Feldman's *Projection 1* (1950), the score, instead of using traditional music notation, is organized in the form of a diagram, placing spectral areas of tonality and temporality across two axes. Areas of equal width are distributed along the horizontal axis, each of which corresponds to a time unit with a value to be defined by the musician who will perform the composition. Respectively, along the vertical axis, the distributed areas of equal amplitude correspond to tonal spectra with their lower and upper limits to be set by the musician playing the work. Therefore, there are, essentially, infinite ways in which one could perform *Projection 1*, while always following the protocols defined through the score's diagrammatical structure. Diagrammatical music scores, as well as written contracts used in the performances discussed, do not constitute a model that one is called to imitate or translate in a one-to-one relationship, after following the principles of representation. On the contrary, they both function as mechanisms, as apparatuses for the distribution of possibilities in the emergence of potential events. They both are morphogenetic structures that will generate forms as soon as the work *happens* in the here and now, whether it is a piece of music or a live performance.

Thus argued, an overlapping between contracts as protocols of governmentality and diagrams - or graphs - in painting, according to the Deleuzean use of the term, is revealed. In Gilles Deleuze's book *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation* (2017[1981]), the French philosopher identified the diagram with the idea of the virtual, as a structure not yet actualized:

The diagram is thus the operative set of asignifying and non representative lines and zones, line-strokes and color-patches. And the operation of the

diagram, its function, says Bacon, is to be 'suggestive.' Or, more rigorously, to use language similar to Wittgenstein's it is to introduce 'possibilities of fact'.⁸⁶

According to Deleuze, Bacon used line or color marks on the canvas as suggestive gestures for the figure to emerge through catastrophe. This process of marking on behalf of Bacon was not completely chaotic, in the way that Hans Arp, Duchamp and other Dadaists based some of their works on pure chance. Here, there was a certain kind of manipulation of the marks produced by the artist, so as to gradually distribute areas of different "possibilities of fact." Likewise, written contracts in the performances presented operate as diagrams, in the sense that they resist representational schemas by offering a structure not yet actualized, defined by the protocols they introduce.



33. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Matter*, 2017. Photograph: Anna Bones.

⁸⁶ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*,... (2017/2019 [1981]), 70.

In *Matter* (2017), the performer-audience encounter was determined by a written contract read aloud to the audience at the outset of the performance, by a person assigned by the artist.⁸⁷ The performer was present during the contract's reading and had to agree and sign it before she took her position on a wooden crate. What was stated in the contract was the performer giving her consent to the audience to touch her, undress her and move her body in the space however they pleased. Throughout the performance, any of the spectators who wished to enter into an encounter with the artist was required to sign the contract before doing so, thus giving their explicit consent in writing, and to wear latex gloves before touching the performer's body. By the end of the performance, the contract would then include, apart from the protocols governing the performer-audience encounter, also the signatures of both the performer and all the spectators who had intra-acted with her.



34. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Matter*, 2017. Photograph: Anna Bones.

⁸⁷ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Matter*, 30-minute performance, A L C H E M I E, Anatomie studio, London, UK, 2017. despinazacharopoulou.com/matter vimeo.com/257666839 (both links accessed 12-04-2021).

As in the case of *The most precious non-object* (2016), in *Matter* (2017), as well, the contract functioned as the main mechanism governing the encounters between the performer and audience. What was at stake in both cases, was not to compile a list of instructions that would specify exactly what would happen during the work, in the form of a scenario, but to establish a series of protocols that would govern areas of lesser or greater probabilities of emergence of events without, however, dictating them. Such protocols would be:

- The optional touch of the performer's body by the public, provided the use of latex gloves.
- The movement in the space and the mobilization of the performer's body by the audience, according to their own will, since the performer resigned from executing the above actions herself.
- The existence and acceptance of the performer's nudity inside the work.
- The voluntary removal of the performer's clothes from the audience.
- The ability of the performer to invoke her *safe word* and to stop any intra-action with the audience should she felt uncomfortable.

CONTRACT

for a 30 min performance, in the context of the ALCHEMIE event
Anatomie Studio, 7-17 Latona Road, Peckham SE15 6RY, London, UK

This contract dated the 14th of July, 2017 is the complete and entire agreement between the signatories. Despina Zacharopoulou, being of sound mind and body, hereinafter referred to as "the performer" and the audience, being of sound mind and body, hereinafter referred to as "the audience". The terms of this agreement will begin on the 14th of July 2017, and will remain in effect for a period of 30 minutes ending on the 14th of July, 2017. This contract shall also become null and void immediately upon request of the injured party following any material breach of the contract. Should the injured party agree to continue with the contract following any material breach, the broken clause shall still remain in effect for the remaining terms of the contract.

The performer

- The performer consents to have their clothes removed by the audience.
- The performer consents to take no initiative concerning their body movement & placement in the space.
- The performer consents to have their body moved & placed in the space by the audience.
- The performer consents to have their body touched by the audience, after they have put on latex gloves.
- The performer consents to invoke their safeword "wall" in case they feel uncomfortable.

The audience

- The audience consents to remove the performer's clothes.
- The audience consents to witness the performer's nude body.
- The audience consents to move and place the performer's body in the space.
- The audience consents to touch the performer's body, after they have put on latex gloves.
- The audience consents to respect the performer's safeword "wall", in case it is invoked, and stop immediately any interaction with the performer.
- The audience consents to respect the performer's safety and health.

These terms are mutually agreed to by the affixing of the respective signatures below.

The performer 14/07/2017
(please sign below)

The audience 14/07/2017
(please sign below)

The image shows a collection of handwritten signatures in black ink. On the left side, under the 'The performer' heading, there are several signatures, including one that appears to be 'D.Z.' and others that are more abstract. On the right side, under the 'The audience' heading, there are more signatures, some of which are more legible, such as 'A. VAS' and 'Flavio'. The signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

35. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Contract (Matter)*, 2017, ballpen on printed paper, 21,0 × 29,7 cm.

Consent

Here, the contract, in addition to being both a mechanism for governing the performer-audience intra-action, and a physical residue of the project, also constituted, for the first time in the category of works of contracts, a signed declaration of consent and responsibility by all the parties involved. Consequently, the signatures included in the document's final form at the end of the performance, not only testified to the exact number of people who had intra-acted with the performer, but also brought to light the singularity of each one of them, through their unique signature.

Requesting from the audience to sign a contract of this kind before making use of the performer's body had no legal applications, nor did it ensure any legal protection on behalf of the artist. In addition, the final image of the contract could not reveal any information about the names and identities of the people who signed it. What one ultimately grasped, either by signing the contract, or while seeing it in its final form with all the signatures included, was the consensus given and the responsibility taken by singular human beings who had a mutual agreement upon entering a particular kind of encounter.

This last remark shows how contracts in the performances discussed redefine the notion of the public/audience attending art events and exhibitions. In the vast majority of cases, the public/audience stands for an almost metaphysical entity having the role of an observer, that would legitimize the artwork precisely through this function of observing. This is something similar to the role of the observer in a scientific experiment who, while remaining anonymous and interchangeable, is able to confirm the validity of the process. In the performances of contracts presented, the public ceases to be an anonymous mass and no longer serves the role of a passive observer; the singularity of each spectator becomes a component of the work through their physical entanglement

with the performance. In this sense, all audience members constitute a kind of thick materiality adding to the project protocols and co-shaping the performance work.

In *Matter* (2017), each member of the audience consenting to the contract through their unique signature, had the right to act upon the performer's body and leave their singular trace. In parallel, the contract was also the constituent act for the creation of a body consisting of the contracting members of the audience, together with the performer, since they all agreed to enter an encounter governed by specific protocols. In this sense, the use of the contract here also produced a special social relationship, named an encounter, and was there to govern the thickness of the boundaries between consent and violence. All these aspects of the idea of the contract in the performances presented indicate the political potential of this research and its contribution to fields beyond that of art, such as those of political science and humanities in general, since every social relationship is based on mutual agreements/pacts.⁸⁸

In the political sciences of the 17th century, theories of the Social Contract, such as those of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, sought to lay down the principles that any primary social constituent agreement should have and to which all people wishing to form a political body, should consent. For Rousseau, such a transition towards citizenship would presuppose the loss of natural freedom in favour of political freedom, which would no longer be guided by individual interests, but would be mobilized, instead, by the people's general will and concern for the common good.⁸⁹ Within Rousseau's paradigm, laws would, for the first time, emanate directly from the people

⁸⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social, ou Principes du Droit Politique*, Book I, Chapter 1, in: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Collection complète des oeuvres*, Genève: 1780-1789, vol. 1, in-4°, online version of the 7th October 2012 rousseauonline.ch/Text/du-contrat-social-ou-principes-du-droit-politique.php (accessed 20-08-2020), 4-5 [190].

⁸⁹ Ibid., Book I, Chapter 8, 14-15 [208-209].

and express the general will.⁹⁰ In such a political system, *general will should obey reason, making the passions silent*, since chaos, luck and violence (beyond that of defending the state) were considered disastrous.⁹¹ Rousseau's *Social Contract*, by constituting the basis of every modern democratic state, eradicated affects and suggested Logos as the main safeguard of justice within each legal state's social relations. However, this argument presupposed a teleological and evolutionary view of society, through the idea of progress towards a just and peaceful future ensured by consensus and agreement on a common good.

The practical dangers that lurk in the - almost mythical - claim of a total consensus through Logos have been identified through the notion of hegemony, as mentioned in the work of twentieth-century political philosophers: Antonio Gramsci, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. In the *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935) Antonio Gramsci called 'hegemony of the ruling class' (the one in which material and economic wealth is concentrated) all the social, cultural, moral, behavioural, and educational institutions that, defined by it, thresh society as a whole, regardless of economic background. It is about all those habits, attitudes, lifestyles, entertainment, religious expression, education and culture that, while created by and for the ruling class, end up recommending what common sense would be for all other classes, in the name of consent to the common good.⁹² Laclau and Mouffe, continuing Gramsci's thought, suggested as a possibility of resistance to hegemony, the emergence of contingency within the public sphere through agonistic strategies and the mobilization of affects.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid., Book II, Chapter 6, 24-25 [228-231].

⁹¹ Ibid., Book II, Chapter 7, 26 – 28 [232 - 237] & Book IV, Chapter 6, 80 – 82 [336 - 339].

⁹² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, transl. by Quintin Hoare & G.N. Smith, International Publishers: New York 1971.

⁹³ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Strategy*, London & New York: Verso, 1985, 2001.



36. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Protreptic*, 2018. Photograph: H.Jukkrit/Bangkok Art Biennale.

In the performances of contracts discussed, a kind of pact between the public and the performer gets established. Although the performer-audience encounters do not take place among the potential citizens of a state - as is the case with the *Social Contract* - they nevertheless suggest ways of correlating with each other in the public sphere, have moral, political and ontological implications. Here, the main and inviolable term of Rousseau's *Social Contract* - that of freedom - is annulled: the performer consents to the voluntary use of her body by members of the public, voluntarily submitting her body to any kind of touch, as much as intrusive, intimate, caring or violating this touch might be.

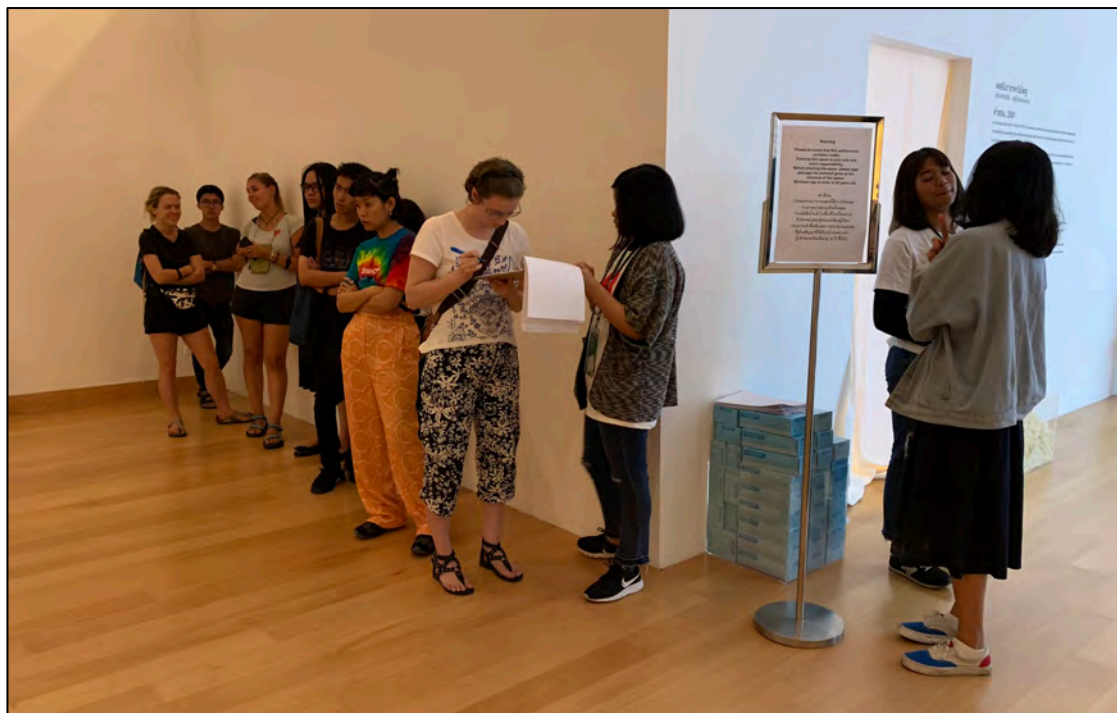
In *Protreptic* (2018) the written contract functioned as a necessary precondition for the audience to enter the performance space, regardless of whether each spectator ultimately chose to physically intra-act with the performer or not.⁹⁴ Each visitor, prior

⁹⁴ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Protreptic*, 168-hour (3 weeks) long durational performance, commissioned by the Marina Abramović Institute & the Bangkok Art Biennale, Bangkok Art & Culture Centre, 2018. despinazacharopoulou.com/protreptic-1 vimeo.com/438234966 (both accessed 12-04-2021).

to entering the performance space was asked to sign a copy of a mutual statement/agreement already signed by the performer, explicitly consenting to its terms.



37. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Protreptic*, 2018. Photograph: H. Jukkrit/Bangkok Art Biennale.



38. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Protreptic*, 2018. Photograph: Billy Zhao.

Therefore, the contract, apart from expressing the performer's availability to be touched by the audience, in any way they wished, provided they had worn latex gloves, also encouraged visitors to respect the performer's health and safety and stop any intra-action with her should she invoked her safeword: "wall." Since each member of the audience entering the performance space had to sign a copy of the contract, the total number of signed contracts (approximately 6,000) ultimately constituted one of the project's material residues – along with the pairs of used latex gloves -, exhibited for a month in the performance space after the live work was over (2018-19) and at the Dyson Gallery of the Royal College of Art (2019).



39. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Remainders #01 (Protreptic)*, post-performance installation, 2019.

CONTRACT / สัญญา

for Despina Zacharopoulou's *Protreptic*, a 3-week long durational performance
commissioned by the Marina Abramović Institute (MAI) and the Bangkok Art Biennale 2018
Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, 939 Rama 1 Road, Wangmai, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330

สำหรับการแสดง "Protreptic" ของศิลปิน Despina Zacharopoulou จัดแสดงเป็นเวลา 3 สัปดาห์
โดย Marina Abramović Institute (MAI) และบางกอก อาร์ต เบียนนาเล่ 2018
ณ หอศิลป์วัฒนธรรมแห่งกรุงเทพมหานคร 939 ถนนพระราม 1 แขวงวังใหม่ เขตปทุมวัน กรุงเทพมหานคร 10330

This contract dated the 30 OCT 2018 is the complete and entire agreement between the signatories.
Despina Zacharopoulou, being of sound mind and body, hereinafter referred to as "the Performer" and
the audience whose name has been given below, being of sound mind and body, hereinafter referred to
as "the Audience", Whereas, the Performer is performing the "Protreptic" performance piece during
18th October - 11th November 2018. This performance requires consent and mutual understanding
between the Performer and the Audience, as prescribed below.

สัญญาดังวันที่ 30 ตุลาคม 2561 ฉบับนี้ทำขึ้นเพื่อเป็นความตกลงโดยสมบูรณ์ระหว่างผู้ลงนามในสัญญา ระหว่าง
Despina Zacharopoulou ซึ่งมีสติสัมปชัญญะสมบูรณ์ ณ วันที่ทำสัญญา ซึ่งต่อไปในสัญญานี้เรียกว่า "ผู้แสดง" และ
ผู้ชมการแสดงซึ่งได้ระบุชื่อไว้ด้านล่างนี้ ซึ่งมีสติสัมปชัญญะสมบูรณ์ ณ วันที่ทำสัญญา ซึ่งต่อไปในสัญญานี้เรียกว่า "ผู้ชมการแสดง"
โดยที่ ผู้แสดงจะแสดงศิลปะแสดงสด ภายใต้ชื่อ "Protreptic" ในระหว่างวันที่ 18 ตุลาคม ถึงวันที่ 11 พฤศจิกายน 2561 โดยการ
แสดงดังกล่าวจำเป็นต้องได้รับความยินยอมรวมถึงการทำความเข้าใจร่วมกันระหว่างผู้แสดงและผู้ชมการแสดง ผู้แสดงและผู้ชม
การแสดงจึงได้ทำความตกลงและให้ความยินยอมร่วมกันดังต่อไปนี้

The Performer / ผู้แสดง

- The Performer consents to have her body touched by the Audience, after the Audience has put on latex gloves.
- ผู้แสดงยินยอมให้ผู้ชมการแสดงสัมผัสร่างกายผู้แสดงได้เมื่อผู้ชมการแสดงได้สวมถุงมือยาง
- The Performer consents to invoke her safeword "wall" in case she feels uncomfortable.
- ผู้แสดงตกลงว่าจะกล่าวรหัสเวิร์ด (safeword) คำว่า "วอลล์" ("wall") เมื่อผู้แสดงรู้สึกอึดอัด หรือไม่สะดวกสบาย
- The Performer consents to be filmed/photographed by the Audience inside the performance's space.
- ผู้แสดงยินยอมที่จะถูกบันทึกภาพและเสียง หรือถ่ายทอดโดยผู้ชมการแสดงภายในสถานที่แสดง

The Audience / ผู้ชมการแสดง

- The Audience consents to touch the Performer's body, after the Audience has put on latex gloves.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงว่าผู้ชมการแสดงจะสัมผัสร่างกายผู้แสดงได้ต่อเมื่อผู้ชมการแสดงได้สวมถุงมือยาง
- The Audience consents to respect the Performer's safeword "wall", in case it is invoked, and stop immediately any interaction with the Performer.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงจะยอมรับรหัสเวิร์ด (safeword) คำว่า "วอลล์" ("wall") ของผู้แสดง โดยในกรณีที่มีการกล่าวคำดังกล่าว ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงว่าจะหยุดการสัมผัสหรือการกระทำใดๆ ต่อร่างกายของผู้แสดงทันที
- The Audience consents to respect the Performer's safety and health.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงว่าจะคำนึงถึงสุขภาพอนามัยและความปลอดภัยของผู้แสดง

- The Audience consents upon the fact that the Performer will include nudity in the work *Protreptic* and the Audience agrees that the work *Protreptic* is performed for artistic purposes only.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงยอมรับว่าการแสดงของผู้แสดงเป็นการเปลือยหรือเปิดเผยร่างกายในการแสดง *Protreptic* ซึ่งจัดขึ้นเพื่อวัตถุประสงค์ทางศิลปะเท่านั้น
- The Audience consents to enter the performance's space in their sole and entire responsibility.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงยอมรับว่าการเข้าสู่สถานที่แสดงเป็นการตัดสินใจและความรับผิดชอบของผู้ชมการแสดงเอง
- The Audience consents to be filmed/photographed while being inside the performance's space.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงยินยอมที่จะถูกบันทึกภาพและเสียงหรือถูกถ่ายภาพในระหว่างที่อยู่ในสถานที่แสดง
- The Audience consents upon the fact that all copyrights of the Performer's work *Protreptic*, including this contract (with the names and signatures of the signatories) and all videos/photographs, belong to the Performer.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงยอมรับว่าลิขสิทธิ์ทั้งหมดของผลงาน *Protreptic* ของผู้แสดง รวมทั้งสัญญาฉบับนี้ (ซึ่งปรากฏชื่อและลายมือชื่อของผู้ลงนามทุกฝ่าย) และภาพเคลื่อนไหวหรือภาพถ่ายทั้งหมดตกเป็นสิทธิ์ของผู้แสดง
- The Audience consents not to make any claims and/or initiate any legal proceeding, both criminal and civil, against the Performer, MAI, Bangkok Art Biennale Management Co., Ltd. and other persons/entities relating to the Bangkok Art Biennale 2018.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงว่าจะไม่เรียกร้องหรือดำเนินกระบวนการตามกฎหมายใดๆ ทั้งทางอาญาและทางแพ่งต่อผู้แสดง MAI บริษัท บางกอกอาร์ตเบียนนาเล่ แมเนจเม้นท์ จำกัด และบุคคลหรือนิติบุคคลอื่นใดที่เกี่ยวข้องกับบางกอก อาร์ต เบียนนาเล่ 2018
- The Audience acknowledges and agrees that the Audience is responsible for their own risks, including but not limited to the criminal and/or civil liabilities, in relation to the use and/or the publication of any motion pictures and/or the photographs taken inside the performance's space by the Audience. The Audience also agrees that Performer, MAI, Bangkok Art Biennale Management Co., Ltd and other persons/entities relating to the Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 shall hold no responsibilities for any consequences and/or any damages thereof.
- ผู้ชมการแสดงรับทราบและตกลงว่าผู้ชมการแสดงจะต้องรับผิดชอบต่อความเสี่ยงใดๆ ที่เกิดขึ้น รวมถึงแต่ไม่จำกัดเพียง ความรับผิดชอบทางอาญาและทางแพ่ง จากการใช้ และเผยแพร่ภาพเคลื่อนไหวและภาพถ่ายซึ่งผู้ชมการแสดงได้บันทึกไว้ภายในสถานที่แสดงด้วยตนเอง นอกจากนี้ ผู้ชมการแสดงตกลงว่าผู้แสดง MAI บริษัท บางกอกอาร์ตเบียนนาเล่ แมเนจเม้นท์ จำกัด และบุคคลหรือนิติบุคคลอื่นใดที่เกี่ยวข้องกับบางกอก อาร์ต เบียนนาเล่ 2018 ไม่จำเป็นต้องรับผิดชอบต่อผลหรือความเสียหายจากการกระทำดังกล่าว


These terms are mutually agreed to by the affixing of the respective signatures below.

คู่สัญญาทั้งสองฝ่ายได้ตกลงร่วมกันตามเงื่อนไขดังกล่าวข้างต้นจึงได้ลงลายมือชื่อไว้ด้วยสัญญาเป็นหลักฐาน

The Performer

ผู้แสดง

(please write your full name and sign below)


Despina Zacharopoulou






2

The Audience

ผู้ชมการแสดง

(please write your full name, ID number, and sign below)

ขออภัยเนื่องจากเอกสารนี้จัดทำเป็นกระดาษและลายมือชื่อที่เห็น


3016 
  

41. Despina Zacharopoulou, Contract (*Protreptic*), page 02 of 02, 2018.

It is worth noting that in relation to previous contracts used in other performances, in *Protreptic* the contract terms included, apart from the protocols governing the performer-audience encounter, legal issues as well, such as those concerning the intellectual property of the work or the use of spectators' personal data, as stated in the following sentences:

1. The Performer consents to be filmed / photographed by the Audience inside the performance's space.⁹⁵
2. The Audience consents upon the fact that the Performer will include nudity in the work *Protreptic* and the Audience agrees upon the fact that the work *Protreptic* is performed for artistic purposes only.
3. The Audience consents to enter the performance's space in their sole and entire responsibility.
4. The Audience consents to be filmed / photographed while being inside the performance's space.
5. The Audience consents upon the fact that all copyrights of the Performer's work *Protreptic* (including this contract with the names and signatures of the signatories) and all videos / photographs belong to the Performer.
6. The Audience consents not to make any claims and / or initiate any legal proceeding, both criminal and civil, against the Performer, MAI, Bangkok Art Biennale Management Co., Ltd., and other persons / entities relating to the Bangkok Art Biennale 2018.
7. The Audience acknowledges and agrees that the Audience is responsible for their own risks, including but not limited to the criminal and / or civil liabilities, in relation to the use and / or the publication of any motion pictures and / or the photographs taken inside the performance's space by the Audience. The Audience also agrees that the Performer, MAI, Bangkok Art Biennale Management Co., Ltd., and other persons / entities relating to the Bangkok Art Biennale 2018 shall hold no responsibilities for any consequences and / or any damages thereof.

⁹⁵ By the end of the first week of the project and due to the disruption caused by the use of mobile phones, this specific term of the contract was outlined, and the spectators were no longer allowed to take photos and videos inside the performance space.



42. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Warning Sign (Protreptic)*, 2018.

Here, and for the first time comparing to the performances presented so far, a hybrid of a contract was used, hovering among areas of legal order and others where the law couldn't be applied. It was a contract that both had and hadn't legal application, *at the same time*. Here, for the first time, the need of the performer to be legally protected, changed the ways in which the contract had been used in all previous performances so far, serving solely as an apparatus governing the performer-audience encounter. In *Protreptic* (2018), a significant conceptual and ontological shift took place; the contract, in addition to being a mechanism for distributing areas of possibilities for the emergence

of events within the work, served also a mechanism with a potential of exercising legal power. What led to this contract mutation was the artist's need to acquire consent to be able to use images and personal data (names, passport numbers, signatures) of the audience for future post-performance publications and exhibitions of the project. Apart from legally protecting her work, the artist's decision to use this contract format also aimed at offering each spectator the choice to enter the work or not, after knowing in advance and consenting to the potential risks and consequences that such a decision would entail.

Protreptic's performance protocol, like any of the contracts presented, did not indicate the exact ways in which the audience was allowed to touch the artist. It was quite remarkable the kind of choices that each viewer made in the face of this condition, using the artist's body in ways that according to the state law could be characterized as inappropriate, intrusive, overly familiar, even harassing:

My first encounter for the day, was with a girl that came over to me and held my hand. As soon as she let it go, I looked straight into her eyes. We both burst into tears. Throughout the whole day I had at least three women and two men crying. The most intrusive and sexually charged encounter, though, was with a man who stayed in my room for a long time. He kept taking photos and observing me closely. He touched me at least three times, with the scariest one being when he touched the front part of my torso. Another interesting moment was when people were massaging me for about thirty minutes. They were trying to warm my palms and feet, as they could see that I was freezing. A young man sitting on the floor was witnessing the scene. He kept repeating: 'You are like me. You are human.' He seemed as if he was overwhelmed by my presence. Most of the people in the room, not only were they shy, but once they decided to approach me and touch me, they did so, *after* they had kneeled in front of the crate, as if I were a deity or a sacred object.⁹⁶

The day started with me lying down on the crate and gazing at the ceiling. A young man entered the room. I immediately created eye contact with him. A few minutes later he came close to me and sat on the crate. After touching my face, he started fondling my breasts. I kept staring at him. Before standing up to leave the crate, he spread my legs open. He then stayed inside the room and kept looking at me as if he was thinking of something. His breath was heavy.

⁹⁶ *Protreptic* performance diary, day 1, 2018.

The atmosphere was erotically charged. After him gazing at me for some time, he headed off. My body started shaking and tears were running from my eyes. I wasn't thinking of anything in particular, nor was I judging what just happened. My body reacted by itself. A young woman approached me and tried to console me. She was caressing my body and wiping the tears off my face.⁹⁷

In *Corner Time* (2016), although there was no contract in place to govern the consent-violence entanglement within the performer-audience encounter, the spectators' intra-actions with the performer's body took place daily, as if there was a tacit agreement:

...[while I was standing still facing the corner with my back to the audience] a person approached me. I heard a scratching sound and then this person grabbed my wrist. They insisted doing that three times [in total, and] on different parts of my arm.⁹⁸

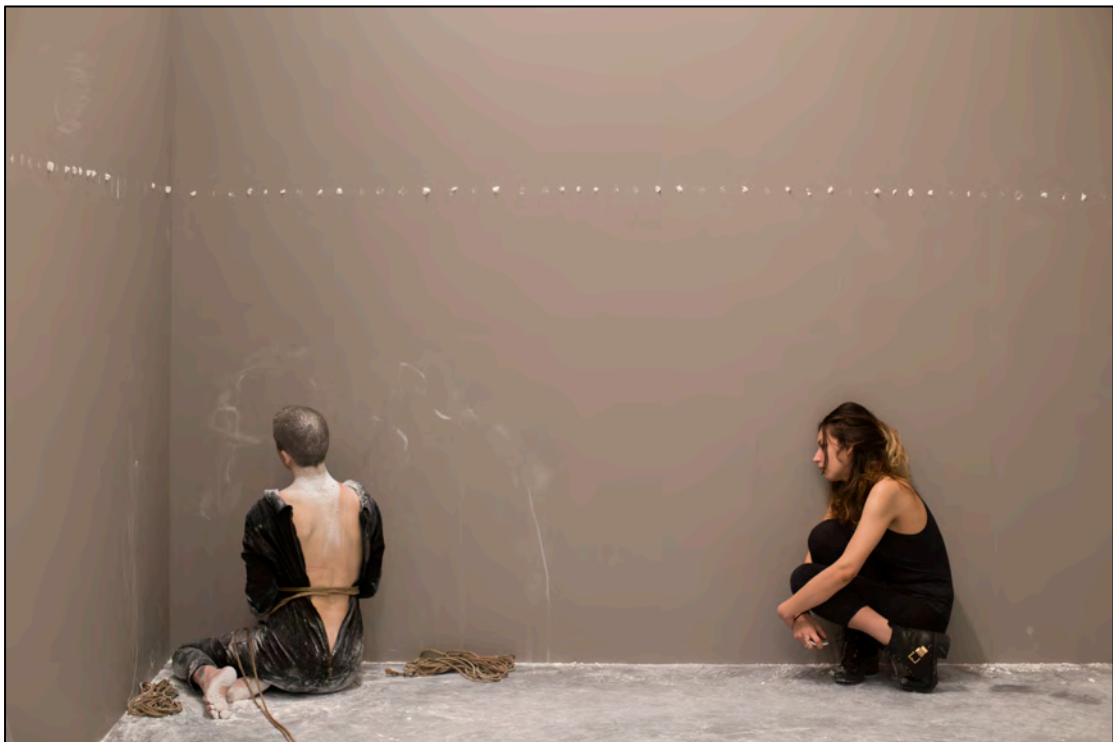


43. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 2016. Photograph: Natalia Tsoukala.

⁹⁷ *Protreptic* performance diary, day 5, 2018.

⁹⁸ *Corner Time* performance diary, day 2, 11-03-2016.

One can only make assumptions about the reasons why the audience took the initiative to physically intra-act with the performer's body. Possibly, the fact that the artist often took positions that made her vulnerable and open to any action of the audience upon her (e.g. with her back exposed and facing the audience, without having any visual contact with the performance space and what was happening therein, tied with a rope, with her eyes closed or covered with a cloth, lying on the ground, etc.) made the audience assume that they could touch her, tie her with the rope or release her from bondage, even though there was no such invitation. *Corner Time* was the performance that triggered the artist's need to explore further strategies and methodologies for stating more explicitly how the audience would intra-act with her, thus leading her performance research to develop and adopt methodological tools of written contracts.



44. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 2016. Photograph: Natalia Tsoukala.

In the works of contracts, the performer leaves no room for doubt about her explicit consent to have her body touched and used by the public. The public knows in advance that they can cross a boundary of a varying thickness and porosity depending on their culture and ethics. The absence of specific directions and orders regarding the exact ways in which the audience could touch the performer removes these performance works from the sphere of morality and allows the affections and affects of bodies exercised upon other bodies to function as pure forces. The question therefore arises: is there an ethical limit to the performer-audience encounter?



45. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 2016. Photograph: Natalia Tsoukala.

In the contracts of the works *Matter* (2017) and *Protreptic* (2018) the artist was explicitly asking the public to respect her health and safety. She was also mentioning a safe word for her to invoke should she felt uncomfortable during the performance.⁹⁹ Both moves

⁹⁹ In BDSM practices a safe word is used by the person upon whom control and/or pain is exercised. Its role is to safeguard consent, and once evoked any intra-action at play must stop immediately. “Because

relied upon the visitors' decisions to respect the artist's safety, or not. Therefore, the boundary of the audience-performer encounter was not set by any sort of moral code of conduct but was defined by that specific point beyond which *the artist's body would be threatened with ceasing to be useful*. By setting a safe word and asking the audience to respect her health and safety, the performer's goal was to allow the free play of forces spread in any direction and without criticism or restriction, to the point where she could continue being affected by and affecting other bodies.



46. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Matter*, 2017. Photograph: Anna Bones.

no negotiation can cover all contingencies, safe words have been in use in the S/M community since the early 1970s.” In: Pat (now Patrick) Califia, *Sensuous Magic*, (New York: Richard Kasak Book Edition /Masquerade Books, 1993), 26.

Thus done, works of written contracts bring to light the risk and the responsibility taken the moment of a leap of faith where the performer-slave submits her body to be used and touched by the audience, without knowing whether she would be safe. Therefore, the performer-slave's body becomes open to possibilities of both violence and care. The public, witness and deed, is the one who is called upon to manage the range of the ethical limits of the events that take place within the particular condition set by the contract of each performance. Without imposing a moral code to indicate what is just, right, or good, an *ethics of surfaces* is suggested that will raise its own questions against the *ethics of segments* governed by hashtags of political correctness.



47. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Matter*, 2017. Photograph: Anna Bones.

BDSM contracts

In *Matter* (2017), the structure of the contract was based on a BDSM contract sample found on the internet.¹⁰⁰ This choice was not accidental and was related to the way contracts operate within the BDSM community, and more specifically within Master=slave relationships.¹⁰¹ BDSM contracts offer good examples for indicating how contracts might serve as protocols of governmentality, rather than mechanisms for the imposition of any legal force.¹⁰² Another parameter to which they might contribute, is the understanding of the importance of signing a written contract. As can be deduced from the BDSM contract example provided - which is not binding or identical for all M=s relationships, but can take other forms as well, such as that of a personal declaration of availability written and signed by the slave only - the form of the contract does not constitute a list of commands, rules or instructions that will indicate specific acts, thus dictating the Master=slave intra-action, but a series of protocols that govern the thickness of boundaries of an encounter of this sort, without prescribing it. It is understood that such contracts have no legal force, after all the reason for their existence and their signing, is primarily related to the ethical commitment of the signatories. The slave is submitted to the binding in a relationship where power exchange is determined by the constant consensual availability and offer of the slave's body to the full ownership and use by the Master.

¹⁰⁰ seattleclouds.com/myapplications/ellie123/sosupdate/contract.pdf (accessed 17-07-2016). For more information on BDSM contracts, visit: bdsmcontracts.org/ (accessed 22-06-2020).

¹⁰¹ In the existing bibliography a Master and slave relationship would be written as: M/s. In the present text the symbol "/" changes to "=", to indicate an encounter that manages to be sustained only through its repetitive renewal, rather than through the adoption of certain roles/fixed identities.

¹⁰² In BDSM, contracts may be used for various reasons and for different timeframes: from a sadomasochistic scene to a M=s relationship. "Contract: A written document which spells out the terms of an S/M relationship. Often it will have a time limit. Someone who is "under contract" belongs to a particular top." In: Califia, *Sensuous Magic*, (1993), 135.

SAMPLE CONTRACT

This contract dated (day) of (month), 20(yr) is the complete and entire agreement between the signatories. I (Dom), being of sound mind and body, hereinafter referred to as "Dom" and (sub/slave), being of sound mind and body, hereinafter referred to as "sub"/("slave"). The terms of this agreement will begin on (day) of (month), 20(yr) at (time)a.m./p.m. and will remain in effect for a period of (duration) month(s)(year(s) ending on (day) of (month), 20(yr) at (time) a.m./p.m. This contract shall also become null and void immediately upon request of the injured party following any material breach of the contract. Should the injured party agree to continue with the contract following any material breach, the broken clause shall still remain in effect for the remaining terms of the contract.

DOM

1. Dom shall be responsible for keeping sub/slave safe at all times.
2. Dom will not allow or make sub/slave scene with any minors or animals at any time.
3. Dom will do everything within His power to train, educate, instruct, shape and mold sub into best sub/slave possible.
4. Dom will receive pleasure from the activities outlined in clause 3 above.
5. Dom shall pick out the entire wardrobe of sub/slave when they are going out in public, however, Dom may instruct sub/slave to pick out said wardrobe and punish sub/slave for selecting an inappropriate outfit after sub/slave has received proper training on appropriate outfits for public display.
6. Dom shall set up a financial account for sub/slave in order to allow sub/slave to have funds to start over shall Dom and sub/slave decide to go their separate ways for whatever reason. Should the sub/slave materially breach this contract and Dom decides that this contract then becomes null and void these funds will not be made available to sub/slave. This will consist of ten percent of any and all revenue that sub/slave generates while working outside the home. Said account shall require two signatures to withdraw funds.
7. Dom will pay all bills from the pooled revenue of Dom and sub/slave.
8. Dom shall read sub/slave's journal on a regular basis and agrees to not punish sub/slave for anything posted therein
9. Dom shall respect and honor the invocation of the safe word () by sub/slave.
10. Dom will stretch sub/slave's limits to help sub/slave grow in the life and position.
11. **Dom will respect all hard limits of sub/slave**
12. Dom agrees to work with sub/slave on any new interests that sub/slave discovers.
13. Whereas both parties will be working outside the home, Dom and sub/slave shall share in housework as enumerated by Dom.
14. Dom shall inform sub/slave the reason for any punishment. Periodically during the punishment Dom will remind sub/slave the reason for the punishment although that

can come from the sub/slave in the form of "Why are you being punished?" with an appropriate response from the sub/slave.

15. Whereas Dom believes that family is important Dom will not keep sub/slave from staying in touch with their family and will not unreasonably withhold trips for sub/slave to visit their family.

16. Should the Dom allow the sub/slave to scene with anyone the Dom shall be present during the entire scene in order to assure that the sub/slave is unharmed and not forced to do anything on sub/slaves hard limit list.

SUB/SLAVE

1. Sub/slave agrees to maintain body by regular bathing and all other routine body care (e.g. brushing teeth, etc.).

2. Sub/slave shall maintain clean shaven genitalia, legs and arm pits at all times, unless instructed otherwise by Dom.

3. Sub/slave agrees to study BDSM on a daily basis, including but not limited to, searching the internet, reading books, attending BDSM munches and/or other BDSM activities..

4. Sub/slave shall journal daily including but not limited to - thoughts, concerns, what was learned and possible new interests to explore.

5. Sub/slave agrees to accept any mark that Dom desires, anywhere on their body, indicating ownership by Dom.

6. Sub/slave shall bring and show honor and respect to Dom at all times.

7. Sub/slave agrees to never remove ownership collar at any time.

8. Sub/slave shall sit at the right foot of the Dom, whenever Dom is sitting, whenever and wherever feasible, if Dom requests.

9. Sub/slave is not to wear any underwear unless necessary.

10. Sub/slave will sleep naked.

11. Sub/slave shall make themselves available for use by Dom in anyway Dom desires at anytime Dom desires whenever feasible, within the terms of this contract.

12. Sub/slave shall not have any sexual contact at any time without permission from Dom.

13. Sub/slave shall not orgasm without permission from Dom.

14. Sub/slave shall not invoke the safe word unless absolutely necessary.

15. Sub/slave agrees to allow Dom to scene with others as long as there is no penile penetration.

16. Sub/slave agrees to service in anyway, within the terms of this contract, anybody Dom desires. Dom will be present at all times during these activities to make sure that sub/slave is safe.

17. If Dom and sub/slave are present at an event and sub witnesses something they desire to experience Dom will not unreasonably withhold permission of sub/slave to participate.

18. Should Dom and sub/slave find a mutually agreeable partner(s) who fits into the family dynamics well, sub/slave agrees to accept said partner(s) into the family. Dom, sub and potential new partner(s) will sit down together to draft a mutually acceptable contract between all parties involved. The new contract may or may not replace this contract.

19. Sub/slave shall count each stroke when being punished by flogging, caning, etc. and also must thank Dom following each stroke.

These terms are mutually agreed to by the affixing of the respective signatures below.

_____(Dom)_____	____/____/____	_____(sub/slave)_____	____/____/____
(Dom's signature)	(date)	(sub/slave signature)	(date)



51. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Matter*, 2017. Photograph: Anna Bones.

As for the Master/Owner's commitment through the contract, it concerns only for Them *to be a Master*, meaning that; The Master Has no obligations whatsoever, other than Their commitment to Guide and Govern the M \rightleftharpoons s relationship. The way this is to be implemented, the tools that are to be used, the methods and the actions that are to take place, are to be determined by the Master only, and are not the same for every M \rightleftharpoons s relationship. Like all performances presented in this research, a M \rightleftharpoons s encounter does not consist of the sum of its parts, nor can it be described by its individual components/segments. M \rightleftharpoons s is, instead, governed by a [physical or non-physical] contract which marks the M \rightleftharpoons s encounter's primary conditions and protocols, while offering the morphogenetic structures for its unfolding. It should also be noted that the drafting and signing of a BDSM contract is not a prerequisite for establishing a M \rightleftharpoons s relationship, nor does it necessarily ensure a successful course of the M \rightleftharpoons s in the long

run. The use of such a contract serves more as an ethical seal for the contracting parties and is clearly related to the Master's aesthetics and the way They Choose to Incorporate rituals and protocols, in general, into the way They Govern Their relationships (e.g. use of collars, use of specific physical postures and verbal protocols by the slave, daily rituals).

In Leopold Von Sacher Masoch's *Venus in Furs* (1870), the central heroine, Wanda, asks her husband and potential slave, Severin, after their joint decision, to sign a contract, drawn up by her, defining the protocols of their future M=s relationship.¹⁰³ Following the signing of the contract by both members, Severin ceases to be Wanda's spouse and officially becomes her slave. Although their relationship had already begun to mutate toward this direction before the signing, the huge difference brought by the contract was the realization by Severin of his position as a slave, after his complete submission to Wanda, despite all the resistance that may have arisen initially on his part.¹⁰⁴ Up to that point, Severin had repeatedly appeared, in contrast to his position as a potential slave, trying to manipulate the relationship (the term used in this case within the BDSM community, would be: 'topping from the bottom'), particularly with regard to his persistent request to Wanda to satisfy him by inflicting on him severe physical pain (e.g. by flogging).¹⁰⁵ This particular demand to Wanda on behalf of Severin, for more pain so as to get pleasure, inspired the term 'masochism' as set in the field of psychopathology, through the work *Psychopathia Sexualis* by Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing (1886). The appropriation of the pathological term 'masochism' by philosophical and academic discourse has since led to a number of misinterpretations of the

¹⁰³ Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* / by Gilles Deleuze, *Venus in Furs* / by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, transl. by Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1989 [Paris: Minuit, 1967]), 196 & 220.

¹⁰⁴ "My whole body trembles with rebellion but I obey humbly like a slave." Ibid., 250.

¹⁰⁵ "Whip me," I implore, "whip me without mercy!" Wanda brandishes the whip and strikes twice. "Have you had enough now?" "No." "Seriously not?" "Whip me, I beg of you, it is a joy to me." Ibid., 185.

commonalities and differences between the terms ‘masochist’ and ‘slave.’¹⁰⁶ To put it schematically, a masochist is a person that longs for pain in order to get pleasure, whereas a slave is a person that longs to be ‘owned’ by and submit to Another Who Will then Govern all spectra of the slave’s life. Contemporary discourse often confuses the two terms, assuming that a slave is someone who just enjoys pain inflicted upon them. Such a misinterpretation was committed, among others, by Gilles Deleuze, in his work *Coldness & Cruelty* (1967). Deleuze, identifying a slave with a masochist, placed Masoch’s language in a binary relationship with Sade’s language, to argue - unsuccessfully - that the role of the contract in *Venus in Furs* was mainly instructional on behalf of Severin towards Wanda, with the aim of teaching her how to best satisfy his masochistic needs:

We are dealing instead with a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of schemes. This is why advertisements are part of the language of masochism while they have no place in true sadism, and why the masochist draws up contracts while the sadist abominates and destroys them. The sadist is in need of institutions, the masochist of contractual relations.¹⁰⁷

Deleuze’s misinterpretation, apart from the arbitrary setting of a Masoch/Sade binary - possibly due to Krafft-Ebing’s influence via the term ‘sodomasochism’ – was grounded mainly on the argument that a M \rightleftharpoons S contract is activated by the masochist as an attempt to win over the sadist as an ally and train them to offer pleasure through the exercise of pain following the masochist’s will. On the contrary, what was actually described in Masoch’s story in terms of the operation of the contract, and which usually exists to a very large extent in contemporary BDSM communities as well, was the written reminder to Severin that the main protocol of any M \rightleftharpoons S relationship is the slave’s complete

¹⁰⁶ Ch. IV, “Neuropsychopathologie Générale” (“General Psycho-pathology”), in: Richard Von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, transl. by É.Laurent & S.Csapo, (Paris: Georges Carré, 1895 [1886]), 48-472.

¹⁰⁷ Deleuze, *Masochism...*, (...1989 [1967]), 20.

submission to The Master/Owner (in this case: Wanda) and the unlimited use of their body by Him/Her whenever and in whichever way The Master/Owner Pleases.¹⁰⁸ In short, what the contract essentially served in *Venus in Furs* was the shattering of any claim or expectation on behalf of Severin, so as to make him an even more conscious slave.¹⁰⁹



52. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Matter*, 2017. Photograph: Anna Bones.

Kathy O'Dell, in her book *Contract with the Skin* (1998), grounds her main argument on Gilles Deleuze's - false - interpretation of the written contract's role in Masoch's work.

¹⁰⁸ "You can no longer lay claims to any rights, and there are no limits to my power over you." Ibid., 196. For more information on complete submission and the operation of contracts, see: Pauline Réage [pseudonym of Anne Desclos/Dominique Aury], *L'Histoire d'O* [*The Story of O*], Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1954.

¹⁰⁹ "I want nothing from you, nothing but the permission to be near you always, to be your slave!" In: Deleuze, *Masochism...*, (...1989 [1967]), 259.

Starting from this misinterpretation, O'Dell identifies pain practices in the 1970's performance art as a sort of 'masochism' that aims at establishing a 'masochistic contract' with the audience.¹¹⁰ However, such a general categorization, not only is based on a false argument - as already indicated- but is also quite problematic due to its references to psychopathology (e.g. Krafft-Ebing), that tend to pathologize pain practices in performance art.¹¹¹ O'Dell, by treating her performance examples as metaphors and/or critiques on the "mechanics of alienation" and the "psychological influences of the domestic site," reduces live art to an illustration or representation of ideological schemas.¹¹²

Contrariwise, this thesis argument looks at the function of written contracts in the performances presented, after realizing that the contract's role within any M= encounter is not to dictate its final outcomes, but to offer a morphogenetic structure that would govern the distribution of forces exercised among bodies. This means that while, on the one hand there is the freedom to intra-act with bodies in ways that cannot be accurately predicted, on the other hand this intra-action is not an 'amorphous soup' but has a kind of topography, a sensuous logic that would define areas of lesser or greater possibilities for the potential emergence of events.

If the Master=slave entanglement - and respectively the performer-audience entanglement - can only exist in the here and now, constituting a kind of surface that is not grounded neither in the past nor in the future, occupied by the forces exercised

¹¹⁰ "Each of the individuals involved, therefore, agreed to tacit or specified terms of a 'contract' with the artist. [...] I would argue that the crucial implication of such masochistic performances concerns the everyday agreements - or contracts - that we all make with others but that may not be in our own best interests. [next paragraph] Beyond its specifically legal function, the contract is a central metaphor in modern life [...]." Cathy O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance art and the 1970's*, (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 2.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹¹² Ibid., 2.

among bodies at any given moment, then this surface being a dynamic energy field of intensities, cannot but be rough and heterogeneous. The surface of the $M \rightleftharpoons s$ event - and correspondingly that of the performances-surfaces presented - is characterized by a constantly pulsating and shifting topography that is nowhere to be grounded, has neither inside nor outside, portrays ‘mountains’ and ‘valleys’ determining the rhizomatic expansion of energy exchange channels among bodies.¹¹³ In this sense, the $M \rightleftharpoons s$ surface - and thus the performance-surface - is a Body without Organs (BwO), as defined by Deleuze and Guattari in their work *Mille Plateaux* [*A Thousand Plateaus*] (1980):

A BwO is made in such a way that it can be occupied, populated only by intensities. Only intensities pass and circulate. Still the BwO is not a scene, a place or even a support upon which something comes to pass. It has nothing to do with phantasy, there is nothing to interpret. The BwO causes intensities to pass; it produces and distributes them in a spatium that is itself intensive, lacking extension. It is not space nor is it in space; it is matter that occupies space to a given degree – to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced.¹¹⁴

In the process of governing the event of the performer-audience encounter, *the contract set the program for the fabrication and maintenance of the BwO. The contract provided the morphogenetic structure that would define the shapeshifting of the BwO's topography in the course of time.* The production and distribution of the intensities produced and circulating during *Matter* was characterized by an economy that could not exist without the technology producing it. This is precisely the role of the contract in the live works discussed; to indicate a mechanism, a technological apparatus, for the fabrication and maintenance of a Body without Organs. Artaud identified a similar mechanism described in his vision for a

¹¹³ “A rhizome has no beginning or end; [...] does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end [...]” In: Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*..., 2013 [1980]), 26-7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 177-8.

Theatre of Cruelty, a masochist in the repeated infliction of pain upon his body, a slave in their complete submission and use.¹¹⁵

Martin Heidegger defined as technology every means (e.g. *poiēsis*, art) that brings forth Truth through the double event of concealment/revealing.¹¹⁶ Truth, for Heidegger, is the clearing within which things appear *as they are*. In *Matter* (2017), as in all works of contracts presented, the role of the contract is precisely that of a technology; of bringing-forth the world *as it is* and *as it is revealed*. The protocols defined by the written contract set the parameters according to which the audience would be allowed to touch the performer. The bodies' intra-action mediated by the latex gloves, affected the spectators' sensation of touch, body temperature, posture and psychology while using the performer's body. The use of gloves also raised questions around ideas of safety and protection in regard to something precious, sacred, fragile, dangerous or contaminating. In the works of violence, the program for the fabrication and maintenance of the BwO would be defined by the technology of the implements inflicting pain upon the performer's body (cane, single tail, body stapler, rope). Each implement would produce different kinds of rhythm, intensities and sensations of pain - sometimes deeper (cane), others more acute (single tail). The tools exercising violence would be '*flow-producing machines*', with the performer's body being a '*flow-interrupting machine*,' creating cuts/incisions in the received energy flows.¹¹⁷ Then these cuts/incisions would be visualized and manifested through marks on the performer's skin.

¹¹⁵ "When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom. Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out as in the frenzy of dance halls and this wrong side out will be his real place." In: Artaud, "To Have Done With ..." (1947), in: Artaud, *Selected Writings*, ... (1988 [1956]), 571.

¹¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" (publ.1954).

¹¹⁷ For the idea of the Desiring-Machines, see "Chapter 1: The Desiring-Machines," in: Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1972]), 16.

Use of bodies

‘Use me,’ and this means: There is no me.¹¹⁸

Jean-François Lyotard

What is at stake in the performances brought forward, either through violence or through touch, is the use of the performer's body by the audience, without serving any purpose whatsoever. In so doing, *the performer functions as a living instrument that can only exist through and during its use*.¹¹⁹ The idea of use as a non-productive process, as opposed to the exchange value that results from the production of objects, points toward *the production of forces and the circulation of flows as the exclusive function of bodies* within the performances presented.¹²⁰ However, the difference between use and exchangeability does not constitute a binary schema, since, as Klossowski indicated in *La Monnaie Vivant* [*The Living Currency*, 1970], even the aimless use of bodies for the sake of pleasure doesn't happen without a debt; with *the debt, in this case, being on the expense of one's sense of unified self*.¹²¹

The idea of a living/animate instrument (*instrumentum animatum*) was first used by Aristotle to define the slave as a being who, although human, “does not belong to himself but to someone else,” and whose work is “the use of the body.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (2015/2019 [1974]), 78.

¹¹⁹ On the idea of the living instrument in relation to the Aristotelian notion of the slave, see Chapter I “The Human Being without Work,” in: Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, transl. by A. Kotsko, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016 [Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2014]), 3-23.

¹²⁰ The schema non-productive use vs. production of exchangeable value, is grounded upon the difference between the Greek terms of *chresis* (being-in-use) and *energeia* (being-at-work), with the second one always aiming at a desirable *telos* (goal). Ibid., 6-7.

¹²¹ Pierre Klossowski, *Living Currency*, transl. by Vernon W. Cisney, Nicolae Morar and Daniel W. Smith (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017 [1970]), 62. In the present thesis, see infra: 102-103.

¹²² See: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, §4, 1253^b 25-35. “For he who can be, and therefore is, another's, [...] is a slave by nature. [...]. And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different; [...]” In: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, §5, 1254^b 20-25. Referencing Aristotle at this point in the thesis serves at shedding light on the philosophical and ontological problem of beings (or... performance artists) *that can exist only through and during their use*. For a further analysis on the *historical* figure of the slave in more recent history (chattel slavery, the enslavement of Black people, the Middle Passage, etc.), see among others: Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016. It is also worth

Now instruments are of various sorts; some are living, others lifeless [...] for in the arts the servant is a kind of instrument. Thus, too, a possession is an instrument for maintaining life. And so, in the arrangement of the family, a slave is a living possession, and property a number of such instruments; and the servant is himself an instrument for instruments.¹²³

Slaves, having as their exclusive obligation the disposition of their body to their Master, were considered as a kind of property, like all possessions and tools of household equipment. Slaves had no political rights, and therefore ontologically floated among the categories of humans, animals and things, thus existing only *through* and *during* their use. The importance of this move resides in the attempt to define an entity *through* and *during* its relationality with other bodies, thus raising some first questions that were to be fully developed much later, either in early Christian and Neoplatonic texts (e.g. by Duns Scotus) or by philosophers of modal ontologies, such as: Spinoza, Leibniz, Nietzsche, Deleuze, Foucault, Golding.¹²⁴

Having identified a correlation between the performances presented and types of encounters such as those between a Master and a slave, one wonders what the element ensuring coherence in these so fragile encounters might be. How might this cohesive matter contribute to the problematization developed around performance art? The thickness or stickiness we are referring to, would be none other than the idea of *submission*.

noting that the common use of the word ‘slave’ across different paradigms, such as the enslavement of Black people or sex trafficking, vs. BDSM communities, often raises confusion, misconceptions and/or difficulties regarding the racial and gender politics of the term. However, we are of the opinion that whereas actual slavery is grounded upon hierarchical stereotypes (white supremacy, patriarchy etc.), the use of the word ‘slave’ in BDSM, as already indicated in the thesis, suggests a totally different ethical and spatio-temporal paradigm that fosters inclusion and diversity.

¹²³ Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle – the Revised Oxford Translation, Vol. II*, transl. by B. Jowett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 1995), 1989.

¹²⁴ “You will not define a body (or a mind) by its form, nor by its organs or functions, and neither you will define it as a substance or a subject. Every reader of Spinoza knows that for him bodies and minds are not substances or subjects, but modes.” In: Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza....*, (1988 [1970]), 123-124.

For Foucault, submission, expressed through the principle of obedience to the Master, would be introduced through the encounter between the Christian ascetic and God:

This is the principle of obedience, in the broad sense of the term. Obedience to God conceived of as the master (the *despotes*) whose slave, whose servant one is; obedience to His will which has, at the same time, the form of the law; obedience finally to those who represent the *despotes* (the lord and master) and who receive an authority from Him to which one must submit completely.¹²⁵

According to the French Philosopher, the Christian ascetic was able to practice parrhēsiastic truth, precisely because of their faith and unconditional love in the face of God, that allowed them to have an openness of heart to all other beings, as well.¹²⁶ Submission to the face of God, thus, expressed a vertical axis of parrhēsia, in contrast to Cynicism, where the axis of parrhēsia was horizontal and referred to the philosopher who took the risk of exposing their life, during their encounter with the citizens of the ancient *polis*:

So parrhēsia will no longer be situated, if you like on the [horizontal] axis of the individual's relations to others, of the person with courage vis-à-vis those who are mistaken. It is now situated on the vertical axis of a relation to God in which the soul is, on the one hand transparent and opens itself to God and, on the other, rises up to Him.¹²⁷

In BDSM, it is submission to the Master's Face that allows the slave to be identified at all times through ways that they are useful to *their* Master.¹²⁸ It is this leap of faith which requires a certain kind of risk, creating an emotional opening of the slave towards

¹²⁵ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth* ..., (2011 [2009]), 320.

¹²⁶ "Who then was this first man? He was naked...he looked on God's face with free assurance (en parrhēsia) and did not judge yet according to taste and sight, 'but found delight in the Lord alone'." Ibid., 332. For a further elaboration on the notion of parrhesia in the present thesis, see *infra*: 104-110.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 326-327.

¹²⁸ The use of '*' in the framing of possessive pronouns in writing is often employed by slaves/submissives of the BDSM community, to annule any idea of possession on their behalf.

the Master, and consequently towards others as well. Søren Kierkegaard, in his book *Fear & Trembling*, managed to convey this sense of submission described here, through the story of Abraham who, after *being attuned* to God's voice, set out to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, since this was what the voice of God asked him to do.¹²⁹ Abraham's faith was, according to Kierkegaard, submission to the strength of the absurd, through obedience to God's call. Abraham did not obey the divine will because he felt safe or knew that he would get something back, but because *he could not do otherwise*. Abraham was in agony and fear, and for this he could not tell anyone about his plan to kill Isaac. It was submission to God and attunement to His will that made Abraham a Knight of Faith.¹³⁰ Submission, thus, became the thick materiality ensuring the coherence in Abraham's encounter with God, precisely because it was not grounded on any logical argument, nor could it be said; it was the *secret*, and as such it could only be *lived*.

Abraham is silent – but he *cannot* speak, therein lies the distress and anguish. For if when I speak I cannot make myself understood, I do not speak even if I keep talking without stop day and night. This is the case with Abraham. He can say what he will, but there is one thing he cannot say and since he cannot say it, i.e. say it in a way that another understands it, he does not speak.¹³¹

In the performances presented submission appears as the driving force and cohesive matter holding together the performer-audience encounter. Elimination of the ego and trust towards the audience, are what enable the artist to respond to external stimuli and shapeshift according to the forces exercised upon her.

The most precious non-object (2016), apart from raising questions through the contract/declaration placed on the wall, also touched upon ideas of value, circulation

¹²⁹ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, (1985 [1843]), 9.

¹³⁰ “On this the knight of faith is just as clear; all that can save him is the absurd; and this he grasps by faith.” “But then what is the duty? For the duty is precisely the expression of God's will.” Ibid., 53, 70.

¹³¹ Ibid., 139.

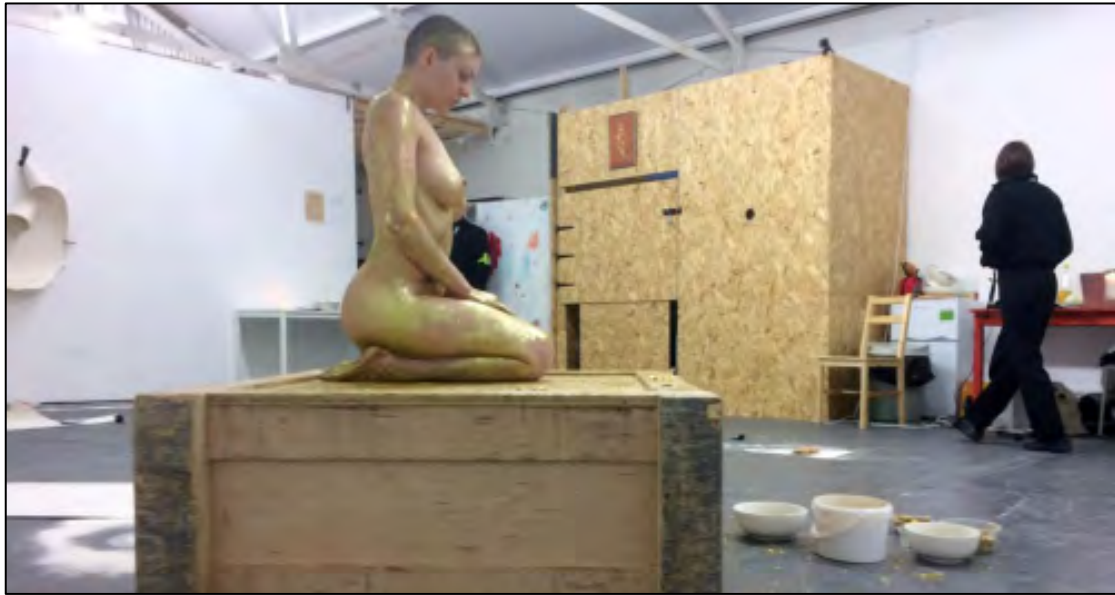
and subjectivity. The phrase '*The most precious non-object*' used as the performance's title, was borrowed from Julia Kristeva's book *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur: Essai sur l'Abjection* [*Powers of horror: An Essay on Abjection*] (1980), initially serving as a definition of the abject. However, there was no prerequisite on behalf of the viewer to know the origin of the project's title in order to fully experience the work. The aim of this particular title choice was to imply the performance's association with ideas of value and subjectivity.



53. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: Félicie Kertudo.

The application of glitter and honey on the performer's skin by the audience, set the performer into an endless flux of mutations for a course of six hours, and established a kind of entanglement with the gallery visitors, where subjectivities were constantly being produced through the bodies' intra-acting. What the word non-object expressed here was precisely the artist's intention to avoid binaries, such as: object/subject, body/soul, etc., thus placing the work within the philosophical tradition of a modal ontology.¹³²

¹³² Modal ontologies don't recognize any separation between existence and being. In that respect, all entities don't get defined in essentialist terms, but rather via their relations to other entities and the ways (modes) that these relations get established. In modal ontologies instead of having inherent characteristics



54. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: Félicie Kertudo.



55. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: Félicie Kertudo.

The choice of the phrase '*the most precious*' in the work's title, and in combination with the materials (glitter, honey) and objects (crate, latex gloves) used, referred to an investigation revolving around ideas of value and preciousness. Afterall, one of the main

attributed to beings, there are only modes of existence. Relevant philosophers would include: Duns Scotus, Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Gilles Deleuze, to name a few.

pursuits and differentiating goals of performance art, since its establishment as an autonomous artistic genre in the 1970s, has been the emancipation of the work of art from its previous conventions, such as:

- The gallery's white cube and the museum as exclusive exhibition spaces.
- The prevailing relationship with the public, which, by giving priority to vision was essentially limited to passive viewing.¹³³
- The identification of the work of art with an exchangeable product of commercial value which, in fact, was usually not corresponding to the actual labor for its production but was evaluated according to the talent, genius and individuality of the artist who created it. The work of art, up until the emergence of conceptual and – mainly- performance art, used to be identified with a painting or sculpture, as it provided the possibility of its transportation and commercial exchange.



56. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: Félicie Kertudo.

¹³³ For the primacy of vision within the aesthetic experience, see: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1965.

In light of the above, some of the questions raised by the wooden crate's appropriation in *The most precious non-object* - which continued to be one of the artist's main props in the performances that would follow – involved exchangeability and value of the work of art, through its role as a kind of commodity.



57. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, replica 1964, porcelain, Unconfirmed: 360 × 480 × 610 mm.

It is not by chance that the performer's body was placed *on* the crate - and not *inside* it or *next to* it - so that the image created would indirectly refer to the historical displacement of works of art from their initial environment (the temple or the sacred space in general), to be placed on a pedestal inside the Museum; a move that would also mark the

beginning of aesthetics, thus the attribution of aesthetic value to the exhibited ‘sacred’ objects. The crate used in *The most precious non-object* - like all the others used in subsequent performances - was not fabricated especially for the project, but was found inside the gallery to be then appropriated by the artist.¹³⁴ Thus done, the crate was detached from its original function, that of transporting paintings and/or sculptures - hence the seals and stickers on its surface and which the artist sought to preserve - , and was appropriated by the artist as a *ready-made* (*objet trouvé*), determining through its dimensions the spatial conditions of the performance. What was at stake here was the spatial and conceptual displacement of an object, having as its original destination to be circulating while transporting works of art, and its transformation into an aesthetic object through its displacement and exhibition in the gallery space.¹³⁵



58. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: P. Soto Aguilar.

¹³⁴ All the works produced in the context of this research, where a crate was appropriated are: *The most precious non-object* (2016), *response-ability* (d'après K.B.) [2017], *matter* (2017), and *Protreptic* (2018).

¹³⁵ It was a similar displacement that marked the beginning of the Museum, almost three hundred years ago, through the detachment - and de-sanctification - of the cult object from the sacred space, and its placement in the Museum as a work of art: “[...] the works of the exhibition have lost their function, from the golden dishes in which no king eats any more, to the gods that no priest no longer prays to.” In: André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard / folio essais, 1965 [1947]), 162. Translation is mine.

On the one hand, the dimensions of the surface on which the artist placed her body defined the spectrum of her possible movements, and the corresponding degree of difficulty regarding the postures she could take on such a restricting area, within a course of six hours. On the other hand, the total volume (approx. 100x100x45 cm) and the height of the crate (approx. 45 cm) added to its strong sculptural presence and gravitas, that defined, via the distribution of movements and gazes, the parameters of the performer's physical encounter with the audience.

The crate's bodily presence in *The most precious non-object*, as well as in all the crate-related performances to follow, created affinities with the Minimalists and the Arte Povera artists of the '70's, especially in relation to the issues raised through their practice and theoretical texts in regards to the specificity of an art object. Donald Judd, in his famous text "Specific Objects" (1964), described how some artists of his era managed to create artworks that resisted representation. These artworks were powerful, even violent or aggressive, due to their ability to *create* space with their material presence and weight, rather than aspiring to expand *in* space:

Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors – which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art. The several limits of painting are no longer present. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface.¹³⁶

In *The most precious non-object*, the placement of the crate almost in the center of the space, allowed the audience to move around the performer, to gaze at and approach her from all sides. Once the performer was lying or sitting on the wooden box, the audience had to lower their gaze in order to include her in their field of vision. Should any of the

¹³⁶ Donald Judd, *Writings*, (Verona: Judd Foundation / David Zwirner Books, 2016), 141.

spectators wished to apply honey and glitter on her body, they had to either bend over her or kneel in front of the crate. Depending on the choice made, different power games took place: kneeling would seem as though approaching with care and attention, whereas standing just above the performer's body and bending over in order to touch her, created a sense of imposition and control. Should the artist choose to stand on the crate, the power dynamics within the work would automatically shift. She would then stand on a level almost half a meter higher than that of the gallery floor, 'transmutating' the wooden box into a kind of 'stage' with her body prominent and fully exposed, strong and fragile at the same time. From this position the performer would then have total supervision of the gallery visitors' movements in space. The fact that she would be forced to lower her gaze whenever she wanted to include the audience in her field of vision or exchange gazes with any of the gallery visitors, combined with the fact that areas of her body (e.g., her chest, face) would be inaccessible to others, due to the difference in height, would create a kind of hard limit resisting to whomever wished to approach her and touch her.

