

**I Think
My Body Feels,
I Feel My Body
Thinks: On
Corpoliteracy**

**VAN
ABBE
MUSEUM
EINDHOVEN**

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I Think My Body Feels, I Feel My Body Thinks: On Corpoliteracy

Introduction



I Think My Body Feels, I Feel My Body Thinks: On Corpoliteracy is a gathering of texts and textures from lyricists, theorists, organisers, artists and practitioners. The publication draws from recent programmes, acquisitions and trajectories within the Van Abbemuseum, alongside essays and new commissions to explore different modalities of – and relationships to – corpoliteracy.

Once activated, corpoliteracy marks the struggle to rely on the ‘corpo’ or body movements as a reliable informant beside the more formal components of reading and writing – knowing or ‘literacy’. In this scheme, narrating and writing are on equal footing as a corporeal phenomenon for recounting history, making community and transcending the boundaries of language. The body is as much a witness capable of providing testimony – through movement and dance – much like written, spoken, eyewitness or earwitness accounts. The term corpoliteracy was coined by curator and polymath Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung and speaks to a consciousness of mind and body rhythm-equity. Indeed Ndikung’s thinking around corpoliteracy has been central to the development of this publication, as well as a key reference point for a number of contributors.

While Ndikung’s term served as a jumping off point, *I Think My Body Feels, I Feel My Body Thinks* offered us, as editors, a chance to bring



different projects, ideas and trajectories within the Van Abbe into conversation with one another. In what follows readers will encounter reflections on recent exhibition and mediation projects – such as the Queer Sign Glossary or the long-term research and exhibition project by artist Yael Davids that, in very different ways, explore the possibilities and limits of mobilising the body within the physical and discursive space of the museum. Alongside this a number of new commissions interrogate and bend the term corpoliteracy, offering generative forms of resistance to the term's seeming marriage of body and text. Collectively, the contributions reveal an investment in somatic practice as a way of knowing, one that is rooted in lived experience and as a movement to counter normativity and dominant structures.

This publication began in 2020 as a proposition for a series of live workshops and performances in the museum space. Due to the pandemic and the resulting museum closure for much of 2020, 2021 and onwards the scope of the project – and our own understanding of it – became reoriented. While the museum closure had the practical effect of pushing us towards the current format of the e-book, the physical absence of bodies within the museum also prompted a more self-reflexive approach. Through individual contributions and the project as a whole editors and contributors consider the different ways we work

with and transmit the corporeal. The format of the e-book has also allowed for an opportunity to have different types of conversations with contributors, taking us to contexts, positions and histories that may have otherwise alluded us – such as the figure of Frederico Morais who was introduced to us by Daniel Neugebauer, and led us to include writing by Renata Cervetto and Mariella Richmond, on which we go into more detail in the following pages.

The publication opens with a letter from artists Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz who share insights into their resistant movement tactic, moving backwards – the title for this 2019 video work acquired for the Van Abbe collection is taken from the strategy used by Kurdish women guerrilla fighters to disorient enemies by wearing their shoes backwards and hiding their true direction. Boudry and Lorenz ask: 'How can we move our bodies out of synch from the rhythms of classical pedagogy, elitist dance trainings, taylorism, Big Pharma, queer shame, the military, and colonial missionary endeavours? Two Steps Forward. And Three Steps Back.' In his essay 'Corpoliteracy: Envisaging the Body as Slate, Sponge and Witness', first printed in the anthology *In a While Or Two We Will Find the Tone* (2020) Ndikung introduces and expands on 'corpoliteracy' as signalling a 'possibility'. He describes this as 'an effort to contextualise the body as a platform, stage, site and medium of



learning, a structure or organ that acquires, stores, and disseminates knowledge'. It is within these multiple registers and modalities of acquiring, storing and disseminating, that the contributions to this book operate.

Artist, dancer and choreographer Joy Mariama Smith introduces the term 'corpolegible', positioning at the 'crux' of their enquiry questions: Is the body a source from which we can understand things other than the mind? And what is the body learning? Their contribution includes a series of videos where we encounter movements and exercises, some of which unfold across the spaces of the Van Abbemuseum, in which the body becomes the site to simultaneously evoke and resist legibility. Developed with a number of collaborators Mariama Smith's pages are conceived as a series of 'glosses', prompting the reader to twist, turn and contort, or even read with others.

A Queer Sign Glossary, was co-developed by designer and organiser Olle Lundin and the Dutch Sign Centre or *Het Nederlands Gebaren-centrum* (NGC) at the Van Abbemuseum in 2017 as part of Queering the Collection. For the publication we present all twelve videos of the glossary as well as an introduction by Lundin. As Lundin details, the project emerged from the confluence of the Queering the Collection initia-

tive alongside a programme titled the multisensory museum. In this way the glossary is an articulation – to turn to philosopher Marie Bardet's term, explained in more detail below – of the textual and the bodily, and serves as a case study for expanding formal language through lived, bodily experience.

A key protagonist and interlocutor within the Van Abbe's engagement with corpoliteracy has been the mediator, educator and editor Daniel Neugebauer who worked at the Van Abbemuseum from 2012–18. In his essay "No Need to Mourn the Glorious Corpse": What a Corpoliterate Institutionalism Could Look Like' Neugebauer charts a number of the projects, ideas and interlocutors that have shaped his relationship to corpoliteracy as a practice, political position and tool for institutional mediation, traversing programmes at the Van Abbe, documenta 14 and Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin where he currently works, offering readers an invaluable series of reference points in relation to this emergent concept. Central to his evolving understanding of and relationship to corpoliteracy, is the realisation of how it allows for both the 'expression and overcoming of embodied trauma in decolonial artistic practice' as well as the possibility of 'translating different emancipatory and inclusionary efforts into institutional mediation strategies'.



When discussing his contribution, Neugebauer proposed to invite collaborators Renata Cervetto and Mariela Richmond who he has recently been in a long-term dialogue with around the term corpoliteracy. Together Neugebauer, Cervetto and Richmond looked to the writing of Brazilian curator and educator Frederico Morais, and his 1971 essay ‘Against Affluent Art: The Body Is the Engine of “the Work”’, which is published in English here for the first time and translated by Jessica Gogan.

In her introduction and reflection on ‘Against Affluent Art’ text curator and mediator Cervetto describes the central premise behind Morais’s idea of the body as motor of work: ‘The body’, she writes, ‘is approached as physical matter (organs, visors, muscles, intelligence), memory and resistance; through its playful and creative capacity.’ Connecting Morais’s writing to contemporary debates on mediation Cervetto sees this idea as ‘allud[ing] not only to the collective learning that triggers artistic practice, but also to the discovery of the body itself’.

Morais’s essay written at the beginning of the 1970s and sensitively translated here by Gogan, begins by noting how the notion of the artwork has ‘exploded’. Morais’s revised idea of art is premised on ‘experience’ rather than the authoring of a single object or image for

contemplation. Here, art cannot be distinguished from its surroundings, its context, its makers and its audience. Morais calls on artists of the so-called ‘third world’ or World 3 and particularly Latin America from which he writes to resist what he terms ‘affluent art’. Central to this resistance and falling within this new sphere of artistic understanding, the body emerges as a distinct site of possibility. ‘Art’, he writes ‘as “cosa corporale” – a body thing.’

In response to Morais’s essay educator and writer Mariela Richmond locates the evocation of a body art within the ‘Dermis, Muscles and Joints’. Extending his central idea that art moves beyond the textual, to the corporeal, Richmond evokes the possibility of new ‘articulations’ – joints – between words and body, text and movement. Richmond expands Marie Bardet’s notion of articulations to encompass relations between artist and public, writing: ‘It could not be a distance, it is rather a resonance with the skin, a redistribution between the inner and the outer of the body, that determines certain relationships through constant movement.’

Gaining a greater awareness of the articulations within the body is at the heart of the Feldenkrais method in which attention to habitual movement patterns that are thought to be inefficient or strained, are reformed to produce new



patterns using gentle, slow, repeated movements – adopted by artist and Feldenkrais teacher Yael Davids in her three-year research project and exhibition *A Daily Practice* (2017–21). In a conversation, Davids with three of her students Nick Aikens, Mercedes Azpilicueta and Megan Hoetger revisit *The School* – a series of Feldenkrais lessons conceived with works from the Van Abbe collection that were included in David's eponymous exhibition (2020) – and relive the experiences and relations within it between body and artwork, body and museum, teacher and student, class and exhibition.

Artist Mercedes Azpilicueta illustrates an experiment in revisioning history with her project *The Captive: Here's A Heart For Every Fate*, revisiting her 2019 exhibition at the Van Abbe-museum that centred on the myth of Lucía Miranda, popularised in South America to perpetuate the false legitimacy of white colonial settlers in indigenous territory. Azpilicueta illustrates this myth through the lens of Argentinian writer Eduarda Mansilla who portrayed Miranda and indigenous protagonists with agency. Within the original exhibition Azpilicueta used tapestries, costume, video and performance to mobilise and implicate the body in different ways, creating a series of relays between different bodies: the pages of nineteenth century literature, digital images, hybrid costumes and performance. For

her contribution to this publication Azpilicueta draws on the elements of this original exhibition, reconfiguring bodily relationships across histories and contexts.

In the second of the republished essays by Ndikung, 'That, Around Which the Universe Revolves: On the Rhythms of Memory, Times, Bodies and Urban Space' we are taken into the realm of rhythmanalysis – first introduced by Marxist thinker Henri Lefebvre – or what it means to live 'rhythmatically'. The text, written as part of the 2017 project *That Around Which the Universe Revolves* explores the different rhythms that permeate our body, movements, interactions and lives. In this reformulation of Lefebvre's ideas Ndikung situates the corporeal as playing a vital role, serving as a 'metronome ready to perceive rhythms without perturbing them nor distorting time'.

Closing the publication is a contribution from the artist collective *Cooperativa Cráter Invertido*. Invited to reflect on and write towards the notion of corpoliteracy they reveal the fleshy and multiplicitous nature of the term. The different entries that can be read as a single text or as distinct strands according to the colour in which they appear, is an exercise in experiencing and knowing through multiple bodies, literacies and shared states of incompleteness



(Moten & Harney). The collective's text/drawing demonstrates interdependent movements in a line, which transforms into a curve, a coil and then a kink: these are cues for jamming a dominant structure. We encounter figures portrayed in sharing, resting, protecting or piggybacking positions, and actions for combatting state police terror and claiming territory as a commons in the context of Mexico City and Oaxaca where the collective is based.

The collection of texts also serve to encourage the institution to think and feel with its body, which is to take responsibility for its weight historically towards equitable practice in the present and future. Or, following Boudry and Lorenz, in terms of the set of aesthetics that are cared for by museums and art institutions – to practice holding both the history and presence of subordination and violence next to the potential for change.

Taken together, *I Think My Body Feels, I Feel My Body Thinks* comprises a series of propositions, modifications and detours around the term corpoliteracy. As such we hope these different interventions unsettle and expand, rather than fix, readers' understanding – or relationship – to the corporeal. Like all books, this publication was made in community and guided by many hands and bodies. We are especially grateful to Olle

Lundin and Inez van de Scheer who managed earlier versions of the book, Bart de Baets for the pleasurable title, and are indebted to all the contributors who continue to teach us to push the institutional body; to resist its normative tendencies, and to undermine predetermined ways of study and being. We give thanks.

Rhythm as Form



Dear Yolande,

Imagine us sitting in a Berlin studio, tapping our feet to the sounds evaporating from the digital depths of our laptops. Here we are, connecting to your email, where you ask us to think along with the body's capacity to create knowledge, and engaging the senses, not least, what Elisabeth Freeman calls the 'sixth sense': 'the sense of timing, or synchronization (temporal coincidence), and alternation (turn taking).' Rhythm.

We put hope into the pause in between the beats. Intending to look at the power of rhythm, we attune our bodies, individually and in concert. Resisting some rhythms, letting us get carried away by others.

We follow the rhythms of lingering bodies, of bodies moving along the syncope that redirect them in time. In the break. (Moten) How can differences between us materialise and matter, while still moving along each other's? One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back (Trajal Harrell).

How can we move our bodies out of synch with the rhythms of classical pedagogy, elitist dance trainings, taylorism, Big Pharma, queer shame, the military and colonial missionary endeavours? Two Steps Forward. And Three Steps Back.



Rhythm, as we hope, can be an entry point for refusing knowledge about bodies, reorienting how we practise encounters with others. Bodies have been scrutinised and hypervisualised, subjected to violent ways of ‘understanding’. Bodies have been represented to make their pain a spectacle. When, in our film installation *Moving Backwards* (2019) we suggest to ‘collectively move backwards’, we are urging ourselves to slow the beat down and reverse it: we go back and try again, this time hopefully with less need to know, but more commons, relationality and equality in place.

For *Moving Backwards* we were inspired by Kurdish guerrilla women’s practice of wearing their shoes the wrong way around to walk from one place in the snowy mountains to the other, an account that a friend kindly shared with us. The guerrilla tactic was live-saving: it seems as if you are walking backwards, but actually you are walking forwards. Or the other way around. We took this story as a starting point for this endeavour and asked if we can use the tactical ambivalence of backward movement as a means to define our togetherness (while acknowledging what tears us apart).

In the first iteration of *Moving Backwards* at the Swiss Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019, we invited the visitors to enter the space through a tunnel. Soon arriving on an elongated stage

their entering shapeshifts the pavilion’s front architecture from being the ‘main entrance’ to becoming a ‘backstage area’. Then, starting to follow the film projection on the opposite wall, visitors realise that they are situated on the very stage where the filmed performance took place and where they might reimagine themselves as (future) performers of the film. The separation of the visitors’ space from the performers’ space might have collapsed, at least for a moment, occasionally becoming visible, when visitors started dancing during the screening.

Can we think of visitors of art exhibitions, including ourselves, as either being here and now, bringing immense debts and our questionable gazes and anticipations, and being visitors of the future with different, more just capabilities and desires (‘either-and’, a queer logic suggested by scholar Zairong Xiang)?

Do you think it possible that aesthetic means can hold both, not only potentialities of hope and change but also the history and presence of subordination and violence?

Working with aesthetic form in a way that is *either rigorous and playful*, for us is a possibility of engaging with violence and futurity at the same time. Rhythm as form guides us not only by moving bodies in togetherness, but also by



its promising skills of reshaping vision: of *either* producing visual pleasure by bringing about alternative ways of hallucinating, conjuring up and imagining *and* of engaging with vision as an often violent and shaming mode of entering encounters.

In *Moving Backwards*, the visitor's gaze towards the filmed performance is rhythmised and narrowed down by the incessant pace of the camera movement, its frame allowing those watching to see the performers' moving bodies at times, but never to get an overview or understanding of the space at large. The formal rigidity of the camera – the tracking shots have their own timing, never following the rhythm of the performers or the music – coerces the performers into catching the frame even while dancing most cheerfully, if they want to be captured and visualised at all. The camera moves at its own speed along an extensive stage to the right and to the left, but since there are no further spatial or temporal markers, it stays undecided, in what direction the camera advances, forwards or backwards. Moreover, small hints indicate that some of the camera's paths are digitally reversed, meaning that one sees first what has been produced last, further complicating direction and orientation.

Moments of disorientation are vital. They are bodily experiences that throw the world up, or throw the body from its ground. Disorientation as a bodily feeling can be unsettling, and it can shatter one's sense of confidence in the ground or one's belief that the ground on which we reside can support the actions that make a life feel livable. Such a feeling of shattering, or of being shattered might persist and become a crisis. Or the feeling itself might pass as the ground returns or as we return to the ground. The body might be reoriented if the hand that reaches out finds something to steady an action. Or the hand might reach out and find nothing, and might grasp instead the indeterminacy of air. The body in losing its support might then be lost, undone, thrown. (Sara Ahmed)

In the film *Moving Backwards*, five performers move forwards, wearing their shoes backwards, or they move backwards beside each other's, they learn their own dance improvisation played backwards and perform it, some of the dances are digitally reversed, obstructing a possible judgement of seeing either bodily capabilities or the digital altering of bodies. What about music playing backwards, moving objects, a disobedient curtain?



If the installation engages with disorientation, the letters to the audience that were confided to us by artists, theorists and activists and given away as a newspaper during the installation of *Moving Backwards*, might perhaps work as some kind of reorientation by splitting up perspective and thus multiplying historical accounts and future visions alike.

Let's singularly and collectively move forwards/backwards and think about the ways in which we wish to live with loved but also unloved others.

Yours, Renate & Pauline

Thank you Elizabeth Freeman (*Beside You in Time-Sense Methods & Queer Sociabilities in the American 19th Century*, 2019), Fred Moten (*In the Break - The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2003), Trajal Harell (*Newspaper Moving Backwards* by Boudry & Lorenz, 2019), Zairong Xiang (*Transdualism - Toward a Materio-Discursive Embodiment*, 2018), Sara Ahmed (*Queer Phenomenology - Orientations, Objects, Others*, 2006)

Corpoliteracy: Envisaging the Body as Slate, Sponge and Witness



O my body,
make of me always a man who questions!
– Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2008

But they jeered one and all and said:
This is only the night of bonfires
We need dancers around the blaze
Acrobats and drummers, stilt dancers
And, listen carefully, lest you forget.
– Olu Oguibe, *The Youth Who Dances*

An Igbo proverb states that when we dance
we express who we were, who we are,
and who we want to be. Time is compressed
and telescoped teleologically to contain
and express the past, the present and the
future in one fluid kinaesthetic moment.
– Esiaba Irobi, 'The Philosophy of the Sea', 2006

In December 2017, as part of the symposium
*That Around Which the Universe Revolves. On
the Rhythmanalysis of Memory, Times, Bodies in
Space*,¹ filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha
proposed rhythm as the door between body
and mind. She later expatiated on this proposal,
referring to the concept of the embodied mind
common to many AfroAsiatic philosophies.
I have been thinking of rhythm within this analogy:
everything that leads to or induces a rhythm,
facilitates a passage through, an inscription in,
a writing on, a recording, and a spelling on and



of that embodied mind.² If the body is the mind, then it has the capacity to learn and memorise. Every movement in space and time – be it a walk, a dance, or otherwise, every gesticulation, every exercise of the muscles and the cells that make up the body – is possibly remembered. But every intervention on the body – scarifications, tattoos, scars or injuries – triggers the process of memory.

I explore the possibility of a corpoliteracy – an effort to contextualise the body as a platform, stage, site and medium of learning, a structure or organ that acquires, stores and disseminates knowledge. This concept implies that the body, in sync with, but also independent of, the brain, has the potential to memorise and pass on/down acquired knowledge through performativity – the prism of movement, dance and rhythm.

It is common practice that when the Nguemba people – like many other peoples on the African continent and beyond – dance, they invoke and embody certain totems important to particular families or societies at large.

The elephant, lion, monkey or snake dances not only mimic typical movements of these animals but also convoke the spirits that connect the human to his/her animal. These dances, which are usually performed in groups, then serve a

purpose beyond that of mere entertainment and pleasure: the dances become sites that enliven rituals, spaces of spiritual communication and bonding – the bodies that perform are the tools through or with which the rituals are practised.

To the accompaniment of ritual music, the movements of the legs, arms and rest of the body invoke certain spirits, and through repetition and reiteration, a certain degree of automation is achieved. Dance becomes a means through which rituals are expressed – or better still – dance is the ritual. Through dance one can communicate with certain spirits and convoke them for the purposes of worship and appeasement. It is no surprise that in the performativity of dance, more often than not, the dancer is catapulted into a temporary state of ecstasy. The etymological roots of ecstasy are not unimportant: ‘elation’ comes from Old French, *estaise* (ecstasy, rapture), derived from the Late Latin *extasis* and the Greek *ekstasis* (entrancement, astonishment, insanity; any displacement or removal from the proper place). It is this rapture, displacement, and removal from a particular space – in dance, the displacement from one’s own body, the possibility of an out of body state – that becomes very interesting: trance as state; transcendence via the exalted state of body and soul when dancing.

1 Trinh T. Minh-ha, ‘On Fourth Dimension’, lecture at HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin for SAVVY Contemporary’s project *That Around Which the Universe Revolves. On the Rhythmanalysis of Memory, Times, Bodies in Space*, 3 December 2017.

2 As Henri Lefebvre points out: ‘Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is a rhythm.’ The body, according to Lefebvre is a collection of rhythms with different tunes that result from history, facilitated by calling on all senses, drawing on breathing and blood circulation, just as much as heartbeats and speech utterances as landmarks of this experience. See Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythm-analysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013.



Besides the spiritual and ritual aspects of dance, performing has obviously been a way for people to write or encode their own histories. Wars or other challenges faced by a group of people take form as dance moves, or are integrated into costumes and music. Battle techniques, loss of life, or moments of victory are re-performed, passed from one generation to another, as with the Mbaya dance or Capoeira. Group dances often reveal moments of encounter. Encountering of a new religion, for example, can lead to the appropriation of those religious signs, as happened with the appearance of the Catholic cross in the P  p   Kall   and Nyboma dances. Encountering new technologies also gives rise to dance moves: arms open wide can symbolise a plane; or the move in the P  dal   dance in dancers mimic cycling.

There is more work to be done exploring the body's performative role as in dance with respect to the conservation, portrayal and dissemination of peoples' histories and that of places and events – dance as a method of historicity, an alternative writing of history, as historiography. The challenge is to acknowledge dance performance as a medium – in its own right – that can reflect with veracity, authenticity and actually historical knowledge claims.

Through dances like the Juba, the Chica or Calenda, one learns about particular times in history: repressions, racial relations, resistances, resilience and more. The body of the dancer is the witness. The witness's narrative – especially when the witness is silent – occurs through performativity. Every performance is to a certain degree a re-experience and re-witnessing, rather than just observation. Through dance the observer becomes witness.

It is this oneness of the observer and observed, inside and outside, that makes dance as a method and practice particularly interesting at this juncture. In Osho it is said that while the scientist is an observer, the mystic is a witness.³ The dancer too could be considered a witness in this light: their ability to perform the processuality of making histories, and offer testimony, collapses the separation of inside from outside.

Through dance and the accompanying music, sociopolitical realities are embodied, portrayed and sometimes even processed psychologically and somatically. During the avian influenza outbreak in West Africa in 2008, DJ Lewis released a popular track in the Ivory Coast called 'Grippe Aviaire'; the dance moves in the music video spread like wildfire among the young and old alike. In nightclubs, offices, public spaces, people dangled their half-raised arms, eyes wide

3 Osho, '25. Consciousness is Contagious', in *Socrates Poisoned Again After 25 Centuries*, New York: Osho International, 1988.



open, evoking movements of chickens with bird flu. Another Ivory Coast artist DJ Zidane, that same year, at the height of maltreatment of prisoners in Guantanamo on the other side of the Atlantic, invented the Guantanamo dance.

Teenagers gathered in public spaces dancing as though hand-cuffed or crippled. Art engulfed sociopolitical reality, histories and knowledges were embodied in dance, as were societal sentiments, traumas, joys and fears. Dance is not about the individual, but the community – the commons. As Léopold Sédar Senghor – the poet, philosopher and politician – put it:

‘Je pense donc je suis’; écrivait Descartes. ... Le Negroafricain pourrait dire: ‘Je sens l’Autre, je danse l’Autre, donc je suis.’ Or danser, c’est créer, surtout si la danse est d’amour. C’est, en tout cas, le meilleur mode de connaissance.⁴

[‘I think, therefore, I am,’ Descartes writes. ... The NegroAfrican could say, ‘I feel, I dance the other, therefore I am.’ To dance is to create, especially if the dance is of love. In any event, it is the best way to know].

Senghor points out a few important things here. Dance is about creation and it is about knowledge. But maybe most importantly, dance seems to be about connecting with the other, about

communion, a group action. Dance, in all its aforementioned functions, manifests itself most effectively when one ‘dances the other’. Dance is a social phenomenon. From Agwara dance, Bikutsi, Coupé Décalé and Zouglou, or circle, contra or square dances, to street dances like breakdancing in which the crew becomes a surrogate family, dance reflects sociopolitical realities, current and historical affairs, and needs a community to be lived and experienced. One can find solace in the dance crew, share happiness amongst birds of the same feather. The crew is a place for mentorship, often crucial to community building. Hip-hop, dancehall moves, krump and many other urban forms of dance offer a degree of social dignity to the dancers – not only because they dance well, but because of their affiliation with the crew.

In *Dance and Politics*, Dana Mills writes about dance as a means of communication and as writing.⁵ Her argument can be radically summarised as follows: there are more languages than just verbal; human beings have found manifold ways to communicate with each other; and dance is an embodied language, a form of communication between bodies in motion.

As such, the language of dance adheres to different rules and structures than those of verbal language. Dance is the way those subjects

4 Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté 1: Négritude et humanisme*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964, 259. Translation by author.

5 See Dana Mills, *Dance and Politics: Moving Beyond Boundaries*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.



perform their equality before those expressing themselves verbally. There are clashes between verbal and nonverbal languages. At the meeting point between dance and verbal languages, different symbolic and political frameworks collide, underscoring the presence of two forms of language. Political dance, or the constitution of dance as a realm that does not require language, creates a shared embodied space between dancer and spectator, between equality and plurality; the equality of bodies allows them to speak with each other unmediated by words; the plurality of beings pushes them to express themselves *through* their bodies. Through these two aspects, dance is inscribed upon the body. The body is altered by inscription, informing it of communities and possibilities – a dancing body is never alone, but rather always conversing with an Other.

But dancing subjects can transcend the boundaries of their communities and live in more than one world – both that constituted by dance as a method of communication and that constituted by words as a method of expression. As a practice that goes beyond boundaries, dance challenges demarcations between communities erected by verbal language, transcending spaces created by words: this happens at the moment dancers gain entry into a community larger than the one they were assigned, attesting to the equality of bodies.

Dance is a sociopolitical method and practice, a means of writing, narrating and disseminating histories. It is a corporeal phenomenon that can be a catalyst for building communities and challenge and transcend the boundaries of societies and languages. The dancing body becomes the witness, a *somato-testimonium* – the body in a dance performance and the movements employed as a formal statement are equivalent to a written, spoken, eyewitness or earwitness account, proof of a spatiotemporal reality.

The above leads me to developing the concepts of *corpo-literacy* and *corpo-epistemology*, involving the study of the nature and extent of bodily knowledge in dance performance, as well as how the body and dance performances produce, enact, inscribe and propagate knowledge(s). Like epistemological studies in general, it is important to analyse bodies employed in dance in relation to notions of truth or belief. Thus, corpo-epistemology also focuses on manifestations of politicised, sexualised, genderised and racialised bodies in performativity. Corpo-epistemology is preoccupied with questions like: What is bodily knowledge? How is bodily knowledge acquired? How is bodily knowledge expressed in dance performances? How can the observer of a performance decipher and relate to these bodily knowledges? If rhythm and dance provide the structure for a form of such bodily knowledge, what are the limits?



Maybe this research is an effort to grasp and practise phenomenology through dance and involving the body in shared participatory experiences. Challenging some of the most prominent philosophical positions in the West certainly takes a lot of guts – especially if these positions embody the authorities of Husserl and Hegel. But as Esiaba Irobi points out:

Husserl, like Hegel, spent the greater part of his career trying to explain what *transcendental phenomenology* means and, in my view, never really came to grasps with what the concept really means to non-European peoples of the world. His problem or mental block was that he based his analysis on the positivist premise that phenomenology could be understood and explained through rational thought, verbal discourse or typographical literacy. It cannot. Reading Husserl over and over again can never compare with an initiation into *Candomble* in Bahia or *Santeria* in Cuba or *Voodoo* in Haiti. Phenomenology, as a *philosophical* and *performative* concept, I contend, can only be fully grasped through action, through a bodily participatory experience as we feel when we take part physically in a ritual, festival, carnival, dance, capoeira.⁶

This text was written as a proposal for a series of performative interventions, lectures, artistic contributions and music sessions at SAVVY Contemporary, organised upon invitation by the Auswärtiges Amt to participate in the Long Night of Ideas. Co-curated with Elena Agudio, the programme tackled the challenge of ‘unlearning the given’ and of deconstructing the ideologies and connotations eminent in the constructs that frame our contemporary societies.

The programme engaged with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s resounding call to ‘unlearn one’s privileges as one’s loss’, as well as with Paget Henry’s call for the poetic power of artistic practice to un-name and rename, de-institute and re-institute selves, lower the volume of imposed voices and un-silence suppressed voices in an effort to resolve crises of entrapment.⁷ By articulating exercises of disobedience and indiscipline as means of decolonising the singularity of ‘knowledge’, the programme sought to give space to the possibility of a plurality of epistemologies.

6 Esiaba Irobi, ‘The Philosophy of the Sea: History, Economics and Reason in the Caribbean Basin’, *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise* 1, no. 3 (2006): 7.

7 Paget Henry, ‘Ramabai Espinet and Indo-Caribbean Poeticism’, in *Shifting the Geography of Reason: Gender, Science and Religion*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006, 13.



Corpolegible



pre-pid- / -pre- / -fid- / -et-emy- -kw- / -tē:

01:52 video



17 ::

Have you ever noticed that you enjoy being around the things you like? When closeness is an enjoyed relation.

12 ::

What you must have in order to feel safe, that make you feel? Can you get closer to the things you like and the things you like? When closeness is an enjoyed relation.

ali watts, [31.12.20 16:01] and then today felt more 'dancey'
 ali watts, [31.12.20 16:02] sourced self-
 ali watts, [31.12.20 16:02] more articulated perhaps bc of the close witnessing
 ali watts, [31.12.20 16:02] i moved very differently to how i have been alone in the studio and it reminded me how much being witnessed can influence/assist in moving with attention

ali watts, [31.12.20 15:58] and i enjoyed how it never felt like a comment on the other's movement but a genuine attempt at embodying something a bit e l u s i v e
 ali watts, [31.12.20 15:59] it's interesting how differently we moved today as separate entities compared to the last session
 ali watts, [31.12.20 16:00] with the dialogue on top

ali watts, [31.12.20 15:59] ali watts, [31.12.20 16:00] e h a h a
 ali watts, [31.12.20 16:00] ali watts, [31.12.20 16:04] the body / fleshly / weighty / moved today as separate entities

ali watts, [31.12.20 15:59] ali watts, [31.12.20 16:00] the light in the studio is / was very beautiful that always makes a lot for me (these thoughts are uninvited)
 ali watts, [31.12.20 16:00] ali watts, [31.12.20 16:00] 1 6 : 0 0]

c o m m u n i c a t i o n

1 : 1
 \ in·ti·ma·cy :
 \ in·ta·me·se :

\ in·ti·ma·cy | when we feel comfortable and safe enough to explore. And are allowed to.

Things

Seeing

u, hosting me, made me lef

I

did a dance

Then

u hosted thet danc , by this giving me an opportunity to moch my self , or to watch u lorning my buddy with your own body . i never soo u , or ur buddy do thet ("thet" , is hosting my danc) and it mide me lef , severol times , and in rispons u wood crack oslo , and wood see "stap it " or " stap it u fuck , im trining to by sireos" :) , i guess the siriernes woos won of the risens for me to fide it so funny . or uncomfortable , and then i had to lef to reliv some of the discomfort (the discomfort is meby deriving from looking at my awon patterns re manifest thro u) , discomfort mite by part of it , but also joy and delighted , for having a well dan representeshen of my self , i could recognize what u notestd and kept , sais , floti hed , eya ekshen , and sloo jeschers , diteils , thet for some reason my body over the years chos to kip and praroretis over other possibilities of state of movement and mind.

© 2017, 10/27/17



•• Wak- ses

•• A gift. spaces ?

What things make you feel at ease when you enter a space? How can you tell? What spaces are easy for you to enter a space?



•• Is it very easy for you to enter a space? How can you tell? What spaces are easy for you to enter a space?

•• Is it very easy for you to enter a space? How can you tell? What spaces are easy for you to enter a space?

•• 2



9

..

trust

When we feel safe and comfortable enough to explore. And are allowed to.

to how one was raised and metaphorically to how two people relate; another expression of exchange is "you eat and I am filled." The deferral of consumption is affective because one always cooks for significant others. To defer and to store is to place into alterity, the self registering substance and emotion in the world. Storage by both donor and recipient encodes the material world. If matter were to be subjected to immediate consumption, there would be no senses, no gemosis, and no memory. The senses defer the material world by changing substance into memory.

The return to the senses (experiential or theoretical), therefore, can never be a return to realism; to the thing-in-itself, or to the literal. In realism, matter is never deferred, but supposedly subjected to total consumption. When the child returns to the senses, this passage will always be mediated by memory, and memory is concerned with, and assembled from, sensory and experiential fragments. This assemblage will always be an act of imagination—thus opposed to the reductions of realism.

The Journey

The child, now living in the city, returns to visit the grandma in the country. The trip to the village to visit grandma was by train. It meant camping out on a long journey. This entailed elaborate preparations, such as the packing of functional items for surviving the trip and numerous gifts for friends and relatives. Every station was identified with specific foods, their particular tastes and smells—one station with *souvlaki*, another with rice pudding, pistachos, *pasteli*, dried figs. The child traveled through substances to reach grandma; a journey that sharpened the senses and prepared the child for diving into the village. The child arrived to the smell of the ocean, lemons—lemon, orange, olive—the sound of the donkey's bray, and the omnipresent, loud, loud music of the cicadas: sensory gates that signified entry into a separate space. The child greets the grandma who has been surveying the road like a gatepost, and passes into her world through the smells and texture of her dress. Shoes are removed as the child enters the main door and the pebbled floor leaves an indelible mark on the insteps. Its feet soon move from the hard pebbled floor to the soft mud of the gardens soothing its insole; an ingestion of the wet and the dry through the insole. Tactility extends beyond the hands.

There is also a tactility of smells. Each smell generates its own textures and surfaces. No smell is encountered alone. There are combinations of smells that make up a unified presence, the grandma's house, the garden aroma combined with the animal dung; the oreganon buds hanging over the sheep skin containing the year's cheese; the blankets stored in the cabinet which combine rough wool with the humidity of the ocean; the oven exuding the smell of baking bread and the residue of the ashes;

6

..

trust

trust

trust

trust

The space you have not gotten to yet. The space you left behind misses you. The space you are waiting for you.

15 :

\ ac·count·abil·i·ty | losing one's

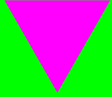
l a b o r

help of others. A path before
finding it again with the
Act of radical care.



\ e-'kaun-to-'bi-la-te :

01:53 video



performance, sourdough bread
by ieva barsauskaite and laura fernández antolín

Saliva

The grandma dressed in black, sitting at home or at the edge of the fields, feeds the baby.¹ The baby in the cradle or on her lap is wrapped tightly in strips of cloth. She takes a piece of crustless bread, the inside of the bread known as *psísa*, crumbles it with her fingers and puts a few crumbs in her toothless mouth. The tongue, rotating, moistens the bread with saliva till it becomes soft.

ture signals the mouth and places swallows her bread and the first in olive oil to the baby, called "loafs" (*frajolits crown*). She returns from the

Different parts of Greece been "raised" with the verb *masáo*. *psísa*, bread resembling that The process of (*peúfi*). This child with *masoulihtou to anástise*), from down to from the raw to dough into bread grandma changing here is akin the "salt and sugar into a "crusty sensation is a sensory imagery (color, is no rigid dichotomy between enculturating and

that transform the body. Northerners, for instance, or dull persons are often characterized as "raw" or "dough" or "inedible" precisely because they are not properly enculturated (raised) in Greek ways. Baking results in an upward movement: coffee is "baked" until it rises to form a top (*kaimáki*)—the top implies sedimentation, texture in taste. Bread and deserts are baked to rise and/or till they form a crust. When they are not

C. Nadia Seremetakis explains on *The Senses Still* a greek tradition on how grandmothers feed their grandkids by the bread they moistened before in their mouths, being saliva the conductive element for the nouriture. This text truly shocked me during our shared research.

I'm interested in how do we transfer knowledge and memories through the senses, this performance is an intimate reflection on the necessary trust bonds between us. Bodies and bread are implied, we share them in our everydayness but yet the relations towards them are ritualistic, even sacred.

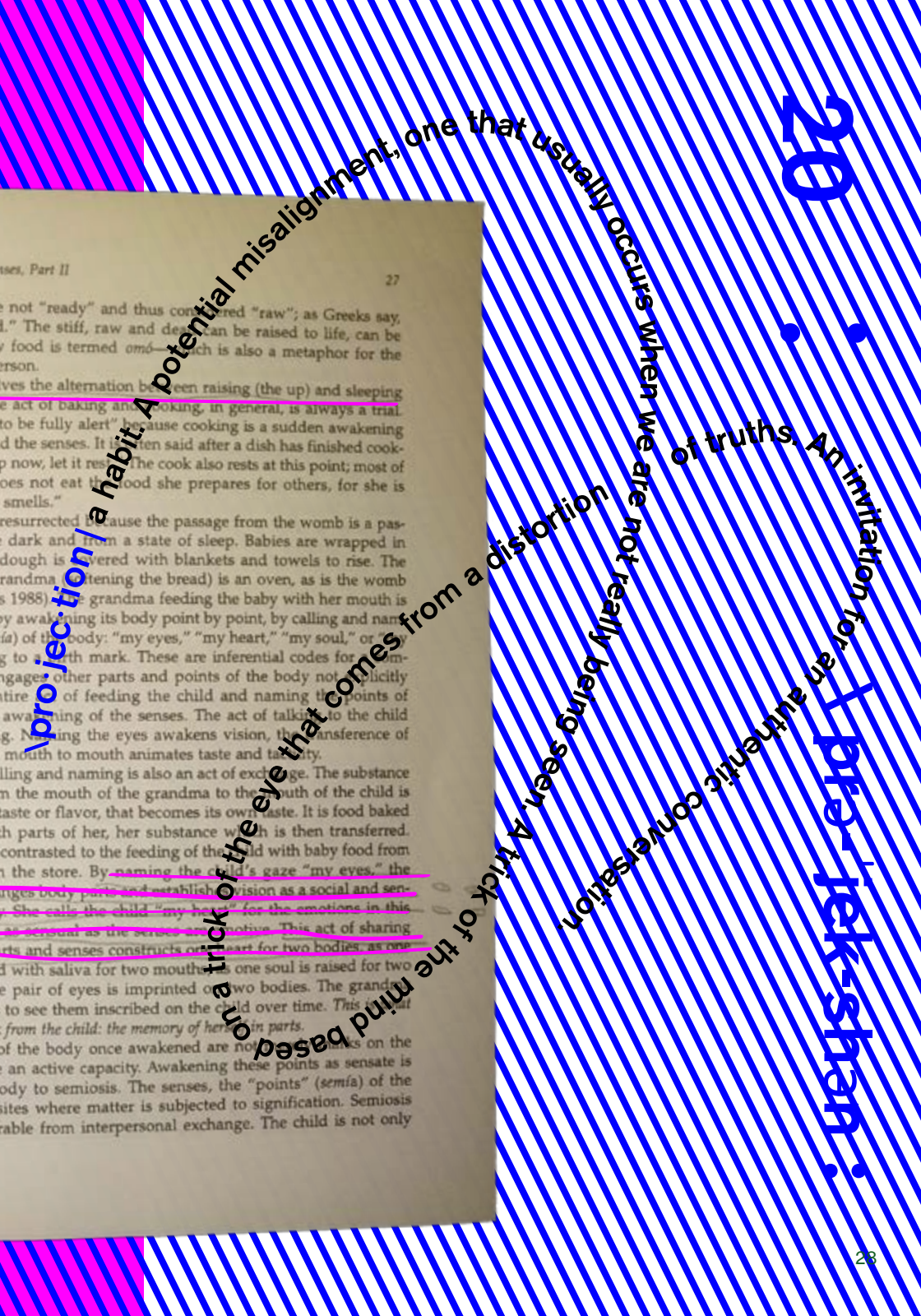
raised, they are not "ready" and thus considered "raw"; as Greeks say, "pale like dead." The stiff, raw and dead can be raised to life, can be baked. The raw food is termed *omó*—which is also a metaphor for the uncultivated person.