As for the choice of honey and glitter, and in combination with the project's title, it aimed at the gradual and continuous transmutation of the performer's body into a fluid, shiny, iridescent, but also, sticky, dirty, and dripping body; both seductive and disgusting, all at once and at the same time. Throughout the six hours of the performance, this constant transmutation of the artist's body via her intra-actions with the audience led to the production of successive shifting images functioning as traces of the touches she received by the audience. The shiny surface covering her body by the end of the performance would be a 'great ephemeral skin,' projecting traumas and pleasures; a multiplicity of violations and healings, a tangible residue of the forces

exercised upon her.¹³⁷ Once the six hours had passed, the artist, proud and humble, shiny as a sort of ornament, offered the possibility *to the world to be a world*, by bringing things forth *as they are*.¹³⁸



59. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: P. S. Aguilar.

The performer's value in the works discussed resides precisely in her non-exchangeability of bringing things to be exposed at the very moment she takes the risk of exposing herself. The risk that the artist has to take while exposing herself, is considered as a necessary precondition for urgency to arise. By bringing herself into a state of non-safety and groundlessness, the artist becomes open to be affected by and affect other bodies, with vulnerability coinciding here with her capacity to endlessly shapeshift.

¹³⁷ The idea of the 'great ephemeral skin' is from: Jean-François Lyotard, "Chapter 1: The Great Ephemeral Skin", in: Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (1993 [1974]), 19-57.

¹³⁸ "Κόσμος – the ornament, the adornment, something that we should not understand as an additional garniture but rather as that which the old word 'Zier' says, namely, the lightning, that which brings something to visibility, that lets present be present in the light [...]". In: Martin Heidegger, *Sojourns – The Journey to Greece*, translated by John Panteleimon Manoussakis (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005 [Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989]), 27.

Following from Pierre Klossowski's argument that there is always a debt to be paid during processes of exchange of forces among bodies, then a possible link between the non-exchangeability of the artist's value and the risk necessarily taken is established, to also shift our understanding on how value and exchangeability might operate within the performances presented. According to Klossowski, every *simulacrum* – that is every linguistic and artistic sign - is a [failed] attempt to express and communicate a *phantasm*, that is; “[...] *an obsessional image* produced within us by the forces of our impulsive life.”¹³⁹ Due to the phantasm's inexpressibility and incommunicability, such an attempt is destined to fail, regardless its obsessive repetition to succeed. In that respect, exchangeable artifacts claim to gain their value due to their capacity to *count as* phantasms, to ‘sell’ impulsive forces via constructed objects. One would then expect from performance art, as a non-exchangeable art genre, to be able to sustain itself in an exchange of forces *ad infinitum*, without price. However, though the price to be paid in this case might not be of a monetary value, there seems for a certain kind of debit balance to be involved, similar to that one described by Klossowski in regards to the free play of forces taking place during the engagement of bodies in actions of pleasure and pain:

[...] there is a process of continuous compensation and exchange between our impulsive forces, which occurs at the expense of our organic unity, these exchanges cannot take place without leaving behind traces or notation of what has been extracted and exchanged. The phantasm is indebted to the organism, just as the pleasure or pain experienced by the individual are indebted to the phantasm that procures them for the individual. This is the ‘debit balance’ [*solde débiteur*] of individual unity.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Daniel W. Smith, “Introduction: Pierre Klossowski: from theatrical Theology to Counter-Utopia,” in: Pierre Klossowski, *Living Currency*, transl. by Vernon W. Cisney, Nicolae Morar and Daniel W. Smith (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017 [1970]), 7.

¹⁴⁰ Klossowski, *Living Currency* (2017[1970]), 62.

In performance art as *Spatium Monstrorum*, the artist's non-exchangeable value is - paradoxically enough - paid for through the expense of the performer's sense of individual unity. This is precisely the risk that the performer has to take, upon entering the work; the danger of being 'dismembered' and 'dispersed' via continuous exchanges of forces within successive encounters. To put it otherwise, it is about *the performer taking the risk of encountering traumas within the artwork*.

At the same time, this risk-taking, this 'roll of dice' is absolutely necessary so that all the works we are referring to may function as *fields of truth* that bring things forth:¹⁴¹

But how does bringing-forth happen? [...] Bringing-forth brings out of concealment into unconcealment. [...] The Greeks have the word *alētheia* for revealing. The Romans translate this with *veritas*. We say "truth" and we usually understand it as correctness of representation.¹⁴²

However, the term truth is not seen here as a universal concept of moral value, nor should it be confused with the logical veridiction of propositions as expressed by true/false binaries. After all, the misinterpretations and pitfalls to which such an identification of the idea of truth could lead, have already been underlined by many philosophers. For Wittgenstein, truth has mistakenly been confined within the logical boundaries of sentences, whereas logic is only a tool that one must eventually dismiss:

6.522 There is indeed the inexpressible. [...] 6.54 My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He

¹⁴¹ The phrase 'roll of dice' is from Stéphane Mallarmé's poem "*Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*" (1897). Lyotard explains the meaning of this phrase as follows: "the deep space of chance where the encounter can take place with this madness [...]." In: Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, (2011[1971]), 130.

¹⁴² Heidegger, "The Questions Concerning Technology" (publ.1954), in: Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 222.

must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly. Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.¹⁴³

On the contrary, the notion of truth as approached in the works presented, is seen as that which emerges and circulates, in the form of currency, during events that would be called: *parrhēsiastic games*. Following from Foucault's move, parrhesiastic truth may exist as soon as one – or both – of the following conditions are met:

a) one exhibits their life as a true life which is radically other, and in so doing they expose - though *in bashfulness* - both themselves and their life in public view.¹⁴⁴ This move, once performed, puts the parrhēsiast in danger, not only of breaking the relationship with their interlocutors, but also of risking their own lives.

b) one stands with an openness of heart toward the Master and consequently toward others (Christian ascetic tradition).¹⁴⁵ The risk, here, is directly connected with the leap of faith that one has to perform while submitting to the Master and Their will, without knowing whether they will be safe.

The performer-parrhēsiast, the moment of their encounter with the audience, is able to reveal the example of a life which is radically other; a life-as-surface, a life which is at

¹⁴³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, transl. by C.K. Ogden (London & New York: Routledge, 1922, 2005 [1921]), 188-189. "[...] sense, *the expressed of the proposition*, is an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition." In: Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, transl. by Constantin V. Boundas, Mark Lester and Charles Stival, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1969]), 19.

¹⁴⁴ "[...] truth as discipline, ascesis, and bareness of life. The true life as life of truth. [...] Cynicism practiced the scandal of the truth in and through one's life." Ibid., 173-174.

¹⁴⁵ "[...] the term *parrhēsia* increasingly tends to designate the one-to-one encounter between the Almighty and His creature, their dissymmetry, but also their relationship. [...] It is within this ontological one-to-one, vis-à-vis relationship of man and God that *parrhēsia*, up to a certain point tends to move. It is no longer the courage of the solitary man facing others who are mistaken; it is beatitude, the bliss of the man raised up to God." Ibid., 328-329.

the same time voluptuous and traumatic, and which despite the fear and trembling, can only be experienced in its full intensity and *in joy*. It is precisely the contradictions governing life-as-surface that do not allow it to be described through its segments - who could describe *eros* after all? - without being degenerated and perceived as something other than what it is. So the only way to indicate it is by exposing and protecting it; hence the role of bashfulness in the process of revealing life-as-a-surface.

Søren Kierkegaard in his work *Fear & Trembling* (1843), used the term ‘secret’ to describe the attunement taking place between God and Abraham, which is similar to that between the performer and the audience described here, the moment that this life-as-surface is being exposed. Attunement between Abraham and God is something that cannot be said, because it is precisely inscribed within the realm of faith, presupposing the moves of infinite resignation and reposition in the strength of the absurd.¹⁴⁶ It is in a similar way, that Nietzsche, in *Gay Science* (*Gaia Scienza*, 1881) called forth the preservation of Truth/Nature’s protecting veil, standing against any indistinguishable exposure to full light, the moment Truth/Nature is being revealed:¹⁴⁷

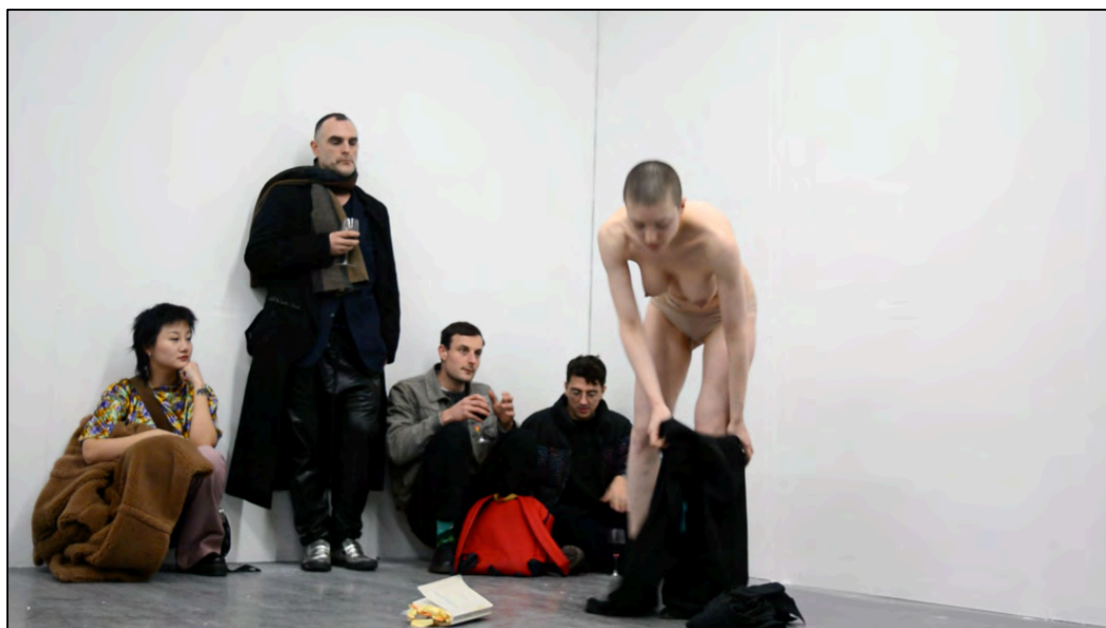
[...] We no longer believe that truth remains truth when one pulls off the veil; [...] One should have more respect for the *bashfulness* with which nature has hidden behind riddles and iridescent uncertainties. [...] Those Greeks were superficial - *out of profundity!* [...] Are we not just in this respect - Greeks? Worshipers of shapes, tones, words? And therefore - artists?¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ “In infinite resignation there is peace and repose and consolation in the pain, that is if the movement is made properly.” In: Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, transl. by Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin Classics, 1985 [1843]), 51. On the relationship between art and attunement, see: Golding, Johnny. “Fractal Philosophy: Attunement as the Task of Art.” In: *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, edited by Simon O’Sullivan and Stephen Zepke. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, 133 - 154.

¹⁴⁷ For a further study on the veil of Truth/Nature, see: Pierre Hadot, *Le voile d’Isis – Essai sur l’histoire de l’idée de Nature*, Paris: Gallimard, 2004.

¹⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. by Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 8-9.

In *Pudeur (d'après FN) I & II* (2017 & 2018 respectively), the artist after removing her clothes in front of the spectators, read aloud Nietzsche's aforementioned aphorism in its entirety, while, at the same time, she was stapling her nipples and genitals.¹⁴⁹ *Pudeur* (2017) started from the performer's need to 'seal' her body after being heartbroken.



60. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur (d'après F.N.)*, 2017. Photograph: Vasiliki Antonopoulou.

The performer's inability to directly communicate the intensity of her emotional pain without falling into banality and cliché, defined her aesthetic decisions for the project; first of all she decided to staple her nipples and genitals, two erogenous zones, so as to exclude any external triggers and 'protect' her body. This was definitely a non-verbal statement, an act of resistance, commitment and grief, in her attempt to share her

¹⁴⁹ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur (d'après F.N.)*, 10-minute performance, The New Darkroom, RCA Queer Society, Dyson Gallery, RCA, London, UK, 2017. Text by Friedrich Nietzsche, *La Gaia Scienza*, 1882, Preface §4, transl. by Patrick Wotling, slightly altered by Pierre Hadot, as mentioned in: Pierre Hadot, *Le Voile d'Isis: Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de Nature*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 285-6. despinazacharopoulou.com/pudeur-d-apres-f-n vimeo.com/265869390 (both links accessed 13-04-2021). Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur II (d'après F.N.)*, 10-minute performance & video projection, Visual Cultures Lecture Series, Marl: Sometimes Hard, usually Soft: A Carnival of Entanglement, Gorvy Lecture Theatre, Royal College of Art, London, UK, 2018. despinazacharopoulou.com/pudeur-ii-d-apres-f-n (accessed 13-04-2021).

emotional pain with the audience. At the same time, this act of resistance was performed with pride and strength, not leaving any space for her potential victimization. The impossibility of verbally expressing her pain, led the artist to read this particular philosophical text written by Nietzsche on the theme of Nature's bashfulness. In parallel with the act of body-stapling, the difficulty of the - mostly - English-speaking audience to access the text that was being read in French, added to the non-representational character of the performance. What was achieved with this multiverse move was the generation and distribution of intensities through the synergy of multiple singularities that mutated and shifted within the work. This delicate move was possible in the first place, precisely due to the artist's decision to create a work about her emotional pain without illustrating it.



61. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur II (d'après F.N.)*, 2018. Photograph: Åsa Johannesson.

Whereas the first version of the performance (2017) took place in a gallery, with the audience being very close to the performer within an intimate environment, in the second version of this work (2018), the performance took place on the stage of an amphitheater, in front of a much larger crowd compared to the first time, with the spectators already seated once the performance started, thus creating a frontal relationship with the artist.



62. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Surface*, 2017. Video still: J. J. Rolfe.

In this second case, the performer decided to project the first version of the work right behind her and repeat the same action without having visual contact with what appeared on the screen. Though it soon became obvious, through a certain kind of exchange, that the live action referenced what was taking place in the video, and vice versa, due to the impossibility of completely identifying the one with the other, a thick materiality circulating between the two, as a sort of 'ghost,' essentially constituted the work per se. Likewise, in Steve Reich's musical compositions, music is, after all, what emerges and circulates between repetitions, mutations and accumulations of musical phrases, instead

of the work being the musical phrases themselves. Here too, the work of art was situated neither on stage nor inside the screen; it was the ghost, the [Deleuzean] difference that kept circulating to haunt the project; a sustained trauma via the repetition of the event of violence on stage.

Going back to the title of this Ph.D. Thesis, one is now able to understand why it was chosen, and how it relates to the performances presented. The Latin term ‘spatium’ is used here to denote a field occupied by matter, rather than that of space:¹⁵⁰

[...] the BwO is not a scene, a place or even a support upon which something comes to pass. [...] It is not space nor is it in space; it is matter that occupies space to a given degree – to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced.¹⁵¹

The performances presented, function as matter-energy fields circulated by forces; they are surfaces of intensities formed in the here and now during the performer-audience entanglement. The Latin term ‘monstrorum’ is used in reference to its etymology from the verb ‘monstrare’ meaning: to expose, to make visible, to show.¹⁵² In the performances discussed, what is exhibited is a life *which is radically other*, a life as a ‘*mode de vie*’ (way of life), creating its own ethics, politics and aesthetics.¹⁵³ Therefore, Spatium Monstrorum denotes both performance-as-surface *and* life-as-surface.

¹⁵⁰ Spatium: race field, extension, terrain. Félix Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire illustré latin-français* (Paris: Hachette, 1934), p.1463. Translation is mine. ‘Spatium’ also overlaps with ‘extensity’: “[...] suppose that extensity is prior to space [...]”. In: Bergson, *Matter and Memory*,... (1991 [1896]), 231.

¹⁵¹ Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: ...*, (2013 [1980]), 177-8.

¹⁵² “‘monstrorum’ > ‘monstro (-avi, -atum, -are)’: show, make visible, make known, indicate, designate, warn, avert.” In Félix Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire illustré latin-français* (Paris: Hachette, 1934), 994. lexilogos.com/latin/gaffiot.php?q=monstrorum (accessed: 22-04-2020). Translation is mine.

¹⁵³ Michel Foucault, «De l'amitié comme mode de vie» (entretien avec R. de Ceccaty, J. Danet et J. Le Bitoux), Gai Pied, no 25, April 1981, pp. 38-39. In: Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits* Vol. IV, text n°293. libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault174.html - :~:text=Un mode de vie peut,culture, et à une éthique (accessed 02-12-2020). For performance art as a kind of *protreptic* (philosophical move urging people to change) towards a life-as-surface, see infra: 210-215.

CHAPTER II: GENERATION OF IMAGES

From representation to morphogenesis and image-as-difference

Imago (noun): echo, ghost, phantom, idea, likeness, image, appearance, statue.¹⁵⁴

Adding to the investigation carried out in the first chapter, concerning the main protocols – those of violence and those of written contracts - governing the performer-audience encounter and the distribution of intensities in the *performances-surfaces* presented, more series of protocols are examined in the present chapter, so as to reveal further potential mechanisms for the generation of images in performance art, that would resist representation and operate via morphogenetic processes, superimpositions, shifts and repetition-as-difference.

Image protocols

Diagram III [113] showcases image protocols employed in the performances discussed. As it can be deduced from the diagram's complexity, the same image protocol might be used in various performances, whereas one single performance piece might employ various image protocols at the same time. What Diagram III essentially indicates are possible strategies (or combinations of strategies) to generate images-multiplicities while working with the medium of performance art. Throughout the present chapter, the following strategies (also employed in the performances presented) are investigated, without exhausting the potential methodologies at hand:

¹⁵⁴ latin-dictionary.net/search/latin/imago (accessed 09-09-2020).

- a) Architecture: wall-as-canvas, wall-as-duration, wall-as-fabric, wall-as-boundary
[e.g., *Introduction* (2015), *Corner Time* (2016), *Being a Threat* (2016), *Love *me** (2017), *d'après S.K* (2017), *Response-ability (d'après K.B.)* (2017)].
- b) Shifting mechanisms governing (I) the convergence and divergence between two distinct series/stages of images [e.g., *Love *me** (2017), *d'après S.K* (2017), *Response-ability (d'après K.B.)* (2017)] and/or (II) the passage from one image to another one [e.g., *Introduction* (2015), *Corner Time* (2016), *The most precious non-object* (2016), *Matter* (2017), *Borderline* (2018), *Protreptic* (2018)].
- c) Image-as-corporeal-trace [e.g., *Introduction* (2015), *Being A Threat*, (2016), *Love *me** (2017), *d'après S.K* (2017), *Surface* (2017), *Response-ability (d'après K.B.)* (2017), *Borderline* (2018)].
- d) Image-as-material-residue/excess [e.g., *Corner Time* (2016), *Aftercare I* (2016), *Aftercare II* (2016)].
- e) Ghosting [e.g., *Pudeur (d'après FN)* (2017), *Pudeur II (d'après FN)* (2018)].

The hypothesis underlying all suggested methodologies would be: in order to avoid representation and illustration in performance art, it would be necessary, instead of letting the images produced crystallize into rigid forms, to invent mechanisms that would allow images to keep fluctuating and shapeshifting. However, the most common methodology followed, especially by new performance artists, would be directly translating the main idea behind their work into one single image, without disrupting it, juxtaposing it, shifting or mutating it to something else, so as to allow the work to be

open to multiple readings. In fact, most of the 1970's historical performances operated in such ways, since what was important within that socio-political condition was to disrupt, via strong images-statements, the audience's passive response towards the historical phenomena of the time. This artistic intention was made quite explicit in Gina Pane's performance practice:

[...] "I attack their [the viewers'] habitual comfort – which if they allowed to be penetrated would automatically be modified. But the simple fact I cause a momentary struggle inside them is important for me." This conclusion situates Pane's performance in a wider historical context than the early 1970's, specifically the Vietnam War.¹⁵⁵

Therefore, the usual format adopted by artists of that time was to generate images based on *what* they were doing, without really considering factors that would disrupt this single image/action and allow it to operate as a pulsating signal.



63. Melati Suryodarmo, *Exergie - butter dance*, 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Effie Stephano and Gina Pane, "Performance of Concern," *Art and Artists*, April 1973, 23, as quoted in: Kathy O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970s*, (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 60.

A more recent example of the same rationale could be identified in Melati Suryodarmo's work *Butter Dance* (2000). Here, the main image was created via the artist's repeated failed attempts to dance on blocks of butter that made her slip and fall while moving. As much powerful as this image might be, it seems to portray limited potential of shapeshifting, thus quickly exhausting its capacity to generate and distribute intensities.¹⁵⁶ This is not irrelevant to the fact that the image's rigidity seems to also relate to the performer's fixed female identity, as presented to the audience, defined by the artist's outfit, make-up, hair and gestures performed. If we had to describe this phenomenon of rigid imagery via Lyotard's vocabulary, then we would say that it is about such a cooling down of the turning bar, that the formerly pulsating surface freezes to a fixed representational form, no longer able to vibrate and generate intensities.¹⁵⁷

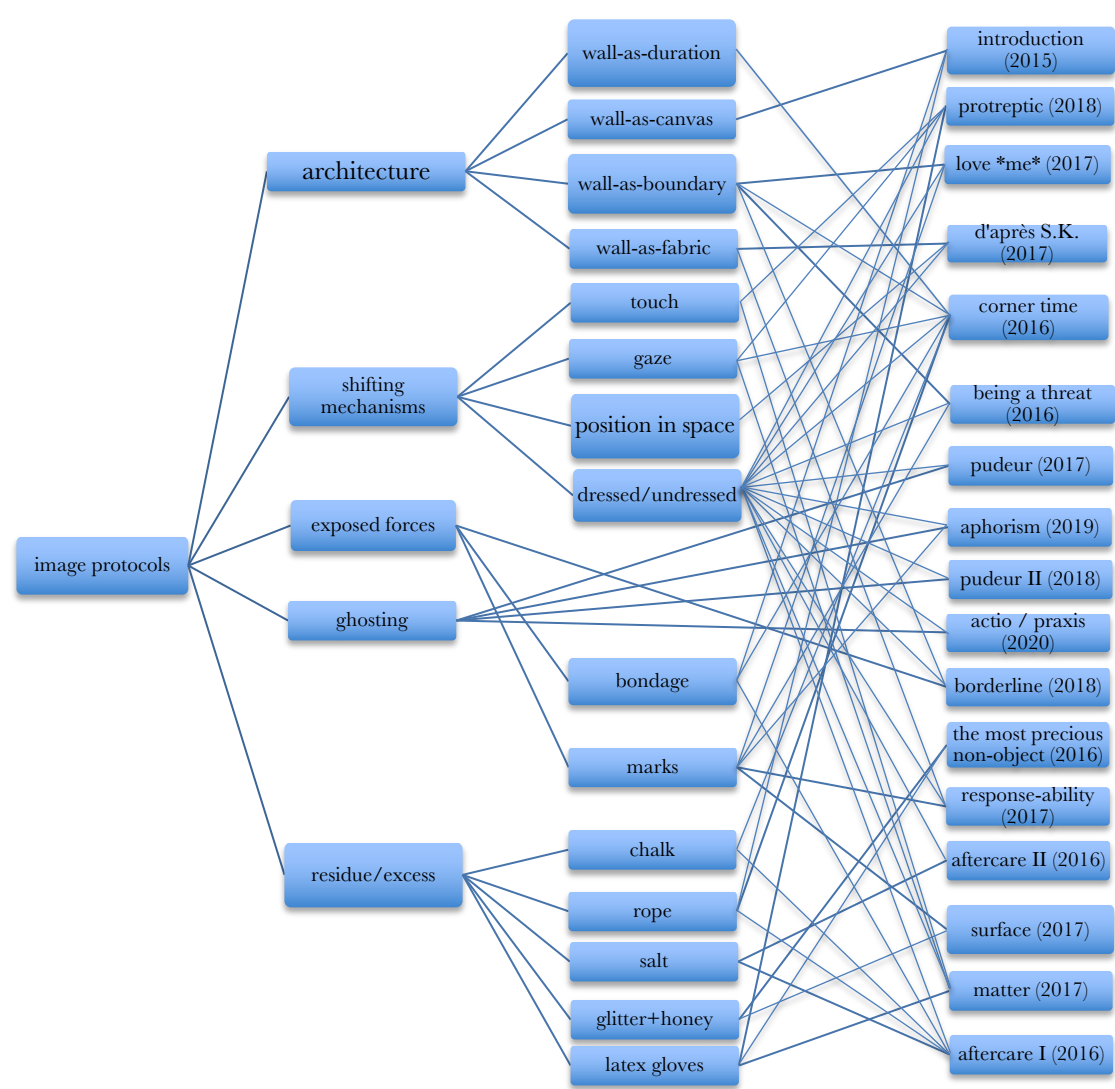
Following from the analysis of the suggested image protocols as featured in the live works carried out in this research, a common viewpoint regarding the nature of images gets to be revealed. Bearing no exceptions, the images-multiplicities produced in the live works presented are but manifestations of forces within specific moments in spacetime. Since all performances discussed, are characterized by a pulse generated via an ongoing conflict between impossible forces, a certain kind of Beauty arises (*Beauty-as-gravitas*) defined by this repetitious two-directional movement of attraction and repulsion that makes bodies gravitate toward the performer, who thus operates as a

¹⁵⁶ Sources: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dXffxrfFhY> <https://vimeo.com/16021520aaa-a.org/events/melati-suryodarmo-body-as-container/> (all links accessed 14-04-2021).

¹⁵⁷ "The operator of disintensification is exclusion: either this or not-this. Not both. The disjunctive bar. Every concept is therefore concomitant with negation, exteriorization." In: Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, (2015/2019[1974]), 31. "Take this bar which separates the this from the not-this. That is to say any segment at all. [...] Subject it to a movement of rotation around a point belonging to this segment [...]. Thus a surface is engendered, which is nothing other than the labyrinthine libidinal band at issue [...]. [...] the more quickly it turns on itself, the more energy it employs and expends [...]. [...] because intensity pertains to an asynthetic movement [...]." Ibid., 32. "The turning bar slackens its pace, the mad aleatory movement which engenders the libidinal band is sufficiently checked so that the this and the not-this, confused by its extremely high speed in all the points of the field, now distinct, are sometimes the this, sometimes the not-this [...]. What is this abatement? A cooling? A lowering of intensity? A withdrawal of investment? Yes, all that." Ibid., 40-41.

catalyst initiating future potential encounters.¹⁵⁸ Given that images in *performances-surfaces* emerge through a ceaseless motion of systoles and diastoles, how might these images survive in post-performance settings? A suggested hypothesis to approach this question would be via methodologies such as those of juxtaposition, conflict, and anachronism, as introduced by Aby Warburg’s seminal work *Atlas-Mnemosyne* (1921-1929).¹⁵⁹

64. DIAGRAM III: IMAGE PROTOCOLS



¹⁵⁸ Infra: 150-157.

¹⁵⁹ Infra: 166-182.

Architecture

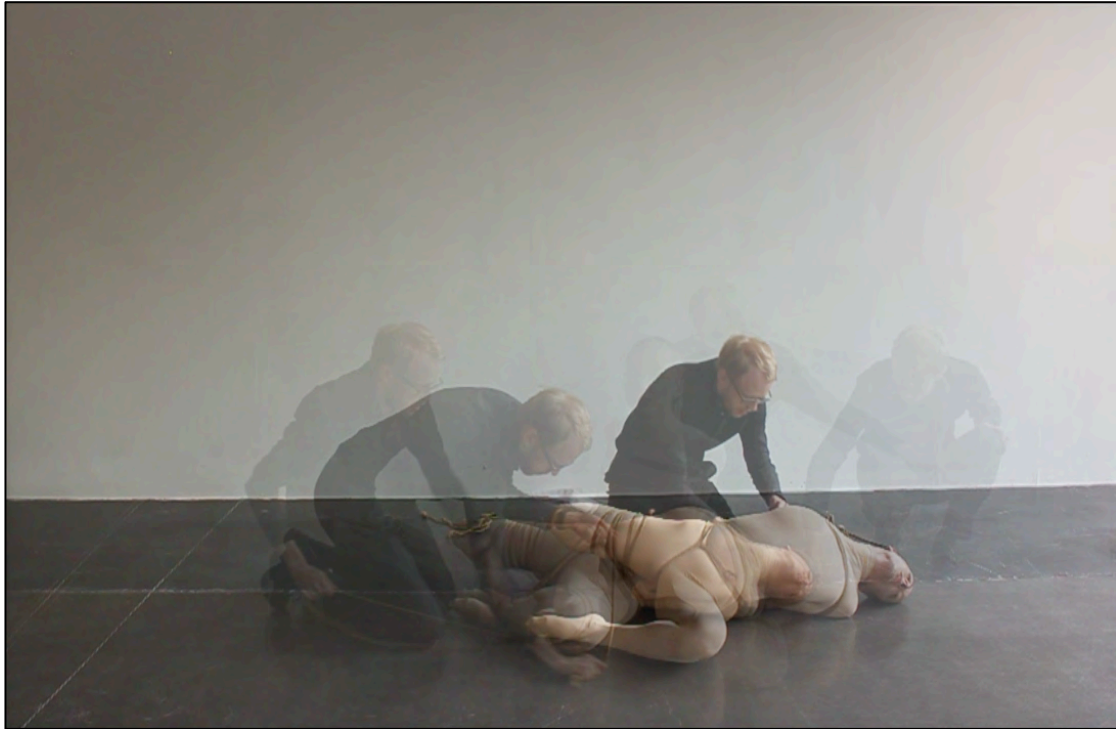
In the project *Introduction* (2015) the overall image was spatially structured against a white wall, serving as a background for the performance (wall-as-canvas). The images created by the performer's body took place parallel to that wall and about half a meter from it, in a frontal relation to the public, so as the wall would function as an empty canvas upon which the body's shapeshifting would be inscribed.



65. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Introduction*, 2015, video still. Camera: Jeroen Van Dooren.

Since the images encountered by the public could not be created without the mediation of rope, the technology of bondage used, or the forces exerted on the performer's body by the rigger, it is *the bondage apparatus* that distributed areas of probabilities for potential images to be produced. These images were directly related to the parts of the body upon which the rigger would act, the style and rhythm of tying, the intensity and rhythm of the forces exerted from one body to the other, the existing posture of the performer's body at any given time before that posture shapeshifted to a new image. The result

would be an image-multiplicity exhibiting its own morphogenetic processes, with its past and future deformations manifested all at once and at the same time.



66. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Introduction*, 2015, digital layering. Video stills: Jeroen Van Dooren.

In *Corner Time* (2016) the performer was located inside a four-wall room. Sometimes the walls operated as a background for the images created by the performer (wall-as-canvas), while others they blended with the images produced, e.g., whenever the performer was making chalk marks on the wall at regular intervals and in a horizontal straight line. If duration is the uninterrupted flow of transmutation from one lived state to another, thus expressing the continuity of existence, then the image structured by chalk marks during *Corner Time*, would be a multiplicity in which time was recorded as the trace of the performer's body intervention upon the wall (wall-as-duration). This hypothesis not only affirms Deleuze's definition of duration "[...] as a 'multiplicity' or divisibility which does

not divide without changing its nature,” but is also aligned with Spinozian and Bergsonian views of the term:¹⁶⁰

DURATION.-The continuation of existence from a beginning onward. Duration is said of the existing mode. It involves a beginning but not an end.¹⁶¹

[...] pure duration, in which the flow is continuous and in which we pass insensibly from one state to another: a continuity which is really lived, but artificially decomposed for the greater convenience of customary knowledge.¹⁶²



67. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 2016. Photograph: Kyveli Dragoumi.

¹⁶⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, (2014/2017 [1968]), 342.

¹⁶¹ Deleuze, *Spinoza...*, (1988 [1970]), 62.