Baking involves the alternation between raising (the up) and sleeping (the down). The act of baking and cooking, in general, is always a trial. The cook "has to be fully alert" because cooking is a sudden awakening of substance and the senses. It is often said after a dish has finished cooking, "Let it sleep now, let it rest." The cook also rests at this point; most of the time she does not eat the food she prepares for others, for she is "filled with the smells."

The child is resurrected because the passage from the womb is a passage out of the dark and from a state of sleep. Babies are wrapped in cloth, and the dough is covered with blankets and towels to rise. The mouth of the grandma (heating the bread) is an oven, as is the womb (see also duBois 1988). The grandma feeding the baby with her mouth is resurrecting it by awakening its body point by point, by calling and naming points (*semía*) of the body: "my eyes," "my heart," "my soul," or "olive"² referring to a birth mark. These are inferential codes for a complex act that engages other parts and points of the body not explicitly named. The entire act of feeding the child and naming the points of the body is an awakening of the senses. The act of talking to the child engages hearing. Naming the eyes awakens vision, the transference of substance from mouth to mouth animates taste and tactility.

The act of calling and naming is also an act of exchange. The substance transferred from the mouth of the grandma to the mouth of the child is her saliva, her taste or flavor, that becomes its own taste. It is food baked within her, with parts of her, her substance which is then transferred. This act can be contrasted to the feeding of the child with baby food from a jar bought in the store. By naming the child's gaze "my eyes," the grandma exchanges body parts and establishes vision as a social and sensory reciprocity. She calls the child "my heart" for the emotions in this awakening are as sensual as the senses themselves. This act of sharing and naming parts and senses constructs one heart for two bodies: as one food was baked with saliva for two mouths, so one soul is raised for two persons, as one pair of eyes is imprinted on two bodies. The grandma gives her parts to see them inscribed on the child over time. This is what she receives back from the child: the memory of her parts in parts.

The points of the body once awakened are not marks on the surface but are an active capacity. Awakening these points as sensate is opening the body to semiosis. The senses, the "points" (*semía*) of the body, are the sites where matter is subjected to signification. Semiosis here is inseparable from interpersonal exchange. The child is not only



20

Pre-tek-shan

A potential misalignment, one that usually occurs when we are not really being seen. A trick of the eye that comes from a distortion of truths. An invitation for an authentic conversation.

Video 16 by Alyssa Reiziger

Video 12 by Alyssa Reiziger

Special thanks:

Ponderosa eV and the light castle studio

Video 20 by laura fernández antolín

Video 1 by Alyssa Reiziger

Video 2 by Alyssa Reiziger

✓ Kör-'pö | ✓ 'le-je-bal

Cor-po-le-gible

Welcome to corpolegible. The invitation here is to change the way your body relates to text and to support multi-modal ways of understanding. We trust you to experience and engage with the multi-media content as you choose. We are working within a certain field of aesthetics that is non-normative and do actively and intentionally challenge the tension of/between legibility, literacy, the intuitive and the somatic... as it relates to notions of deep understanding. We push against the legible to allow various potential relations and associations that can remain dynamic. There is no correct way to engage with this content.

Here is a collection of 'glosses' or of specialised terms and their meanings (aka glossary), this project cracks open and creates non-normative ways of relating to text. It posits the question, can there be a non-text-based glossary? In my/our understanding of specialised [and spatialised] terms, can definitions be portrayed as dynamic and relational? At the crux of the corpolegible research: 'Is the body a source from which we can understand things apart from the mind?' and 'What is the/Is the body learning?' are two primary modes of inquiry.

Corpolegible will continue to explore of time, space and bodies as a point of inquiry on how we read, understand and label bodies in our surroundings. Corpolegible will also hold at the centre of its excavational practice the research questions already in play at the museum:

1. How can we share practices that unsettle normative ways of reading bodies?
2. What are ways to unlearn concepts formed by modernity?
3. Where and how can we establish practices of non-individualism – detaching the self from individualistic ideas of personal progress and forming collective practices of emancipation?

References:

Nadia C. Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, New York: Vintage, 1997.

MINQ is a Berlin-based DJ & Sound Artist with roots in South Louisiana. Their practice is fuelled by the belief that music is a place of connection, to the self, others, and the world – from the past, present and future. With their current research project, Sonic Utopias, MINQ is exploring the intersections of Mindfulness, Sound and Movement and what decolonising Somatics could look like for Queer and Trans Black and Brown folks.



Alexandra Dragne



Frank Willens



Ataf Aharonson

Alyssa Reiziger is a queer woman of colour. A blessed child of the diaspora, who sometimes locates herself in Aruba, and at other times to the former imaginary. She graduated from the University of Leiden with an MA in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, using film as method. She is a freelance videographer and creative content producer, specialising in filmmaking and video editing. Her main praxis is one of dis/locating, de/contextualising, re/imagining and reclaiming, one that uses film as a way of seeing. She lives vicariously through differing [but not mutually exclusive] sensibilities ranging from queerness to decoloniality to identity politics. The bees in her head busy themselves with embroidery and various 90s inspired crafts. She talks during films and will candidly tell you that your food needs salt.

Mirjam Linschooten is a visual artist, researcher and graphic designer living and working in Amsterdam. She completed an MA at the Dutch Art Institute (Arnhem) and a BFA at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (Amsterdam). Her multidisciplinary practice is concerned with how cultural heritage institutions represent history, exploring tactics of representation and the way memory is constructed, forms of collecting and aesthetics of display. Her work includes installation, film, publications and performance. Her work has been exhibited at institutions nationally and internationally, including Stroom Den Haag, Cemeti (Yogyakarta), De Appel (Amsterdam), AGO (Toronto), Het Wilde Weten (Rotterdam), Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven), Vicki Myhren Gallery (Denver), the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver), Trankat (Tétouan), Artellewa (Cairo) and Sanat Ilmani (Istanbul).

Anthony Nestel develops a practice of radical care that pieces our bodies and their context, reclaiming the senses and affects for new relations, sharing capacities of resilience, creativity and action for inhabiting together. Working from the materiality of cloths, textiles, drawings, clay, scents, texts, objects and performance they look for diverse possibilities to affect the discourses that engage and relate immediately with the body. Our bodies and their environment as landscapes where we capture the instability of our lives, where we experiment our knowledge and question our perceptions of the political, domestic, intimacy, gender, trust, commoning, togetherness, ... By addressing these questions, ecosystems of reverie come to life, built from their roots on relationships of care, solidarity and inclusiveness.

laura fernández antolín, collaborative textile and performance artist, develops a practice of radical care (Yogyakarta), De Appel (Amsterdam), AGO (Toronto), Het Wilde Weten (Rotterdam), Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven), Vicki Myhren Gallery (Denver), the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver), Trankat (Tétouan), Artellewa (Cairo) and Sanat Ilmani (Istanbul).

Elif

Ole

Thomas

caner

Mijke

Ali

Anthony

Setereh

Zwoisy

Carly Rose & Gabriel



Video 9 by Alyssa Reiziger

Video 15&18 by Alexandra Dragne

Video 19 by Alyssa Reiziger

Video 1 by Alyssa Reiziger

the entire team at

Audio by MINQ

participants in research residency at Ponderosa eV

Queer Sign Glossary



The increasing awareness of how bodies in museums are read, perceived and understood or misunderstood speaks to the need to express oneself with a sensitive, tentative and nuanced language. The Queer Sign Glossary includes terms related to queer lived experience that have perhaps previously gone unnoticed or unarticulated by queer deaf individuals.

As the coordinator of the Queering the Collection initiative at the Van Abbemuseum, I sought out partners to help articulate queer elements of the collection in Dutch Sign Language (Nederlandse Gebarentaal). With Marleen Hartjes who leads the museum's Multisensory Museum trajectory, I worked with a local group of deaf folks to make early sketches of a Queer Sign Glossary. Through Marleen's network we eventually found the two partners of the project, Richard Cokart, a junior researcher at the Nederlandse Gebarencentrum (Dutch Sign Language centre), which promotes the language and Ellen Nauta, Docent Tolkvaardigheden, Nederlandse Gebarentaal at the Instituut voor Gebaren, Taal en Dovenstudies (Institute for signs, language and deaf studies) at University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, which primarily educates teachers and interpreters. Extending the process beyond the museum we discussed next steps, the shared and individual responsibilities and the glossary exhibition. With the new partners, the Queer Sign Glossary

became the first documented collection of sixteen terms related to queer lived experience at the Nederlandse Gebarentrum. The sixteen videos were exhibited at the Van Abbemuseum from 12 December 2019 to 30 March 2020 in a 4-channel video installation.

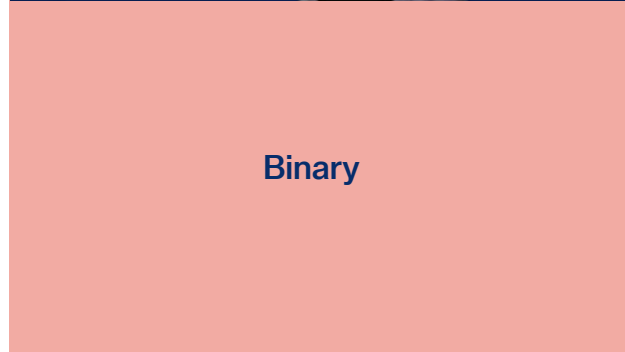
MAKING SIGNS

Established in 1996, the mission of the Nederlands Gebarentrum (NGC) is to maintain and promote Dutch Sign Language through mapping, documenting and sharing – though it wasn't until 2020 that the government recognised Dutch Sign Language as an official language. As an example, the NGC played a central role in organising the baking-specific signs for the 2018 edition of the famous Dutch baking show *Heel Holland Bakt* that featured a deaf participant. The centre also seeks to acknowledge local Dutch sign variations and dialects, and learns or borrows from other sign languages, especially when it comes to names of locations, organisations and people.

New signs can only be developed and confirmed by those fluent in Dutch Sign Language and in discussion with experts on lexicons related to justice, museums, GGZ, Islam and many more. Cokart is one such expert, for whom it is important that the process is natural and doesn't feel like a language factory – a spirit he applied to



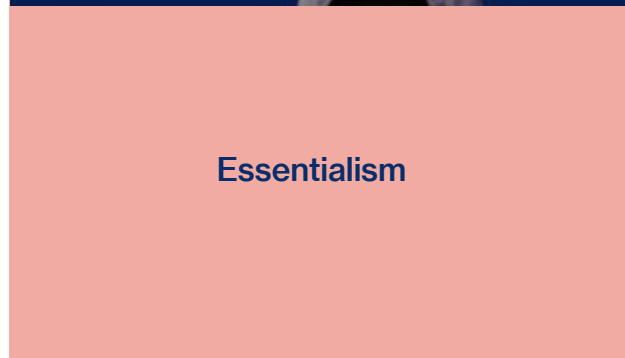
Asexuality



Binary



Cisgender



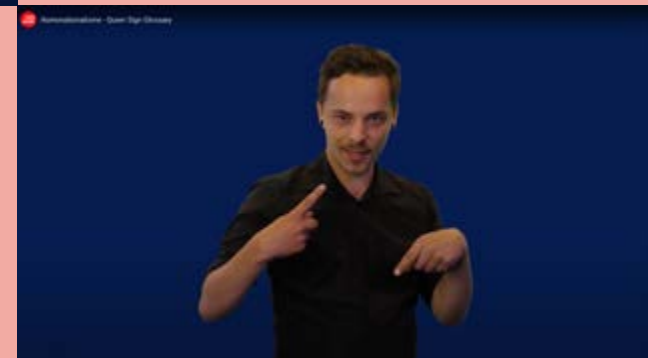
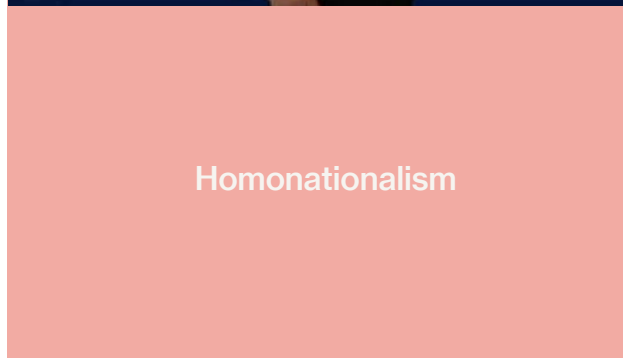
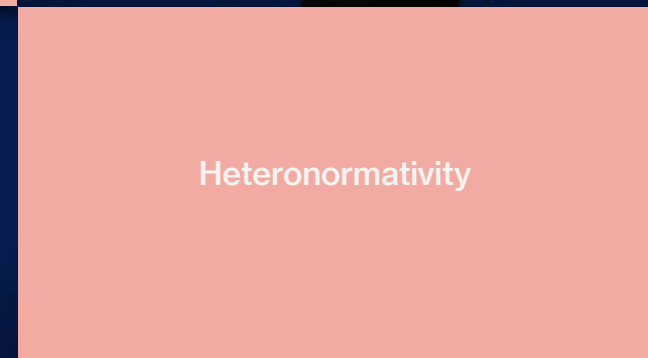
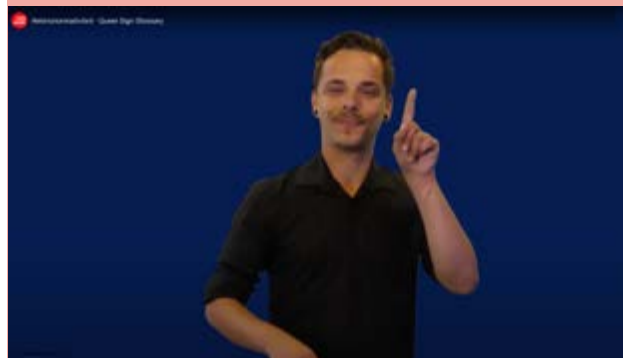
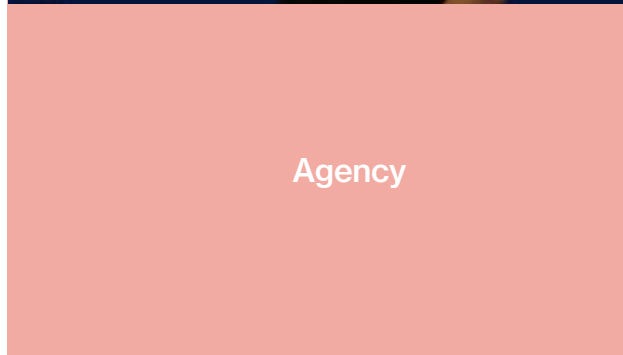
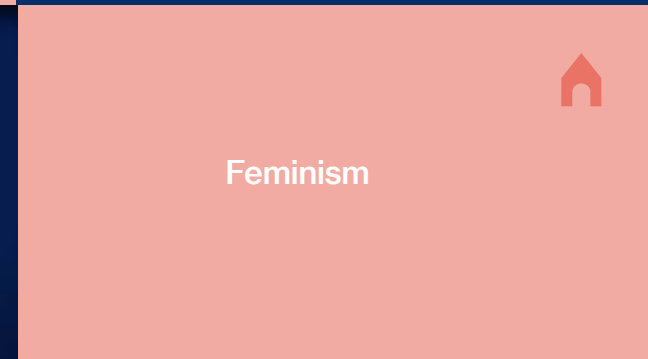
Essentialism



the Queer Sign Glossary in reaching out to queer Dutch Sign Language speakers to set up the Queer Gebaren Atelier and create the first signs. As part of the Queering the Collection initiative at the Van Abbemuseum, the ongoing Queer Glossary had already attempted to identify and give suggestions of terms that could be useful when discussing queer lived experience, without being conclusive, prescriptive or aiming to give a definition. This initiative was shared with the Queer Gebaren Atelier as suggestions. With Ellen Nauta, the team took part in a workshop, translating written text to Dutch Sign Language and practising signing in front of the camera.

LANGUAGE AMBASSADORS

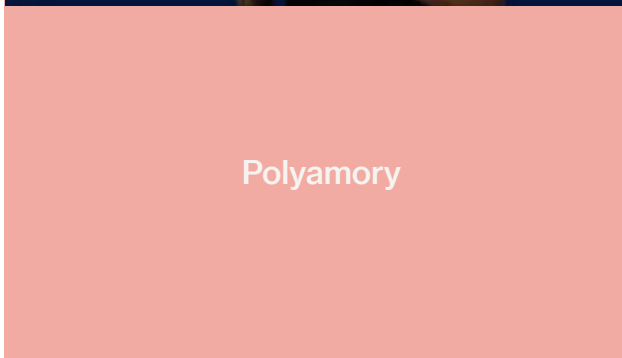
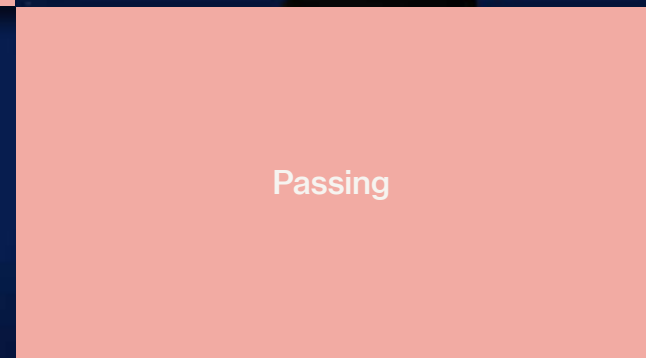
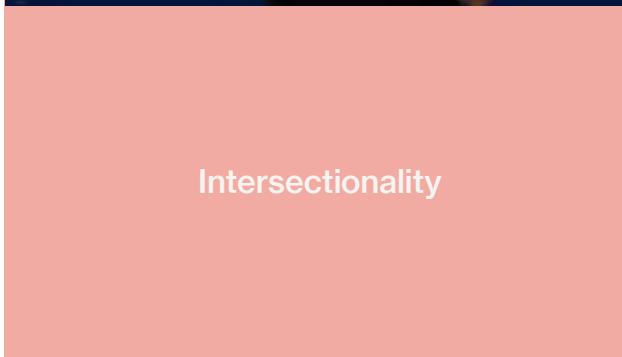
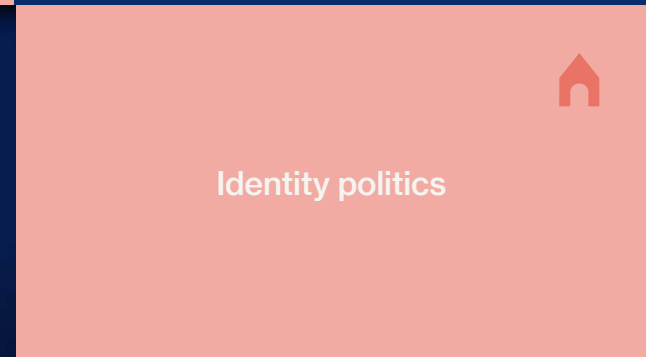
The Van Abbemuseum's need to engage in this process came out of two seemingly separate processes. In 2016, the museum launched Qwearing the Collection as an experimental approach to analysing the museum collection using queer lenses in the form of public mediation tools. Visitors were invited to wear vividly coloured garments with texts containing queer critiques and stories with images about some of the collection artworks such as *Vrouwenfiguren* by Charley Toorop, *Javaanse Danser: Raden Mas Jodjana* by Isaac Israëls and *Self-Heterotopia, Catching Up with Self* by Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin. The museum simultaneously explored a multi-sensory approach to experiencing art with tours



in sign language and collaborations with deaf communities, including a sign language choir. But when guides wanted to unpack queer elements in the collection in Dutch Sign Language, it was hard to find the right terms. Out of this lack grew the curiosity to find these terms, leading to the collaboration with Richard, Ellen and the Queer Sign Glossary Ambassadors.