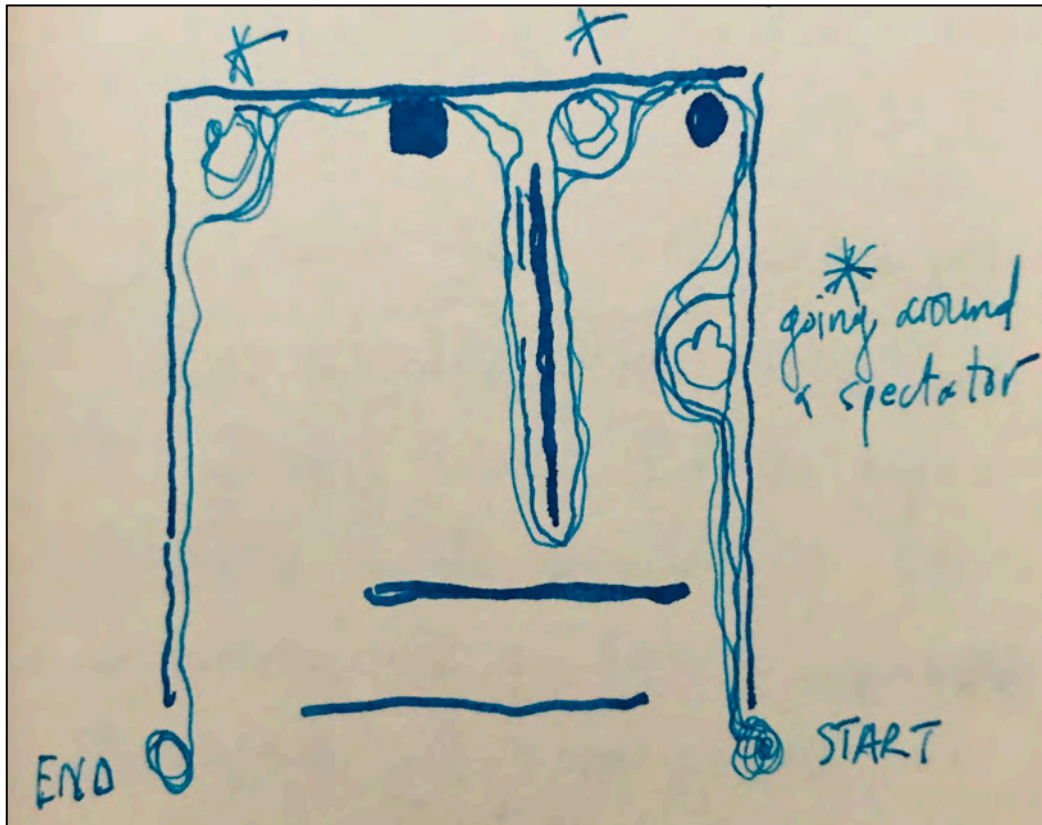
¹⁶² Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer, (New York: Zone Books, 1991 [Paris: Félix Alcan, 1896]), 186.

In the work *Being a Threat* (2016), the wall was used neither as a background nor as a surface upon which the performer would intervene with some material, leaving its trace. Here the wall played the role of an impenetrable boundary determining the performer's trajectory in space (wall-as-boundary).



68. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Being A Threat*, 2016. Photograph: Ania Mokrzycka.

In *Being a Threat* (2016), the artist appeared crawling on the floor, right on the border where the floor met the wall; a body in continuous contraction and expansion, like a snail leaving its invisible trace while passing by. The images produced during the performer's movement along the perimeter of the gallery were shaped by the resistance exerted upon her body from the obstacles encountered during her passage. The architectural elements (floor, walls, columns), the objects and the bodies obstructing to the artist's movement once in contact with her, led her body to successive turns, twists, contractions, and elongations.



69. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Diagram (Being A Threat)*, 2016.

Image-as-corporeal-trace

In *Being a Threat* (2016), the pulsating images produced by the artist's bodily contractions and extensions, created an image-multiplicity, as they became superimposed with the image of the performer's marked back. The exhibited whip marks exposed the forces already exerted by third parties upon the artist's body within a consensual environment and at a time prior to the performance. The technology of the whip used, by governing the rhythm, the density, the disparity, and the depth of the abrasions created, determined the morphogenetic processes for the images produced and exposed to the eyes of the public. Such a trace-image as the one produced in *Being a Threat*, this thesis would name as '*corporeal trace*,' echoing, in a sense, the way that Spinoza grasped the idea of the image in his modal ontology:

[...] the images of things are the very affections of the human body, *or* modes by which the human body is affected by external causes, and disposed to do this or that.¹⁶³



70-71. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Being A Threat*, 2016. Photographs: Ania Mokrzycka.

Following the Spinozian image-body entanglement, one could locate the multiverse ways in which *images-as-affects* might be generated in the performances presented:¹⁶⁴

- (a) Through the images produced by the performer and which may function as affects upon the spectators' bodies.

¹⁶³ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III: "Of the Origin and Nature of the Affects", Proposition 32, scholium. Quote taken from: Benedict de (Baruch) Spinoza, *Ethics*, transl. by Edwin Curley (London & New York: Penguin, 1996 [1677]), 87.

¹⁶⁴ Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part V: "Of the Power of the Intellect or on Human Freedom", Prop. 1. Ibid., 163.

- (b) Through the traumatic images registered as *traces-affects* on the performer's body, that would keep producing new images in a feedback loop.
- (c) Through the images generated by the physical affects of the spectators on the performer's body.

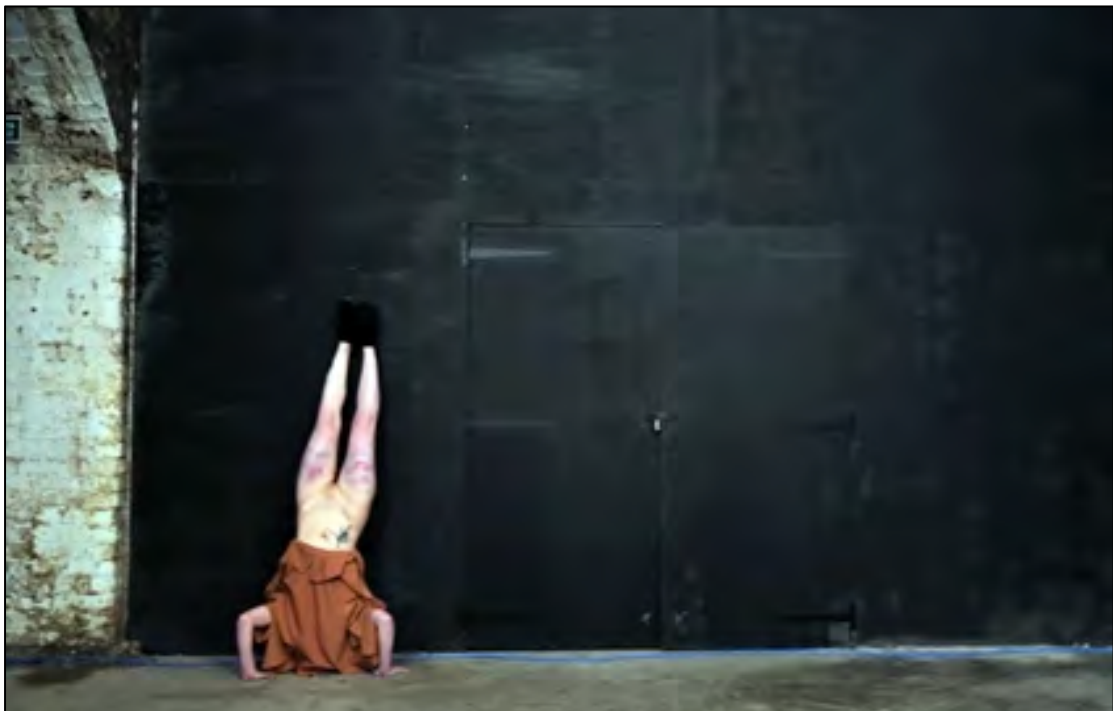
Shifting mechanisms I

In the series of works that follow, the images created while the performer moves according to a wall protocol, make sense via a relationship of connection, shift, and rupture with a second, different series of images. However, the overall production of images does not actually consist of the first series of images nor the second, but of the tension that arises the moment of shift and rupture between the two.



72. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Love *me, 2017. Photograph: Prof. Nigel Rolfe.**

In the work *Love *me** (2017) the artist entered the space while the audience was already there.¹⁶⁵ Initially, she walked along the perimeter of the space and about 30-40 centimeters away from the walls. As in *Being a Threat* (2016), here too, the walls essentially functioned as a limit, determining the artist's movement. The performer, after completing one round of the room, stood in front of a black wall right next to the entrance/exit. After standing still for a few seconds, she turned upside down on a handstand, exposing her naked body from the waist and below. Her thighs had bruises from a cane session that took place the night before and within a consensual environment. After staying in this position for a few minutes, she placed her feet on the ground, forming a 90° angle with her body and legs, exposing her bruised buttocks to the audience. A few seconds later, she got up and left the room.



73. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Love *me, 2017. Photograph: Prof. Nigel Rolfe.**

¹⁶⁵ Despina Zacharopoulou, *love *me**, 5-minute performance, 5 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME, RCA Performance Pathway, The doodle bar, London, UK, 2017. despinazacharopoulou.com/love-me (accessed 12-04-2021).

In *d'après S.K* (2017), the performance began with the artist standing against the wall, her back to the audience, and her face hidden among a book's pages.¹⁶⁶ She was wearing a light blue dress, that made her figure blend in the space (wall-as-fabric). After standing motionless on her toes for a few minutes, she slowly began to move to the right, constantly pushing the book against the wall, so that it wouldn't fall. As the artist was displacing her body along the wall, she was in a constant tension due to the pressure she exerted on her face to hold the book, making it more and more difficult for her to breathe, while also walking on her tiptoes. The tension of her body was communicated to the public via the images she created.



74. Despina Zacharopoulou, *d'après S.K*, 2017. Photograph: Greg Goodale.

¹⁶⁶ Despina Zacharopoulou, *d'après S.K.*, 10-minute performance, Tender Loin #9, Steakhouse Live, Toynbee Studios, London, UK, 2017. despinazacharopoulou.com/d-apres-s-k vimeo.com/221403826 (both links accessed 12-04-2021). Book in the work: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, ...1985 [1843].



75. Despina Zacharopoulou, *d'après S.K.*, 2017, photograph by Greg Goodale.

The total duration of this first image-multiplicity was determined by the wall's length, since the moment the performer reached the end of the wall, she took a step back and let the book fall on the floor. Then, after walking among the audience, she stood almost half a meter away from the middle of the wall at the other side of the room. Her back was facing the spectators, who were already forced to turn their bodies 180° to follow the artist's displacement. The performer, after standing still for a while, bent forward and turned upside-down on a handstand, to reveal her naked body from the waist down. Her thighs bore marks from a consensual caning session that happened the night before. After staying in this position for a few minutes, she let her feet touch the floor while exposing to the audience her bruised buttocks. She then got up and left the room.



76. Despina Zacharopoulou, *d'après S.K.*, 2017. Photograph: Greg Goodale.

In *Response-ability (d'après K.B.)* (2017), the performance started with the artist moving along a former asylum's chapel wall.¹⁶⁷ She had her back turned to the audience, her gaze fixed on the wall, while gently touching its surface as she was slowly sliding along it. The performer, kept responding through her movement to everything that affected her at all times, having her body attuned to all stimuli of the environment: the actions and the energy of the people present, the changes on the wall's texture, the sounds and the light in the room. As in *d'après S.K.* (2017), in this work too, the figure of the performer's body managed to become integrated into the wall, as if it were part of the building's architecture (wall-as-fabric).

The Asylum Chapel in Peckham, London, where this event took place, is an architectural site-monument of cultural heritage where one must be very careful not to

¹⁶⁷ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Response-ability (d'après K.B.)*, 2-hour performance, Asylum Live, Daybreak RCA Research Show, Asylum Caroline Gardens, London, 2017. vimeo.com/249951756 despinazacharopoulou.com/response-ability-d-apres-k-b (both links accessed 12-04-2021).

cause any damage. This idea of care became also evident in the images produced as the performer moved slowly and carefully, gently touching the building's surface so as not to injure it - in contrast to *d'après S.K.* (2017), where she was constantly pushing the book against the wall. Here, what the audience encountered was a multiplicity of images showing a subtle and light passage of contained intensities.



77. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Response-ability* (d'après K.B.), 2017. Photograph: Monika Kita.

As in *d'après S.K.* (2017), in this case too, the performance's duration in relation to the wall was defined by the wall's length, stopping at a point where the wall had collapsed, and light flooded the performer's field of vision. This moment of rupture was the moment when the performer stepped back, turned around to face the audience, walked across the room and stood on the other side of the chapel to take her clothes off. She then walked to another corner of the space and placed her naked body on a crate,

exposing cane bruises on her rear created by third parties the night before within a consensual environment.



78. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Response-ability* (d'après K.B.), 2017, photograph: Monika Kita.

In all three performances discussed [*Love *me** (2017), *d'après S.K* (2017), *Response-ability* (d'après K.B.) (2017)], the same main image-production protocol was followed, composed by two distinct stages/series of images:

(a) the first stage/series involved the duration of the performer's displacement along a wall's surface, revealed via a spatio-temporal image-multiplicity composed of successive shifts and transmutations in a continuous flow. In *Love *me** (2017) this first stage/series of images lasted for about 1-2 minutes, following a fast, short, and sharp rhythm (staccato). In *d'après S.K.* (2017), this stage's duration was approximately 4-5 minutes

long, and had a slower pace, creating a sensual image-multiplicity as the performer's body blended in the white wall. In *Response-ability (d'après K.B.)* (2017), the first stage/series of images lasted for about an hour. As a result, the performer's very slow movement led to an expansion of time and to a production of pulsating images operating almost meditatively.



79. M.Duchamp, *Nu descendant un escalier*, 1912, 147x90cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

(b) the second stage/series of images was separated by a hard cut from the first, with this cut being manifested by:

- the performer's spatial displacement away from the wall to another place in the space, a move followed by the performer's stasis at that second place.
- revealing part or the entirety of the performer's naked body.
- the change of plane or direction of the performer's body axis, for example: by completely reversing its axis after going upside-down, or by placing her body – mainly lying or sitting - at the level of the crate's surface.
- the superimposition of an additional image-multiplicity that introduces another narrative and another duration to the work, e.g., through cane marks/bruises caused on the performer's body by third parties within a consensual environment and at time prior to that of the live performance piece.



80. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Response-ability* (d'après K.B.), 2017. Photograph: Monika Kita.



81. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Response-ability* (d'après K.B.), 2017. Photograph: Monika Kita.

In any case, what emerged as the main image production protocol, was the divergence and rupture that occurred between two different stages/series of images. The produced *ghost-image* that emerged in each of the above-mentioned works was not related, in essence, to what was being enacted at all times - that is to the phenomenon of each action per se - but to the difference in intensity or the intensity of difference between the first and second stage/series of images, which were also not completely homogeneous but composed of other different/ciations - tensions.¹⁶⁸ It was through memory that the two series of images gave meaning to each other, as the shift from the first stage/series of images to the second was accompanied by changes in levels of intensity, created paradoxes and disjunctions. Gilles Deleuze, in his attempt to express this “asymmetric

¹⁶⁸ For the idea of different/ciation, see the Chapter “Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible,” in: Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, (2014/2017[1968]), 293.

synthesis of the sensible,” explained how the world - in our case, *the image* - is the residue of inequalities in intensity:

Everything which happens and everything which appears is correlated with orders of differences: differences of level, temperature, pressure, tension, potential, *difference of intensity*. [...] Intensity is the form of difference insofar as this is the reason of the sensible. Every intensity is differential, by itself a difference. Every intensity is E-E', where E itself refers to an *e-e'* and an *e* to *ε-é* etc. [...] ¹⁶⁹

It is without exception, that the works presented in this research, produce *images-as-residues*, based on differences in intensities and on differentiation/ciation processes. As long as the images produced are able to maintain their intensity as affects exerted on the bodies of the members of the audience, then they can still lead to the production of images able to survive and resist time through their own singularity.

Image as residue/excess

Excess contrasts with reason.¹⁷⁰

George Bataille

In some of the performances presented, the images-residues produced managed to be manifested via material accumulations over long periods of time. Such a kind of visible residue were the elements of chalk and rope in *Corner Time* (2016), testifying to the morphogenetic processes that composed the performance's image-multiplicity. The range of mutation possibilities that each material could undergo, expanded the areas of probabilities for the emergence of new, unpredictable images. The more unpredictable

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 293-294.

¹⁷⁰ Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, transl. by M. Dalwood, (London: Penguin, 2012 [Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1957]), 186.

and chaotic the behaviour of a material was, the more unpredictable and chaotic were the images produced.



82. D. Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 7-week (324 hrs) performance, 2016. Photo: N. Tsoukala.



83. D. Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 7-week (324 hrs) performance, 2016. Photo: N. Tsoukala.



84 - 98. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 7-week (324 - hrs) long durational performance, 2016.
 Space transmutation (starting from top row):
 11, 12, 13 March - 20, 22, 23 March - 1, 2, 3 April - 5, 7, 8 April - 14, 15, 17 April 2016.

In *Corner Time* (2016), chalk's brittleness succeeded in giving chaotic and uncontrollable shifts to the images generated, constantly transmutating the performance space over the course of seven weeks (324 hours). The artist incorporated chalk into her work in many ways, producing a palimpsest of images: breaking and rubbing blocks of chalk on her head/body, inserting a block into her mouth like a gag, placing very small pieces of chalk on the walls, making fragile chalk pedestals on which she would stand, lay or sit, until they collapsed under her weight. Should one compare the first to the last day of the performance, one might ascertain the visual manifestation of the project's duration, through the ways in which the material residues of chalk and rope transmuted the space itself from an empty cold shell into a space lived.

Researchers Sergio Patricio Valenzuela Valdés and John David, in their article "Strange Attractor Factor beyond Performance Art in a Time - Based Media Context," cite performance *Corner Time* (2016), as a case study.¹⁷¹ The Strange Attractor Factor (SAF) model was initially created within the field of quantum mechanics by academic researcher Robert Buckner with whom Valdés and David came in contact in their attempt to apply the Strange Attractor Factor (SAF) model in time-based art media, like that of performance art:¹⁷²

The 'strange attractor factor' could give an explanation about how attention is lost or even how awareness of the multiple variables is lessened where time-space is altered by unexpected and unplanned actions. Those variables rather than what the audience anticipates or the creator had planned, could take control and change the aim of actions.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ John David and Sergio Patricio Valenzuela Valdés, "Strange Attractor Factor beyond Performance Art in a Time – Based Media Context", in: *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* Volume III Issue XI. (November 2019): 153-164. [rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/Digital-Library/volume-3-issue-11/153-164.pdf](https://www.rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/Digital-Library/volume-3-issue-11/153-164.pdf) (accessed 18-12-2020).

¹⁷² Ibid., 157.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 153.

Valdés and David, using the performance *Corner Time* (2016) as a case study, explain in a very apt way how chalk managed to function as a kind of Strange Attractor Factor:

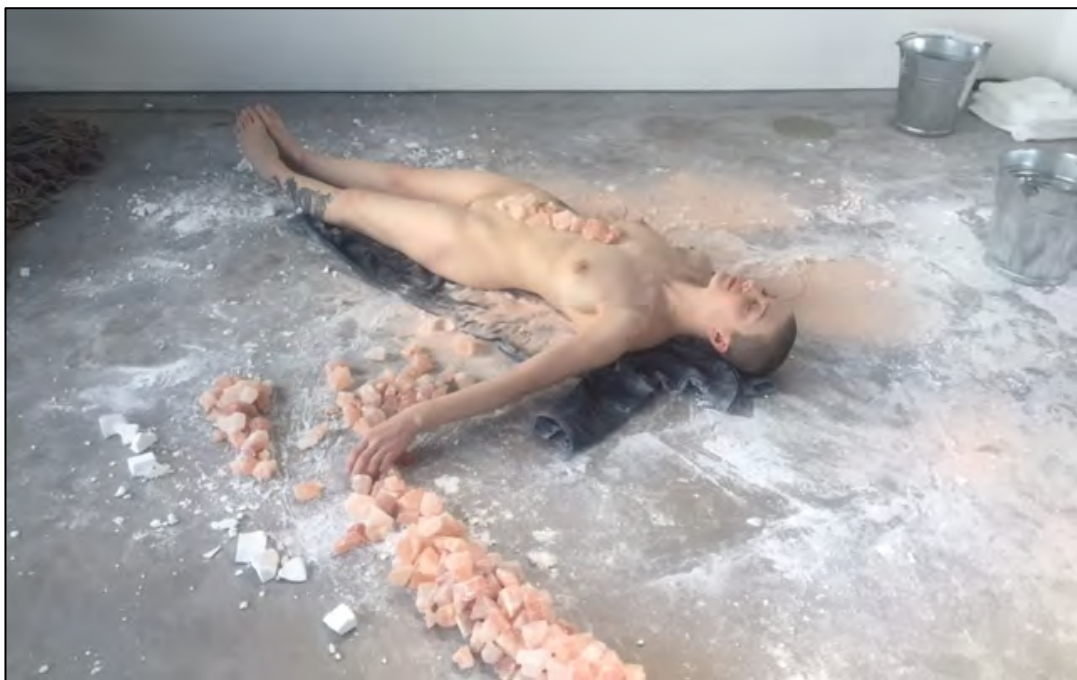
The chalk is clearly a variable used by the artist in many ways possible. [...] The particles in the space could go in many unexpected trajectories and chaotic behaviors that this factor, element, makes up.¹⁷⁴



99. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 7-week performance 2016. Photo: K. Dragoumi.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 163.

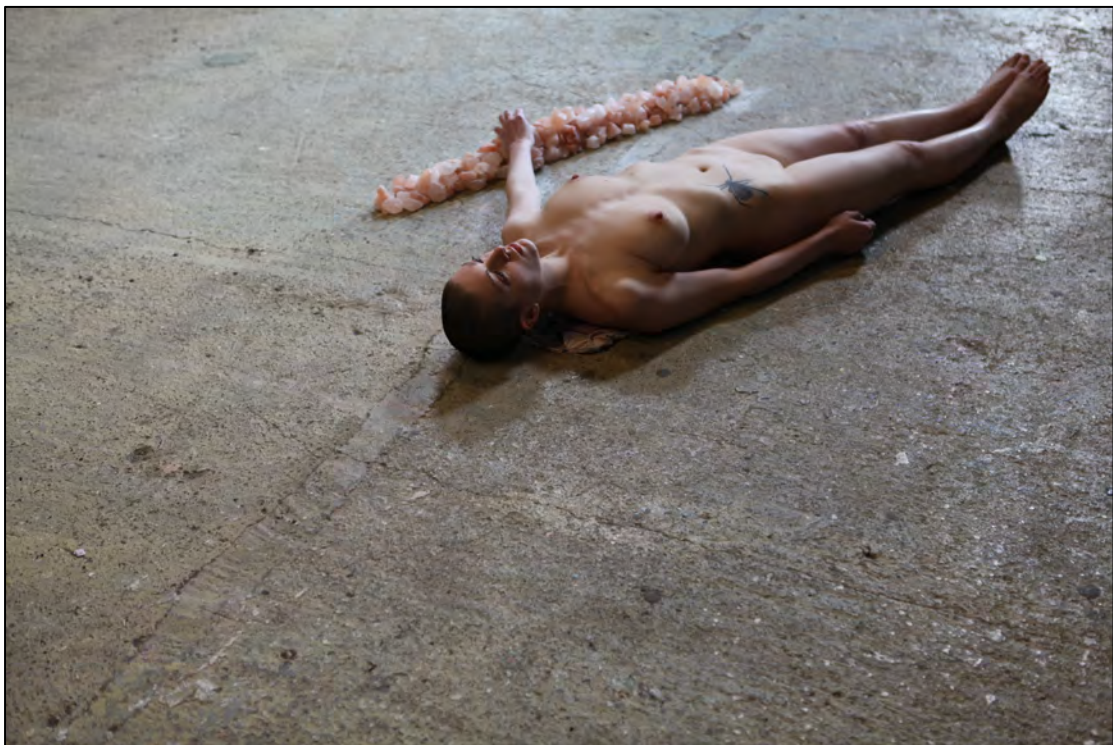
Aftercare I & II (2016) represent similar cases regarding the chaotic behaviour of materials, as in both cases the artist performed a series of rituals of care to manage the intense effects of *Corner Time* upon her body. Here, the material residues of chalk and Himalayan salt rocks, were the main image-production mechanisms. In performance *Aftercare I* (2016), the artist was repeating a series of cleansing rituals for three consecutive days (20 hours): rinsing her mouth with soda and water, dusting off the garment she had worn at *Corner Time* (2016), putting salt rocks, ground salt and chalk on her body. A palimpsest of images, visually manifested through the material residues of salt, soda and chalk, was created. In *Aftercare II* (2016), the artist performed a one-hour action inside an old chapel of a former asylum. She entered the room wearing a light skin-coloured dress and holding salt rocks in her lap. After standing still for a while, she let the rocks roll on the floor, got undressed and after spreading her dress on the floor, she laid down on her back. Then, with slow movements, she placed the stones one by one on her body as a kind of healing ritual. When the action was completed, she got up, got dressed and left, with the stones abandoned on the floor as an image-residue of the action that took place.



100. D. Zacharopoulou, *Aftercare I*, 3-day (20 hrs) performance, 2016. Photograph: J. A. Lange.



101. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aftercare I*, 3-day performance, 2016. Photograph: J. A. Lange.



102. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aftercare II*, 2016. Photograph: Prof. Nigel Rolfe.

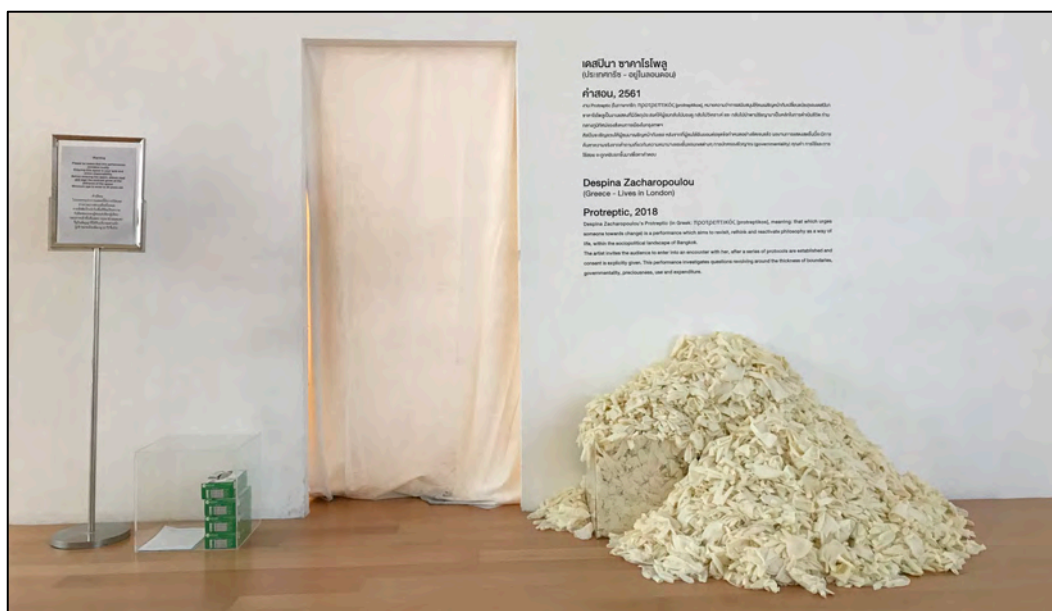
In *The most precious non-object* (2016) an image-residue was generated as the public applied honey and glitter on the performer's body, with every touch adding to the creation of an iridescent palimpsest on the artist's skin. If corporeal trace is the image created when bodies intra-act with other bodies, then in *The most precious non-object*, this trace became perfectly visible through the glitter and honey imprints that each spectator left on the performer's body, the moment they touched her. The iridescent material accumulated on the performer's skin within six hours, not only testified to the multitude of her encounters with the public, but through its topography's anomaly and roughness, also testified to the varying intensity and duration of these different encounters and touches.



103. Despina Zacharopoulou, *The most precious non-object*, 2016. Photograph: F. Kertudo.

Pierre Klossowski's work *The Living Currency* (*La Monnaie Vivante*, 1970) emphasized the importance of the idea of surplus/residue, in the economy of passions/affects [impulsive forces (*forces impulsionelles*)] during the production of images-signs (simulacra). For Klossowski, the similarity between a useful object and a work of art - which is useless and beyond any value - lies precisely in the fact that both are “expressions of waste;”

they manage to consolidate phantasms in some temporary forms (simulacra), thus being “modes for the expression and representation of impulsive forces.”¹⁷⁵ In an attempt to bridge Freud with the Marx, the French philosopher regarded the phantasm as the primary impulsive force persistently repeated through actions and constructions of artifacts, as an attempt to express itself, without ever fully achieving it. Deleuze & Guattari in their work *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), argued that every phantasm is necessarily collective and distributed. This thesis, positioning itself in favour of Deleuze & Guattari’s argument, considers the works presented as “[theatrical] stages” where the “reality of the phantasm” is dramatized in its full intensity.¹⁷⁶ The surplus/excess that this “phantasm reality” expresses, would be “*the debit balance of individual unity,*” the expenditure that the performer’s subjectivity undergoes during its dissolution and transmutation into flesh.¹⁷⁷



104. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Protreptic*, 3-week long durational performance, 2018 (last day).

¹⁷⁵ Klossowski, *Living Currency*, (2017 [1970]), 47.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 53.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 63.

In *Protreptic* (2018) the material residue of the audience's 12,000 worn gloves disposed in a plexiglass box by the performance space's exit, constituted the work's final image. During the course of three weeks, although there was no direct visual contact between the inside and the outside, the images generated inside the performer's room and the image of the gloves piling up by the exit, created a multiplicity of images brought together through memory processes.



105. Nicolas Provost, *Long Live the New Flesh* – excerpt 1, video still, 2010.

Ghosting

The performances *Pudeur (d'après FN) I & II* (2017 & 2018 respectively) and *Actio / Praxis* (2020), show in the clearest way how two different series of images unfolding simultaneously, may allow for a third series of images to emerge. The intensity produced during the pulsating vibrations of convergence and divergence between these two series, would engender a third series of images, in the form of signal, now able to circulate like a ghost between the first two series.

In the field of programming, ghosting is the glitch effect that can occur during the repetitive operation of a code. Glitch is an unexpected error/fold in the code, a wave disorder, which gives a kind of plurality or dimensionality to the repetitive pattern, via the production of new singularities. While referencing to morphogenetic processes within feedback loops, one could argue that the symbol z in the Mandelbrot set could be seen as the glitch effect, with z being both the initial raw material and the material residue produced:

$$z \Rightarrow z^2 + c$$

Mandelbrot set



106. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur (d'après F.N.)*, 2017. Photograph: Vasiliki Antonopoulou.

In *Pudeur (d'après FN)* (2017) the ghost image was produced, mainly, through the pulsating motion of convergence and divergence between the following two series of images: (a) the reading of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical text, and (b) the action of body stapling. Schematically this relationship could be described as:

$$\text{text reading} \rightleftharpoons \text{body stapling}$$

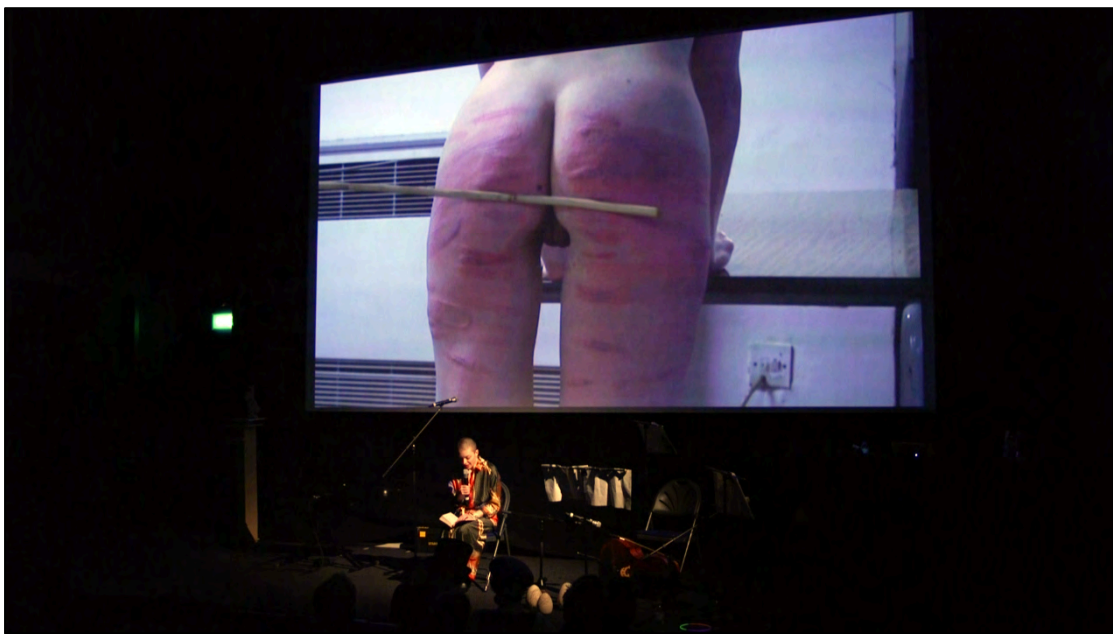


107. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur II (d'après F.N.)*, 2018. Photograph: Åsa Johannesson.

In *Pudeur II (d'après FN)* (2018), the action of *Pudeur (d'après FN)* (2017) was re-enacted live on stage, while at the same time the performance's first version was shown in a video projection, behind the performer while on stage. In addition to the pulsating vibration between the two series of images unfolding within the project, the intensity of the difference was increased during the repetition process between the live action and the video. Schematically this relationship could be described as:

$$[\text{text reading} \rightleftharpoons \text{body stapling (video)}] \rightleftharpoons [\text{text reading} \rightleftharpoons \text{body stapling (live)}]$$

In *Aphorism* (2019), the artist sat in a chair on the amphitheatre stage, dressed in a colourful dress, to read Nietzsche's aphorism "Of the despisers of the body."¹⁷⁸ While reading, the black screen just behind her showed short excerpts from a caning session she had within a private consensual environment a few years ago. The scenes projected were interrupted by black frames, thus creating a rhythm superimposing onto the rhythm of caning and the rhythm of the live reading of Nietzsche's philosophical text.



108. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aphorism*, 2019. Photograph: *This is tomorrow*.

The paradoxes and discrepancies that took place between the live reading and the video created tensions and allowed a new series of images to emerge. The timid, seated colourful figure reading in a calm and rhythmic voice, created a kind of paradox alongside the video's explosive and voluptuous images, which kept appearing and

¹⁷⁸ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aphorism*, 7-minute live performance & video projection, Entanglement - The Opera, Gorvy Lecture Theatre, Royal College of Art, 2019. Text read during the performance: Friedrich Nietzsche "Of the Despisers of the Body," in: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, transl. by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1961, 2003 [Chemnitz: Ernst Schmeitzner, 1883]), 61-63. despinazacharopoulou.com/aphorism (accessed 21-06-2021).

disappearing in a staccato and allegro rhythm. The relationship established between these two series of images could be rendered in the form:

text reading \rightleftharpoons caning (video)



109. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Actio / Praxis*, 2020. Photograph: Tara Fatehi Irani.

In *Actio / Praxis* (2020) the artist was reading the terms of the contract from *Protreptic* (2018), while a five-minute video with intermittent shots from the live work was being projected.¹⁷⁹ Here, too, the transition from one video shot to the other was mediated by black frames, creating a kind of pulse intervening within the viewers' field of vision. The correlation created between the live images and the video images could be translated as:

Protreptic contract reading \rightleftharpoons *Protreptic* video documentation

¹⁷⁹ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Actio/Praxis*, 5-minute live performance and video projection, Art, Performance & the Act [invited guest speaker Romeo Castellucci], University of Roehampton, London, UK, 2020. despinazacharopoulou.com/actio-praxis vimeo.com/416314312 (both accessed 14-04-2021).

In *Actio / Praxis* (2020), the contradictions and inconsistencies between the two series of images produced, were based on the paradox established between the live reading of *Protreptic's* contract, and the post-performance images portrayed in the projected video. What was created through the collision of these two different temporalities, combined with the performing body's third temporality of the here and now, was a rhythmic pulse in the form of a signal, an *echo-image* circulating between the reading of the contract and its physical application as shown through the video.



110. D. Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 7-week performance, 2016. Photograph: N. Tsoukala.

Shifting mechanisms II

In the live works where the artist intra-acted with members of the audience, the very element of use via the action of touching, was the mechanism that would shift the action towards unexpected directions and lead to the birth of new, unexpected images that would in turn compose pulsating images-multiplicities. As the performer's body assumed

new positions, it would distribute the gaze and movement, and play with different degrees of nudity, to prevent or facilitate possible future uses of the performer's body by the public.



111. D. Zacharopoulou, *Protreptic*, 3-week durational performance, 2018. Photograph: BAB team.

Notes from the performance diaries accompanying each performance piece reveal how such shifting mechanisms in the hands of the performer operated; the artist was then able not only to respond to the forces exerted upon her body by other bodies, but was also in the position to be attuned to the energies and bodies around her, to act attractively or repulsively towards possible future intra-actions:

I had a group of teen-agers that wanted to make fun of me. After me getting naked [in order to confront them], they left the space.¹⁸⁰

For most of the day I was lying down on the crate. [...] There was a specific moment, though, when I realized that there was a person that insisted upon

¹⁸⁰ *Protreptic* performance diary, 2018, day 19.

teasing me. A girl kept tickling and poking me on different parts of my body. She was trying to make me laugh, without me responding to her attempts, though. [What I did instead, was] getting naked and covering my face with my garment. [...] She attempted to lift the dress off my face. [My response to her gesture] was getting completely naked and standing on the crate staring at her. [...] initially she felt embarrassed and then started avoiding me by walking around the crate. As soon as she realized that she couldn't escape my gaze she [accelerated her pace]. I kept standing still on the crate, fully naked, waiting for things to unfold.¹⁸¹



112. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Protreptic*, 3-week performance, 2018. Photograph: Billy Zhao.

I decided to tie up myself on the chair [already existing inside the performance space]. [...] apart from my legs and torso, I tied up my face and neck. I decided to [...] stay in this position as long as possible, while pulling the rope around my neck [as strongly as I could]. I started feeling dizzy, I got scared that I might lose consciousness, but I stayed [in this position] for at least thirty minutes [...]. While in this position I felt someone [wiping] my neck, face, torso and feet, with a wet towel [already existing in the space]. They also tried to make loose the rope around my neck.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ *Protreptic* performance diary, 2018, day 19.

¹⁸² *Corner Time* performance diary, 2016, day 4.



113. D. Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 7-week performance, 2016. Photograph: N. Tsoukala.

The aforementioned excerpts from the artist's performance diaries provide examples of a certain game of pulling-and-pushing taking place within the works discussed.



114. D. Zacharopoulou, *Corner Time*, 7-week performance, 2016. Photograph: N. Tsoukala.

Compared with other performance pieces (e.g. Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* [1974], Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* [1964]) where the performer passively accepted the audience's actions upon her body while having her gaze fixed towards an infinite field of vision, works carried out in the context of this research suggest a dynamic pulsating relationship with the audience. The performer not only is in the position to accept forces exercised upon her that would shift the course of events within the work, but, while also being attuned to everything surrounding her, is equally able to employ strategies of attraction and repulsion towards the audience.



115-116-117. Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964.

These strategies of attraction and repulsion should not be seen as separated the one from the other in a binary way, but should be viewed as coexisting in various degrees, always mutating and shifting to create a complex and nuanced performer-audience entanglement. Such attraction \Rightarrow repulsion strategies might include: functions of the gaze, body positioning, energy shifts, alterations between movement and stillness, different rhythms according to which all of the above might happen, shift and combine with each other. For example, staying still for long periods of time may invite and/or discourage members of the audience to approach the performer and intra-act with them. At the same time, it may result in boredom as if nothing is happening. Or...all of the above and at the same time. Rapidly changing positions or displacing oneself in space might energize the work, trigger the audience's attention and/or create a hard limit blocking

any physical performer-audience intra-action. Creating eye contact with members of the audience, gazing at the ceiling or towards an infinite field of vision, closing the eyes, blinking or not blinking – depending on the duration of each action and the rhythm of shifting from one action to the other - may also operate in various different ways, sometimes inviting, others menacing, intimidating, fearsome or neglecting, leading to a whole spectrum of unpredictable responses. Should the performer decide to lie naked in a supine position exposing her breasts and/or genitals, assume an introvert embryo-like position, stand, sit, face the audience or stand with their back towards it, all different kinds of encounters might be initiated, various degrees of vulnerability might get established, multiple levels of intensity might be generated, all resulting to an ever-pulsating energy field within the work that would engender fluctuating image-multiplicities.

Beauty-as-gravitas

The seductive⇒repulsive images created and inhabited by the performer, are characterized by a certain kind of Beauty, indicated not from the imitation of forms, but from the images' function as desiring machines set in motion by the conflict among non-reconcilable / impossible forces, generating a reality affirmed *in pure joy*.¹⁸³ Beauty, in this case, would be this seductive and magnetic quality (gravitas) exercised by images produced through an endless pulse of ongoing systoles and diastoles.¹⁸⁴ *Beauty-as-gravitas*, thus, adds to the potential of new research trajectories within the genealogy of the existing philosophical and aesthetic discourse on the idea of the Beautiful. Traditionally, Beauty has been associated with the creation of aesthetic forms characterized by a sense

¹⁸³ On the operation of desiring machines, see supra: 90.

¹⁸⁴ The phrase 'Systoles and diastoles' means 'contractions and extensions,' from the Greek words *συστολές* and *διαστολές*, respectively.

of harmony deriving from the application of rules set by classical Greek art.¹⁸⁵ However, Immanuel Kant, in his “Analytic of the Beautiful” would give two different definitions of the Beautiful, with the first one grounded on the bodily affect that Beauty provokes to the person encountering it, and with the second one associated with an object’s purposiveness:

*The beautiful is that which, apart from concepts, is represented as the object of a UNIVERSAL delight.*¹⁸⁶

*Beauty is the form of purposiveness in an object, so far as this is perceived in it apart from the representation of an end.*¹⁸⁷

Commenting briefly upon Kant’s definitions, one might extract the following:

- Firstly, that Beauty is recognized via the senses, not rationality, by triggering delight to those who encounter it, along with the aspiration for the existence of a *sensus communis* upon this specific aesthetic object’s capacity to trigger the same delight to everybody who encounters it.¹⁸⁸
- Secondly, that Beauty – an aesthetic object’s capacity to resuscitate delight to those encountering it – once recognized, presents itself as an aesthetic object’s sole purpose, beyond any other goal.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ “The sense of Beauty which continues to expand all over the world, started to be shaped for the first time under the Greek sun.” In: Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Σκέψεις για τη Μίμηση των Ελληνικών Έργων στη Ζωγραφική και τη Γλυπτική* (*Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*), transl. by N.M.Skouteropoulou (Athens: Indiktos, 2001 [publ.1755]), 7. Translation is mine.

¹⁸⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, transl. by J. C. Meredith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952/2007[1790]), 42. “The pleasure in the beautiful is, [...] Without any guiding-line of end or principle [...]” Ibid., 122.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 66.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 123.

¹⁸⁹ “[...] the causality of a *concept* in respect of its *object* is purposiveness (*forma finalis*).” Ibid. 51.

Edmund Burke, in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*, problematized the recognition of Beauty among human beings. For Burke, the main force of attraction that would make humans develop a certain kind of preference toward specific people (also animals and/or objects), would be Beauty.¹⁹⁰ For the Irish philosopher, Beauty would be a “social quality,” a “cohesive matter,” as it were, that makes people “[...] enter willingly into a kind of relation [...]” with those that attract them due to the triggering of visceral responses such as: joy, pleasure, affection etc.¹⁹¹ Though for both Kant and Burke, Beauty gets recognized via the bodily affects provoked to the spectator, the idea of the Beautiful throughout the history of aesthetics has been mostly approached via formalistic criteria and has been used to describe artworks portraying a certain kind of harmony observed in “restful contemplation.”¹⁹²

The artistic avant-garde, marking the beginning of Modernity in the first decades of the 20th century, renounced Beauty in the context of its attempt to establish a polemic art, able to initiate sociopolitical change. From that moment on, the idea of the Beautiful would be officially banned from any aesthetic discourse, in favor of the idea of the Sublime.¹⁹³ Lyotard, in his text “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde” problematized the idea of the Sublime, starting from Barnett Newman’s 1948 essay “The Sublime is Now” where the painter suggested an understanding of the Sublime in art as an experience of

¹⁹⁰ “[...] beauty is, for the greater part, some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses.” In: Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998/2008 [1757]), 90.

¹⁹¹ Edmund Burke, “Section X: Of BEAUTY” in: *Ibid.*, 36-37.

¹⁹² “The mind feels itself *set in motion* in the representation of the sublime in nature; whereas in the aesthetic judgement upon what is beautiful therein it is in *restful* contemplation.” Kant., *Critique of Judgement*, ... (1952/2007[1790]), 88.

¹⁹³ “*Sublime* is the name given to what is *absolutely great*.” In: Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, ... (1952/2007[1790]), 78. “Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect.” In: Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*, (1998/2008 [1757]), 47.

the “here and now.”¹⁹⁴ Lyotard’s main argument was the suggestion that Burke’s idea of the Sublime as something that induces astonishment (a mixture of terror and pleasure) would be all about the creation of an event that would answer to the question: “is it happening?”, via the intensification of the senses and without finding any refuge to rationality. For the French philosopher, Burke’s aesthetics - and to a lesser degree Kant’s - would inform the artistic practices, methodologies and goals of the early 20th century avant-garde (e.g. by inspiring their shock-provoking happenings), as well as those of abstract expressionism and minimalism.¹⁹⁵ Lyotard, going a step further than Newman, would then raise the question of what the constitutive element of innovation in the art of his contemporaries might be. He would conclude that, within a capitalist society where the circulation of information and the distribution of time are governed by the capital, innovative art should only exist as soon as it *redistributes existing notions of time*:

The avant-garde task is to undo spiritual assumptions regarding time. The sense of the sublime IS the name of this dismantling.¹⁹⁶

However, it was during the 1990s that a renewed interest revolving around ideas of beauty took off.¹⁹⁷ Dave Hickey, in 1993, after declaring that “The issue of the nineties will be beauty,” gave a definition of it as: “the iconography of desire,” “the agency that

¹⁹⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde”, transl. by Lisa Liebmann, in: *Artforum* (April 1984): 36-43. artforum.com/print/198404/the-sublime-and-the-avant-garde-32533 (accessed 22-04-2021). Also see: Jean-François Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, transl. by E. Rottenberg, Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994 [Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1991].

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁹⁷ The principal text identifying this shift was Dave Hickey’s “Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty,” in: Dave Hickey, *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty*, (Los Angeles: Art Issues Press, 1993), 15-24.

causes visual pleasure in the beholder.”¹⁹⁸ Hickey, based on the beautiful commercial art vs. rational academic art binary, argued for Beauty’s potential to initiate change due to the democratic appeal of its vernacular character and direct visceral effect to the audience. Arthur Danto, responding to Hickey’s text as well as to other curatorial attempts to define the meaning of Beauty, suggested a rethinking of the idea of the Beautiful as something inherent to the work of art, related to ethical values.¹⁹⁹ Kathleen Marie Higgins, in her 1996 text “Whatever Happened to Beauty? A response to Danto” problematized around the issues at stake in Danto’s 1994 text “Beauty and Morality.”²⁰⁰ Challenging Danto’s argument that “[t]o find beauty in images of suffering, to seek aesthetic satisfaction where injustice prevails is [...] a moral fail,” Higgins called forth Beauty’s political potential to facilitate change through its capacity to:²⁰¹

- create a space for spiritual openness,
- allow moral insight to develop further by creating the comforting background against which one can think the uncomfortable,
- develop our capacity for nuance
- foster attunement/faith to the improvability of things and revolutionary change.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Hickey, “Enter the Dragon...” as mentioned in: Dave Beech, ed., *Beauty*, (London / Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel / The MIT Press, 2009), 22.

¹⁹⁹ Arthur C. Danto, “The Aesthetics of Brillo Boxes,” *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003) 2-4: 6-15. Here, as mentioned in: Beech, ed., *Beauty*, ... (2009), 60-65.

²⁰⁰ Kathleen Marie Higgins, “Whatever Happened to Beauty? A Response to Danto”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 54, no. 3 (summer 1996) 281-4. Here as mentioned in: Beech, ed., *Beauty*, ... (2009), 31-35. Arthur C. Danto, “Beauty and Morality”, in: *Embodied Meanings: Critical Essays and Aesthetic Meditations* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994) 363-75.

²⁰¹ Higgins, “Whatever Happened to Beauty?...”, in: Beech, ed., *Beauty*, ... (2009), 31.

²⁰² All points: *Ibid.*, 34-35.

The question of the ethical stakes of Beauty in regard to images of suffering has been also developed by Elaine Scarry in her book *On Beauty and Being Just*.²⁰³ Scarry after locating the incoherence of the political argumentation against Beauty, stood in favor of Beauty's political potency via its capacity to create urgency, awaken attunement, care and empathy and, therefore, give justice to "existing injuries."²⁰⁴ For Scarry, Beauty operates as a sort of contract between something beautiful (a person or thing) and the person who encounters it:

[...] At the moment we see something beautiful, we undergo a radical decentering. [...] We willingly cede our ground to the thing that stands before us.²⁰⁵

The importance of this argument resides in *associating Beauty's aesthetic value with its ethical value, via ideas of distribution*.²⁰⁶ Beauty's power to redistribute in space the affective forces of those who witness it, also reveals its potential to give justice. An idea that seems to be relevant to Jacques Rancière's definition of the political as *the distribution of the sensible*.²⁰⁷ But, isn't this, precisely, what the live works presented investigate through the

²⁰³ Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999.

²⁰⁴ Elaine Scarry extracts from Part Two, "On Beauty and Being Fair," in: *On Beauty and Being Just*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 36.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 42.

²⁰⁶ It would be interesting to see Scarry's argument in light of Deleuze's distinction between two different types of distribution: (a) the first one associated with *logos* and the hierarchical "division of that which is distributed," and (b) the second one associated with *nomos* (the law in Greek) and the "division among those who distribute themselves in an open space." The first one creates exclusions, the second one "equality of being" via nomadic distributions. In: Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, ... (2014/2017 [1968]), 47-48.

²⁰⁷ "I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. [...] It is on the basis of this primary aesthetics that it is possible to raise the question of 'aesthetic practices' as I understand them, that is forms of visibility that disclose artistic practices, the place they occupy, what they 'do' or 'make' from the standpoint of what is common to the community." Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, transl. by Gabriel Rockhill, [London : Continuum, 2004 (Paris: La Fabrique / Les Belles Lettres, 2000)], 12-13.

governmentality of the thickness and the porosity of boundaries in the performer-audience encounter? Adding to the above, one of the contributions made by the current performance practice-led research would be *rethinking Beauty via performance art as an affective catalyst for potential encounters*. Thus argued, what is essentially suggested in the thesis is a radical rethinking of the idea of Beauty, away from all sorts of idealisms, now seen as an attracting force having no further goal apart from its potential to seduce and, therefore, initiate future encounters by creating a gravitational field pulling other bodies toward it. It is precisely in their capacity of seduction leading to potential encounters with the audience that the performances discussed exercise their disruptive power to generate change.

Image as corporeal trace II

Conscious Man as Middle Point Between Systole and Diastole.²⁰⁸

Aby Warburg, *Notes on the Kreuzlingen Lecture*, 1923

In *Borderline* (2018) the artist was walking incessantly for three hours along the periphery of a chapel's back space.²⁰⁹ The images generated from the movements and deformations of her body, visualized the forces running through it in a rhizomatic expansion towards all directions and in a constant flux. Comparing *Borderline* (2018) with the much earlier performance *Introduction* (2015), it becomes evident that they both operated in a similar way. Both performances allowed the non-representable forces exerted upon and

²⁰⁸ Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, ... (2004 [1998]), 300.

²⁰⁹ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Borderline*, 3-hour performance, Flightmode RCA Research Show, Asylum Caroline Gardens, London, UK, 2018. despinazacharopoulou.com/borderline-1 vimeo.com/292771595 (both links accessed 15-04-2021).

traversing the performer's body, to be manifested via bodily movements and deformations.



118-119. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Borderline*, 2018. Photographs: Sotiris Gkonis.

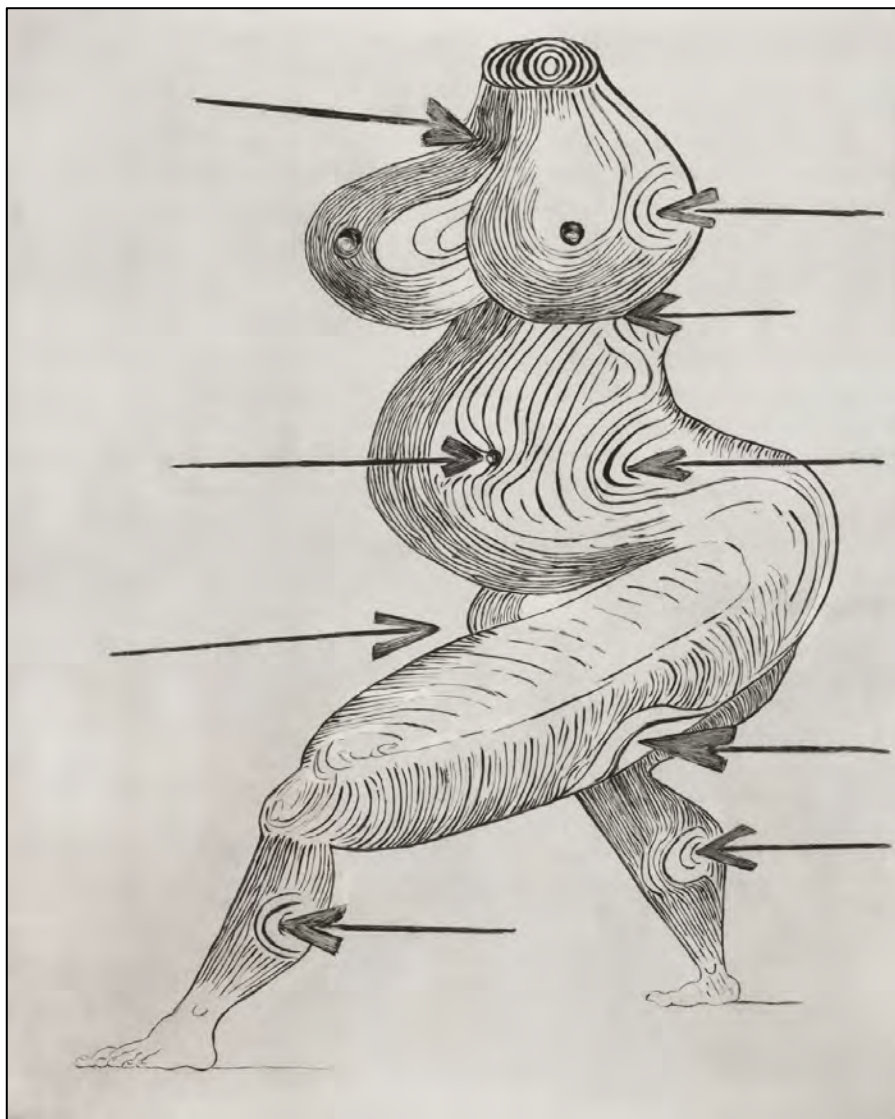
For there is a community of the arts, a common problem. In art, and in painting as in music, it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces. For this reason no art is figurative. Paul Klee's famous formula – "Not to render the visible, but to render visible." – means nothing else.²¹⁰

The difference between the two works lies in the fact that in one case there was a medium exercising and distributing forces on the performer's body (rope), while in the other case, there was not. Moreover, in the work *Borderline* (2018) the forces running through the performer's body were not only due to the affections of other external forces upon it (energies of other bodies, light, sounds, etc.), but were also the generative orgiastic forces

²¹⁰ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon, ...* (2017/2019 [1981]), 41.

that traversed her, swirling and expanding in all directions, causing her body to be in constant contorsion and movement.

Ancient Greeks called *physis* (nature) all these generative forces that spring and develop like a spiral within every living being, setting it in motion. Martin Heidegger conceived of the idea of *physis* as “this emerging and rising in itself” through a double pulsating movement of concealment and revelation.²¹¹



120. Louise Bourgeois, *Sainte Sébastienne (The Arrows of Stress)*, 1993, 97x77.8 cm, MoMa.

²¹¹ Martin Heidegger, “*The Origin of the Work of Art*,” in: Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: Routledge, 2010), 107.

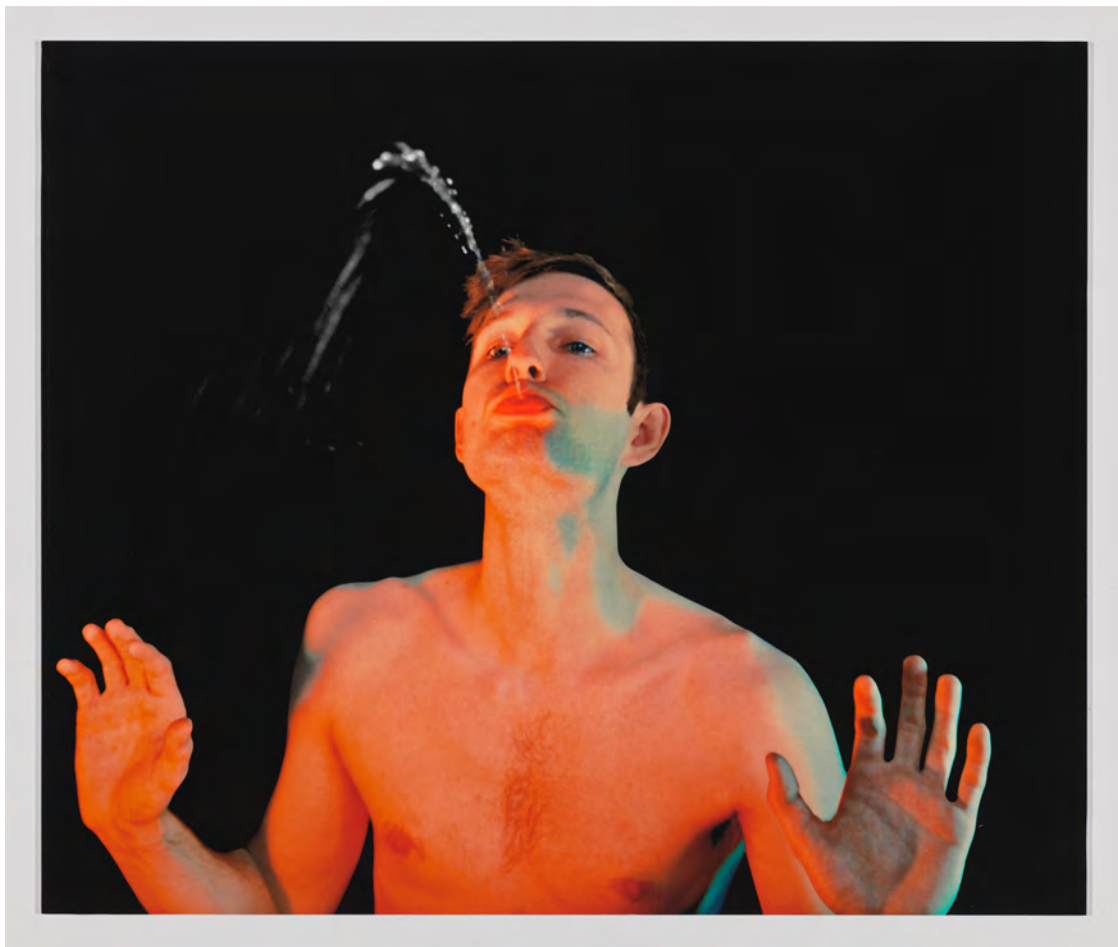
According to Heidegger, the work of art, as a kind of ‘rift’ [Riß], is what would allow this double pulse motion to spring out like a jet/fountain of truth, revealing things the moment it hides them.²¹² *Borderline* (2018), together with all the other works discussed, functioned as a cut through which truth got to be revealed. This happened precisely because performance as *Spatium Monstrorum* allows for truth to spring out from the conflict taking place the moment images get produced, thus maintaining truth’s violent character.



121. L.Fontana, *Spatial Concept 'Waiting'*, 1960, Tate T00694, © Fondazione Lucio Fontana.

²¹² Ibid., 121-122 & 131. A similar idea to Heidegger’s rift may be identified in Merleau-Ponty’s chiasm as read by Lyotard in: Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, transl. by Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011 [1971]), 5.

At this point it would be necessary to make, again, a clarification about how the orgiastic forces at stake in the performances analyzed, place themselves in relation to the philosophical references of this thesis. Having identified areas of overlapping with Martin Heidegger's work regarding the role of the double concealment-revelation of truth within the work of art, it would be important to distinguish this research's view as to the originary quality assigned to truth by the German philosopher.



122. Bruce Nauman, *Self Portrait as a Fountain*, 1966-67, printed 1970.

Truth in the present thesis is not meant to be pre-existing, calling one to bring it to light as if they were conducting an archaeological excavation. In the performances put forward, the event of truth takes place when bodies get entangled; it is about a trans-

physical field of forces circulating through the repetition of trauma in the form of a feedback loop. However, this process should not be conceived of as a revival of an original event that happened in the past, now resuscitated for therapeutic purposes, but as a reconfiguration of both the present and the past in a form of a multiplicity, through the process of Eternal Return. Revelation and concealment, in this case, should not be seen as a form of binary move, but as a sort of signal resulting from the systoles and diastoles of a pulsating surface inhabited by heterogeneous forces. If Nietzsche saw in Eternal Return the mobilization of Dionysian forces through their conflict with the Apollonian element, it was because he grasped the necessity of the continuation of the circulation of these forces, that dismember and disperse every kind of totality, proving that what survives within the course of Eternal Return is not the imitation of forms but only tensions and differences.²¹³

Klossowski's reading of the Marquis de Sade's *120 days of Sodom*, showed how the figure of the libertine/pervert sought to sustain the circulation of intensities via the obsessional repetition of carnal debauchery, to attack normality through the "redistribution of functions" for the construction of a "sensuous polymorphy:"²¹⁴

[...] the pervert thus observed and documented does behave essentially as a maniac. He subordinates his pleasure to the performing of one sole gesture.²¹⁵

The pervert [...] seems to formulate by his gesture a definition of existence and a sort of judgement put on existence.²¹⁶

²¹³ Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, ... (1997[1969]), 43-44.

²¹⁴ Pierre Klossowski, *Sade my Neighbor*, transl. by Alphonso Lingis (Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1991 [Paris: Seuil, 1947/1967]), 23.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 22.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

Annie Le Brun, author specializing in Sade since 1986 and curator of the exhibition *Sade: Attaquer le soleil* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris, 14/10/2014 - 25/01/2015), in an interview with *Éditions de Beaux Arts* magazine, argued that the key question posed through Sade's work was that of the unrepresentable:

Starting with the image of the body. How to illustrate these forces that agitate us, desire, violence, that which is called evil?²¹⁷

In Sade's literary works the body appeared surrendered to all kinds of pleasure and cruelty, without limit. His heroes indulged in all sorts of sexual practices and extreme tortures, without end, as if they had to operate accumulatively to create an excess able to circulate and renew as soon as acts of pleasure and violence continued with increasing intensity, as more and more people participated in them:

The way a first transgression is ramified in transgressions it irremediably engenders is here described with the customary vigor of the Marquis: from incest to adultery, from adultery to false witness, from false witness to murder.²¹⁸

By distinguishing sodomy as the most blasphemous act against Christian morality - since it does not recognize gender, nor can it lead to childbearing, and therefore cannot serve the family institution - Sade spoke of the death of God and of the revaluation of all values, long before Nietzsche did.²¹⁹ Opposing the Christian God, the French writer should not, however, be confined by his readers to a mere opponent of religion, but

²¹⁷ Annie Le Brun, Laurence Des Cars, Florelle Guillaume, "Sade pose la Question de l'Irreprésentable: Entretien avec Annie Le Brun et Laurence des Cars, Commissaires de l'Exposition." In: *Sade: Attaquer le soleil - Musée d'Orsay* (Paris: Beaux Arts/Tim Éditions, 2014), 4. Translation is mine.

²¹⁸ Klossowski, *Sade my Neighbor*, ... (1991 [1947/1967]), 108.

²¹⁹ "If it was true that God existed, would we not all be his rivals destroying as we do what he has molded?" Verneuil's words from Sade's *Juliette* (1797), as mentioned in: Maurice Blanchot, *Lautréamont and Sade*, transl. by S. Kendall and M. Kendall, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004 [Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1963]), 29.

should be recognized as a philosopher of excess and of the forces traversing the human body. These forces were seen by Sade as pure intensities regardless of their pleasurable or painful affective character, thus overlapping with Burke's thoughts on the common nature of pleasure and pain:

For my part I am rather inclined to imagine, that pain and pleasure in their most simple and natural manner of affecting, are each of a positive nature, and by no means necessarily dependent on each other for their existence. The human mind is often, and I think it is for the most part, in a state neither of pain nor pleasure, which I call a state of indifference.²²⁰



123. Franz von Stuck, *Le péché*, 1899, oil on cardboard, 32.5 x 77 cm.

In the Sadean universe the pain-pleasure entanglement allows a kind of *calm spasmodic Beauty* to emerge via bodies not entrenched in boundaries, but dismembered, pierced and used in all possible ways. These bodies, fully submitted and under the influence of various kinds of forces, are presented in constant tension, adopting twisted and contorted

²²⁰ Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, ... (1998/2008 [1757]), 28.

postures, in such ways that are not far from Jean-Martin Charcot's well-known photographic studies on hysterical patients in crisis.²²¹

Jean-Martin Charcot was the doctor who led the study of hysteria at the Salpêtrière clinic in Paris during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, using the photographic technology of his time to capture the traces of this mental illness on the body of hysterical patients. Despite the questionable scientific value of Charcot's methods, his visual legacy is *a study of the human body in spasm while traversed by impossible forces* taking over its formations and movements, to produce a whole spectrum of images.



124. Louise Bourgeois, *Arched figure*, 1993, sculpture, 116.8 x 193.0 x 99.1 cm, Art Gallery NSW.

²²¹ Désiré Magloire Bourneville and Paul Regnard, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière. Service de M. Charcot*, Paris: Adrien Delahaye & Co., 1876-1877, 1878. Also see: Asti Hustvedt, *Medical Muses: Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.

For Charcot the origin of hysteria was due to some kind of inherited degeneration, whereas for Freud (who was Charcot's student and attended his - almost theatrical - lectures in Salpêtrière's amphitheater) hysteria was due to some kind of repressed primary trauma, necessarily of a sexual nature, most likely abuse.²²² For the father of psychoanalysis, as can be deduced from his text "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896), hysterical symptoms are to be seen as bodily manifestations of an obsessive repetition of trauma which, after being repelled into the unconscious, cannot be verbally expressed.²²³ However, repetition of trauma in the performances presented shouldn't be grasped as a compulsive revisiting ('acting out') of a primary violent experience not "[...] fully integrated into the psycho-somatic condition," nor as its therapeutic working-through.²²⁴ The performances-surfaces discussed, generated meaning and produced intensities via actions of use and violence that managed to crystallize trauma within transient forms, as an obsessive image (phantasm) that kept circulating, in a similar way that Klossowski, under the influence of Hermes Trismegistus, grasped "every theophany as a pathophany."²²⁵

Survival of images / Survival of forces

The body-images generated during the performances discussed were images where generative forces got manifested via every movement and posture adopted by the performer. Therefore, questions revolving around the survival of these images are raised.