In the following videos you see signs in Dutch Sign Language that were previously only used in sign language slang or did not exist. Since December 2019 they have been officially documented by the Nederlands Gebarencentrum as a first step to make expressions related to queer lived experience more widely known. Joining the process of the Queer Gebaren Atelier as private individuals are the Queer Sign Glossary Ambassadors – Jelmer Hein Veerman, Driss Oukake, Nathalie Muller and Linda Korthout – who in the videos explain how they contributed their knowledge and experience in discussing and shaping the signs.

I invite you to take part in the videos and experience how the queer, intersectional or visibility signs touch you.



The Dutch Sign Centre
(Nederlands Gebarencentrum)
Introduction by Olle Lundin

Queer Sign Glossary

The Queer Sign Glossary can also be viewed
on the Van Abbemuseum website:
[www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/collection/queering/
queer-sign-glossary/](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/collection/queering/queer-sign-glossary/)



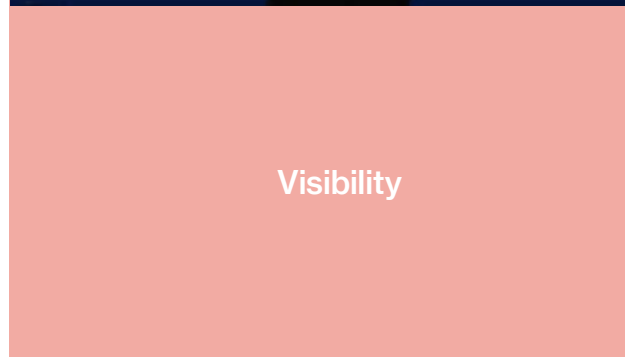
Privilege



Queer



Appropriation



Visibility



‘No Need to Mourn the Glorious Corpse’: What a Corpoliterate Institutionalism Could Look Like



‘The glorious corpse’ is a productive, corporeal metaphor for the majority of Western institutions in the second half of the twentieth century. It was developed by poet and theorist Décio Pignatari to describe the entanglement of contemporary art with privilege in Brazil around 1970.¹ He opted for letting go of canonical ideas of what art could be and imagined a transformative resurrection. His contemporary Frederico Morais, corpoliterate curator *avant la lettre*, sympathetically called him a ‘gravedigger’ for that, since he was on a quest for a transformation in the art world as well – putting the body centre stage. With the use of a shared corporeal metaphor, one possible starting point for a narrative on corpoliteracy can be imagined, when systemic crisis and colonial institutionalism call for new concepts of artistic communication. This struggle is still a defining force in the globalised art world. What I am trying to do here, is connect the historic Brazilian position to contemporary manifestations of institutions in Europe I was or am engaged with. For the Van Abbemuseum and other institutions, as I will show, corpoliteracy is a useful tool with which to reimagine Western institutionalism.

In my work at documenta, the Van Abbemuseum and Haus der Kulturen der Welt it has helped put an institutionalism into practise that is built on solidarity and complexity, which could be described as intersectional in how it tries to address



societal problems from different perspectives and not a master narrative² – or at least inform how some institutions view their role in society in reconsidering the art, curator and pedagogy in a museological context. Since the exhibition *Museum of Arte Útil* (2013–14), the Van Abbemuseum used the idea of a museum as a social power plant – as opposed to a museum dedicated to enchanting the privileged. Corpoliteracy's activation of historical knowledge from centuries of embodied practice and philosophy in contemporary thought motivated us to include this constellation of texts around Frederico Morais's 1970s writings. His curatorial approach resonates with current embodied and body-related practices as exemplified in other parts of this volume. Renata Cerveto,³ with whom I was in an ongoing conversation since 2019 on questions of new (corporeal) alphabets for contemporary art discourse, introduced me to Morais's writings that had not been published in English before. With the curatorial research collective of which Mariela Richmond and Jessica Gogan are also part, she shifted my focus from corpoliteracy as a practice of mediation to a corpoliterate curatorial. In their contributions to this volume they share some acute insights and situated knowledge that charge the neologism corpoliteracy anew.

Looking at the term chronologically, corpoliteracy, as a practice rather than a consistent theory, was

first formulated by Elena Agudio and Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung at SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin in April 2016 during the programme of DJ sets, talks and performances 'Unlearning the Given: Exercises in Demodernity and Decoloniality of Ideas and Knowledge' within Berlin's annual Long Night of Ideas. The programme spotlighted 'corpoliteracy as a form of learning, i.e., bodily knowledge, experientiality and performativity as means of unlearning, but also acquiring, enacting and disseminating knowledge',⁴ intimately connecting artistic practice to the educational mission of unlearning. As part of documenta 14, Ndikung theorised the term further, focusing on body semiotics and epistemologies:

with the concept of corpoliteracy I mean to contextualise the body as a platform and medium of learning, a structure or organ that acquires, stores and disseminates knowledge. This concept would imply that the body, in sync, but also independent of the brain, has the potential of memorising and passing on/down acquired knowledge through performativity.⁵

Morais's 1971 text also under discussion here suggests alternative ways to think about and practice art, both from the position of Western modernism and 'third world' decolonial struggles, including institutions and aesthetics.⁶ Like Ndikung does in his 'Corpoliteracy' essay, Morais connects his vision of corporeal aesthetic

1 See page 50 in this book.

2 Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term in 1989 when analysing the double exclusion of African American women. Today it describes overlapping or conflicting aspects of identity.

3 See pages 39–44 in this book.

4 See www.savvy-contemporary.com/en/events/2016/unlearning-the-given/

5 See Aneeducation, documenta 14, <https://www.archivebooks.org/aneducation-%E2%80%A2-documenta-14/>

6 The term corpoliteracy might then serve as a tool to transform postcolonial theory into a decolonial, body-based practice. Both Ndikung and Morais refer to Frantz Fanon's thinking as a base for their intellectual efforts for a liberation of colonial subjects.



practices, to Frantz Fanon's ideas on postcolonial realities: his advocacy for looser definitions of art that favour experience over concept and shift roles among artist, critic and spectator have the potential now to open up ever-changing possibilities of art. Morais's original text as presented here, illustrates this beautifully. Awareness and knowledge alone are not enough to overcome (colonial or other) trauma – shape, movement, choreography are needed to express and unlearn trauma. The documenta 14 mediation programme titled 'aneducation' applied these ideas headed up by Sepake Angiama and Clare Butcher who added cooking, community practice, walking ('strollology' by Lucius Burckhardt) into the equation and showed that corpoliteracy could adopt new layers of meaning when put into practice.⁷

The concept of corpoliteracy allows for the conceptualising of strategies to move towards overcoming bodily exclusion in gallery spaces. The Van Abbemuseum has been deeply involved with accessibility and inclusion programmes through Unforgettable Van Abbe (with Loes Janssen from 2013), Special Guests (with Marleen Hartjes from 2014) or Queering the Collection (with Olle Lundin from 2015). Subsequent programmes have centred activities for people with dementia, the blind, deaf and hard-of-hearing wheelchair users, people with non-normative sexualities and gender identities

and people with aphasia or neurodiverse audiences. In these programmes a strategy was needed to connect individual groups, rather than create further segregations. This led to a multisensory approach (adding touch, smell, sound and movement to the displays), first in mediation and later in exhibition architecture and displays, which I would retrospectively include within corpoliteracy. The aforementioned body semiotics and epistemology could be built on by a multisensory approach and focus on questions of gender as constituting forces in corporeality. Following a majority-minority model, meaning a centre that is constructed through the combination of a variety of margins or marginalised groups, corpoliteracy offers a powerful framework and methodology to create solidarity among individual groups in society. In the case of the Van Abbemuseum, it has allowed the institution to evolve from an accessibility-driven approach to mediation to a broader concept of diverse inclusivity.

Working with Ndikung during documenta 14 while still employed with the Van Abbe, the conceptualisation of diverse inclusivity as an aspect of corpoliteracy took shape. My interest to explore even more facets of this term was sparked and I was given the chance to do so within the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin, my employer since 2018. Within HKW's multi-year programme DNA/The New Alphabet,

7 See <https://www.documenta14.de/en/public-education/>



I initiated research on the possibilities of corpoliteracy as a new alphabet to help navigate the here and now. From the symposium *Reading Bodies! Cruising Corpoliteracy in Art, Education and Everyday Life* (September 2019),⁸ some key propositions arose, one being artist Olave Nduwanje’s spoken word performance *Do Not Read This Body*,⁹ which made clear that an emancipatory corpoliteracy requires teaching as well as practising resistance in institutions, shifting power from the gaze to the gazed. When teaching, when to avert the gaze and when to ‘read a body’ is as important as an intersectional, non-judgmental perception of other humans – the ‘how’ of the reading. Researcher Jules Sturm and artist Angelo Custódio presented physical exercises such as breathing, movement and touch to disrupt purely logocentric knowledge production.

These experiments aimed to add body knowledge to classical academic thinking and writing. A panel with educational experts María do Mar Castro Varela from BildungsLab, a network of migrant academics of colour working in the educational field, Ed Greve and Tuğba Tanyılmaz (as part of i-Päd – Initiative intersektionale Pädagogik), professor for education Gila Kolb and activist researcher and pedagogue Ayşe Güleç reminded the audience that institutional education must be premised on intrinsic political motivations and cannot be reduced to the formalisation of a marketable term like corpoliteracy,¹⁰

which itself creates new forms of exclusion. Finally, the programme revealed how corpoliteracy can also be extended to media education in terms of using the same tools and strategies to approach both physical and digital bodies, opening up a field of digital corpoliteracy.

Part of the long-term project DNA is a series of twenty-five small volumes, some of which are dedicated to corpoliteracy and body-related practices.¹¹ This line of enquiry has been pursued due to my interest in and search for new forms of institutional art mediation.¹² In the volume *Re_Visioning Bodies*, Maaïke Bleeker, professor of Theatre Studies at University of Utrecht, takes a step back from corpoliteracy to analyse her concept of *corporeal literacy*. After discussing Walter Ong’s theories of literacy as a foundation for cultural interaction, she suggests *corporeal literacy* as a term to describe the ability of bodies to create new systems of understanding and world-making. Knowledge about the human body’s innate corporeal literacy is therefore a precondition for understanding and work with other acquired literacies like literary literacy, media literacy or corpoliteracy.¹³ In the same volume, Carmen Moersch critically re-examines her own positioning as a white art educator working in white cubes with marginalised people. She reflects on the double-bind between being complicit with a colonial history of Western art institutions while trying to change that system

8 See https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2019/corpoliteracy/corpoliteracy_start.php

9 See <https://hkw.de/en/app/mediathek/audio/75567>

10 See <https://hkw.de/en/app/mediathek/video/78520>

11 So far the series edited by Detlef Diederichsen, Anselm Franke, Katrin Klingan, Daniel Neugebauer and Bernd Scherer includes *Counter_Readings of the Body*, *Re_Visions of the Body*, *Skin & Code*, to be followed by *War & Wardrobe* in 2022.

12 See https://www.kiwit.org/kultur-oeffnet-welten/positionen/position_15809.html

13 See forthcoming publication in *The New Alphabet* series edited by Daniel Neugebauer et al., Leipzig: Spector Books, 2021.



drawing on the concept of Critical Diversity Literacy.¹⁴ It was Moersch, in documenta's twelfth edition in 2007, who famously conceptualised four discourses of art mediation.¹⁵

Thinking through the reproductive, affirmative and critical aspects of classical mediation tools, it seems that corpoliteracy could be regarded as one of the rare fourth-category strategies that hold the potential for transformation: of embodied trauma, of mutual gaze exchange, of museum architecture as the Van Abbemuseum tried with the Multisensory Museum.¹⁶ Here, the museum visit held more room for interacting with art instead of being reminded of a person's physical or intellectual limitations. Since this was appreciated by a lot of visitors and staff, the small section of the museum turned into the multi-sensory museum kept and keeps growing.

The self-critical analyses of representatives of a specific institutional system is especially illuminating when read against poetic comments by representatives of marginalised or excluded communities. Rhea Ramjohn's poem, commissioned for the volume *Skin and Code* from the same series, is especially striking in how it dissects institutional allyship, as exemplified around the Black Lives Matter movement. The piece, titled '#MSOV (modern surviving object / I / fied vernac)', which features a freely available audio version online,¹⁷ as well as the video work *Live, Chile* produced with Black Brown Berlin,¹⁸

speaks of a corpoliteracy vernacular and a longing for 'good institutionalism' against an existential will to survive.

Thinking of corpoliteracy as a meta-theory for education, or an archive of body-based practices allows for the discovery of undervalued or overlooked aspects in artworks and new audiences and experts. Most importantly, however, it can empower and emancipate audiences in identifying with other struggles. Witnessing the failure of many institutions to serve their publics, the wish to follow the status quo makes corpoliteracy all the more urgent such that corpoliteracy becomes a wiki – a weapon rather than a theory. In the words of Morais when opposing a Western and commercialised 'affluent art' from a colonial perspective, the corpse mentioned in the beginning of this text: 'Do not taboo new materials or instruments, nor let yourself be scared.'¹⁹ I understand this as a corporeal call to action, and as a reminder to contemporary institutions that innovation springs from embracing weaknesses and resisting norms. This can be applied to institutions (as social power plants) and bodies (as producers of meaning) alike: 'If necessary, we will use the body itself as a channel for the message, as the engine of the work. The body – its muscles, blood, viscera, excrement, and above all intelligence.'

14 See Moersch in *ibid.*

15 See <https://www.diaphanes.net/titel/at-a-crossroads-of-four-discourses-1032>

16 See <https://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/programme/programme/multisensory-museum/>

17 See <https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2021/das-neue-alphabet-publikationsreihe/das-neue-alphabet-titel/publikation-haut-und-code-das-neue-alphabet.php>

18 See <https://ccworld.hkw.de/live-chile/>

19 See page 55 in this book.



Um domingo de papel (Paper Sunday). 24 January 1971. Photo: Author unknown. Frederico Morais Archive.



O tecido do domingo (The Fabric of Sunday). 28 March 1971. Photo: Raul Pedreira.

The Body as Engine



‘Against Affluent Art: The Body Is the Engine of the “Work”’¹ (1970) was written by the Brazilian curator and educator Frederico Morais to, as in his many other texts, reflect on his immediate context of the literary and philosophical worlds in Rio de Janeiro and connect with the international scenes of the US and France. The process of collectively reading and translating some of Morais’s writings from Portuguese into Spanish has allowed me to empathise with his way of relaying the artistic, social and historical scenario that he experienced amid the political agitation of the 60s and 70s in Brazil that was defined by the country’s military coup.² Morais uses words that derive from the performative orality that was constructed by fellow artists-poets around him day by day, to give accounts of the cultural effervescence of those years and put artistic practice in dialogue with hippie, guerrilla, bourgeois and student movements among others. Most of his writing was developed under the 1964–85 military dictatorship, during which, from 1969 on, he noticed that increased forms of censorship and repression accompanied a change in artistic practice. With a greater concern for what was happening at the political level, he began to look into how to generate responses by using the logic of then current artistic practice where the body and language had begun to take on a more politicised role.

- 1 Originally published as ‘Contra a arte afluyente: o corpo é o motor da “obra”’, *Revista de Cultura Vozes* 1, no. 64 (January/February 1970): 45–59. See translation in this book, see p.46-61
- 2 The collective translations of Frederico Morais’s texts began in September 2020 on the initiative of Jessica Gogan, based on her research into *Domingos da Criação* (Sundays of Creation), that also involves Mônica Hoff, Nicolás Pradilla, Mariela Richmond, Lola Malavasi, Ignacia Biskupovic and Renata Cervetto.



'Against Affluent Art' expands on something Frederico develops in many of his writings: the body as an engine. From the body as physical matter (organs, visors, muscles, intelligence), memory and resistance as well as its playful and creative capacity, Frederico conceives his practice as a cultural worker, long before the role or term of 'curator' came into use. In 1968, he recovered artist and writer Vladimir Dias-Pino's important ideas on a 'physical', 'respiratory' and 'olfactory art',³ which became fundamental to the 'Creation Sundays' programme Frederico developed in 1971 as director of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro. In the essay translated in this book, Frederico introduces the ideas that would shape it: 'The more art is confused with life and everyday life, the more precarious the materials and supports become, corrupting the very idea of the artwork.'⁴ The programme took place in the land adjacent to the museum where each Sunday a material or theme would be explored: earth, paper, thread, fabric, body, sound. The museum provided these materials and invited people to bring their own in order to create collective, intergenerational learning experiences. The body and its activation make the passive or merely contemplative spectator become a co-creator by participating with their body in an artistic proposal that has no other purpose than the 'enrichment of the individual'.

Thinking art as a platform for communication, free expression and process, led Frederico to reflect on the body within the city, in the use and appropriation of the street and the *aterro*⁵ – the new museum would operate from a flexible architecture open to the needs of an interdisciplinary, environmental art, where the focus would no longer be on the contemplation of objects but on the process (what Morais calls the artist as proposer). He supports these ideas in arguing that counterculture reinforces touch and hearing against the passivity of the gaze.⁶ For instance, Frederico notes that it is in the 'the architecture of the favelas'⁷ that artists find the motivation to create their works.

He also draws a parallel between 'guerrilla' and artists' capacity to dislocate the senses and provoke actions as a whole, positioning the body against the machines of repression. The dissolution of the parameters established for modern art means that art can also be confused with 'protest movements, be it a student march, a rebellion in a black ghetto in the United States, or even an assault on a bank'.⁸ This 'confusion' is today already a methodology in artistic practice. In Rio de Janeiro, this daily life is associated with carnivals, samba and popular parades, which Frederico brings in through Hélio Oiticica's *Parangolés*, and the *Caminando* (Walking) by Lygia Clark among others. The *Parangolés*

- 3 See 'Apocalipopotesis no Aterro: arte de vanguarda levada ao povo' (Apocalipopotesis in the Aterro: avant-garde art brought to the people), *Diário de Notícias*, 26 July 1968.
- 4 See pages 44-49 in this book.
- 5 Aterro refers to the embankment landfill turned public park near the Museum of Modern Art overlooking Rio's Guanabara Bay known as Aterro do Flamengo where Frederico organised the month-long public art event *Arte no Aterro* (Art on the Embankment) in 1968.
- 6 See 'O museu e a reeducação do homem', *Diário de Notícias*, 2 April 1971.
- 7 See page 53 in this book.
- 8 See page 52 in this book.



materialise the ‘Art as “cosa corporale” – a body thing’,⁹ and consist of irregular layers of colour that could be used when dancing or to *sambear* (dance samba). Frederico also recalls the manifestation of *Apocalipopótese*,¹⁰ which took place in the Aterro do Flamengo in July 1968, where ‘an attempt was made to achieve a single, collective rhythm, a *pneuma* that would bring everyone together’.¹¹ This collective integration through dance, samba in particular, was a way of resisting the violence and censorship that prevailed in those years.

THE BODY AS THE HOUSE

According to Frederico, the idea of the body as an engine of work alludes not only to the collective learning that triggers artistic practice, but also to the discovery of the body itself. There is a connection, implicit perhaps, to the self-recognition of our own materiality, our emotions and fragility – from where we construct our physicality to link to other people, and how that exchange makes us more aware of our strengths and weaknesses.