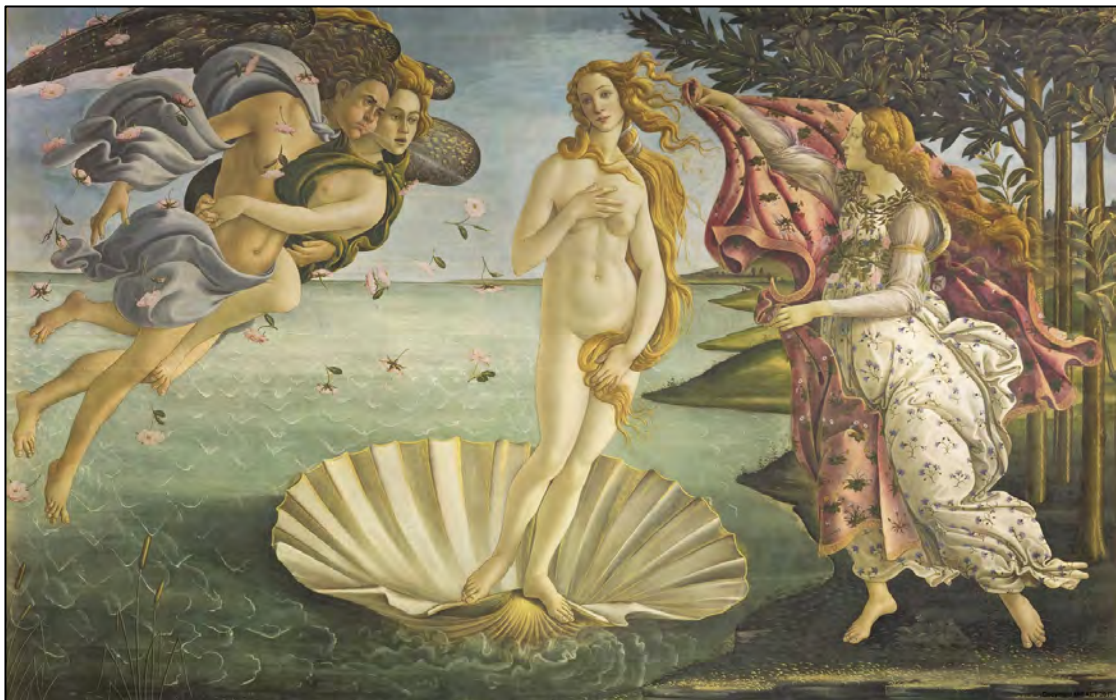
²²² "Whatever case and whatever symptom we take as our point of departure, in the end we infallibly come to the field of sexual experience." Sigmund Freud, "The Aetiology of Hysteria," in: *The Freud Reader*, edited by Peter Gay, (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 100.

²²³ "[...] hysterical symptoms are derivatives of memories which are operating unconsciously." Ibid., 106.

²²⁴ However, these two positions are brought forward as the main viewpoints for looking at how trauma is staged in contemporary theatre performance, in the book: Miriam Haughton, ed., *Staging Trauma: Bodies in Shadow*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

²²⁵ Smith, "Introduction...", in: Klossowski, *Living Currency*, ... (2017 [1970]), 7.

Is there a methodology to be followed in order to preserve the intensity of the live works presented, as soon as they are over? How is it possible to document and express duration-as-lived-experience in time-based media such as performance art, after the live work is over? How can live art images survive in the history of art, since their very differentiating character relies on their impermanence and transience in time? ²²⁶ In order to approach these questions, it is suggested to invoke Aby Warburg's work on the survival of images, as described by the French art historian Philippe-Alain Michaud. Aby Warburg's research on the survival of the [pagan] spirit of Greek antiquity in the works of the Italian Renaissance, suggested that what managed to be revived through 15th century Italian artists was, the so-called, *Pathosformeln* (*pathetic formulas*); the Bacchic forces that set bodies in motion. A seminal example in Warburg's study was the survival of the moving nymph figure in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (c.1485).²²⁷



125. Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, c.1485, tempera on canvas, 172.5 x 278.5 cm.

²²⁶ On the survival of images, see: Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, 1999 [1932]. However, it was Henri Bergson who initially used the aforementioned phrase, in the third Chapter ["Of the Survival of images"], of his book *Matter and Memory* (1896).

²²⁷ Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, (1999 [1932]), 89-156.

Contrary to Winckelmann's argument - and other art historians of the time - that the distinctive identity of ancient Greek works was defined by "a gentle simplicity and a calm grandeur" acquired through the study and imitation of beautiful natural forms, Warburg saw in Greek art – even more so, in the emblematic complex of *Laocoön* - the "untamed energy" and "the collision effect" that came to be summed up, for the Greeks, in the mythological figure of Dionysus, and for Native Americans in the symbol and figure of the serpent (*figura serpentina*).²²⁸



126. Agesandros, Athenodoros, Polydoros, *Laocoön*, c.40-30 B.C., marble sculpture, 242 × 160 cm.

Influenced by his journey to the Native American tribes in New Mexico, and especially by his research on the snake ritual, Aby Warburg conceived through his work *Atlas* -

²²⁸ "The general feature of Greek masterpieces is ultimately a gentle simplicity and a calm grandeur in movement and expression." In: Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works*, ... (2001 [1755]), 32. Translation is mine. For the serpentine figure in Warburg's work, see: Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, ... (2004 [1998]), 286-287.

Mnemosyne (1921 - 1929), “a history of art without a text,” he called “a ghost story for adults.”²²⁹



127. Aby Warburg, *Atlas-Mnemosyne*, plate 39, 1921-1929.

²²⁹ Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*,... (2004 [1998]), 242, 262.

Warburg's Atlas was a collection of black plates upon which the German historian mounted Western art paintings' reproductions from across different historical periods (Ancient Greece, Renaissance), in conjunction with other iconographic elements such as maps, symbols, diagrams, photographs of Native Americans and their rituals, advertisements of his time, Eastern artworks etc. Through the methods of anachronism and montage, the German art historian attempted to reveal the forces that circulate between works of art over the centuries, once placed in proximity to one another and viewed panoptically within a constellation formation.

In this way Warburg not only managed to set art history in motion, his body as well, while operating as a sort of seismograph under the influence of his own pathological symptoms.²³⁰ Warburg saw poets, himself as an art historian, and other thinkers, such as Nietzsche, as physically registering the vibrations of Eternal Return to trauma, via the creative process, thus raising questions revolving around temporality, memory, trauma and creative-practice-as-symptom.²³¹ Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, in his lecture entitled "The Poet and the Present Time," argued:

[The poet] is like a seismograph that vibrates from every quake, even if it is thousands of miles away. It's not that he thinks incessantly of all things in the world. But they think of him. They are in him, and thus do they rule over him. Even his dull hours, his depressions, his confusions are impersonal states; they are like the spasms of the seismograph, and a deep enough gaze could read more mysterious things in them than in his poems.²³²

²³⁰ Warburg was suffering from chronic mental health issues and had been hospitalized for six consecutive years (1918-1924) during which he presented his lecture on the serpent ritual (1923). Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, (2004 [1998]), 24.

²³¹ On the idea of the symptom please see: Ibid., 15. On the idea of 'the artist as seismograph,' see: Ibid., 260. For Klossowski's argument upon Nietzsche conceiving the idea of Eternal Return influenced by his recurrent symptoms and cycles of treatment in the context of his mental illness, see: Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, ...1997 [1969].

²³² Lecture published in 1907. Text and information retrieved from: Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, (2004 [1998]), 260.

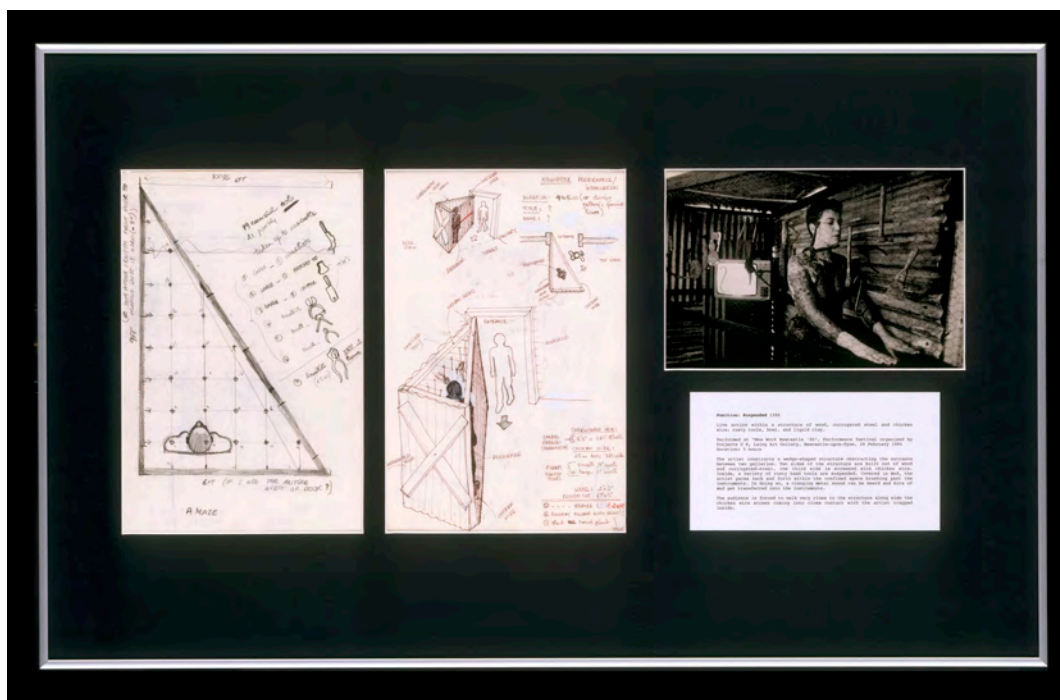
Aby Warburg's work by bringing together fossilized images across different artistic expressions – from painting to architecture and ritual – raised questions concerning the survival of images, after taking for granted that all linguistic signs, whether they are gestural, pictorial, poetic or else, lose part of their capacity to engender intensities, once mechanically reproduced.²³³ Walter Benjamin would name this capacity: the artwork's *aura*.²³⁴ Warburg's *Atlas-Mnemosyne* thus offers a potential working hypothesis and a methodology on how to approach ideas revolving around the survival of images within the history of art and how to allow these images distribute intensities through the violent collision of impossible forces of artworks once placed in constellations. In so doing, Warburg's move is seen as an important methodology to be taken into account when it comes to the survival of images in immaterial and transient artistic practices, such as that of live performance.

Existing strategies of presenting live works in post-performance settings usually include the use of photographic material or moving image as a sort of documentation of the 'actual work,' portraying as much information as possible, sometimes also supported by text, sketches and diagrams. This was the direction followed by Mona Hatoum in her work *Performance Documents*, 1980-1987/2013 shown in her solo exhibition at Tate Modern (2016).²³⁵ All elements employed (photographs, videos, images, text) had a rather descriptive function, aiming mainly at helping the audience understand what was happening during the live piece.

²³³ In: Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, ... (2004 [1998]), 271.

²³⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, transl. by J. A. Underwood, London: Penguin, 2008 [1935].

²³⁵ Christine Van Assche with Clarrie Wallis, eds., *Mona Hatoum*, London: Tate Publishing, 2016 [Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2015].



128. Mona Hatoum, *Position Suspended*, 1986, detail of *Performance Documents*, 1980-1987/2013.

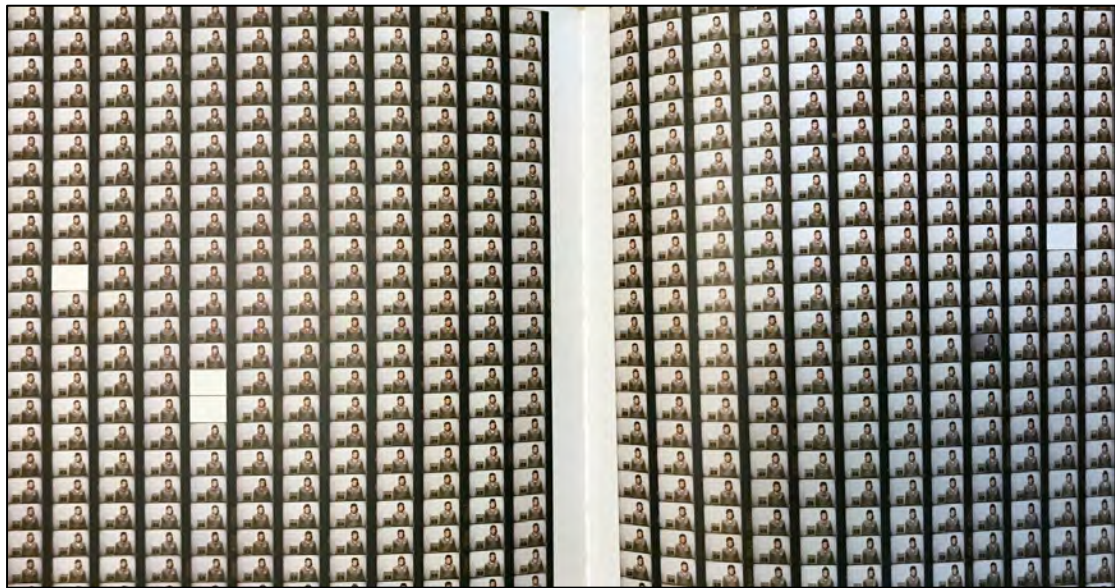
In Tehching Hsieh's case, a particular set of documentation material was more or less employed whenever he would get invited to present his "One Year Performance Pieces," either in the context of an exhibition or in the pages of a book publication:²³⁶

- Performance contract/personal declaration
- Performance poster
- Performance photographs
- Text

What is characteristic about Hsieh's practice in his "One Year Performances" is the repetition of a specific action throughout a long period of time (1 year): e.g. living in a cage (1978-1979), staying outdoors (1981-1982), living tied up with another person

²³⁶ Adrian Heathfield, and Tehching Hsieh, *Out of Now: The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh*, London: Live Art Development Agency / Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015 [2009].

(1983-1984), punching a work clock every hour (1980-1981).²³⁷ This repetition and monotony are also present in the way that he chooses to present his work, e.g. after taking the same photograph of himself every one hour during the day, dressed in the same clothes, while executing the same action (e.g. punching a work clock).



129. Tehching Hsieh, *One Year Performance: April 11, 1980 – April 11, 1981*. Super-8 film.

Problematizing around the survival of images in regard to contemporary performance art adds new questions to the present research and initiates further investigations on possible ways of giving justice to live works, by allowing the generative forces already present in *performances-surfaces*, to keep circulating within post-performance conditions. The main methodologies suggested are those of juxtaposition, accumulation, conflict and anachronism, inspired not only by Aby Warburg's *Atlas-Mnemosyne* (1921-1929), but also by Sigmund Freud's research on memory disturbances and André Malraux's study on an imaginary museum.

²³⁷ Ibid.



130. André Malraux in his house in 1953. Photograph: Maurice Jarnoux for *Paris Match*, 1954.

Polaroid synthesis *Atlas-Mnémosyne* (d'après A.W.) (2018) constituted a map/diagram, making visible the way that performance images survive both in history, after the live work is over, *and* in memory, during the 'actual' performance and beyond.²³⁸ The polaroid synthesis apparatus operated as a fluctuating patchwork of libidinal skin, where pieces could be added *ad infinitum* to make visible the ways in which memory functioned within the performances presented in the photos, both for the performer and the audience, while encountering each other.

²³⁸ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Atlas-Mnémosyne* (d'après A.W.), 35-polaroid synthesis, Flight Mode, RCA Research Exhibition, Assembly Point Gallery, London, UK, 2018.



131. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Atlas-Mnémosyne (d'après A.W.)*, polaroids, 2018.

<i>Being a Threat</i> 2016	<i>Being a Threat</i> 2016	<i>Being a Threat</i> 2016	<i>Being a Threat</i> 2016	<i>The most precious non-object</i> 2016	<i>The most precious non-object</i> 2016	<i>The most precious non-object</i> 2016
<i>The most precious non-object</i> 2016	Wip Marks 2016	Wip Marks 2016	Wip Marks 2016	Wip Marks 2016	Wip Marks 2016	Shibari session 2016
Shibari session 2016	Body Stapling 2017	Body Stapling 2017	Body Stapling 2017	Body Stapling 2017	Body Stapling 2017	Rope Marks 2016
Rope Marks 2016	Rope Marks 2016	Shibari session 2016	Shibari session 2016	Shibari session 2016	Shibari session 2016	Shibari session 2016
Shibari session 2016	<i>d'après S.K.</i> 2017	<i>d'après S.K.</i> 2017	<i>d'après S.K.</i> 2017	<i>d'après S.K.</i> 2017	Cane Marks 2016	Cane Marks 2016

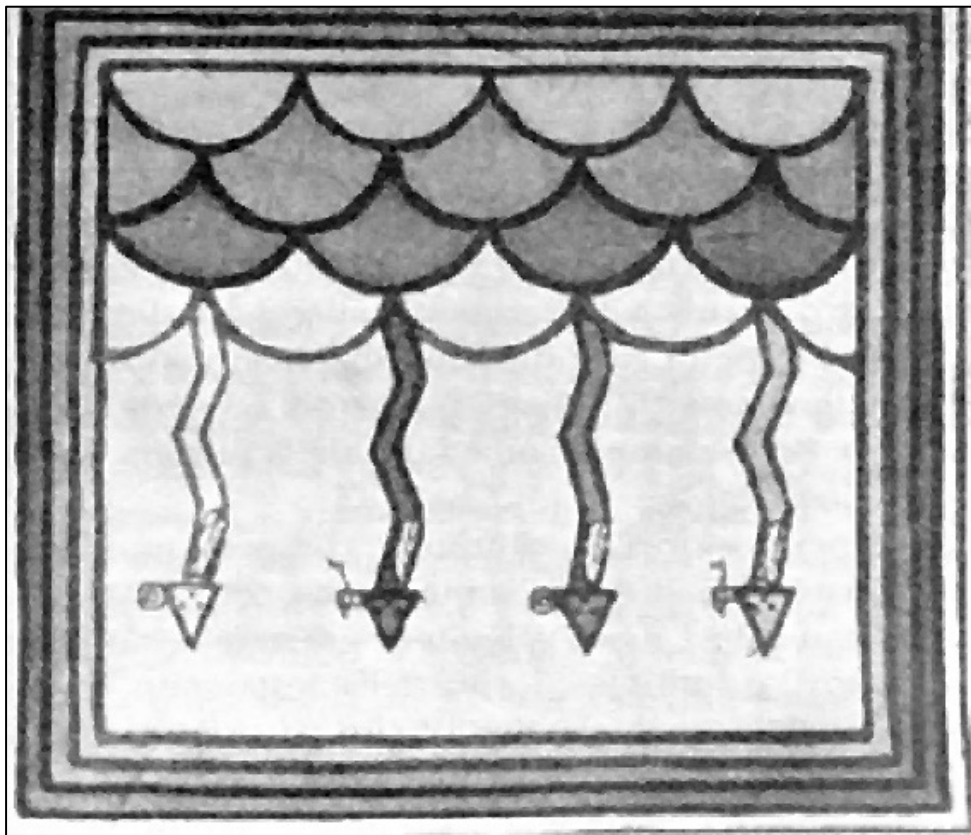
132. Diagram IV: Index for *Atlas-Mnémosyne (d'après A.W.)*, 2018.

Atlas-Mnémosyne (d'après A.W.) (2018) was a composition of thirty-five polaroids mounted directly on the wall, in a 7 x 5 polaroids grid, with equal gaps among them. The strict geometry of the installation, composing a kind of mosaic, allowed the photographic images to be read equally and as a whole. Some of the polaroids came from live performances [e.g. *Being a Threat* (2016), *The most precious non-object* (2016), *d'après SK* (2017)], while others were snapshots just after scenes of violence, which took place within private consensual environments. Photographs of the latter category were taken either during preparations for a performance piece [e.g. *Wip Marks* (2016): preparation for *Being a Threat* (2016), *Cane Marks* (2017): preparation for *d'après SK* (2017)], or not [e.g. *Shibari Session* (2016), *Rope Marks* (2016)].



133. Diagram V: Flows in *Atlas-Mnémosyne* (d'après A.W.), 2018.

In terms of the placement of the photos in the general composition, polaroids belonging to the same event were placed next to each other in a horizontal arrangement, as a group. Each group followed the other in a horizontal sequence from left to right, as if one were reading a written text. However, there was no linear narrative with a beginning, middle and end. The aim was to activate the gaze and engage it in a twisting downward motion through the creation of successive flows, without their boundaries being clear, while simultaneously offering the possibility of a panoramic view of all images at a single glance.



134. Motif of sand painting in a kiva depicting four lightning-bolt serpents, c. 1903.

Each polaroid operated as a fractal incorporating its own morphogenetic process, condensing present, past and future into a fossilized image. Each polaroid was the visible trace of what happened at a given moment, lived and directly inscribed on the

photographic surface the time of it being captured. In this sense, the deliberate choice of using polaroids was in line not only with the Bergsonian concept of duration-as-time-lived, but also with the Deleuzian notion of time-as-Aion.²³⁹ According to Deleuze, the Stoics identified equally two notions of time, both of them necessary and excluding each other: time-as-Cronos and time-as-Aion.²⁴⁰ In the first case there would only be the present, subdivided in depth into “interlocking presents,” repeating itself in cycle, recognizing only Sameness and “the wisdom of the Cause.”²⁴¹ In the second case, time would be viewed as if it were an “unlimited past and future,” “eternally neutral,” where each moment always already *would be* all of its pasts and futures through the gathering of “[...] incorporeal events, at the surface, as effects.”²⁴² Deleuze saw this second time as the time of the Event, which he identified with the Stoic notion of the wound: “the living trace and the scar of all wounds,” the Event of all events (*Eventum Tantum*), the event which is willed (*Amor Fati*), thus actualized “on its most contracted point, on the cutting edge of an operation.”²⁴³ Following from Deleuze’s view on time, each polaroid of *Atlas-Mnémosyne (d’après A.W.)* (2018) marked a singular moment pointing in all directions at once, “an unlimited past-future” exhibited via its double on a present without thickness, a *throw-dice*, an “aleatory point which is displaced over the line,” a “mobile instant” representing time in its neutrality *ad infinitum*.²⁴⁴ This is precisely the notion of the instant as expressed via the medium of polaroid; an instant that allows time-as-Aion to emerge. Having said that, it is worth noting that *epiphaneia* (ἐπιφάνεια) in

²³⁹ For the Bergsonian view on duration, see supra: 117-118.

²⁴⁰ Chapter “Tenth Series of the Ideal Game,” in: Deleuze, *Logic of Sense, ...* (2013[1969]), 61-68.

²⁴¹ Ibid. 64.

²⁴² Ibid. 64-65.

²⁴³ Ibid., 153-154.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 154, 156.

ancient Greek, means ‘surface,’ but also ‘appearance,’ in the sense of ‘becoming visible’ and/or ‘coming into existence.’²⁴⁵

Atlas-Mnémosyne (d’après A.W.) (2018) operated as a constellation, a cloud of fossilized images, composed as such through the tensions that developed among impossible forces, setting the viewer’s gaze in motion. Each recorded fossilized image was the 1 in the 0-1 schema, where 0 stood for the lived event (the performance-surface) and 1 for each one of its segments-singularities. Each fossilized image did not form part of a visual totality, but was a crystallization/material manifestation of events-surfaces into any given ‘now.’ Each fossilized image became meaningful by and through its encounter with multiple events-surfaces, while also bringing to appearance and through a temporary form, a certain echo of these surfaces that were by default non-representable and non-communicable (Klossowski’s phantasm).

Speaking in surface terms according to Lyotard, *Atlas-Mnémosyne (d’après A.W.)* (2018) was, thus, a moebius band, a great ephemeral skin, where each polaroid operated as a fold, after the cooling down and the immobilization of the bar’s turning, to create a theatrical volume.²⁴⁶ What was at stake here was to enter the theatrical volume without mistaking its fixity as the band itself. To put it otherwise: the viewer was invited to grasp the great ephemeral skin via its theatrical stages, while also acknowledging the power and the weakness of the stage to communicate something by default non-representable.

It was this very impossibility of representing any performance-surface, combined with the demand for a survival of images, that *Atlas-Mnémosyne (d’après A.W.)* (2018)

²⁴⁵ “[...] appearance, coming into light or view, [...] esp. of deities appearing to a worshipper, manifestation, [...]; a manifestation of divine power, [...]. visible surface of a body, superficies, [...]. the front, [...] the surface or skin of the body, [...]. outward show, fame, distinction, esp. arising from something unexpected, [...] to create a sensation [...].” In: Lidell & Scott Dictionary online <http://www.lsj.gr/wiki/ἐπιφάνεια> (accessed 11-12-2020).

²⁴⁶ On theatrics, see: Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (1993 [1974]), 21. On the cooling down of the bar and the creation of the theatrical volume, see: Ibid., 29-33.

problematized upon, via a certain kind of governing of spacetime through memory disorders. In *Atlas-Mnémosyne (d'après A.W.)* [2018] a survival of images was attempted through the juxtaposition of fossilized images that came into a repetitious conflict with one another in order to reactivate the generative forces of live performances that no longer existed. André Malraux, while contemplating on a relevant displacement, that of the cult objects from sacred places to museums, envisioned a revival of their '*no longer heard*' voices, via a juxtaposition of artworks within a spatio-temporal simultaneity, beyond any historical references.²⁴⁷

It was in a similar way, that psychoanalysis sought to study memory disorders as the paradox of the violent collision between past and present images inhabiting the same spatio-temporal surface. Freud pointed out how hysteria and melancholy, are able to project the past into the present and the present into the past, thus triggering strong psychosomatic reactions through conflicts, contradictions and tensions brought about during the experience of time-as-multiplicity.²⁴⁸ For example, in "A disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis" (1936), Freud described himself as being overwhelmed by an intense feeling of *disquieting estrangement* (*l'inquiétante étrangeté*), as soon as he first encountered the Acropolis. He attributed this feeling of melancholy to his child belief, that he would never be able to visit this almost mythical place.²⁴⁹ The conflict between the direct view of the Acropolis, and the conviction that such a thing would have never

²⁴⁷ "The Imaginary Museum is not a legacy of vanished fervors, it is an assembly of works of art [...]." In: Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire* (1965 [1947]), 260. Translation is mine.

²⁴⁸ Sigmund Freud "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis" (1936), Sigmund Freud "Delusion and dream. An interpretation in the light of psychoanalysis of *Grädisa*, a novel by Wilhelm Jensen," (1907), Sigmund Freud "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), Sigmund Freud, "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896).

²⁴⁹ "[...] '*What I am seeing there is not real.*' This is called a feeling of estrangement. In: Sigmund Freud "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis" (1936), as mentioned in: Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, translated by Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin, 2005), 240.

been possible, put Freud in a state of dissociation due to his impotence to manage the paradox he was encountering.



135. Freud's consulting room, with the 'Gradiva' relief on the right-hand side (www.freud.org.uk).

In his text on Wilhelm Jensen's novel *Gradiva: A Pompeian Fantasy* (1903), the father of psychoanalysis showed how the personal relationship between Norbert Hanold - the novel's central character – and his childhood love, led him to a delusional memory disorder in relation to a female figure (Gradiva) depicted in a replica of an ancient Roman relief.²⁵⁰ Freud used the example of the hero of *Gradiva* to show the psychosomatic effects that the paradox of time-as-multiplicity might have, to the point that one might mistake a woman he just met, as having lived in Pompeii thousands of years ago. This simultaneity of past, present, and future in the form of a manifold could

²⁵⁰ Wilhelm Jensen, *Γκραντίβα: Μια Πομπηιανή Φαντασία* (*Gradiva, a Pompeian Fantasy*, 1903)] / Sigmund Freud, *Το παραλήρημα και τα όνειρα στην Γκραντίβα* [*Delusion and dream. An interpretation in the light of psychoanalysis of Gradiva, a novel by Wilhelm Jensen*, 1907)], Athens: Agra, 1994, 2008.

be equally spatially perceived in Freud's office, through his collection of diverse objects - including a replica of the Gradiva relief.

In the work *Atlas-Mnémosyne (d'après A.W.)* (2018) the viewer received no explanation in relation to the conditions, the space and the context in which each polaroid was shot. As a consequence, the spectator couldn't know whether each image came from a live performance or from a personal moment of the artist, whether it was something staged, a kind of abuse - a crime perhaps? - or a sexual scene... or all the above and at the same time. This fluidity of the images presented, along with their impossibility to be entrenched in an ethico-ontological category, would bring the viewer into a state of uncertainty and instability – a vertigo, even - without knowing how to feel or ethically position themselves towards the work encountered.²⁵¹ Each polaroid, through its particular morphogenetic process, stood as a material witness of events of violence and use, while also simultaneously making the viewer an accomplice, responsible and accountable for gazing at the photographic images.

Atlas-Mnémosyne (d'après AW) (2018), after placing diverse images onto the same spatio-temporal plane, managed to translate in a post-performance setting notions of time expressed during the live works where the photographs were taken, e.g.: spacetime-as-multiplicity, duration-as-time-lived, time-as-Aion.²⁵² Via the violent collision taking place among these fossilized images, generative forces relevant to those present in the live works, were able to keep circulating, thus giving justice to the performances they came from, without trying to represent or substitute them in any way.

²⁵¹ For an analysis regarding people's ethical response to photographic images of bodies in pain, see: Susan Sontag, *Regarding the pain of others*, London: Penguin, 2003. For the inexpressibility of physical pain and its political consequences, see: Elaine Scarry, *The body in pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

²⁵² For spacetime-as-multiplicity, see supra: 13-18. For Bergson's notion of duration-as-time-lived, see supra: 115-116, 176. For Deleuze's idea of time-as-Aion, see supra: 178.

CHAPTER III: PERFORMANCE - AS - PHILOSOPHY

A praxis towards life-as-surface

Thought itself, reflection, that is, is only fulfilled in excess.²⁵³

Georges Bataille

What is art? Prostitution.²⁵⁴

Charles Beaudelaire

Having already analyzed the ways in which images get constructed and produced in the performances carried out in the context of this research, it is now time to explore how these *images-affections* always also operate as *images-thoughts*.²⁵⁵ Images generated in the live works discussed, question Western culture's prevailing image of thought from Plato onwards, which has been promoting rationality over corporeality, Logos over Pathos, essentialism over modality of existence, dialectics over logics of the senses.²⁵⁶ Performance art as *Spatium Monstrorum* suggests aesthetic experience as a methodology for and access to making meaning manifest, through strategies such as those of intimacy, understood here as a sort of carnal knowledge inhabited via practices of use-of-oneself.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ Georges Bataille, "A Preface to Madame Edwarda," in: Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, transl. by Mary Dalwood (London: Penguin, 2012 [Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1957]), 268.

²⁵⁴ Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1949. Referenced in: Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (1993 [1974]), 93.

²⁵⁵ "By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time the ideas of these affections." Benedict de (Baruch) Spinoza, "Third Part of the Ethics: Of the Origin and Nature of the Affects", Definition 3, II/97, *ibid.*, 70. "The images of things are affections of the human body whose ideas represent external bodies as present to us." Benedict de (Baruch) Spinoza, "Third Part of the Ethics: Of the Origin and Nature of the Affects", Proposition 26, Demonstration, II/160, *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁵⁶ Ch. III "The Image of thought," in: Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, ... (2004[1968]), 171-221. Regarding the ways that contemporary performance practice and discourse don't succeed in fully dismissing the Dogmatic Image of Thought, see *supra*: 8-14, 112-114.

²⁵⁷ "intimacy /'ɪntɪməsi/ noun 1. Close familiarity or friendship. 1.1 A cosy and private or relaxed atmosphere. 1.2. *euphemistic* sexual intercourse. Synonyms: [...] act of love, carnal knowledge [...]. 1.3 *count noun* An intimate remark. 1.4 *in singular* Closeness of observation or knowledge of a subject." Oxford

Intimacy, by bringing forth ideas of use, allows for a rethinking of processes of subjectivation, now seen as played out *at the surface*, through ways of intra-connectivity (e.g. individuation, entanglement) where identities are co-shaped the moment they intra-act with each other.²⁵⁸ *Performance-as-surface*, thus fosters new ways of establishing kinships, such as that of friendship (according to the philosophical use of the term); a way of being-with that requires attunement, care, intimacy and response-ability.²⁵⁹ For this move to be performed not only a new ethics of care is required, but also a radical rethinking of performance art in relation to philosophy, now grasped through the schema: *performance-as-philosophy*. Thus done, philosophy revisits its initial ethical and political role (e.g., as in Cynicism) as an embodied parrhēsiastic praxis of joyfully leading one's life in its full intensity.

Against the Dogmatic Image of Thought

Gilles Deleuze in the third chapter of his book *Difference and Repetition* (1968) described how philosophy and the process of thinking as such, are always already presupposed.²⁶⁰ According to Deleuze there is a dogmatic - otherwise called 'orthodox' or 'moral' - image of thought, dictating the principles upon which people ground thinking.²⁶¹ These presuppositions are those of common sense or natural good sense (*Cogitatio Natura Universalis*), taking for granted the idea of an already ever existing Nature and Truth that

Languages online: [lexico.com/definition/intimacy](https://www.lexico.com/definition/intimacy) (accessed 03-11-2020). In the present analysis, see *infra*: 197-204.

²⁵⁸ *Infra*: 204-212.

²⁵⁹ *Infra*: 211-212.

²⁶⁰ Chapter III "The Image of thought," in: Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, ... (2004 [1968]), 173-223.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

people are invited to uncover through rational thinking and the tools of Logos, in order for them to generate meaning.²⁶²

Philosopher Johnny Golding, following from Deleuze's argumentation, also claims that this dogmatic image of thought identifies with Hegelian dialectics and its respective schema thesis – antithesis – synthesis.²⁶³ According to Golding, as useful as the dialectical method might be for someone to start thinking plurally - since “all that there is” already contains its opposite “all that there is not,” in a perfect symmetrical and reflective point-to-point, one-to-one relationship, nevertheless one cannot neglect the closed and self-referential character that any dialectical system portrays.²⁶⁴ Dialectics not only recognizes finite kinds of truth to exist - those compatible with the dialectical structure thesis-antithesis-synthesis - but, as Lyotard shows, also creates exclusions via the definition of interiorities and exteriorities:

The *dispositif* of confinement [= the Great Zero], that is to say of delimitation and conception, which will produce the exterior and the interior, which will enclose the extension of the concept, which will define *places* (of art, of culture, of production, of politics, of sexuality), this *dispositif* with its zero can only be engendered by disintensification.²⁶⁵

A few years earlier than Lyotard, Theodor Adorno would stress upon the potential dangers of exclusions (e.g. fascism) generated by the dialectical schema, including the dismissal and marginalization of human beings not fitting in it, e.g.: homosexuals,

²⁶² Ibid., 176.

²⁶³ On the dialectical schema thesis-antithesis-synthesis, please see: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1807. Johnny Golding's critique on Hegelian dialectics runs across the entirety of her texts and academic teaching, though it appears elaborated in great detail in her text “The Courage to Matter,” as mentioned in: Johnny Golding, Martin Reinhart, Mattia Paganelli, (ed.), *Data Loam: Sometimes Hard Usually Soft – The Future of Knowledge Systems* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 451-486.

²⁶⁴ Johnny Golding, “The Courage to Matter,” in: Golding, Reinhart, Paganelli, (ed.), *Data Loam...*, (2020), 451-486.

²⁶⁵ Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (1993 [1974]), 31.

immigrants, women, people of color etc.²⁶⁶ Therefore, the problem with dialectics not only is related with misconceptions regarding truth and the making of sense, but also relates to the ethical and political implications carried along with it.

For Deleuze, the problem with the supremacy of the dialectical method in Western thought, would be its uncritical application, initially used for the logical veridiction of sentences, as the only and most reliable tool for engendering meaning across all spheres of knowledge.²⁶⁷ Given that events, though inexpressible by default, always offer the possibility of being communicable to a certain extent, via language, Deleuze analysed the four dimensions of propositions where different relations between events and language get established:

- *denotation or indication*: the association of a singular event with a state of affairs,
- *manifestation*: the grounding of denotation on the 'I' of a thinking subject (Cogito),
- *signification*: the logical veridiction of words in relation to Truth according to universal concepts,
- *sense*: the expressed of the proposition.²⁶⁸

According to the French philosopher, the necessary route for the optimum communication of events via linguistic signs ought to be the fourth dimension of propositions, that of sense. Sense – and, consequently, the event – ought to be independent from a proposition's denotation, manifestation and signification, since *sense*

²⁶⁶ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, transl. by E.B. Ashton, (London & New York: Routledge, 1973/2004 [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1966]).

²⁶⁷ “*Dialectics* is precisely this science of incorporeal events as they are expressed in propositions, and of the connections between events as they are expressed in relations between propositions. Dialectics is indeed, the art of *conjugation* [...]” In: Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, ... (2013 [1969]), 9.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 13-19.

is always already paradoxical, moving in opposing directions *at the same time*. The problem with dialectics, as located by Deleuze, is therefore the positing of sense within the third dimension of propositions – that of signification – thus mistaking the relation between sense and non-sense as that between true and false, whereas each case is of *an entirely different nature*.²⁶⁹

Against dogmatic images-thoughts

Images, as already embedded in discourse, are always already *images-thoughts*. What is at stake here, is not to position images in an *a priori* favorable position against language. The questions, therefore, to be formulated would be: how can an image generate meaning without promoting the dogmatic image of thought? How can artworks avoid generating dogmatic images-thoughts?

Lyotard in his work *Discours, figure* (1971) claimed that even in language, discourse always portrays a *thickness* (otherwise called *difference*) which itself belongs to the realm of the sensuous (the figural) and not that of rationality.²⁷⁰ Within the self-sufficiency of reason there is always an an inexhaustible expenditure producing meaning, though unable to be signified by language.²⁷¹ For Lyotard, meaning is, thus, always *sensed* and always grasped *as silence*:

What cannot be tamed is art as silence. The position of art is a refutation of the position of discourse. [...] Art stands in alterity as plasticity and desire, a curved expanse against invariability and reason, diacritical space. Art covets the figure, and 'beauty' is figural, unbound, rhythmic. [...] And one can get in

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 70.

²⁷⁰ "This book protests: the given is not a text, it possesses an inherent thickness, or rather a difference, which is not to be read, but rather seen; and this difference, and the immobile mobility that reveals it, are what continually fall into oblivion in the process of signification." In: J.F. Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, transl. by A. Hudek and M. Lydon (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011 [1971]), 3.

²⁷¹ "There can be no discourse without this opacity in trying to undo and restore this inexhaustible thickness." Ibid., 8.

the figure without leaving language behind because the figure is embedded in it.²⁷²

In the live works discussed, images are generated through the material vocabulary of visceral performance art, as introduced in the '70s performance tradition and its lineage. What is at stake here is not to refute this material vocabulary, but to realize that the generated images in the performances presented, don't operate *as sentences*; they don't make sense as symbols of signification.²⁷³ The images produced in the performances presented, are able to make meaning manifest the very moment that discourse gets exhausted. It is precisely in this respect that the strategies employed in the live works carried out, aim at.

For each of the performances presented, and in order for each body image produced to be *meaningful*, the adoption by the performer of 'this' or 'that' body posture, would not be the case. It is not about *what* is being enacted in front of the audience (or, at least, it is not *only* about that). It is about the artist's ability to inhabit each body image, as long as it is necessary for it *to become exhausted*.²⁷⁴ To put it otherwise, for the performer 'to inhabit an image' means to keep a certain body posture, to sustain a certain kind of encounter, as long as the potentialities generated from it are on the verge to be exhausted. The moment of exhaustion arrives when an image becomes predictable, already known, worn-out...a habit. This is the moment when an image stops

²⁷² Ibid., 7.

²⁷³ "One does not read or understand a picture. Sitting at the table one identifies and recognizes linguistic units; standing in representation one seeks out plastic events. Libidinal events." Ibid., 4.

²⁷⁴ "What can it mean to 'inhabit with oneself'? *Habitare* is an intensive form of *habere*. Use, as relation to an inappropriable, appears as a field of forces held between a propriety and an impropriety, a having and a not having. In this sense, if one recalls the proximity between use and habit and between use and use-of-oneself [...], to inhabit means to be in a relation of use, thus understood, with something to the point of being able to lose and forget oneself in it, of constituting it as inappropriable." In: Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of bodies*, transl. by Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016 [Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2014]), 87-88.

engendering singularities and starts repeating itself *in similitudo*, thus being a repetition of sameness. Leading an image just a step before it being exhausted, means to abandon representation and give way to unconditional expenditure and the free play of forces.²⁷⁵

Consequently, duration (as time lived) plays a crucial role in this process of inhabiting images. This is why long durational performance has the potential to allow images to be meaningful. Inhabiting an image requires a kind of suspension, immobilization or arrest, in the same way that Deleuze described how to avoid sterile division of propositions, e.g. via recurring language disturbances such as stuttering and/or doubling ups.²⁷⁶

There is indeed a way of avoiding this infinite regress. It is to fix the proposition, to immobilize it, just long enough to extract from it its sense – the film at the limit of things and words.²⁷⁷

However, one shouldn't valorize long durational performance as the only way to immobilize discourse and allow sense to be manifested. Short durational performances (c. 3-10 minutes) also offer this potential, after creating images that strike the audience so quickly and unexpectedly, that one is not able to assess them rationally, but is instead forced to grasp them directly, through the senses.

*Love *me** (2017) is an example of this sort of production of images-flashlights.²⁷⁸

The action lasted up to five minutes and included: the performer walking around the

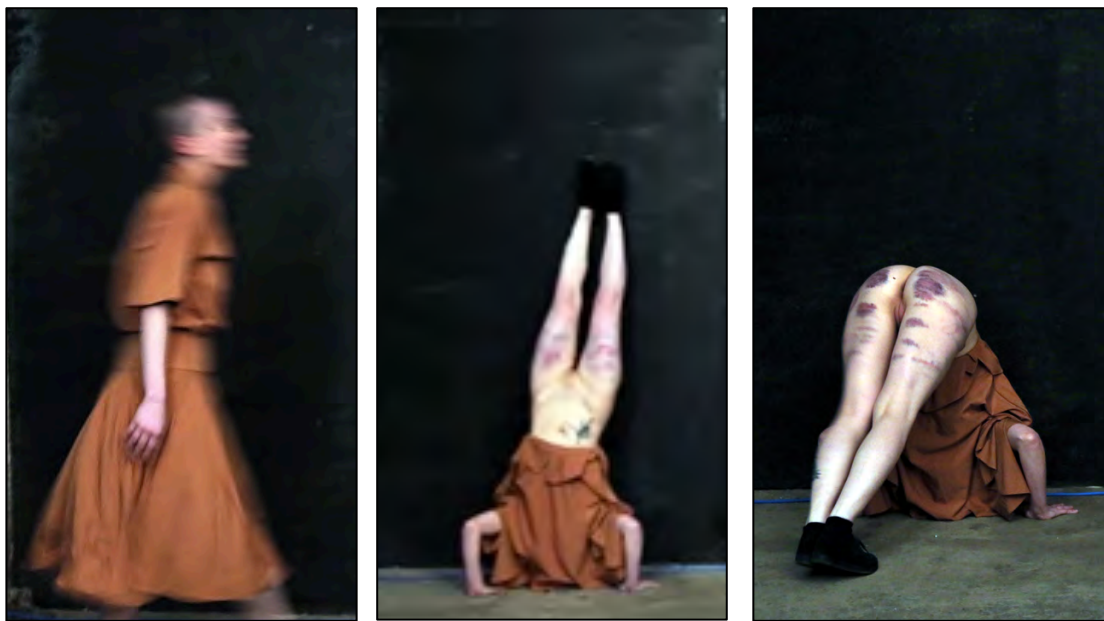
²⁷⁵ On the notion of expenditure as sacrificial loss without end for the sake of excitation, leading to the creation of unproductive values, see: Georges Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure" (1933), in: Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927 – 1939*, transl. by Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald N. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1985), 116-129.

²⁷⁶ "[...] Carroll's doubles represent the two senses, or two directions of the becoming-mad [...] Two are necessary for being mad, one is always mad *in tandem*." In: Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, ... (2013 [1969]), 81.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁷⁸ Despina Zacharopoulou, *Love *me**, 5 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME, RCA Performance, the Doodle bar, London, UK, 2017. *Supra*: 122-123.

periphery of a room, going upside down against the wall to reveal her bruised buttocks, and then leaving the space. One of the people present, right after the event was over, said how much they appreciated the fact that this performance didn't signify or try to symbolize anything; it was just *the given* that was shared with the audience, without any external references to it: a body walking, a body being upside down, a body being bruised, a body leaving the space.²⁷⁹



136-137-138. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Love *me**, 2017. Photographs: Prof. Nigel Rolfe.

Looking at the same problem from a different angle, one might as well ask: how might art produce dogmatic images-thoughts? First of all, it should be clarified that there are no images-thoughts inherently dogmatic. It is only a matter of *use* – thus of duration and repetition – that defines the dogmatic or non-dogmatic character of an image-thought.

²⁷⁹ To grasp this idea of *the given*, one could think about it in Heideggerian terms as: “the world *as it is* and *as it is revealed*” through *technē* (see supra: 159-161), and/or in Deleuzian terms to find affinities with the idea of *the fact*: “What we call a ‘fact’ is first of all the fact that several forms may actually be included in one and the same Figure, indissolubly, caught up in a kind of serpentine, like so many necessary accidents continually mounting on top of one another.” In: Deleuze, *Francis Bacon...*, ..., (2017/2019 [1981]), 113.

To make this argument clearer, one could associate it with Klossowski's notion of the stereotype:²⁸⁰

The stereotype corresponds to the normative schemata of our visual, tactile, and auditory apprehension, the schematization that conditions our primary receptivity.²⁸¹

Stereotypes are, essentially, worn out simulacra: “[...] residues of phantasmatic simulacra that have fallen into common use, as much as in language as in art.”²⁸² Thus said, dogmatic images-thoughts are but disintensified images via processes of use, governed by *Cogitatio Natura Universalis*.



139. Albrecht Dürer, *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman*, c. 1600.

One of the most tangible examples of mechanisms producing dogmatic images-thoughts would be the use of perspective in the Western history of art. Perspective, as a

²⁸⁰ See: “On the Use of Stereotypes and the Censure Exercised by Classical Syntax,” in: Pierre Klossowski, “Protase et Apodose,” in: *L’Arc* 43 (1970), 15-20. Quote here, as mentioned by Daniel W. Smith in his “Introduction: Pierre Klossowski: from theatrical Theology to Counter-Utopia,” footnote 49, in: Klossowski, *The Living Currency*, ... (2017 [1970]), 33-34.

²⁸¹ Pierre Klossowski, “Description, Argumentation, Narrative,” in: Pierre Klossowski, *Decadence of the Nude*, transl. Paul and Catherine Petit (London: Black Dog, 2002), 125-39:129.

²⁸² Smith, “Introduction...,” in: Klossowski, *The Living Currency*, ... (2017 [1970]), 9.

mechanism for the production of images, translated into aesthetics a certain philosophical paradigm with man at its center. In this paradigm, space was regarded as an empty vessel ruled by euclidian geometry and cartesian logic. Likewise, in Dürer's *portico*, the artist's eye, was regarded as a fixed and immobile point in space visually scanning its environment. With the *portico* apparatus, gaze was, thus, framed and projected onto a two-dimensional plane. Consequently, art images produced according to the laws of perspective, operated as windows gazing at the world, thus taking for granted - and reproducing through the medium of painting - ideas associated with the dogmatic image of thought, such as: the inside-outside binary, linear time, space-as-vessel, newtonean physics, euclidian geometry, subjectivities-as-categories, etc. Despite the abolition of perspective as the royal avenue to the visual representation of the world, even the Impressionists failed to eliminate the demand for a faithful mimesis of nature, thus continuing the production of dogmatic images-thoughts. This is why Klossowski argued that: "[...] the imperative to reproduce 'nature' 'objectively' arises from a 'modern fantasy obsession'."²⁸³

Cézanne's example stood as a beacon against early modernity's dogmatic images-thoughts since, although he appeared at a time when painting had not yet emancipated itself from representation, he conceived that what is required of the production of images is nothing but a transmutation of intensities via areas of color:

It's only me who has temperament, it's only me who knows how to make a red...!²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Pierre Klossowski, *La Ressemblance*, (Marseille: Ryôan-ji, 1984), 78. Translation is mine.

²⁸⁴ In: Paul Cézanne, *Correspondance* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1978), 310, footnote 1. Translation is mine.



140. Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1902-04, oil on canvas, 73 x 91,9cm.

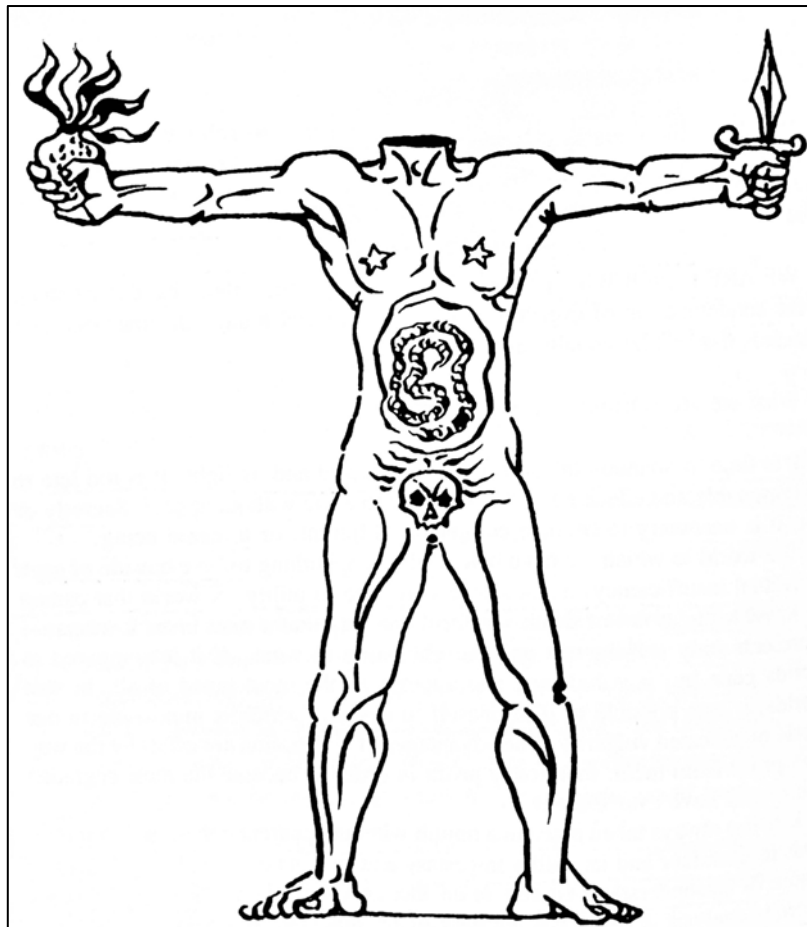
Even revolutionary movements in the history of art didn't avoid producing dogmatic images-thoughts, not easily identifiable in the first place. It is in that respect that Georges Bataille exercised a ruthless critique on his former friend André Breton and the surrealist movement.²⁸⁵ For Bataille, surrealists as much radical as they might wanted to present themselves, didn't manage to dismiss universalism, but essentially created a reversed hierarchical model after investing traditionally "[...] low values (the unconscious, sexuality, filthy language, etc.) [...] with an elevated character by associating them with the most immaterial values."²⁸⁶ What Bataille countersuggested to this survival of

²⁸⁵ Georges Bataille, "The 'Old Mole' and "the Prefix *Sur* in the Words *Surhomme* [Superman] and *Surrealist*" (c.1930), in: Bataille, *Visions of Excess...*, ... (1985), 32-44.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

idealism within the surrealist circles (and art in general), was the figure of the *acéphale*; a headless creature symbolizing the victory of the flesh over the kingdom of reason:

Beyond what I am, I meet a being who makes me laugh because he is headless;
[...] He is not me but he is more than me: his stomach is the labyrinth in
which he has lost himself, loses me with him, and in which I discover myself
as him, in other words as a monster.²⁸⁷



141. André Masson, *Acéphale*, ©ADAGP, Paris, 1985.

Since one cannot escape language or form, how can images-thoughts avoid the trap of idealism and keep vibrating from the intensities they produce? Lyotard's view on the

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 181.

function of the representational chamber and that of pagan theatrics (Theologia Theatrica) indicated a crucial move that allows images to keep emanating singularities:

The representative chamber is an energetic *dispositif*. To describe it and to follow its functioning, that's what needs to be done. No need to do a critique of metaphysics (or of political economy, which is the same thing), since critique presupposes and ceaselessly creates this very theatricality; rather *be inside and forget it* [...].²⁸⁸

For Klossowski, this is precisely the lesson that roman Theologia Theatrica teaches us: linguistic signs always operate as both intelligent signs and tensor signs, they both signify but also carry and distribute intensities. This is what Lyotard called; the duplicity of signs.²⁸⁹ For Saint Augustine, roman theatre's presentation of Gods' adventures on stage, through the most cruel and perverse actions, was judged as totally unacceptable, as if Gods were being disgraced and made fun of via such ridiculous representations.²⁹⁰ Theologia Theatrica is thus revealed as a powerful "dispositif of pathos."²⁹¹ Contrary to Augustine's thought, the Romans knew that Gods appearing on stage were not a representation *in similitudo*. The roman audience was conscious of Theologia Theatrica being a gathering of forces, a distribution of singularities in a mad dance. Gods on stage were nothing but an ephemeral crystallization of orgiastic forces, a material manifestation of intensities in the here and now. Thus, Theologia Theatrica cannot be judged in moral terms, nor can it be grasped literally. The lesson to be learned here, is to acknowledge that forms – and thus, images-thoughts - are able to avoid idealism, only

²⁸⁸ Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (2015/2019 [1974]), 21.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 33.

²⁹⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, transl. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), Book VI, §10, 249. Pierre Klossowski, *Diana at her Bath and the Women of Rome*, transl. by Stephen Sartarelli, (Boston: Eridanos Press, 1990), 82.

²⁹¹ Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (2015/2019 [1974]), 24.

as long as they are grasped as dimensions of an infinite and incommunicable reality. And this reality may come under many different names: plane of immanence, surface, Body without Organs, or...Spatium Monstrorum.



142. Troubleyn / Jan Fabre, *Mount Olympus*, 2014.

Antonin Artaud stressed the duplicity of signs in theater through his elaboration upon the notion of the double. Artaud called for a non-representational theatre that would operate in terms of alchemical processes, rather than a mirror reflexion producing copies of an originary reality.²⁹² In other words, it is Hermes Trismegistus' phrase: "As above, so below," as inscribed on the *Tabula Smaragdina* (*Emerald Tablet*), that should govern the protocols of transubstantiations taking place on the theatrical stage.²⁹³

Inspired by Klossowski, Lyotard would further elaborate upon the duplicity of signs through the idea of an "adulterous coherence of the simulacrum and the phantasm," where the double function of the sign, whether it is linguistic or plastic,

²⁹² Antonin Artaud, "Le Théâtre Alchimique," in: Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 73-80.

²⁹³ For different translations of the *Tabula Smaragdina*, see: Anonymus, *The Emerald Tablet of Hermes: Multiple Translations*, (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), Burckhardt, *Alchemy...*, (1997[1960]), 196.

inevitably sets impulsive forces (*forces pulsionnelles*) in motion.²⁹⁴ Here, Lyotard made a distinction between adultery and prostitution: in prostitution one navigates from intensity to order - as is the case of art -, while in adultery one goes from order to intensity - as is the case of language.²⁹⁵ In any case, what matters is that images-thoughts are able to keep distributing intensities, once one is aware of the duplicity of the image, and learns how to work with it.

Intimacy as form of knowledge

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed.²⁹⁶

Gilles Deleuze

In the performances informing this research, intimacy appears as both the main methodology and output regarding the generation of knowledge, the moment of the performer-audience encounter. Sufficient agreement exists concerning intimacy being firstly and foremost connected with physical proximity among bodies within the same space, or a close relationship, such as familiarity or friendship. However, what the live works presented suggest, is that intimacy doesn't necessarily require physical proximity, nor does it demand for an already established close relationship to be in place. There is something else required in order for intimacy to emerge; the parrhēsiastic event of the encounter among entities who take the risk of exposing themselves and become

²⁹⁴ Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (2015/2019 [1974]), 90-98.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 95.

²⁹⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, ... (2004 [1968]), 183.

vulnerable under the gaze of others. Inevitably, this ‘exhibitionist’ (sic) spooky-action-at-a-distance cannot but necessarily generate and share knowledge of a sensuous nature.²⁹⁷ This carnal knowledge is precisely the sticky substance sustaining the event of intimacy, which is always already a moment of parrhēsiastic truth, involving: raw flesh, entanglement, and the mastering of certain kinds of corporeal/embodied technologies.



143. Adrian Howells, *Foot Washing for the Sole*, Nazareth, Israel, 2008. Photograph: H. Suleiman.

In the book *Intimacy across visceral and digital performance* (2012), the first few sentences of the introduction describe intimacy as something “intertwined with feelings of closeness, trust and familiarity [...],” something that “[...] occurs through effective

²⁹⁷ ‘Spooky-action-at-a-distance’ is a phrase initially used by Einstein to speak about physics’ inability to explain how entities not in physical proximity might affect each other.

communication between people in some kind of relationship.”²⁹⁸ Editors, Maria Chatzichristodoulou and Rachel Zerihan, begin with defining the notion of intimacy, according to Julia Kristeva:

[...] ‘the intimate’ as an interiority that includes the unconscious, [...] ‘that which is most profound and most singular in the human experience’ [...] ‘similar to the life of the mind, that is the activity of the thinking ego [...] in opposition to social or political action’ (Kristeva, 2002, p.45).²⁹⁹

In Simon Jones’ contributory text in the same book, intimacy in performance art is approached through ideas of proximity and the self/other binary, as presented in Levinas’ philosophy on hospitality and the idea of the face.³⁰⁰

Clearly in disagreement with the previous descriptions’ implications that intimacy takes place among already existing subjectivities, the view of intimacy suggested by this research would be an event where entities don’t pre-exist as such, but are co-created during the very moment of their encounter. Being intimate with someone, thus, requires an openness of heart, an availability of one’s body to be affected by and affect other bodies (affectability), even a sharing and a transubstantiation of traumas during the intimate encounter itself (vulnerability).

However, the fine line between intimacy and violence, and the consequent fear of being traumatized the moment one allows themselves to be intimate with others, are some of the most common obstacles one must face during the establishment of

²⁹⁸ Maria Chatzichristodoulou, and Rachel Zerihan, eds., *Intimacy across Visceral and Digital performance* (Hampshire: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2012), 1.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

³⁰⁰ Simon Jones, “Not Citizens, But Persons: The Ethics in Action of Performance’s Intimate Work.” In: Chatzichristodoulou & Zerihan, eds., *Intimacy...* (2012), 26-38.

intimacy.³⁰¹ This is why physical proximity or familiarity doesn't necessarily guarantee intimacy. Taking the risk to be affected by and affect others is not something to be considered for granted for people who share the same space or are familiar with each other. Contrariwise, people often allow themselves to be intimate with strangers (e.g. while chatting online. This might even reach to the point of sexually engaging with a stranger via one's laptop camera). In addition, whatever the familiarity with others might be (e.g. family members, friends), exposing oneself and being vulnerable would not necessarily be the case.

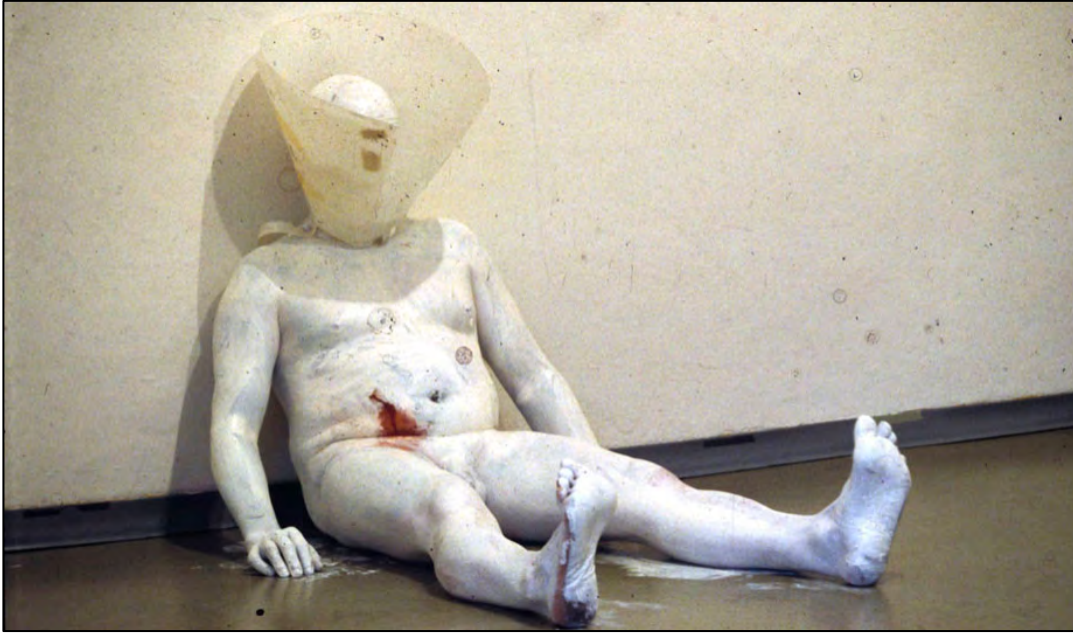
However, there are some people for whom it is precisely this fragile intimacy-violence entanglement that is sought for, once they decide to enter into certain types of encounters, that would give them access to kinds of shared and distributed embodied knowledge that wouldn't be accessible otherwise. These particular encounters would include: the performances presented in the context of this research, one-to-one performances created by other artists, but also examples from everyday life such as those of one-night stands, darkroom sexual encounters, sadomasochistic sessions, D=s (Domination=s submission) or M=s (Master=s slave) relationships.³⁰² Franko B's parallelism between intimate one-to-one performance practices and sex, shows how intimacy-as-carnal-knowledge and the idea of promiscuity, overlap and counter-inform each other.³⁰³

³⁰¹ On the relationship between intimacy and violence, see: Chatzichristodoulou & Zerihan, eds., *Intimacy...*, (2012), 39-47.

³⁰² Regarding one-to-one performance, a seminal example would be Adrian Howells' work, as presented in: Deirdre Heddon, and Dominic Johnson, eds., *It's All Allowed: The Performances of Adrian Howells* (London: Intellect Books, 2013).

³⁰³ "promiscuous /prə'miskjʊəs/ adjective 1. having or characterized by many transient sexual relationships. [...] 2. demonstrating or implying an unselective approach; indiscriminate or casual." Oxford Languages online [lexico.com/definition/promiscuous](https://www.lexico.com/definition/promiscuous) (accessed 12-02-2021).

[...] Franko B describes the one-to-one format as ‘most like you are having sex with somebody’: he adds, ‘although sex doesn’t happen, you have an intimacy – a serious intimacy’ foregrounding the gravity with which lovers commit to the task of care and hospitality in intimate encounters, even if with strangers (Zerihan, 2009a, p.11).³⁰⁴



144. Franko B, *Aktion 398*, Milan, Italy, 1998.

Apart from the performances carried out in the context of this research, Kira O'Reilly, Franko B, Bob Flanagan, Ron Athey and Adrian Howells are some of the artists that managed to successfully produce intimate encounters with the audience. Kira O'Reilly's *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter Kuopio* (2003) was a site-specific commission, where the artist invited the audience to attend the work - one person at a time - after booking a time slot.³⁰⁵ Once at the performance location, each visitor was given an envelope by the usher at the entrance of the bomb shelter containing a pair of latex gloves, a scalpel and an invitation. They were directed to put on the gloves and to walk down the long central

³⁰⁴ Dominic Johnson "Ecstatic Intervals," in: Chatzichristodoulou & Zerihan, eds., *Intimacy...* (2012), 99.

³⁰⁵ Kira O'Reilly, *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter Kuopio* (2003). ANTI Contemporary Art Festival Kuopio. Information regarding the performance taken from: Kira O'Reilly, *Untitled (Bodies)*, Bristol & Chicago: Intellect, The University of Chicago Press / London: Live Art Development Agency, 2018.

walkway of the tunnel of the bomb shelter, where they were met by O'Reilly as she walked to meet them halfway along the tunnel. Each visitor was invited to make a cut on the artist's fleshy areas of the thighs or the back. Those who declined to make a cut were invited to cover a cut or scar with a band aid. Throughout the work's whole duration, there was a video camera and monitor in front of the bench, providing a live feed. Following the performance of making a cut or of no cut, Kira O'Reilly and the visitor arranged themselves into a piéta configuration, and then gazed at the monitor, often with an utterance of surprise or recognition from the viewer at the piéta.



145. Kira O'Reilly, *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter Kuopio*, 2003. Photograph: P. Mäkinen.

This live work by Kira O'Reilly is exemplary in indicating the importance of care and trust in the establishment of intimacy in performance art, while also exhibiting the risk taken by the artist to have each member of the audience exercising violence on her body.

Throughout Michel Foucault's work, the relationship between body and care had always had a central role in his thought. During his early philosophical investigations, Foucault was preoccupied mainly with the relationship between knowledge and regimes of power, with a particular focus on corporeal practices of conditioning, defined by dominant views on sexuality, hygiene, care, discipline and punishment. In the second phase of Foucault's thought, a significant shift occurred: not only did he displace his area of investigation from the study of power and its exercise of control upon bodies, to ideas of population, biopolitics and governmentality, but he also managed to expand his existing research on the notion of the care of the self and others.³⁰⁶ Care, at this last stage of Foucault's work, was rethought of through the lens of his investigation on the importance of parrhēsiastic truth towards a new hermeneutics of the subject, grounded upon the idea of a stylistics of life. Foucault's personal engagement in BDSM practices, particularly in the San Francisco and New York sadomasochistic gay clubs and bathhouses, operated for him as a direct access to carnal forms of knowledge that coincided with and informed his philosophical endeavours:³⁰⁷

In numerous interviews, he thus refers to sadomasochism as a practice of the invention of new pleasures and new styles of existence and, more generally, to the homosexual circles of San Francisco and New York as a 'laboratory' in

³⁰⁶ This second phase in Foucault's thought began with his series of lectures at the Collège de France for the academic year 1977-78 and lasted up until his untimely death in 1984. On the idea of governmentality in relation to the performances presented, see *supra*: 30-32.