I would like to make a leap here with mediation practices to connect the way in which Frederico highlighted the role of the body in processes of what today we call ‘unlearning’. I understand mediation as a holistic practice, where artistic, activist and theoretical proposals and

methodologies coexist. When taken as a tool for individual and collective learning, it goes beyond facilitating certain artistic content. Mediation as a practice promotes a questioning that allows for the construction of alternative realities, an attentive attitude, a *ser-con* (being-with), as Cecilia Vicuña would say.¹² Corpoliterality, in turn, opens up a field for the reading of bodies as platforms of experiences and situated knowledge; the body in its totality (viscera and intelligence, as Frederico also states) as a materialisation of memories and future scenarios.

Among other authors and theoreticians, Morais rescues the ideas of Herbert Read and John Dewey in relation to the type of learning that art enables, placing more emphasis on interdisciplinarity than knowledge categories. Frederico’s conception of artistic practice made him a mediator *avant la lettre*, since each project – be it his ‘Plano-piloto da futura cidade lúdica’ (Pilot plan for the future ludic city), a postmodern museum, or the programme for Sundays of Creation – was developed contemplating its pedagogical, political and aesthetic elements. Everything happened at the same time, and there was no need for translation because art was to be experienced, lived, not interpreted.

Yet we can identify certain parallels between this positioning of the artist who proposes situations

⁹ See page 53 in this book.

¹⁰ The manifestation / happening *Apocalipopótese* by Hélio Oiticica was part of the month-long series of public art events *Arte no Aterro* organised by Frederico with *Diário de Notícias* as media partner in July 1968. A neologism derived from apocalypse and apotheosis, Oiticica credits the artist Rogério Duarte with coining the term.

¹¹ See page 53 in this book.

¹² Cecilia Vicuña, *PALABRAMAS*, Santiago de Chile: RIL editores, 2005. See <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0035876.pdf>



with the work of the educator or mediator today. In both Frederico's conception of artistic practice and contemporary mediation practices there is a proposal to be elaborated by the public that prompts questioning or simple amusement. This approach to both artistic and mediation practice creates the capacity to generate a tension, a disruption in the 'normal' course of things. The practice of artistic mediation must also think outside the established norms and protocols of society itself, in order to be able to propose activities or ways of working together that take us out of our comfort zone through a mental and/or corporal way.

Frederico's return to the vital rhythms of people, or 'the rhythms of the body in the natural environment'¹³ allies with Marina Garcés's 'revolution of self-care'.¹⁴ The rhythm in which we move today, due to work or other obligations, keeps us in a state of constant acceleration, in which it is difficult to listen to ourselves (our bodies). We tend to forget, although we are rarely taught this, that the body is our (first) home. This care, respect and recognition of the body in its totality is something that is also contemplated in artistic mediation. The famous 'unlearning' to which the so-called radical pedagogies appeal is also how to self-listen to ourselves, to inhabit the body as a channel of learning and connection with others.

¹³ See page 53 in this book.

¹⁴ Marina Garcés, *Nueva ilustración radical*, Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, S.A., 2017, 25.



O domingo por um fio (Sunday by a Thread). 7 March 1971.
Photo: Beto Felício.



Domingo terra a terra (Earth to Earth Sunday). 25 April 1971.
Photo: Raul Pedreira.

Against Affluent Art: The Body Is the Engine of ‘the Work’



Translator’s Note

Originally published as ‘Contra a arte afluyente: o corpo é o motor da “obra”’, *Revista de Cultura Vozes* 1, no. 64 (January/February 1970): 45–59, this text is currently part of the collective study and translation project *Grupo de los domingos* (Sundays’ Group) named after the dynamic series of participatory happenings *Domingos da Criação* (Sundays of Creation), organised by Brazilian critic and curator Frederico Morais in 1971 at the Museum of Modern Art (MAM), Rio de Janeiro, at the height of the country’s military dictatorship (1964–85).¹ A key player amidst the radical shifts in art and culture of the 1960s and 70s, Morais organised public art events, pioneered site-specific interventions and new forms of criticism, and as course coordinator at MAM promoted the museum as a vital laboratory. In praise of counter-histories, the precarious, and the experiential, this text pulsates with the experimental, situationist and corporal tendencies emerging at the time.

The ARTIST is an inventor. They ‘realise’ ideas. Their function, as Abraham Moles has noted, is heuristic.²

Today the concept of the ARTWORK has been exploded.³ Umberto Eco and other theorists of the ‘open artwork’ such as Vinca Mazini are probably the last defenders of the notion of the work. Ceasing to exist physically, freeing itself from supports, walls, floors or ceilings, art is nothing more than a situation, a pure event, a process. The artist is not the one who makes works for contemplation, but rather the one who proposes situations that must be lived, experienced. The work as object is not what matters, even if multiplied, but the experience.⁴



The work no longer exists. Art is a sign, a situation, a concept.

Supersizing, precarity of materials.

The PATH that art has followed – from the modern to the current postmodern phase – has been to reduce art to life, gradually denying everything related to the concept of the permanent or durable artwork: pictorial or sculptural specificity, frame or pedestal, representational support, artisanal elaboration, panel or floor, and, as a consequence, the museum and the gallery. In this evolution, two aspects are evident: the supersizing of works (Christo simply wraps wagons and buildings); the sculptors of 'primary structures' occupy all the available gallery space; Marcelo Nitsche, in Brazil, makes his inflatables larger and larger; Oldenburg creates supersized clothes and ordinary food, his 'pop-foods', and rebuilds rooms and entire environments (similar to Segal with his gas station) together with an ever-increasing precarity of materials. In so-called 'arte povera' materials such as earth, sand or debris are used; in kinetic art the dematerialisation is almost complete (working with light using images in continuous metamorphosis). On the one hand, other mathematical or technological supports have emerged. On the other, the artist has simply taken over existing objects, creating 'ready-mades' again, transforming and reifying objects that in turn gain new functions and are semantically enriched with ideas and concepts.

The more art is confused with life and the everyday, the more precarious materials and supports become, corrupting the very idea of the artwork.⁵ We are seeing a shift from the appropriation of objects to the appropriation of geographical or poetic sites simply as situations. The artwork as object is over.

Walking:
arte vivencial
(experiential art).

Creating tension within the environment, expanding individual perception.

With her 1963 proposal *Caminhando* (Walking) LYGIA CLARK eliminated all transcendence from the work. A strip of paper, based on the Möbius strip, is offered to the spectator to cut with a pair of scissors. Here, the work actually ceases to exist: it is simply the 'walking' of the scissors on paper. When the experience ends, so does the work. What remains is simply the lived experience of cutting, the act itself.⁶ It is the same with her piece *Dialogo de mãos* (Hand Dialogue).⁷ Several virtually unknown young artists made similar proposals in the recent *Salão da Bússola* (Compass Salon at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro in 1969).⁸ Luiz Alphonsus Guimarães presented an audiovisual account of an expedition in the *Túnel Novo* (New Tunnel), in Copacabana. Everything that happened was recorded on tape (sounds, noises, voices, testimonies, the random sounds of the street) and also in photographs, akin to 'underground' cinema. So what was presented in the *Salon* was not a work, but a documentary. The work had



Run or remain
silent, that's the
work.

been done in situ. By presenting the 'recording'⁹ in the *Salon* the artist certainly had it in mind to prompt the 'spectator' to realise similar expeditions. The artwork, in this case, is conceived as a proposal, creating tension with/within the environment, aimed at expanding man's perceptive capacity.¹⁰ Another artist in the same *Salon* was the experimental musician Guilherme Magalhães Vaz. With the tacit support of the jury, he simply communicated to visitors that experiences might be had outside of the *Salon*. For example, run anywhere, he suggested, in an open or closed space, vertically on stairs, or horizontally on beaches, for as long as you wish; or remain silent, in a group. The experience ends with the fatigue of the corridor or breaking the silence. The result is not the elaboration of a particular work, but the enrichment of the individual. Vaz used the *Salon* as a medium (creating an area marked with chalk on the floor together with small 'signs') – others might be used more quickly and anonymously, I suggested, like the telephone or the postman.

This article is a tribute to Décio Pignatari who wrote 'Theory of Artistic Guerrilla [Warfare]' in 1967.¹²

Cildo Meireles, who was awarded the main prize at the *Salon*, competed with three drawings alongside previous works made with different materials. The drawings were sheets of paper with typed suggestions for spectators to carry out various kinds of experiences, such as outlining an area on the beach. There is no more artwork. Judgment is no longer possible. The critic is now a useless professional. What remains, perhaps, is the theorist.¹¹

The artist, today, is a kind of guerrilla. Art is a form of ambush. Acting unpredictably, where and when it is least expected, in an unusual way (since everything can become, today, a weapon or an instrument of war or art) the artist creates a permanent state of tension, a constant expectation. Everything can be turned into art, even the most banal everyday event. A constant victim of artistic guerrilla warfare, the spectator is forced to sharpen and activate their senses (eyes, ears, touch, smell now mobilised by artists), and above all to take initiative. The guerrilla-artist's task is to create nebulous, unusual, undefined situations, to provoke in the spectator (who can be anyone and not just those who attend exhibitions) more than estrangement or repulsion, fear. Only in the face of fear, when all the senses are activated, can there be initiative, that is, creation.



In the conventional WAR of art, participants had well-defined positions. There were artists, critics and spectators. The critic, for example, judged. They dictated norms of good behaviour, saying that this was good and that was bad, this was valid and that was not, delimited areas of situations, and defended categories and artistic genres, the so-called plastic values and other specificities. In doing so, they established aesthetic (ethical) sanctions and rules. However, in artistic guerrilla warfare, everyone is a guerrilla and takes initiative. The artist, the audience and the critic continually change their positions and artists themselves can fall victim to ambushes plotted by the spectator.

The trigger,
merely.

No longer the author of artworks, but the proposers of situations or appropriators of objects and events, artists cannot continuously exercise their control. They pull the trigger, but the trajectory of the bullet escapes them. They propose structures whose development, however, depends on the spectator's participation. Randomness enters the art game. The 'work' loses or gains meaning depending on events, whatever order they may be. Participating in an artistic situation today is like being in the jungle or the favela. At any moment, an

ambush can arise from which only those who take initiative come out unscathed, or even alive. Taking initiative is to expand one's perceptive capacity, the primary function of art.

Guerrilla history:
counter-history.

ART HISTORY deals with 'works' (finished products) that generate schools or isms. It deals with styles and trends. This official history of art, as Wilhelm Worringer noted, bases itself on artistic ability or rather aesthetics, not will. There is, however, a subterranean and unpredictable guerrilla history, that is neither announced nor allowed to crystallise. Amidst the synopses and graphic timelines of art history, a central column comes into view, emerging from the jungle of isms, that of a counter-history. This counter-history is made up of unfinished and inconclusive works, of projects, of what was just an idea and never made it beyond what had been imagined virtually. *Projects*.¹³ Counter-history pours its sludge into post-modern art and accumulates rubble in the vacant lots and wastelands¹⁴ of guerrilla art, where there are no categories, modes or means of expression, styles and, in time, no authors.



Futurism:
art is over.

THIS COUNTER-HISTORY can be told in several chapters. They would all have the same heading: art is over. Futurists, imagining a futuristic reconstruction of the universe, wanted to burn down all the museums and schools of fine arts that flooded Italy, as if it were a vast cemetery. Russolo proposed an art of noises, sounds and odours. Marinetti wanted to hold futuristic congresses in space. The Dadaists were the first to propose an anti-art. Marcel Duchamp, in Europe, added mocking moustaches to his Mona Lisa and, in the United States, where he arrived in 1915, still at the airport, he said: 'art is over, who could do anything better than this propeller?' The Russian Constructivists, for their part, stated in 1923, in the magazine *Lef*, created by Mayakovski: 'Art is dead.' 'Let us cease our speculative activity (painting pictures) and return to the sound bases of art – color, line, matter, and form in the realm of reality, meaning practical construction.' El Lissitzky proclaimed that, 'the painting, an icon for the bourgeoisie, has died. The artist as reproducer has been transformed into the builder of a new universe of objects.' At a demonstration held at the Bauhaus, in 1922, a poster appeared with the inscription: 'Art is dead. Long live the new art of the machine according to Tatlin.' The recent history of

Dada: art is over.

Russian
Constructivists:
Art is over.

Oiticica: purity
does not exist.

Mondrian
predicted the
death of art.

avant-garde art in Brazil would include similar chapters. Hélio Oiticica, after having explored form for form's sake (in his previous aestheticist position from the neo-concrete period), immersing himself in the veritable labyrinthine concepts of beauty and purity, and feeling around in the dark in search of beauty, dramatically concluded that, 'purity does not exist'¹⁵ in the installation he presented at the Museum of Modern Art in 1967. Created for the exhibition *Nova objetividade Brasileira*, the piece precipitately received the title of *Tropicália*.¹⁶ Art for Mondrian was a substitute in an age that lacked beauty. When life found more balance, when the tragic disappeared, everything would be art, and we would no longer need paintings and sculptures. He also foresaw the death of art. After a painful struggle, Oiticica, at once stunned and joyful, found that he had to declare that purity did not exist in order to reach purity. For him, art stopped being something superimposed on life. Everything became art. As if a primitive¹⁷ who finds themselves in a permanent state of discovery and enchantment, the artist no longer had any shame in appropriating everything he saw – from here on out, as he said, it was about the 'finding'. That's when his art took off, resolutely tropical, poor, a true restoration of a new Brazilian culture.



Lygia Clark with her *Caminhando* negated 'every concept of art that she had had until then', as she noted in May 1968:

Previously, man had a discovery, a language. He could use it his entire life and thus feel alive. Today, if we crystallize into a language, we stop, inexorably. We totally stop expressing. It's necessary to always be capturing. There should no longer be any style. In the past, expression was transcendent. The plane, form [...] pointed towards an external reality. Today, in art, things are worth something for what they are in and of themselves. Expression is immanent. Things are not eternal but precarious. It is in them that reality exists. In my work, if the spectator does not engage in making the experience, the work does not exist.¹⁸

Décio, guerrilla, gravedigger of art, pays it posthumous homage.

One of the last gravediggers of art in Brazil, [poet and theorist] Décio Pignatari, more concerned with consumption than with production, argues in his book *Information, Language, Communication* that art is a cultural prejudice of the privileged classes.¹⁹

We can say that we are witnessing the *final agony of art*: art has entered a state of coma, because its production system is typical and not prototypical, not adjusting to large-scale consumption. There is no reason to mourn

the glorious corpse, because from its ashes something much broader and more complex is being born, something that reduces the distance between production and consumption and for which there is still no name; it may even continue taking the name of the deceased, as a posthumous homage: art.²⁰

Death-life.

However, all these chapters constitute the very life of art or rather a death-life. Whenever an artist proclaims the death of art, a new leap is given, and art gathers forces to enter a new phase, although, they are occurring less and less. Death seems nearer because of the frequency with which it is proclaimed and here I am citing only the most recent chapters. A broader survey of this guerrilla history would show that the centuries immediately following the invasion of the barbarians and the dissolution of the classical world constituted one of those chapters in the 'death of art'. Historians stuck with the concept of 'ideal realism' define this barbaric phase as the 'crisis of ancient art', while Worringer prefers to see a 'will to form'. Mannerism, whose revision was only made possible after Dada, is the crisis of the Renaissance. As Arnold Hauser points out, or rather our reading of him, it is the meta-art of the Renaissance and without a doubt, an anti-art proposal. Anyone who

'Crisis of ancient art' or 'will or form'?

Mannerism equals Dada.



Hegel spoke of
the object's death.

wants to analyse this might cite the theories of Lomazzo and Zucari and the works of Piero di Cosimo, Arcimboldo, Bosch, Bruegel and El Greco, to name some of the best known mannerists. Likewise, in the nineteenth century, the Pre-Raphaelites and Art Nouveau deserve more in-depth studies, which historians, in the absence of more reasonable explanations, consider epiphenomena. Counter-history is not made like that, out of surprises, unpredictability, anti-styles or epiphenomena. Yet for historians what counts are the chapters on the 'death of art'. This is also the case for theorists whose discussion should rather revolve around artistic situations instead of specific artworks. Hegel had already spoken of the *death of the object*, saying that only the will of an aesthetic plan would remain.

MARCEL DUCHAMP, in one of the many interviews he gave during his lifetime, said: 'Art doesn't interest me, only artists.' Today, this 'singular state of art without art', as the critic Mário Pedrosa once characterised it,²¹ might be defined in a number of ways: ARTE VIVENCIAL (what counts is the experience of each person, because the work, as has already been said, does not exist without the participation of the spectator); conceptual art (the work is eliminated, only the concept,

the idea or a direct dialogue, without intermediaries, between the artist and the audience remains); PROPOSITIONAL ART (artists no longer express subjective content, they do not communicate messages, but rather make proposals for participation).

Street art.

WHAT IS ART. In England theatrical guerrilla groups merge theatre within the crowd in the middle of the street. An unexpected tap from a passerby can start the theatrical action. Their reaction, or simple perplexity, is already a form of interpretation.

A bonfire, a hole,
a cord: what is art?

Oldenburg digs holes in the street, leaving the spectator with the task of replacing the earth. Cildo Meireles extends a cord along four kilometres of beach, in the state of São Paulo, or makes a bonfire in Brasília, afterwards collecting the residue and presenting it. In fact, it no longer makes sense to say that this or that is art. Anti-art is the art of our time. Yet as *work*, art has always been the conscience that each age has of itself

Art is the con-
science of an age.

(Herbert Read); a thing of sensibility par excellence artworks formerly acted as a kind of 'relay' not only of culture, but also of all other facts of social life. But now the artwork has disappeared and art has ceased to be part of a contestatory universe. Is there an artist currently that has the same



Art has reached a zero point: the hippies started from scratch.

capacity for contestation as a Goya or a Daumier? It is no longer art, but students, provos, hippies and urban guerrillas that question today's society.

Art seems to be lagging behind. Proponents of 'anti-commodities', 'anti-comfort', hippies are among the main challengers of affluent and technological society, even if we consider that their protest is also being consumed in affluent terms. That is, the system is massifying their rebellion (clothes, habits, etc.). Interestingly, with the hippies, the opposite of what happened with artists is happening. If the latter, as we have seen, managed to bring art to life, by stripping it of all artificiality, the hippies, on the other hand, are starting from nothing, from scratch, and ritualising life, fetishising the vital acts of man.

READERS do not look for any consistency in this article. It is impossible not to be contradictory in this age of crossed purposes. Picabia, the cannibal artist of Dada, already noted that the difficult thing is to sustain one's contradictions. However, it is only possible to correct the article at the time it is written. In refusing specificity and supports and mixing with everyday life, art can also be confused with protest movements, be it a student march or

Coherence and contradiction.
It is necessary to correct the article.

a rebellion in a black ghetto in the United States, or even an assault on a bank. Marta Minujín, creator of happenings, said that the best 'environment' was the street in its simultaneity of events and actions. Art and contestation develop on the same plane as quick, unforeseen actions. Both resemble guerrilla warfare. Inside or outside museums and salons, the avant-garde artist is a guerrilla. Avant-garde, by the way, is a term of war (albeit a conventional war). Breton, theorist of surrealism, Communist Party activist, and member of the French resistance, in a premonitory article, written in 1936, 'Crisis de l'objet', showed that the function of art is to throw the everyday into disarray, putting into circulation unusual, enigmatic, terrifying objects. Art, then, would have as a goal breaking the logic of the 'object system', upending daily life with the 'fabrication and launching into circulation of objects that appeared in dreams'. Against rationalisation, making no distinction between the real and the imaginary, surrealism proposed a revolutionary action with the mission of: 'continuously and vigorously rectifying the law, that is, order. In place of routine, the unusual, the unpredictable.' Disorganise the organised, unwork the worked, destroy the built. One of the vehicles for disseminating surrealism was called



La Révolution Surréaliste. For Breton, it was not about putting art at the service of revolution, but to make a revolution in art.

POOR ART, emerging in Europe and the United States with the same strength as the protest movements, parallels the efforts of the hippies and guerrillas in artistic form. Some of its most important proponents in Brazil, Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica are indisputably two international pioneers. It opposes the art/technology binomial, just as hippies fight against comfort, hygiene, the technological environment, and by extension, against the repressive character of current technology. Technological art replaces the taboo on noble materials: acrylic, aluminium, PVC countering the bias favouring well-made, hygienic, clean, resistant and durable work, especially art that is 'minimal' and 'hard-edged'. In the jungles of Vietnam, the VietCong fire arrows at the F-111 planes. Just as they call into question with their primary processes the most advanced and exoticised technology in the world, poor art – tropical, underdeveloped, Brazilian – shows that the 'plá' (the key) is in the idea and not in the materials or its realisation. While Europeans and North Americans use 'computers' and 'laser' rays, we Brazilians (Hélio Oiticica, Antonio

Again the
material taboo.

The 'aesthetics
of garbage'

Parangolé art.

Manuel, Cildo Meireles, Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, Artur Barrio, Carlos Vergara, etc.) work with earth, sand, coffee grounds, corrugated cardboard, newspaper, banana leaves, grass, cords, rubber, water, stone, scraps, in short, with the detritus of consumer society. Poor and conceptual art thus approximates the 'aesthetics of garbage', the 'junk culture' of William S. Burroughs and the art of debris (merz) of Kurt Schwitters. The latter piled up rubble making his famous 'merzbau' using everything he could find on the street to make his paintings (labels, washers, wood, cloth, tow, papers) and poems (after all, debris were also the loose words collected here and there in random newspapers, advertisements, labels). Other parallels include: the precarious art of the neo-Dadas, such as Burri, and the happenings performed by Cage, Kaprow, Warhol and Lebel in streets, workshops, automobile graveyards, tire shops. No noble and beautiful materials, nothing more than the event, the concept. Oiticica's *Parangolé* art (capes, tents, banners) recalls the rags of the poor that inhabit our streets and favelas, but also the clothes of hippies.²² Mending things, collaging objects (trinkets, knickknacks) on the body itself, transforming packaging (oil cans, for example) into new objects such as baskets and lamps, are not only indicative



of poverty, but also of the highly ludic sense of the Brazilian. It is here, in the inventiveness, in the extraordinary architecture of the favelas, in the Morro de Mangueira (Mangueria Hill),²³ in Campo de Santana, in carnival or in football, that Oiticica finds his best motivation and not in the tired and jaded art of museums.

'Cosa corporale'
[Body thing],
muscular art.

BODY ART. The use of the body itself. In Oiticica, as in Clark, we see *Nostalgia do corpo* (Longing for/of the body),²⁴ a return to the vital rhythms of man, to a muscular art. A return to that 'archaic trunk' (Edgar Morin), to the 'techniques of the body' according to Marcel Mauss, to the rhythms of the body in the natural environment, as mentioned by George Friedmann. Art as 'cosa corporale' – a body thing. In his collective *Parangolés*, Oiticica sought to revive the primitive rhythm of the tam-tam, fusing colour, sound, dance and music in a single ritual. In the manifestation *Apocalipopótese*, held in the public park Aterro do Flamengo in July 1968, the aim was to achieve a single, collective rhythm, a *pneuma* that would bring everyone together.²⁵ At once environmental, sensory and corporal, this art provoked, as is well known, enormous interest in England, where Oiticica currently resides, having held two

exhibitions in London and Sussex, as well as in the United States, where Lygia's equally sensory proposals attracted the attention of scientific circles, especially among young psychologists. For both Brazilian artists the 'work' is often the body. *A casa é o corpo* (The House is the Body),²⁶ rather, the body is the engine of the work. Or, it is to the body that the work leads. To the discovery of one's own body. Something of the utmost importance at a time when the machine and technology not only alienate man from their own senses, but also, from their body. One of the characteristics of the technological environment is absence, distance. Man is never in his body: his voice is heard on the telephone, his image appears on the TV screen or on the newspaper page. Man-to-man relationships are increasingly abstract, established through signals and signs. Man becomes a thing. If clothing is a second skin, the extension of the body (Marshall McLuhan) it is necessary to tear off the skin, seek out blood, viscera. Body art, muscle art.

Tear off the skin.

MARCUSE AGAINST MCLUHAN. The repressive characters of current technology and the waste of affluent society have already been widely denounced by various thinkers, Marcuse among them. Current technology is largely death-oriented,



The energy of
the human body
in art and war.

despite all the contrary efforts to save life (the fight against cancer or leukemia, etc.). Marcuse, in his political preface to *Eros and Civilization*, affirms the body when he says: 'The spread of guerrilla warfare at the height of the technological century is a symbolic event: the energy of the human body against the machines of repression.' Many years earlier, however, Frantz Fanon, the key intellectual of the Algerian revolution, showed, in an extraordinary study on the contribution of Arab women to the war of liberation, the relationship of their revolutionary mobility to the clothes they wore (when dressed in European style, they participated in the colonialist scheme of domination, losing their Arab values). The success of 'arte povera' has the same symbolic meaning that Marcuse pointed out for guerrilla warfare.

The third world
against affluent
art.

THE COUNTERING OF AFFLUENT ART must be, above all, a task for the third world, for Latin America, for countries like ours. We must move beyond affluent art; take advantage of the good aspects it has left us and integrate this with the positive values of nations that have not yet made the leap to the new art. The body against the machine. In the Brazilian case, the important thing is to make poverty and underdevelopment our main riches. Do not taboo new materials or instruments, nor let yourself be scared.

Above all, avoid artisanal/technological confrontations, for obvious reasons. We will always be in an inferior position. What matters, it doesn't hurt to repeat, is the idea, the proposal. If necessary, we will use the body itself as a channel for the message, as the engine of the work. The body – its muscles, blood, viscera, excrement, and above all intelligence.

Nothing is art.
Everything is art.

ART - Experiential, propositional, environmental, pluri-sensory, conceptual, poor, affluent; none of this is art. They are labels. Art - Experiential, propositional, environmental, pluri-sensory, conceptual, poor, affluent, all of this is art. Of today. None are objects. Just situations, projects, processes, scripts, inventions, ideas.



NOTES

- 1 The Grupo de los Domingos is a collaborative initiative established in September 2020 and features seven artists, researchers, educators, and curators from different Latin American countries, contexts and organisations: Ignacia Biskupovic, Renata Cervetto, Jessica Gogan, Mônica Hoff, Lola Malavasi, Nicolás Pradilla, and Mariela Richmond. Drawn together by a common interest in collaborative investigation and learning, the group's focus is to study and collectively translate critical texts by Morais (1968 - 1972), explore the radical legacy of the events he organised and reflect on synchronicities and contemporary resonances. Our current focus is on Spanish translation. Original Portuguese texts and Spanish translations with accompanying critical/poetic interventions have recently been launched - www.osdomingos.org. We are grateful to be able to include this translation - to the best of our knowledge it is the first English translation of Morais's article - and accompanying text by Richmond and Cervetto in this publication and especially to Daniel Neugebauer and Nick Aikens for their interest.
- 2 A prolific critic and journalist, Morais's fluid style was shaped by the urgency of the political and artistic moment together with a certain affective humour and the demands of newspaper deadlines. While his texts rarely include full citations, they demonstrate an impressive up-to-date knowledge of a broad range of contemporary debates of the time referring to not only Brazilian but also international critical and philosophical writings from Herbert Marcuse to Frantz Fanon as well as those of information and media theory pioneers such as Abraham Moles and Marshall McLuhan. For the purposes of the footnotes included here, given the ready availability of online resources, the focus is rather to primarily situate the reader in the Brazilian context.
- 3 T.N. 'Obra' can mean a work of art or generally work (as object and process), labour, construction work or site, as well as a body of work. In this essay Morais uses 'obra' mostly meaning artwork and work as a physical object juxtaposed with the emerging experiential and situational artistic proposals of the late 1960s and 70s. However, in the title and at various moments in the text 'obra' can also be interpreted as in John Dewey's distinction between a work of art as physical object and *the work of art as process*. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Perigee Books: New York, 1934, 162. Accordingly 'obra' is variably translated as artwork, work and occasionally as object for clarity.
- 4 T.N. 'Vivência' is commonly translated as 'experience' or 'lived experience'. Suggesting a notion of 'livingness', the term conveys a vital sense of being in the moment, an openness that allows one to really be present and feel an experience. The concepts of 'vivência', 'tempo vivido' (lived time) and 'estrutura viva' (living structure) are key to Brazilian art of the period, in particular the work of the artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. 'Vivencia' is particularly opposed to that of 'obra' or 'artwork' as an object. It is associated with a freedom of no longer being beholden to the obligation to produce art as an object. A 'vivência' is rather a 'succession of moments where the agreeable and the disagreeable are what counts' as Oiticica described his 'vivências' in 1968. Hélio Oiticica, letter to Lygia Clark, 15 October 1968. In Luciano Figueiredo (ed.), *Lygia Clark. Hélio Oiticica: Cartas 1964-1974*, UFRJ: Rio de Janeiro, 1996, 12. Clark similarly writes: 'Time is the new vector of artistic expression. Not mechanical time, of course, but lived time that brings a living structure within itself.' Lygia Clark, letter to Hélio Oiticica, Paris, no date, *op. cit.*, 31.
- 5 T.N. The text here has been altered from the original, which actually notes 'the less precarious are the materials'. This is a textual error as not only does this not correspond with the overall meaning of the essay, it was also corrected in a subsequent version published by Morais in 1975: Frederico Morais, *Artes Plásticas: A crise na hora atual*, Rio de Janeiro: Paiz e Terra, 1975, 25.
- 6 Inaugurating her concept of the artist as proposer, Lygia Clark's *Caminhando* (Walking, 1963), deployed the seemingly double- yet single-sided surface of the Möbius strip inviting spectator/participants to simply cut along a paper version of the strip, making their own choices of



direction, speed, width, time, etc. A revolution in the artist's practice and a key moment of Brazilian avant-garde rupture, *Caminhando* shifted the emphasis from art as object to action and experience, reworking the predetermined steel folds of Max Bill's influential sculpture of the Möbius strip, *Tripartite Unity* (1948–49), awarded on the occasion of the first São Paulo Biennial in 1951, to open up to chance and possibility. Instead of concrete form, momentum, choice and duration are the distinguishing features – the space/process/time it takes to cut along the strip. Instead of opposites there are rather foldings, inseparable from one another and the process itself. See video produced for the exhibition *Lygia Clark: Uma retrospectiva*, Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sP-uT5DQLM>

- 7 Following a car accident after which the artist required wrist therapy, Clark developed *Dialogue de mãos* as a dialogic proposal involving a band of elastic material inviting two spectator/participants to experiment with a 'dialogue' of their hands through various movements. See video produced for the exhibition *Lygia Clark: Uma retrospectiva*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSwsPjaBT68>
- 8 *Salon de Bússola* (Compass Salon, 1969) was a competitive salon exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art (MAM) in Rio November 1969 showcasing many of the emerging experimental artistic trends of the time. Because of the boycott of the 1969 São Paulo Biennial, a response to Brazil's military dictatorship (1964–85) and specifically the introduction of AI-5 (Ato Institucional 5/Institutional Act no 5) in 1968 that imposed restrictions including the suspension of parliament and constitutional guarantees, paving the way for censorship, arrest and torture, many artists opted instead to send their works to the *Salon*. Artist/composer Guilherme Vaz would later provocatively suggest that the *Salon* was 'where contemporary Brazilian art began'. 'Arte sonora: podcast #01 – Guilherme Vaz: Interview with Franz Manata e Saulo Laudares', Rio de Janeiro, 2013. Scholar Claudia Calirman observes that at the time official salons did not yet include any categories

for emerging experimental, conceptual and performative art forms. However, they did allow for an 'et cetera' category. Cildo Meireles, who was also awarded the *Salon* prize, submitted all his works under this 'humorously vague label'. Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles*, Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2012, 133–35.

- 9 T.N. The use of 'gravatura' in Portuguese combines the words 'gravura' meaning engraving or print and the verb 'gravar' meaning to record creating a neologism combining both audio and visual elements.
- 10 T.N. Far from the gender neutral sensitivity of today's cultural context, nothing dates this text more than the use of 'man'. A datedness that is also important to convey as part of the translation. However, when man and artist are used in a general sense, plural pronouns are used.
- 11 Morais, originally from Minas Gerais, moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1966 to write a daily art column for the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*. Shortly thereafter he began teaching art courses at MAM and in 1968 became that institution's course coordinator. In tandem with his new role in 1969, just prior to the *Salon de Bússola*, with the artists Guilherme Vaz, Luiz Alphonsus and Cildo Meireles, Morais co-founded the group Unidade Experimental (Experimental Unit) as a kind of research laboratory for new expressive languages and situations geared towards activating the senses and stimulating new perceptions. Morais describes the role of the Unidade within the department as 'a type of pedagogic laboratory'. Functioning as 'an extension of MAM's courses' the group would act as a 'vanguard laboratory' comprising 'artists, musicians, scientists, art critics, university professors, and students'. Frederico Morais, 'Um laboratório de vanguarda', *Diário de Notícias*, 15 October 1969. The Unidade was not interested in technological experiments but rather those of 'the mind' using 'only the body' to 'open up and sharpen perception'. Frederico Morais, internal communication to director Maurício Roberto, 5 October 1969, Archive MAM, MAM Cursos: Gestão e coordenação, 1969.



- 12 Décio Pignatari was a Brazilian poet, essayist, translator and co-founder of the concrete poetry group and magazine *Noigmandres* with fellow poets Haroldo and Augusto de Campos. His text ‘Teoria de guerrilha artística’ was published in the newspaper *Correio de Manhã* on 4 June 1967. The original version of Morais’s ‘Corpo é o motor da obra’ essay notes the date as 1968, it has been corrected here.
- 13 The concept of ‘probject’ or *probjeto* in Portuguese is a neologism – object/project – coined by the artist Rogério Duarte. In a letter to Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica writes that the concept *probjetos* was developed by Duarte after hours of conversation between the two and that its essence implied not finished works but rather ‘open structures’ ones even ‘created at the time of participation’. Oiticica, letter to Lygia Clark, *op. cit.*
- 14 T.N. The Portuguese ‘terrenos baldios’ means lands or sites that are unused or abandoned. Various translations render it as vacant lots and wastelands. Both are apt here for Morais’s ‘guerilha art’.
- 15 T.N. The phrase more commonly associated with this work is actually ‘pureza é um mito’ or purity is a myth and was written on a small wood sign along with other poetic phrases in Oiticica’s 1967 installation *Tropicália* exhibited at MAM Rio as part of the exhibition *Nova objetividade Brasileira* (Brazilian New Objectivity). The word installation instead of the original ‘cabin’ has been used here for clarity. See note below.
- 16 *Tropicália* is a labyrinthine environment comprising two walk-in structures that Oiticica called *Penetráveis* (Penetrables) *PN2* (1966) – *Pureza é um mito* (Purity is a Myth) and *PN3* (1966–67) – *Imagético* (Imagetic). These precarious cabin-like constructions similar to favela shacks are installed amidst tropical plants, sand, gravel, wooden signs with poetic phrases, *Parangolé* capes (see footnote 17) and a TV. Oiticica writes: ‘*Tropicália* was born from the idea and conception of “New Objectivity” which I initiated in 1966. [...] With the “Theory of New-Objectivity”, I wanted to institute and characterize a state of Brazilian avant-garde art, confronting it with the major movements of world art (Op and Pop) and aiming at a Brazilian state of art, or of manifestations related to this. [...] *Tropicália* is the very first conscious, objective attempt to impose an obviously Brazilian image upon the current context of the avant-garde and national art manifestations in general. Hélio Oiticica, ‘Tropicália: Selection of writings 1960–1980’, Guy Brett et al., *Hélio Oiticica*, Rio de Janeiro: Projeto *Hélio Oiticica*, 1992, 124. See also video *Hélio Oiticica and the Tropicália Movement* produced by Tate Modern, London, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fA-Mm8_SGsc
- 17 T.N. While the problematic use of the term ‘primitive’, particularly as deployed in late-nineteenth and early twentieth century art and anthropology, had already been critiqued at the time, Morais uses it here to refer to an archaic or primordial state of perception. Artists like Oiticica were striving for an openness where one could apprehend the world via direct emotion, unfiltered by the desire for intellectual domination. Oiticica privileged what he called the ‘suprasensorial’ encompassing ‘the expansion of individual consciousness, the return to myth, the re-discovery of rhythm, dance, the body, the senses’. Oiticica, *ibid.*, 130.
- 18 T.N. The original text does not source this citation. However, given its length it has been provided here: Vera Pedrosa, interview with Lygia Clark, ‘O homem é o centro’, *Correio de Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, 30 May 1968.
- 19 T.N. Similiar to the above. Here is the complete reference together with some minor corrections: Décio Pignatari, *Informação, Comunicação, Linguagem*, Rio de Janeiro: Ateliê Editorial, 2002 [1968], 18.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 85.
- 21 Tour de force Brazilian art critic Mário Pedrosa was a friend of – and significant influence on – Morais. He championed artists such as Oiticica and Clark and famously described the artistic practices and art that was emerging in the late 1960s in Brazil as the ‘experimental exercise of freedom’. However, the phrase ‘singular state of art without art’ actually belongs to Clark, but quite definitely as Morais suggests, and as Pedrosa must have repeated in conversation, characterises the art of the period. ‘If the loss of individuality is imposed in a certain way on modern man,



- the artist offers a certain revenge and an opportunity to find oneself. As they dissolve into the world, merge into the collective, the artist loses their singularity, their expressive power. Content to propose that others be themselves, they reach the singular state of art without art.’ Lygia Clark, ‘A propósito da magia do objeto’ [1965]. See English translation of this text and others that made up Clark’s *Livro Obra* (1983) via the recently launched web portal by the Lygia Clark Association: <https://portal.lygiaclark.org.br/en/archive/7355/livro-obra>
- 22 Oiticica famously disrupted the opening of the exhibition *Opinião 65* (Opinion 65) held at MAM Rio arriving with his *Parangolés* featuring wearable capes, standards and samba performers from Mangueira favela and samba school. Seen as a dynamic artistic and sociopolitical gesture post-1964 military coup, the collector and critic Jean Boghici wittily described this now mythic history as ‘Hélio Oiticica: our national Flash Gordon’ not ‘flying through space, but social layers’. Jean Boghici quoted in ‘Ainda o Parangolé’, *Artes Plásticas, O Globo* (16 August 1965). It is a key moment where the experimental moves out of the laboratory-school-museum-studio into the world. It is also where an individual and contemplative art experience is inverted to become a collective and participatory one of wearing and watching. ‘My entire evolution, leading up to the formulation of the Parangolé, aims at this magical incorporation of the elements of the world as such, in the whole life-experience of the spectator, whom I now call “participator”. It is as if there were an “establishment” and a “recognition” of an inter-corporal space created by the world upon its unfolding. The work is made for this space, and no sense of totality can be demanded from it as simply a work located in an ideal space-time, whether or not requiring the spectator’s participation. Wearing, in its larger and total sense, counterpoints “watching”, a secondary feeling, thus closing the wearing-watching cycle.’ Hélio Oiticica, ‘Notes on the Parangolé’, in Guy Brett et al., *Hélio Oiticica, op. cit.*, 93.
- 23 T.N. The use of ‘morro’ meaning ‘hill’ in common parlance connotes a favela community as it is on the surrounding hills of the city that favelas developed.
- 24 *Nostalgia do corpo* describes a phase of Clark’s work from 1966–69 highlighting sensory relationships between participants and objects. Psychoanalyst and critic Suely Rolnik notes that here ‘the work began to move from the act to the sensation that it evoked in the one who touched it’. She also remarks that instead of translating ‘nostalgia’ as nostalgia, Oiticica proposed ‘longing for the body’ as the works deal more with longing for the body rather than a melancholy nostalgia. Suely Rolnik, ‘Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lygia Clark’, in *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom: Lygia Clark, Gego, Mathias Goeritz, Hélio Oiticica and Mira Schendel*, Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1999, PDF version available online, 14.
- 25 The manifestation/happening *Apocalipopótese* by Oiticica was part of the month-long series of public art events *Arte no Aterro* (Arte on the Embankment) organised by Morais with *Diário de Notícias* as media partner in July 1968. A neologism derived from apocalypse and apoteosis, Oiticica credits Rogério Duarte as coining the term and wrote of the event, citing the critic Mário Pedrosa: ‘Mário thinks that there was something there that was more important than the sense of happening in its really open sense of experiences.’ Oiticica, letter to Lygia Clark, *op. cit.* The event was held on what is known as the ‘Aterro’ the embankment landfill turned public park near the Museum of Modern Art overlooking Rio’s Guanabara Bay and featured samba performers from the Mangueira favela and samba school, together with Oiticica’s *Parangolés* and works by artists such as Lygia Pape, Antonio Manuel and Jackson Ribeiro. For a sense of the festive atmosphere see the short film of the events by Raymundo Amado, unfortunately incomplete as some reels were lost. *Guerra e Paz*, 1968, 10 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kIDYRIAOTg>
- 26 *A casa é o corpo* (The House Is the Body) refers to a fourth stage in Clark’s work similarly encompassing the time period from 1967–69 and comprises various works such as *Série roupa-corpo-roup: O eu e o tu* (Clothing-Body-Clothing



Series: The I and the You, 1967) highlighting sensory relational encounters between spectator/participants and individual experimental corporal sensations. 'Casa' meaning house and also home in Portuguese draws attention to the body both as shelter and habitat. As Rolnik notes: 'The feeling of being "at home" as a familiarity with the world ceases to stem from a supposed identity, in order to be built and rebuilt in the experience itself: the house is the body. Here, it is the body, in relation to objects, that becomes poetic again.' Rolnik, *op. cit.*, 15. A subsequent phase developed in parallel to this one Clark called *O corpo é a casa* (The Body Is the House) where she experimented with various proposals for collective encounter that she called 'Arquiteturas biológicas' (Biological Architectures). Rolnik continues: 'The work achieves its realization in the pure sensation of the experience captured by the vibrating body of the participants. [...] Here it is the interaction between the bodies that becomes poetic again.' *Ibid.*, 16. *The House is the Body* also refers to a specific environmental installation by Clark whose full title is *A casa é o corpo: penetração, ovulação, germinação, expulsão* (The House Is the Body: Penetration, Ovulation, Germination, Expulsion, 1968). See also the video produced for *Lygia Clark: Uma retrospectiva* (Lygia Clark: A Retrospective) at Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiU26qNYxOI>



O som do domingo (The Sound of Sunday). 30 May 1971. Photo: Author Unknown. Frederico Morais Archive.