³⁰⁷ For more information on Michel Foucault's private life and participation in the gay sadomasochistic scene, see: James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), Hervé Guibert, *Les secrets d'un homme*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), Hervé Guibert, *À l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

which one ‘tries to explore all the internal possibilities of sexual conduct from the perspective of the creation of new forms of life.’³⁰⁸

Following from Foucault’s move, performances presented in the context of this thesis also use the BDSM paradigm as a potential methodological tool for the study of intimate encounters in performance art. Though Foucault focused on sadomasochistic practices, in the present research it is the Master=slave entanglement that allows one to grasp other forms of intimacy, now dictated by the use of protocols of governmentality.³⁰⁹ Given that one agrees with Agamben’s definition of intimacy as “use-of-oneself as relation with an inappropriable,” then performance art as *Spatium Monstrorum* allows for intimate coherences to happen, not on the grounds of possession – and thus, exchangeability – but on the uninterrupted circulation of forces via the use of the performer’s body, that would create subjectivities through use-of-oneself.³¹⁰ Once this hypothesis is adopted, there is a double challenge to be met, as already stated by Dominic Johnson: a) “a politics of intimacy must be articulated [...],” as well as, b) a rethinking of “[...] promiscuity not [only] as erotic gratuitousness but as an exemplary ethical gesture.”³¹¹

Subjectivation at the surface

In its slow unfolding the scene recalled
the slaughtering of a pig or the entombment of a god.³¹²

Georges Bataille

³⁰⁸ Agamben, *The Use of bodies*, ... (2016 [2014]), 96.

³⁰⁹ On protocols, see supra: 49-54, 57-59.

³¹⁰ Quote found in: Agamben, *The Use of bodies*, ... (2016 [2014]), 91.

³¹¹ Johnson “Ecstatic Intervals,” in: Chatzichristodoulou & Zerihan, eds., *Intimacy...* (2012), 91,99.

³¹² Georges Bataille, “Le mort” (1964), in: Georges Bataille, *Madame Edwarda, Le Mort, Histoire de l’œil* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1967), 79. Translation is mine.

Processes of subjectication via intimacy as use-of-oneself, allow for a new hermeneutics of the subject to emerge, through ideas such as those of entanglement and individuation.³¹³ What is proposed here is a need for a politics of intimacy and an ethics of care, across art and society. Consequently, a horizon of new ways of being with and of establishing kinships opens up, beyond essentialist categories and binaries. This radical move cannot but disrupt existing notions of identity and resituate it as difference, within protocols of belonging among entities in a process of co-transmutation. In order for one to grasp what this belonging within identity-as-difference entails, it would be necessary to revisit Heidegger's move on the notion of identity.

Martin Heidegger in *Identity and Difference* (1957) rethought the problem of identity through his analysis of the formula $A=A$.³¹⁴ For Heidegger, the question of identity in the Western philosophical tradition, has always been a question about being as a thinking subject which, in virtue of that, has been able to participate in Being. For almost two thousand years, philosophers used to translate Parmenides enigmatical phrase “τό γάρ αὐτό νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καί εἶναι” as: “thought and being are the same.” However, one needs to be more precise in terms of translation from the ancient Greek text, since Parmenides' phrase would be more accurately translated as: “for the same perceiving (thinking) as well as being,” meaning that there is an identity (the Same) where both thinking and being belong to.³¹⁵ This Sameness, is what has been tried to be expressed via the formula $A=A$. Since Plato, the principle of identity has been seen as a tautology,

³¹³ On the hermeneutics of the subject as a research area, see: Michel Foucault, *L'Herméneutique du Sujet: Cours au Collège de France, 1981-1982* [*The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1982*], Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil, 1982. On the idea of individuation see: Gilbert Simondon, *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*, Paris: P.U.F., 1948. For a further elaboration on individuation in the present text, see *infra*: 209-210.

³¹⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Identity and Difference*, transl. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969 [1957]), 23.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

where $A=A$ stood for the unity between the thinking being and Being. From German speculative idealism onwards (e.g. Schelling, Fichte) to Kant and Hegel, the question of a *mediation* between the two was raised; either being was already presupposed and thus grounded thinking, or vice-versa, with identity from that point onwards being looked at as a mediated synthesis.³¹⁶

Heidegger's revolutionary move resided on his grasping of the '=' symbol, as a site of belonging together. In so doing, the German philosopher managed to shift the focus from the question of *what* is being or thinking, to the relation established between them and which, by virtue, grounds them both.³¹⁷ Heidegger managed to set this belonging together as the principle of identity, and name it as the "event of appropriation."³¹⁸

Consequently, the encounter between (the thinking) being and Being is not to be grasped in dialectical terms. For Heidegger, what is actually needed is a leap away from Metaphysics. This leap is also a spring that would allow humans and Being to be present "in their active nature" (*physis*), determining and defining thinking as such.³¹⁹ As a result, the event of appropriation strips down being and Being from any ontological categories attributed to them. Identity is then grasped as a "property of the event of appropriation," and thinking happens the moment one realizes this being together and being apart between humans and Being.³²⁰ Thinking is thus seen as the inhabiting of identity as difference, as the acknowledgement of this clearing where entities are allowed to "vibrate in their active nature," emanating a signal that betrays this pulse of contraction and

³¹⁶ Ibid., 25.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 28.

³¹⁸ "Man and Being are appropriated to each other. They belong to each other." Ibid., 31.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 33.

³²⁰ Ibid., 39.

expansion, attraction and repulsion between being and Being. Following from Heidegger's move, it would be fair to rewrite the principle of identity, now seen as difference via the repetitive pulsating movements established within the event of appropriation:

$$A \rightleftharpoons A$$

Along the same lines, Michel Foucault, in his commentary text on Pierre Klossowski's work *Le Bain de Diane* (1956), located Klossowski's original contribution to the field of knowledge, in the indication of a world where demons disrupt the identity formula of $A=A$ with a vibration, due to the setting in motion of a double movement, which is completely irrelevant to dialectics:³²¹

[...] the equality $A = A$ is vibrated by an internal and endless motion that removes the two terms from its identity, and restores them with the game (power and deceit) of this deviation. So while no truth can be born from this resolution, a dangerous space opens up where Klossowski's words, myths, traps that entrap and get entrapped, discover their language. A language as important as Blanchot's, since in turn it teaches us that the deeper essence of thought will find the spontaneity of insight outside dialectics.³²²

Klossowski, speaking of demon simulations and the different impact they have on the demon-possessed and those who witness them, focused on the fluidity of identity expressed through the constant shapeshifting of demons from one form into another.³²³

³²¹ The word demon is used here according to its ancient Greek sense; *δαίμων* was an intermediary entity of divine nature, moving between the worlds of Gods and humans, appearing as the embodied manifestation of the Divine among the living, thus functioning as a simulacrum allowing communication between Gods and humans.

³²² Michel Foucault, "Ο λόγος του Ακταίωνα" (The prose of Actaeon, 1964), in: Pierre Klossowski, *Το Λουτρό της Άρτεμης* (Diana's Bath), transl. by Maria Efstathiadi, (Athens: Agra, 1992 [Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1956]), 171.

³²³ "The demon inhabits not only what it reveals (the goddess Diana) but also the spectator (Acteon) to whom the image of goddess is revealed. [...] The simulations of demons imply a liquidation of the principle of identity: behind every simulated mask there lies not face, but only another simulation, another mask, and another mask behind that mask." Smith, "Introduction...", in: Klossowski, *The Living Currency*, (2017 [1970]), 18.

The demon, here, according to Klossowski, resides in both the artist and the spectator. While creating associations with Klossowski's thought, which essentially stood away from any interiority vs. exteriority binary, one would dare to say that the 'demon' in the cases of the performances presented here, is nothing but the constantly redistributed set of intensities that flow and circulate among bodies, the moment they get entangled and lead to the successive emergence of fluid subjectivities.

Following from Klossowski's move, one might identify throughout his works the everexisting presence of action mutators; spacetime protocols that function as shifting and mutating mechanisms in the order of events, defining the game of identities within them. These action mutators are to be found in the spatiotemporal planes of myth (*Le Bain de Diane*, 1956), theatre (*Theologia Theatrica*) and hospitality (*Roberte ce Soir*, 1953). It is in a similar way that the protocols set in the performances presented - be it written contracts and/or technologies of violence - also operate as action mutators governing the games of identities taking place within each live work. In that respect, *Spatium Monstrorum* is but a 'theatrical stage' where identities are but masks upon masks upon a non-existent face.³²⁴ At the moment of the collapse of the Ego, Universalism and God, what remains, is a field of singularities that shift and intra-act. What performance as *Spatium Monstrorum* adds to this process of production of singularities is an architecture of entanglements that organizes the intra-actions and energy flows among bodies. This morphogenetic structure, defined by the protocols associated with each project, creates and distributes potential zones of emergence of events producing new singularities. The importance of this move suggested by performance as *Spatium Monstrorum* lies on the indication of a field of investigation that is neither occupied by fixed identities nor is it

³²⁴ "This suffering through excess is that of the Bacchantes, it proceeds from the *impossibility* of figures, of masks which together occupy the same space-time and thereby reveal the libidinal band [...]." In: Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, ... (2015/2019 [1974]), 28.

an undifferentiated abyss; the nomadic distribution of singularities portrays a topography governed by protocols, through which one is invited to reflect, so as to be able to generate art and thinking away from metaphysics.

Nomadic distributions of pre-individual singularities and their importance in rethinking processes of subjectivation, was firstly brought to the table in a systematic and thoroughly thought-out way, by Gilbert Simondon and his theory of individuation.³²⁵ Simondon argued that in the process of biological genesis there is always a pre-individual and impersonal stage revolving around the emergence of singularities-events, portraying the following five characteristics:

- a) the potential energy of the field,
- b) the internal resonance of series,
- c) the topological surface of membranes,
- d) the organization of sense,
- e) the status of the problematic.³²⁶

Following from these five traits, one could briefly describe the world of singularities-events, as a pulsating energy field where “everything happens at the surface.”³²⁷ Singularities-events corresponding to heterogeneous series, organized in a metastable system, frequent along membrane topologies “[...] to the extent that a paradoxical element traverses the series and makes them resonate.”³²⁸ Within this topography there are only surfaces - there is neither interiority nor exteriority - and sense is thus produced

³²⁵ Simondon, *L'individu ...*, 1948.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, (2013 [1969]), 106.

³²⁸ Ibid., 105.

at the surface, once singularities get organized according to the resonance of the series. Since there are no forms yet, no individuals nor organs, distributed singularities are but topological events without orientation. Thus said, sense produced in this impersonal stage would belong to the area of the problematic, since all that there is, is but nomadic distributions.

In sum, Simondon's move allows one to grasp the importance of the performance practice informing this research, through its potential to generate a discourse on how live art might problematize around the notion of the singular instead that of the personal, the individual and the subjective. Now it becomes even clearer how the performances presented differentiate themselves from the 1970's performance tradition, with which they share a similar vocabulary: in the first case we have a hermeneutics of the subject based on the emergence of pre-individual singularities within phenomena of entanglement, whereas in the second case the performer's body constitutes the limit for an identity grasped as already defined by institutional and social mechanisms, with the live work operating as an agency of critique and act of resistance towards these mechanisms of identity formation.³²⁹

The notion of entanglement, thus, becomes particularly important in the hermeneutics of the subject examined in the suggested paradigm, and needs to be further unpacked so as to fully exhibit its ethical potential in contemporary performance art. Karen Barad is one of the first philosophers who borrowed the term 'entanglement' from the area of quantum mechanics (Barad is also a theoretical physicist), in order for her to indicate how identities don't pre-exist as such, but are instead co-created the moment of their encounter, in the same way that particles cannot be separated from the

³²⁹ "I have been arguing that masochistic performance artists of the 1970's took suffering upon themselves in order to point to trouble two interconnected social institutions: the law and the home." In: O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, ... (1998), 12.

phenomena and the intra-actions they partake in.³³⁰ The way that Johnny Golding views the term ‘entanglement’ both in her academic seminars and philosophical texts, provides another dimension of this notion, now closer to the philosophical idea of friendship.³³¹ Golding resituates entanglement as a state of attunement among sentient beings; a trans-species listening-encounter, opening up to the possibility of *radical pitié* (after Rousseau) and life-as-friendship.³³²

In the history of philosophy, *φιλία* (friendship in ancient Greek) was first used by Aristotle as a term in order to describe a kind of affection differentiated from *έρως* (eros) and *αγάπη* (love).³³³ Friendship, for Aristotle, always requires a kind of encounter among sentient beings, it is reciprocal – thus, recognizable from others –, involves intimacy and care, and has the potential to be an ethical gesture.³³⁴ Since Aristotle, and up to the present day, plenty of philosophers have been engaged with the idea of friendship (Montaigne, Derrida, Foucault, Golding, etc). In any case, what seems to be at stake in all discourses (dialectical or not) developed around the idea of friendship, is a kind of encounter including: attunement, intimacy and care. As seen from a non-dialectical perspective, a necessary presupposition for this particular kind of entanglement to take place would be parrhēsiastic truth. Friendship being manifested via gestures of care towards others, also necessarily requires care towards oneself. One cannot befriend others, without ‘befriending’ themselves, at the same time and vice versa. This is what

³³⁰ “[...] *phenomena* are the *ontological* inseparability of agentially intra-acting components.” In: Barad, *Meeting the Universe ...*, (2007), 33.

³³¹ Johnny Golding, “Friendship,” in: *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies*, edited by Lynn Turner, Ron Broglio and Undine Sellbach (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 262 - 276.

³³² *Ibid.*, 269-272.

³³³ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, as mentioned in: Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by J. Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995 [1984].

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

Michel Foucault essentially meant through his idea of the care of the self and others, as it was reformulated in light of the notion of parrhēsia, during his latest lectures at the Collège de France.

Ethics of care / Performance-as-philosophy

Following from the above, it now becomes clear how performance as *Spatium Monstrorum*, while problematizing life-as-surface and its establishment via visceral encounters and parrhēsiastic games, calls forth the urgency for establishing new kinds of kinships among sentient beings, that would be closer to the idea of friendship. The demand for such an attempt, requires a radical displacement of the existing binary relation between performance art and philosophy, to now be rethought of through the schema: performance-as-philosophy. Leading one's life *in friendship*, to include practices of care and intimacy, demands a certain kind of *praxis* or *ascesis* that would encompass corporeal forms of knowledge and sensuous technologies of the self. As it will be shown just below, within the Western philosophical tradition starting from ancient Greece, this realm of carnal knowledge used to be that of philosophy, offering all the necessary tools and methodologies on how to lead one's life. Therefore, suggesting performance to be rethought of as philosophy, not only reconstitutes an existing relationship between technologies of the body and philosophy, but also suggests new methodological pathways in the fields of humanities and art.

French philosophers Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault were two of the most prominent examples of thinkers who revisited ancient Greek philosophy in order to indicate how embodied practices and techniques might operate as methodologies for leading one's life. Hadot approached this question through his research on practices of

indifference, as indicated by the Stoic tradition and early Christian texts.³³⁵ As for Foucault, he focused on the notion of parrhēsia, as practiced by Socrates and Diogenes, as well as by the Cynics and the early Christian ascetics.³³⁶ For Hadot, ancient Greek philosophy was, essentially, not about the creation of concepts as coherent ideological systems of thought carrying absolute truths to be passed on to others. On the contrary, most of the ancient Greek philosophers tended to have inconsistencies and contradictions in their texts, not because they had errors and thus failed to create a perfectly consistent theory to explain the world, but precisely because ancient Greek philosophy was not a system but a *method* that allowed one to see the world differently and change their way of life:

[...] the ancient philosophers weren't looking above all to present a systematic theory of reality, but to teach their students a method in order for them to be equally oriented in their thinking but also in their life.³³⁷

For Hadot, Greek philosophy was first and foremost *a set of spiritual exercises* that served as an indication for and an invitation (*protreptic*) to *a true life*, including practices, such as:

- a) detachment from oneself,
- b) surpassing of all dualities,
- c) mnemotechnique,
- d) dialogue,
- e) concentration in the present,
- f) preparation for death (*preparatio mortis*) and the difficulties of life,

³³⁵ See: Pierre Hadot, *La Philosophie comme manière de vivre*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2001.

³³⁶ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, (2011[2009]).

³³⁷ Hadot, *La Philosophie...*, (2001), 148. Translation is mine.

- g) confession,
- h) meditation,
- i) breathing exercises.³³⁸

Ancient Greek philosophy was, thus, both: (a) a kind of methodology for someone to find the tools and the ways to lead a true life, and (b) true life itself. Michel Foucault, in his 1983-1984 series of lectures at the Collège de France, dedicated to the subject of parrhēsia, presented the case of the Cynic scandal as a philosophical example of a true life, as *a life which is radically other*.³³⁹ The particularity of the Cynics resided on the fact that they had no written texts or a philosophical doctrine to pass on to others. On the contrary, philosophy for them was literally practiced through their scandalous way of life committed to simplicity, dismissing all material possessions, social conventions and behavioral patterns.³⁴⁰ The Cynic scandal consisted precisely in practicing an extreme form of life that would disrupt the public sphere and stand as a set of parrhēsiastic corporeal practices among the Athenian citizens. Diogenes, being the seminal example of the Cynic life, had no possessions at all, and became well known for living inside a big urn and wandering in the city while holding a lamp - even during daylight - 'looking for humans.' Diogenes used to eat and masturbate in public, seeing no division between the private and the public.³⁴¹ Whenever other people scorned him he would respond in unexpected ways (e.g. barking at them) that would always serve as a philosophical

³³⁸ Ibid., 114 (a), 119 (b), 149 (c), 146 (d), 252 (e), 145 (g,h), 153 (i). The practice of surpassing of all dualities is also met in Alchemy, Neoplatonism and the esoteric tradition, through the idea of the *Reconciliation of the Opposites* (*Coincidentia Oppositorum*). For more information, see: Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*, transl. from French by Stephen Corrin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), and Burckhardt, *Alchemy...*, (1997 [1960]).

³³⁹ Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, (2011 [2009]), 269.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 270.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 171.

statement made directly through the body. In that respect the Cynics not only were the most tangible example of philosophy-as-a-way-of-life, but also stood as a predecessor of performance art in the public sphere, as seen much later on, in the political actions of the early twentieth century avant-garde (e.g. Dada), to the 1960's happenings and contemporary performance art.³⁴² Following from the above, it now becomes clear how the performance-philosophy entanglement, enables performance as *Spatium Monstrorum* to not only revisit philosophy as embodied practice and method for a life which is radically other, but to also create the possibility for a life-as-friendship.

It is precisely in that respect that the present practice-led research contributes to the area of performance-philosophy, by bringing forward a body of work that not only evades to operate as a representation/illustration of philosophical schemas, but most importantly, by suggesting a rethinking of performance-philosophy as an embodied praxis and methodology for changing one's life.³⁴³

Following from Hadot's and Foucault's arguments, performance-as-philosophy should thus be an invitation to change and an exhortation to a new ethical life. In that respect, performance-as-philosophy would be a sort of 'προτρεπτικόν' (*protreptic*) - a title given to philosophical texts in ancient Greece and early Christianity that would encourage and invite people towards change. Thus said, performance-as-philosophy would be an action mutator towards life-as-surface.

³⁴² A relevant argument associating James Lee Byars's practice with Diogenes' tradition was made in: Thomas McEvelley, *Sculpture in an Age of Doubt*, (New York: Allworth Press, 1999), 427.

³⁴³ Performance-Philosophy as a field of research has been particularly promoted by the Performance Philosophy (PP) international research network, book series and Journal (<https://www.performancephilosophy.org>). Professor Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, one of PP network's founding core conveners, is also the author of many books on performance-philosophy, including: *The Routledge Companion to Performance Philosophy* (Routledge, 2020) and *Encounters in Performance Philosophy* (Palgrave, 2014), both co-edited with Alice Lagaay; *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* (Palgrave, 2012); *Manifesto Now! Instructions for Performance, Philosophy, Politics* (Intellect, 2013), co-edited with Will Daddario; and *Deleuze and Performance* (Edinburgh, 2009).

As indicated by the performer-audience encounters in the performances examined, *being surface* corresponds to this state of living one's life in its full intensity and without presuppositions, precisely because one is courageous enough to be open to be affected by and affect others, while being entangled with them in dynamic and pulsating multidirectional exchanges. Thus said, the current research calls forth an everyday praxis of response-ability, in a similar way that the spiritual exercise of *Dialogues* did within the Western philosophical tradition.

Διάλογοι (*Dialogues*) in ancient Greece, were philosophical texts structured according to the question-response scheme, that would correspond to the encounter of two or more people involved in a conversation. As a consequence, *Διάλογοι* (*Dialogues*) indicated a demand for responsibility and response-ability among all interlocutors. Even texts that didn't follow the Dialogue form were still a manifestation of this fundamental encounter of exchange, e.g.: Aristotle's *Notes* and Epicurus's *Letters*. In all cases, ancient Greek philosophical texts didn't aim at creating an absolute truth, a dogma or an ideology. Their main goal was to encourage people towards change and offer the tools for a life lived in its full intensity. Seen from this perspective, *Spatium Monstrorum* could be regarded as a sort of Dialogue, revolving around possibilities of being-with, the moment of being surface. It is a Dialogue regarding strategies of re-inventing one's ethics and politics, away from idealism. And the praxis of this Dialogue requires certain tools such as those of trust, care and *délicatesse*.³⁴⁴ As a consequence, the potentialities offered by such a move, point to a trans-individual self, always entangled and always in a state of affirmation *in pure joy*.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ For Roland Barthes this would be: *tact, douceur*. In: Joe Kelleher, "Intimacy, Delicacy and Indifference: Ane Lan," in: Chatzichristodoulou & Zerihan, eds., *Intimacy...* (2012), 200-212.

³⁴⁵ The aforementioned position in favor of a trans-individual self-affirming life in its full intensity, coincides with Nietzsche's vision.

The importance of the onto-epistemological move suggested by performance-as-philosophy, for the re-invention of a trans-individual self, lies on the engendering of a possibility for a new ethics [of surfaces] to emerge in the place of morality. The urgency of such a move has already been indicated by philosophers such as: Friedrich Nietzsche and his doctrine of the revaluation of all values, Michel Foucault and his experimentation with BDSM, Jacques Rancière and his ethics-aesthetics entanglement in the political sphere as expressed through his idea of the distribution of the sensible (*le partage de sensible*), Deleuze & Guattari and their view on the affirmative nature of the BwO. In the case of the present research, this is done via a politics of difference, with difference here seen not as ‘being different from’ but as this ‘belonging with,’ this pulsating movement among entities, this “ \rightleftharpoons ” that would always produce an excess.



146. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Matter*, 2017. Photograph: Anna Bones.

CONCLUSION

This practice-led Ph.D. research investigated the question of how contemporary performance art might be rethought of and resituated away from representation or any reference to absolute truths. The methodology followed had performance-making as its starting point and area of problematization, and was supported by references to non-dialectical thinkers such as: Lyotard, Deleuze & Guattari, Nietzsche, Foucault, Bataille, Klossowski, Golding, Heidegger, Barad and others. Through the mutual exchanges and feedback loops between the live works produced and the non-representational systems of thought studied, performance-as-surface (here named as: *Spatium Monstrorum*) was suggested as a possible working hypothesis.³⁴⁶ Therefore, further research questions were raised:

- If performance-as-surface operates as a field occupied only by intensities, what might be the technological apparatuses that generate, organize, and distribute the intensities produced (Supra: Chapter I)?
- In what ways might these technological mechanisms resituate the production of images in contemporary performance art (Supra: Chapter II)?
- What might be the onto-epistemological moves entailed with performance-as-surface and its technologies of governmentality (Supra: Chapter III)?

In Chapter I (Protocols: Generating and distributing intensities within performances-surfaces) the question of the potential technologies generating and distributing intensities within performances-surfaces was investigated. Through the body of performance work

³⁴⁶ On the idea of *Spatium Monstrorum*, see supra: 109-110.

produced in the context of this research, the examples of protocols of violence and protocols of written contracts were suggested as potential technological apparatuses for the production and distribution of intensities.³⁴⁷ The protocols applied in the live works discussed, not only governed the performer-audience encounter through the distribution of areas of potential future events, but they also set the rhythm for the repetitive use of the performer's body and its subsequent transmutation into flesh, so that it became itself a material force; a tangible material already sensuous and dimensionally active. In so doing, the reiteration of acts of use on the expense of the performer's unity of self, essentially suggested how Nietzsche's idea of Eternal Return might be bodily expressed through the way in which trauma maps itself onto the body via the repetition of successive encounters.³⁴⁸ Therefore, the material remainders or excesses (used gloves, contracts, chalk, rope, etc.) of the reiterated events taking place in the form of a feedback loop ($z \Rightarrow z^2 + c$) within the performances put forward, were suggested as being able to maintain or echo the intensities of the encounters that took place within each live work. In addition, the risk required on behalf of the performer – and the audience – to establish a certain kind of intra-action that would allow these encounters to emerge, indicated the locus of contemporary performance as a potential field for parrhēsiastic truth to take place. Situated via the idea of parrhēsia, truth in the present thesis was thus viewed as that which emerges and circulates the moment of the encounter, as the performer takes the risk of revealing a life which is radically other.³⁴⁹ While investigating the embodied logics of how written contracts operated within the performances presented, associations with Master and slave ($M \Rightarrow s$) contracts from the BDSM lifestyle were brought to the

³⁴⁷ Supra: 30-32.

³⁴⁸ Supra: 40-49.

³⁴⁹ Supra: 92-94, 104-110.

table, in order to show how contract protocols might function as morphogenetic structures / diagrams for the embodiment of a shared physical reality among sentient beings, sustained only via the circulation of intensities –this shared reality, some would call: a Body without Organs.³⁵⁰ In addition, references to Master and slave contracts allowed one to grasp the complexity of the idea of consent in the performance contracts discussed, with consent now operating not just as a mere agreement but as a material tool of embodied knowledge that has a way of enabling a social contract - as opposed to an individual contract - to become in fact a socialized encounter of a non-exchangeable value.³⁵¹

In Chapter II (Generation of Images: From representation to morphogenesis and image-as-difference) a further problematization emerged, revolving around the ways in which the technological apparatuses (here: protocols of violence and protocols of written contracts) employed in performance-as-surface might resituate, away from representation, the production of images in contemporary performance art.³⁵² Starting from the performance practice informing this research, it was examined how the protocols applied in the live works presented, allowed images to emerge as residue, excess or phantasm, via the repetitive pulse of contraction and repulsion between two (or more) heterogeneous series of images. In so doing, the generated images in the performances discussed, operated as images-multiplicities that, due to live art's transient nature were equally fragile and fugitive. Therefore, the question of the survival of performance-surface's fugitive images-multiplicities was raised, to be then approached after adopting Aby Warburg's hypothesis on the survival of forces circulating renaissance

³⁵⁰ Supra: 88-90.

³⁵¹ Supra: 64-79.

³⁵² Supra: 111-115.

art, through the violent collision among fossilized images.³⁵³ A direct consequence of this ability of the image to manifest and mobilize impulsive forces that would initiate and sustain a certain kind of encounter with the viewer, as shown in the performance practice informing the thesis, was a rethinking of Beauty-as-gravitas, opening a horizon of new performance research methods that would investigate ideas on the Beautiful as a catalyst for potential encounters within live art.³⁵⁴

In Chapter III (Performance-as-philosophy: A praxis towards life-as-surface), it was shown how performance-as-surface might also perform an onto-epistemological move manifested in visceral performance environments, so as to resituate and update to the 21st century, logics of sense opposing to the Dogmatic Image of Thought and the supremacy of Logos as the sole locus of thought.³⁵⁵ Through the performances informing the thesis, the very act of thinking got to be examined away from rationality, now seen as this material and embodied sensuous process of inhabiting identity-as-difference in the here and now.³⁵⁶ In line with the Heideggerian event of appropriation, the performances-surfaces presented disrupted the tautology of Being with the [rationally] thinking being, to suggest instead a notion of identity seen as a continuous pulsating movement of belonging (being together and being apart), the moment one is being entangled with others. Within the identity paradigm put forward, the role of the technological apparatuses employed in the live works discussed (protocols of violence & protocols of written contracts) seems to be that of action mutators governing the pulsating game of identities, through the redistribution of spacetime. Consequently,

³⁵³ Supra: 166-182.

³⁵⁴ Supra: 151-157.

³⁵⁵ Supra: 184-197.

³⁵⁶ Supra: 204-208.

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To conclude, what this performance art practice-led Ph.D. thesis aimed at is a radical repositioning of performance-research-as-philosophy, after revisiting philosophy's initial task which, instead of presenting a coherent theoretical schema to be handed over to others, was essentially to offer a methodology that would encourage people to live differently. This is possibly where the value of the thesis and practice-led research resides, while suggesting potential methodologies on how performance art might operate as a protreptic for one *"to change the value of the currency"* (περιχάραζον το νόμισμα), in a similar way that Diogenes and the Cynics resisted conventions by extrapolating the idea of the true life to such a degree that it would lose its essentialist support and be grasped only via its capacity to circulate.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ Supra: 210-212.

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104. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Protreptic*, 168-hour (3 weeks) long durational performance, commissioned by the Marina Abramović Institute and the Bangkok Art Biennale, Bangkok Art & Culture Centre, 2018 (last day). **[140]**
105. Nicolas Provost, *Long Live the New Flesh – excerpt I*, video still, 2010. **[141]**

106. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur (d'après F.N.)*, 10-minute performance, The New Darkroom, RCA Queer Society, Dyson Gallery, London, 2017. Text by Friedrich Nietzsche, *La Gaia Scienza*, 1882, Preface §4, transl. by Patrick Wotling, slightly altered by Pierre Hadot, as mentioned in: Pierre Hadot, *Le Voile d'Isis: Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de Nature*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 22-23. Photograph by Vasiliki Antonopoulou. [142]
107. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur II (d'après F.N.)*, 10-minute performance & video projection [Despina Zacharopoulou, *Pudeur (d'après F.N.)*, 10-minute performance, 2017. Camera by Vasiliki Antonopoulou.], Visual Cultures Lecture Series, Marl: Sometimes Hard, usually Soft: A Carnival of Entanglement, Gorvy Lecture Theatre, RCA, London, UK, 2018. Photograph by Åsa Johannesson. [143]
108. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Aphorism*, 7-minute live performance & video projection, Entanglement - The Opera, Gorvy Lecture Theatre, RCA, 2019. Text read during the performance: Friedrich Nietzsche, "Of the Despisers of the Body," in: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, transl. by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1961, 2003 [Chemnitz: Ernst Schmeitzner, 1883]), 61-63. Photograph by *This is tomorrow*. [144]
109. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Actio/Praxis*, 5-minute live performance & video projection, Art, Performance & the Act [invited guest speaker Romeo Castellucci], University of Roehampton, London, UK, 2020. Photograph T. Fatehi Irani. [145]
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moma.org/s/lb/collection_lb/object/object_objid-71875.html (accessed 12-10-2020). [159]
121. Lucio Fontana, *Spatial Concept 'Waiting'*, 1960, Tate T00694, © Fondazione Lucio Fontana, Milan. tate.org.uk/art/artworks/fontana-spatial-concept-waiting-t00694 (accessed 27-04-2021). [160]
122. Bruce Nauman, *Self Portrait as a Fountain*, 1966-67, printed 1970. Chromogenic print: sheet, 20 1/16 × 23 15/16 in. (51 × 60.8 cm); image, 19 1/2 × 23 1/4 in. (49.5 × 59.1 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase 70.50.9 [161]
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artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/239.2016/ (accessed 13-11-2020). [165]
125. Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, c.1485, tempera on canvas, 172.5 x 278.5 cm, The Uffizi Collection. uffizi.it/en/artworks/birth-of-venus (accessed 13-11-2020). [167]
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museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/museo-pio-clementino/Cortile-Ottagono/laocoonte.html (accessed 13-11-2020). [168]
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130. André Malraux poses in his house at Boulogne-sur-Seine near Paris while working on *Le Musée Imaginaire De La Sculpture Mondiale: Des Bas-Reliefs Aux Grottes Sacrées*, in 1953. Photograph by Maurice Jarnoux/*Paris Match* via Getty Images. [christies.com/features/Walter-Grasskamp-The-Book-on-the-Floor-Andre-Malraux-and-the-Imaginary-Museum-8060-1.aspx](https://www.christies.com/features/Walter-Grasskamp-The-Book-on-the-Floor-Andre-Malraux-and-the-Imaginary-Museum-8060-1.aspx) (accessed 11-02-2021). **[174]**

131. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Atlas-Mnémosyne (d'après A.W.)*, 2018. Flight Mode RCA Research Exhibition, Assembly Point Gallery, London, UK, 2018. Polaroids taken by Despina Zacharopoulou, Master Po, Michael Cane, Vasiliki Antonopoulou, MnR, John, Shannon Forrester, Åsa Johannesson, Kelly Spanou, Patricio Soto Aguilar. **[175]**

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137. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Love *me**, 5-minute performance, 5 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME, RCA Performance Pathway, The doodle bar, London, UK, 2017. Photograph by Prof. Nigel Rolfe. **[190]**

138. Despina Zacharopoulou, *Love *me**, 5-minute performance, 5 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME, RCA Performance Pathway, The doodle bar, London, UK, 2017. Photograph by Prof. Nigel Rolfe. **[190]**

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140. Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1902-04, oil on canvas, 73 x 91.9cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art Collection. philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/102997.html (accessed 25-04-2021). **[193]**

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144. Franko B, *Aktion 398*, Milan, Italy, 1998. franko-b.com/Aktion_398.html (accessed 10-12-2020). **[201]**
145. Kira O'Reilly, *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter Kuopio*, 2003. ANTI Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio. Photo by Pekka Mäkinen. In: Kira O'Reilly, *Untitled (Bodies)* (Bristol & Chicago: Intellect, The University of Chicago Press / London: Live Art Development Agency, 2018), 124. **[202]**
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