O corpo a corpo do domingo (Body to Body Sunday) 29 August 1971. Photo: Beto Felício.

DERMIS, MUSCLES and JOINTS: Open Conversation with Frederico Morais's 'O CORPO É O MOTOR DA OBRA'



MY EXPERIENCE

I have a lump in my throat the size of my fist. Perhaps I cannot fit any more words between the mouth and the stomach. There is something that shuts down every time I do not connect what is flooding into my head and does not touch my heart. These two organs should be closer to each other, ARTICULATED in a direct way, so that maybe communication could be more fluid within our body, in that way we would not have to pass all of our thoughts through the mouth. But, well, it is not like that. The body's communication passes through the throat, through the translation of a voice, a sound; while other times, communication goes directly to the hands, to the DERMIS, deriving into words for someone else to read them, so that they can last.

The wise body-system decides when to persist in its transmissions and when to let go of thoughts in a series of actions that perspire in experiences, in gestures. The DERMIS feeds on sensations that are closer to desire, mobilised by the channels between neurons and the pulsating MUSCULAR channels of the heart.

The words melt between my hands while I write this text at full speed, among the notes of the cell phone and the ideas ARTICULATED by the present; it is as if my head could understand perfectly what is inside of my inhabited body



before this translation happens. I trust my body's stenographer incipient drive, and do not stop the sensations to translate them into words.

Ideas about *O CORPO É O MOTOR DA OBRA*

To think with/in the body, one can start from many places. I decided to converse with the DERMIS, the MUSCLES and the JOINTS. It is enough to know how to trace a beginning of that study, which allows that starting point to be related to the rest of the body, transforming the beginning into a system, into an infinite chain.

In *O CORPO É O MOTOR DA OBRA*, Frederico Morais, shows us a first layer that could be called the DERMIS of his thinking/writing, in which he develops body art as the use of his own body. In it, he refers to the works of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, who speak about the nostalgia of the body returning to the vital rhythms of man:

In 1963, LYGIA CLARK proposed 'the spectators' in the piece *Caminhando* (Walking), take a strip of paper, similar to a Möbius strip and then cut it with scissors. The work simply sought out the walking of the scissors on the paper. After the experiment finished, the piece was over. What remained was the experience.

In 1967 HÉLIO OITICICA presented in *Tropicália*, visual, tactile and sonorous experiences with a playfulness that invites the reverberation of the senses that influence everyday sensibilities. They are 'suprasensorial' experiences that transform the body and space of those who participate.¹

Moreover, the body is the engine of the work; or even more it is to it that the work leads to, to the discovery of the body itself. This is of utmost importance at a time when machines and technology alienate man, not only from his senses, but also from his own body. ... Man is objectified. If clothing is a second skin, an extension of the body (McLuhan),² it is necessary to remove the skin and look for the blood, the viscera. Body art, muscle art.
– Frederico Morais

FREDERICO AS ARTICULATOR

Given his statement about MUSCULAR ART, I am interested in putting Frederico's use of writing into dialogue with the muscles that perform within a system. Metaphorically contracting and extending, Frederico generates the movements that allow us to stay active within the text and circulatory system of artistic processes that he proposes. Frederico is the muscular framework of a system that – with the layers of different skins or DERMIS of artistic processes – produces a tissue that forms JOINTS, as a whole or unit, and which activates the verb 'articulate'.

1 The suprasensory experiences of Hélio Oiticica require the participant to immerse himself in himself and enjoy the pure sensations preferably before any conceptualisation. See <http://www.analesiie.unam.mx/index.php/analesiie/article/view/2565>

2 In 1964, Marshall McLuhan said in *Understanding Media*: 'We started a dynamic by placing our physical bodies at the centre of our enlarged nervous systems with the help of electronic media; whereby all the above categories, which are mere extensions of our body, including cities, may be translated into information systems.'



In the magazine *Thinking with Dance*, Marie Bardet,³ establishes an approach to ARTICULATIONS, proposing we forget about the study of the body as a homogeneous corpus or closed trunk and rather visualise it as a hybrid broth, an archive in process, a compendium of knowledge often conflicting with each other, a 'corpus' but one that is always fragmented.

'Lo articular' (articulate), quoting Bardet once more, makes problems that rise up and resonate, as transversal that do not allow categorising styles. They offer tools for a dialogue between those who look, do, think (jointly or respectively) about art. It could not be a distance, it is rather a resonance with the skin, a redistribution between the inner and the outer of the body, that determines certain relationships through constant movement.

Throughout his texts, Frederico immerses us in a network of disputed JOINTS, where all the senses are mobilised, and through scattered initiatives, many times, creation arises. As the author himself points out: It is impossible to stop being contradictory in this age of crossed perspectives. Therefore, the power to reread Frederico's texts in our current context, would be to manufacture new JOINTS. By allowing his words to function as layers of the skin and muscles that strengthen 'Ways of doing', a

complex system of linked experiences is created. In this system the parties, one by one, like a chain of experiences – that faces dissent – could become creative enhancers.

3 Philosopher Marie Bardet writes from a theoretical-practical approach that includes dance, in particular improvisation and somatic practices. See her article 'Del punto de vista a un acercamiento teórico-práctico: lo articular', *Pensar con la danza*, 2014, 43.



Domingos da Criação (Sundays of Creation)



Held at the height of Brazil's military dictatorship (1964–85) at the Museum of Modern Art (MAM) Rio de Janeiro in 1971, the six Sunday happenings that comprised Domingos da Criação (Sundays of Creation) involved now well-known Brazilian artists such as Antonio Manuel and Carlos Vergara as well as many others working in various creative modalities at the time including theatre director Amir Haddad and the dancers/choreographers Klauss and Angel Vianna. Organised by critic/curator Frederico Morais, then coordinator of courses at the museum, Domingos levelled a Marxist critique of the Bourgeois notion of Sunday entertainment. The events emphasised the simplicity of materials, the tactile and the corporal. Each of the six Sundays had a particular material and conceptual theme that determined the nature of the day's activities: paper, thread/wire, fabric, earth, sound and body. The idea was to demonstrate that any material could be used to make art, but also to position an anthropophagic subversion. Using so-called waste as creative material both critiqued industrialisation and countered the unstable image of a developing nation in an actual promotion of the precarious. The focus was on art as an activity not an object. What mattered most, Morais noted, was the process. A carnivalesque mix of art, education, party, playground and protest, the events attracted thousands.

Jessica Gogan

Frederico Morais with *P20 parangolé Cape 16 'Guevarcália'* by Hélio Oiticica, in *Apocalipopótese*, 1968. Photo: Claudio Oiticica.
© César and Claudio Oiticica

Nick Aikens, Mercedes
Azpilicueta, Yael Davids
& Megan Hoetger

On *A Daily Practice*



Yael Davids: A Daily Practice curated by Nick Aikens with performance curator Frédérique Bergholtz in 2020 at the Van Abbemuseum is the outcome of Yael Davids's eponymous three-year research project in collaboration with the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.¹ The artist's practice-led research and engagement with the museum's collection, building and infrastructure drew on somatic techniques that encourage the adjustment of functional everyday movements derived from the teachings of Moshe Feldenkrais (1904–84). For example, observing that turning the head solely by moving the neck causes undue stress, Feldenkrais initiates the movement with the eyes or shoulders to incorporate the whole body and transfer weight from – and back to – the ground. This holistic approach goes beyond the single body to recognise the interconnectedness of things. 'The School' occupied two central galleries where weekly classes were conceived by Davids, a Feldenkrais teacher, in dialogue with collection works by artists including Stanley Brouwn, Carolee Schneemann, Ossip Zadkine, Bruce Nauman and Patricia Kaersenhout. In the spirit of Feldenkrais, this conversation with School attendees artist Mercedes Azpilicueta and curator Megan Hoetger scans memories, bodies and feelings to give an idea of this central component of the exhibition.



MH: I'll start at the beginning, with what it felt like to take my shoes off in the gallery. Full admission – I rarely participate in installations where I have to take my shoes off, so it was a special occasion for me! But that said, there was a whole ritual, because I changed clothes to prepare for the class and I was prepping to take my shoes off for about 30 minutes, before I actually did it. I was a bit nervous because it was the first time I had been to see the exhibition. I started the classes on screen in April 2020, so I had a familiarity with the practice, but had never been in person, or a group, or with Yael. I was quite nervous about how I would feel with other people around me. I took a mat on the edge and I tried to stay as quiet as I could.

As soon as the class started I closed my eyes and we did the body scan that we always begin with. I completely forgot that there were other people around me. A friend of mine says I have quite a strong spectral eye, so I'm always thinking, 'how are other people seeing me from the outside?'. I guess it is because I started the class in April, I had become accustomed to closing my eyes, turning into my own body and looking there. Even the sound of the photographer's flash wasn't disturbing. I was happily surprised that I could go into my inner eye and let go of the others around me.

MA: Also for me it was the first time I saw the exhibition and did a Feldenkrais class with Yael or connected to Yael's practice. I had done a series of classes in Rotterdam. And even though I had been on the floor during a performance I did at the Van Abbe, I had a different impression of it. This was in the central gallery with some visitors nearby. I remember someone stepping on one of the works during the lesson. This artist's ego almost jumped out of me and I wanted to check the installation. It was in the middle of the pandemic, September, the first time I encountered a group of people. I had secluded myself most of the year and then this experience of lying horizontally on the floor created a plain, flat relationship with the walls of the museum, the room and even with the works.

NA: It was the lesson with Bruce Nauman's *Vision* (1973), a print of a black square and Stanley Brouwn's *one step (4x)* (1971), which consisted of four lines of pencil marking different lengths of steps.

YD: 'The Sensible and the Imaginative – Different Patterns in Creating an Image.' Megan you were with Ossip Zadkine?

MH: I was with the Marcel Broodthaers's installation *Tapis de Sable*, from 1974, which was represented by a plant and a single A4 print

1 Davids is the first recipient of the Creator Doctus, three-year third-tier artist research programme at Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam.



and the large wooden sculpture of Zadkine, which consists of a twisting, writing figure.

NA: Those are very different physical, formal lessons: abstract compositions in one and large wooden figures and plants in the other! The large Zadkine sculpture had been moved from the previous room onto the yellow carpet. What did it mean to encounter those works in that space, and to hear what Yael said about those works? What was your relationship with those works before the class, during or after the class?

MH: I wish I had seen the exhibition again after my lesson as I would have probably seen the works a bit differently. In a strange way, conceptually, I felt a connection with Marinus Boezem's work before the lesson. *Weersituatie 18-3-1969 (0300 GMT)* (1969) is an offset print that shows a kind of schematic re-rendering of weather patterns and there was something about the dailiness of these wind patterns, the daily practice of it, the movement. I didn't quite understand the wood sculpture, although I did compositionally like it on the yellow carpet. But after the class – or, actually, in the middle of it – I was thinking about the sculpture that was with us. I started to understand a bit more in my own body through these massive wooden sculptures: the figures are almost emerging from within the wood, from this heavy, dense material. I remem-

ber you saying, Yael, that you liked another sculpture by that artist better because there was more of that sense of it emerging from the wood.

YD: The other one is heavier, yes.

MH: It had been a few weeks since I had done a class because I injured my ankle, my foot, so the heaviness stuck with me. One of the things that I think about a lot in the class is the softening of the breast bone and how that happens, and the accordant nature of the rib cage. In the lesson I was thinking about the wood sculpture and my breastbone feeling like a heavy chunk of wood, but also having a softness. When I finally opened my eyes at the end and saw the sculpture again I had a strange moment of identification with the wood, because of the way that something could emerge from what felt like a heavy lump of material, which is sometimes what I feel like as a body. But some sort of softness could emerge. I felt a better or stronger relation in terms of my movement and maybe that's the nature of sculpture. I had a more difficult time understanding the drawings in relation to my body. The palm tree sort of sat with you, Yael, as your partner in giving the class, but that was about the extent of it for me.

YD: This was one of my favourite pieces to study. Some of the work helps me. The plant helped me to understand what I was talking about. I'm very



'Force transmission – reaching through breathing. Legs crossed and expanding chest and abdomen (AY 28).
With works by Marinus Boezem, Marcel Broodthaers & Ossip Zadkine', 18 September 2020.
Yael Davids: *A Daily Practice*, Van Abbemuseum. Photo: Marcel de Buck.



nervous when I give the lessons in the museum compared to in person or on Zoom. You can feel it maybe. The work Boezem's *Weersituatie van 18-3-1969 (0300 GMT)* is a conceptual work. He's a conceptual artist. It helped me to have the plant from *Tapis de Sable* by Broodthaers to connect to Boezem's work. The seed creates movement down – that makes roots in the humid darkness, and reaches upwards towards the light.

The plant was also very interesting for me in understanding Feldenkrais's texts on the nervous system as the nucleus of the body/cosmos unit. He talks about the relation between one's world and the force of gravity, the Earth's orbit. He talks about this relation to hormones – to women's menstruation. He says something like, 'Consider this for a woman every twenty-eight rotations of the Earth provokes menstruation.' When reading about the trees I learned that what determines the direction of the moment and the force is a hormone, so the driving force behind the movement – up – the light-oriented growth, is the plant hormone auxin. This was for me so exciting, to draw all these different relations. It helped me to bring different material into the lesson. I projected all this onto the wood, the raw wood, the material of Zakine's sculpture, what you felt was probably my sensation and thought around the plant that

I put through Zadkine. It was my favourite lesson, because while preparing it, I learned so much about plants.

MA: I agree with Megan. I wish I would have seen the exhibition afterwards. I was more struck or driven by the experience, this strange experience within the familiar, a bit like in a fantastic story where the strange appears within what is known. The strange or it could even be fear. I don't know. It was of course a mental trip. There were these conceptual works on paper, black and white mostly, I can't remember whose work was what. When I take the classes with you online, it is a kind of a dark trip, in the dark I mean. The image that I had in the museum was similar, an image of going into a dark room – completely dark – and the eyes slowly adjusting to that darkness and starting to see different things. I didn't get a particular revelation in relation to the works. In a way, this bizarre experience within the familiar, of being inside the museum, with people I didn't know, doing kind of similar movements, almost felt like a frieze in my mind that was above the works themselves.

NA: I have such a vivid memory of a series of classes we did when we were experimenting with how this would work in the old building – one of them was with Bruce Nauman and Stanley Brown. I have a clear recollection of Yael talking



about the imprint of the Nauman, the black imprint of the paper, and feeling that sense of imprint with my body on the floor. It was a strange identification with a black square on a piece of paper! One of the things that I was always pushing rhetorically within the context of the show was about how the exhibition, or the project, allowed us to encounter artworks through the body, not through the eye or the mind. This was a refrain that kept coming back. But listening to you, it is also what the artwork does, or simply the presence of the artwork, that allows us to understand body and movement. It is not a way of accessing the artwork, but the other way around: the artwork becomes a way to access the body.

YD: In your lesson Mercedes I felt I was not so good as a teacher. I did that lesson once so well, and I felt it, it's like magic. It's a performance for me that you feel in the body. This was a struggle with Nick all the time. He encouraged me and kept saying, 'you should talk more, you should not be shy'. But I *am* a bit shy in the end. That is why I choose this practice where you all have closed eyes of course! Every time I have to talk about the work, I feel terrified, because, who am I? For me, it's easier to work with people. To talk about the art is really a struggle. Most of the combinations worked for me very naturally, that is also how I did the show with Nick. I feel

it in my body, the relation between the works. A lot of time it's about gravity, weight and lightness. It's a very physical experience.

Creating the charts for each lesson was sometimes very difficult. For example, with works by Carolee Schneemann, Joan Jonas and Patricia Kaersenhout, because I thought I have to honour these works and not reduce them to categories, like feminism or historical moments. But with Jonas, Schneemann and Kaersenhout it was a hell of a chart. I did it two times. That's the only place I couldn't work easily, because it didn't come from an authentic sensation in me towards the work, it was really feeling a responsibility as an artist as to how to present this work.

NA: During one of the experiments that we did early on in the project when we had the El Lissitzky study day we were really struck by the inhospitable nature of the museum: the incredibly hard floor, the climate control, the lighting. It's a very inhospitable place for bodies. In the exhibition, a lot of thought went into making the space more hospitable. Could you talk a little bit about the sensations of being on that carpet, being in that room, the light, the scent?

MH: Mercedes you talked about how it made the familiar space unfamiliar. I liked this sort of fantastical experience. Most often I find museum



**'Living contours – inward and outward. Stomach and chest first (AY 35).
With works by Joan Jonas, Patricia Kaersenhout & Carolee Schneemann', 11 September 2020.
Yael Davids: A Daily Practice, Van Abbemuseum. Photo: Marcel de Buck.**



spaces, even the ones I know quite well, unfamiliar, because they do tend to be inhospitable. The class reversed that. It made it feel familiar because I'm in it with my body, instead of being a disembodied spectator, which is how I often experience the museum. Even when I'm in installations that are supposed to make me feel my body I don't know that I actually do, or maybe I'm not doing it right!

I was not on the yellow carpet, there were a few extra people for social distancing, and I wanted to stay in the corner. I wanted to leave it for people that didn't know the class and for them to feel a bit more in the centre and the warmth of that yellow rug. I was curious how we were going to occupy it when I passed through it as a visitor. Because the black textile cuts through the gallery, so I was curious how that was going to shift, and then I immediately understood. When I closed my eyes I immediately went into my Feldenkrais practice. I wasn't thinking about myself occupying the museum or that I was in the installation. It was more like the museum becomes part of a practice that is part of my life practice. It became more about it becoming familiar, instead of maintaining an unfamiliarity, even though I spend quite a bit of time in museums.

I came to the performance through my own body. That's how I came to even start working as a curator. It is actually in reverse that my own life helped me get into an artistic practice. That's the same way that the class worked for me and the museum. The museum helps me understand I move in the other direction, which has been quite special because I don't have another somatic practice. For the Feldenkrais to feel comfortable or safe in a way to do that, and then the museum to be brought along with it, was fun.

YD: The intention was not that you are part of the installation. I'm very old school in that way; when it's class, it's class, when it's exhibition, it's exhibition. I'm very strict about it. I want a good lesson and a good exhibition. I want it, it doesn't mean that it works.

MA: I also didn't feel part of an installation, because when I was looking at the exhibition, I saw everything taking place before the class. It was clear that they were moving things, making space, placing the mats. It was not like a sacred moment of things shifting or people stepping in, it was not theatrical at all. It felt very real. We were switching and changing the page. I had very similar impressions. And then of course, the museum does feel familiar to me, because I've been there; but the space in itself, there is not much comfort. The floor is cold, the walls are very high, you have all these distractions around you.



Also, when doing the Feldenkrais inside the museum, even though it feels familiar, everything felt very strange to me. I never knew if I was doing the right thing, so I was hesitating all the time. Am I following the exercise properly? And that hesitation was also very relevant, because usually I perform when I enter a museum in a different way. Because I'm an artist, I know how to move, how to walk through the rooms, how to mingle, how close to get to a work, how to perform against a work; but now I was with my eyes closed and hesitating a lot, stumbling a lot. All that felt kind of bizarre and meaningful.

MH: The room, the repository room, with all of the works that were being used in the classes really struck me, seeing the collection in this way. When I read that in the wall didactic 'to think the relation to the works through movement' instead of thematically or chronologically, it stuck with me why certain works were there, and why certain works from the collection were paired.

There are other small moments I could feel the daily practice nature within your installation, in your pieces Yael. It was interesting to re-enter familiar works, like Warhol's wonderful black and white *Jill and Freddy Dancing* (1963), where we see the writer and critic Jill Johnston dancing on the roof of a Manhattan building with choreographer Fredy Herko. Accessing the Judson

school, not from my chronology that I know so well, as a dutiful art history person, but to re-enter it from another direction. The sculptural installation of the Noa Eshkol cabinet in the second room, where you had created this beautifully delicate wooden and glass casing for documents and images from the Eshkol archive with the translation of texts – it was breath-taking to me. To enter back into Feldenkrais's language and then to see the works I think was really meaningful.

YD: It's nice you mention the Jill Johnston piece. We saw the work in New York, Nick and me. People who know the history of Judson will know Johnston's writing. For me it was important who she was as a person and a writer, how she makes sentences in the books, her syntax of movement and writing. This was a decision. We had all these names that you have to honour as my background in performance and that don't feel like the right thing for the show.

MH: I also felt the relation to language in the exhibition. I mean Johnston was a writer, she performed but her writing is still so central for me even now. But in that, the Noa Eshkol cabinet, there was another relation to language through the translation of Feldenkrais.



'The detail as a whole – background and foreground. Work with the active (dominant) hand (AY 124).
With works by Manon De Boer, Edgar Fernhout & Charley Toorop, 4 September 2020.
Yael Davids: A Daily Practice, Van Abbemuseum. Photo: Marcel de Buck.



MA: One of the features when I see your works is that they are always very elegant. And at the Van Abbe, this elegance was at its maximum potential, with the fabric, the glass, the cabinet, everything was so exquisitely installed and that was beautiful to see. And when the school started and things were being dismantled in the main room, you were a bit nervous at the beginning and I couldn't hear well or maybe it was the accent. That elegance, that pristine perfection that I always had when encountering your work, was blurred.

NA: The illusion was shattered.

MA: Yeah the illusion was shattered. But I think that was another leap that you made, you de-articulated that attribute that, for me, is a central part of your work, this elegance. You managed to break that. You broke that spell and then the class started, and then we entered into this personal trip that was special. I look up to that as an artist, to create this formal excellence and to be able to break it.

YD: My performance work is never really elegant, compared to my sculptural work. There is a clumsiness, but the insecurity as a teacher is more than that of a performer. I want to be a teacher and a good one and not necessarily to lose that human aspect. But there is still a lot of

doubt for me about the practice. Sometimes I think Feldenkrais just as Feldenkrais is enough. Why do we have to make the leap to the collection?

MA: To me the artworks functioned as an excuse for the experience. The class really desacralised them. We were working with the spine, moving like worms on the floor so the works really moved to the background. They stayed behind the scenes. The experience was stronger than that.

YD: At the same time at the Van Abbe and in Zurich I realised that the connection with the collection is not necessarily simply through the lesson. It is also the process around choosing and displaying the work, understanding what is necessary to engage with the collection in a certain way. It is a whole structural reorganisation of a system that is so unused to it, to this flexibility, of taking a work, removing a work.

MH: It is an extension of the class – understanding the museum's relation to the collection, the moving of the sculptures, even moving any work once it's been installed and reinstalling it. It's also the museum learning about its own movements.

For me the lessons are about developing a relationship to your voice, to your way of speaking and your way of speaking to the body. Sometimes



I just think, ‘wait didn’t you just say left, and did you mean right? Is it the position of noon or nine?’ This is the moment where artistic and somatic practice meet. Because this is a process of me getting to know you and the way that you use language to walk me through my body. It is about getting to know the way the bodies carry their language in them. Over the months I have developed a trust. As an example, you might say that you will feel the left side of your pelvis lifting up, and then in my head I think, ‘oh my god you’re right that is exactly what I feel.’ So even if it becomes blurred or confused there are always moments that bring it back to where I trust where your voice is taking me, even if the language isn’t always as elegant, to come back to that word, as we might imagine.

MA: The class and the experience is almost like a mind trip. It’s a fantastic story about entering the body. You encounter yourself as a double, as if perceiving something almost for the first time. It is a very intimate experience.

Mercedes Azpilicueta's *The Captive: Here's a Heart for Every Fate*



In 2019 artist Mercedes Azpilicueta presented a new body of work at the Van Abbemuseum as part of the exhibition *Positions 5: Telling Untold Stories*. Set across two galleries, the exhibition combined two large tapestries, a series of costumes, three animated videos and a sound work. On the last weekend Azpilicueta performed in the galleries with her collaborator Setareh Fatehi Irani.

Azpilicueta's starting point for the exhibition was the Argentinian Eduarda Mansilla (1834–92) who wrote at a time when work by women was increasingly being published, though often under male pseudonyms. In 1860 Mansilla wrote a version of the story of Lucía Miranda – part of South America's colonial foundation myth – who was the first *cautiva*, a European woman captured by indigenous people on her arrival in Argentina in the sixteenth century. Mansilla's version portrays both the indigenous protagonists and Miranda as strong and empowered. Azpilicueta's large tapestry *Lady's Dreams or Stop Right There Gentlemen!* (2019), elements of which appear in the following pages, show scans of prints that display Buenos Aires, sourced from the Argentinian visual art archive Fundación Espigas. Dresses, corsets and headwear hover over the city with women confidently populating both the surface of the tapestry and the depiction of nineteenth-century Buenos Aires. Male figures watch on from the lower section of the



tapestry as women and their garments break through walls and take off into the sky.

Nineteenth-century fashion became the inspiration for a series of costumes and props produced by Azpilicueta with her collaborator Lucile Sauzet. Within the galleries of the Van Abbemuseum these costumes are hung on the wall, or stretched over wooden structures – part human, part animal, part insect. The costumes reappear in Azpilicueta's digital animations, and here as personifications of different characters in Mansilla's novels. Dancing corsets and strutting head pieces sing the verse of poems such as 'The Green Eyed Poet' by Azpilicueta, and reproduced as part of her contribution.

Within the context of *Corpuliteracy*, the editors invited Azpilicueta to revisit this project, compelled by the constellation of readings, interpretations and mobilisations of the body. Perhaps Azpilicueta's performance offered the most fluid entanglement of these relationships. Tracking and responding to each other's movements, the performers initiated a relay of moving and reading bodies that animated the objects and spaces of the exhibition. At the same time the audience was invited to negotiate their own relationship to looking and reading bodies, as Azpilicueta and Fatehi Irani moved around and amongst them, and through the spaces

of the exhibitions. Azpilicueta's costumes, and the historical and contemporary references they speak to, were literally picked up, worn and circled around – never displayed or explicated, but mediated through movement and the act of being worn. At the same time the performers' own bodies offered multiple interfaces: between each other, with the figure of Mansilla and nineteenth-century Argentina, the context of the museum and the watching public.

The following spreads montage different components: close ups from the tapestries, installation photographs from the exhibition, documentation of the performance, stills from the animation and a song sheet. Vanina Scolavino's graphic treatment offers a new entry point to Azpilicueta's formal and referential choices, overlaying and offsetting the entangled relationship between representing, reading and mobilising bodies across time.

The Captive:
Here's a Heart for Every Fate
Mercedes Azpilicueta





LA MODA DEL CORRIENTE DE ELFRANCO

En la moda del corriente de El Franco, se nota una gran influencia de la moda de París, en lo que respecta a los vestidos, y a la vez una gran influencia de la moda de Londres, en lo que respecta a los sombreros y a los accesorios. La moda de París se caracteriza por ser elegante y refinada, y la moda de Londres por ser más práctica y sencilla. En la moda del corriente de El Franco, se combinan estas dos tendencias, dando lugar a una moda que es a la vez elegante y práctica.

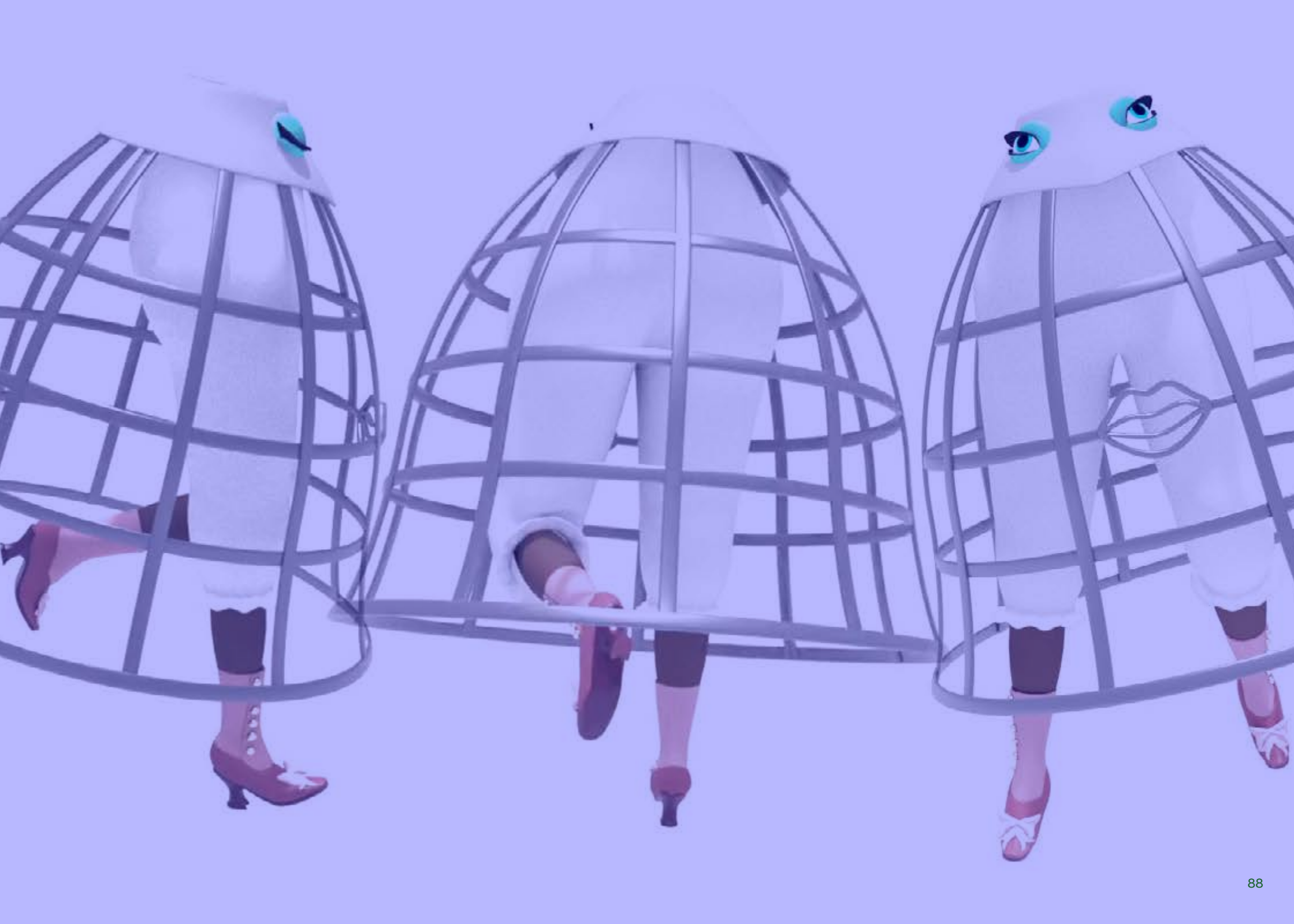




Trages y costumbres de Buenos Aires. N°5







The Green-Eyed Poet

Lyrics by: Mercedes Azpilicueta


Music by: Mercedes Azpilicueta

Soprano



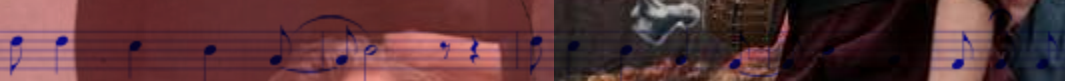
from all my dreams and fears ———— this is the one I'm proud of the most

S



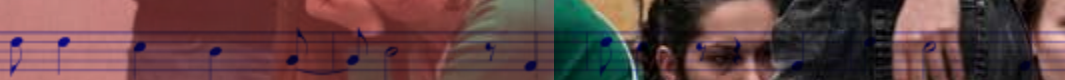
drag-ging my house drag-ging my bo-dy drag-ging part of you drag-ging part of me ———— from

S




all my dreams and fears ———— this is the one I'm proud of the most it's

S



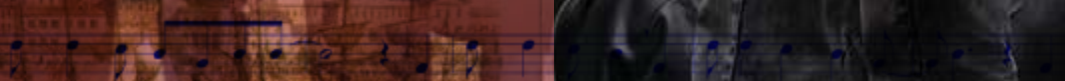
eigh-teen se-ven-ty-nine and I leave ———— and I leave

S




I leave my hus-band and I leave ———— five of my chil-dren ———— behind I

S




move back to Bue nos Ai-res ———— I move back to where I run a way with my

S



run a way to write e-very-thing speaks ———— to me ———— comes from

S



all my dreams and fears ———— this is the one I'm proud of the most



The Captive: Here's a Heart for Every Fate, 2019
Jacquard textiles, costumes, props,
video-animations, sound piece, performance

Concept: Mercedes Azpilicueta

Research: Verónica Rossi

Tapestries: Mercedes Azpilicueta with
TextielLab, Tilburg

Costumes and props: Mercedes Azpilicueta
with Lucile Sauzet and Guillermina Baiguera

Video-animations: Mercedes Azpilicueta with
Azul De Monte

Music: Liza Casullo

Sound editing: Tiago Worm Tirone

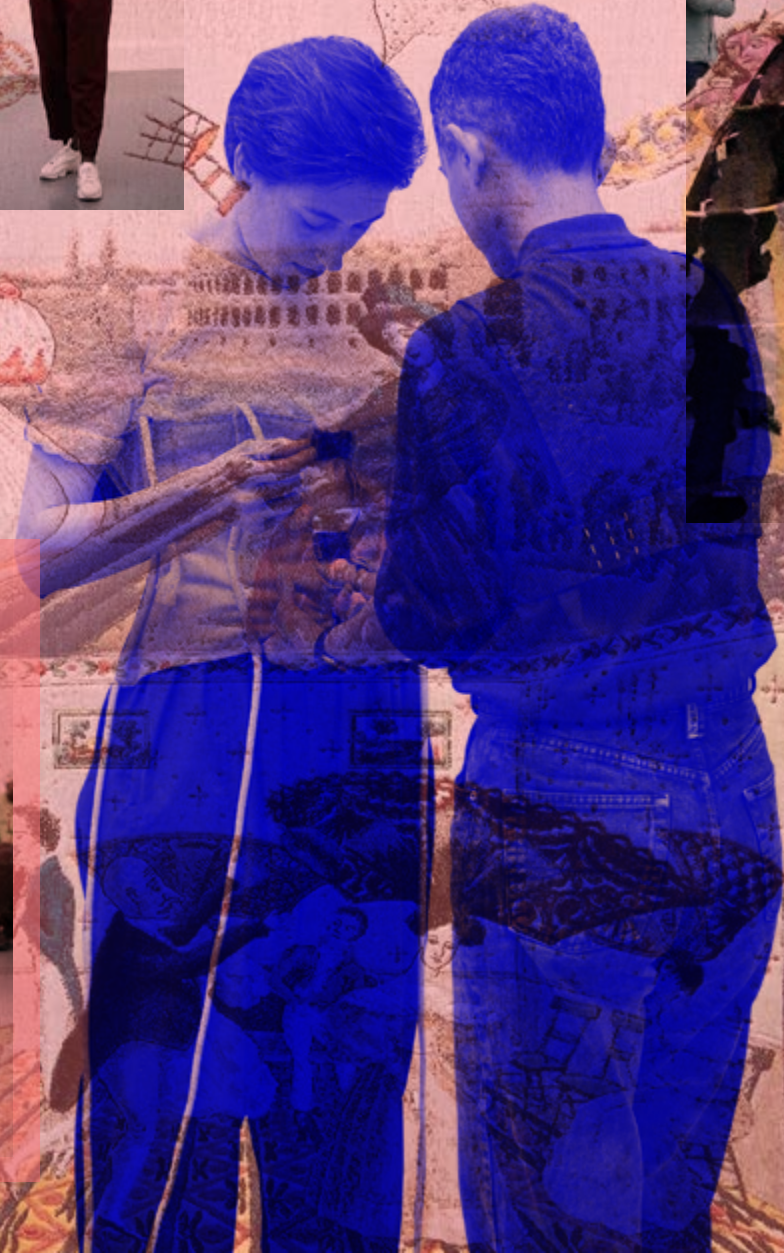
Production assistance: Laura Fernández Antolín,
Angeliki Tzortzakaki,
Nina van Hartskamp

The Captive: Here's a Heart for Every Fate was
commissioned by the Van Abbemuseum, as part
of *Positions: Telling Untold Stories*, curated by
Nick Aikens.

30 November, 2019 – 8 March, 2020.

Design for *Corpoliteracy*: Vanina Scolavino

Trages y costumbres de Buenos Aires. N.º 2



That, Around Which the Universe Revolves: On the Rhythms of Memory, Times, Bodies and Urban Space¹



ACT I: BEING RHYTHMATICAL

Rhythmanalysis gave us the tools to try to read the history of a people, its collective memory and understanding of what a society has inherited from its ancestors, how it cultivates or cares for what is inherited, and how all of the above manifests in space.

From Lagos to Düsseldorf, to Harare, to Hamburg and lastly to Berlin, we set out to engage with urban settings as places to create knowledge from, not about – taking their animate and inanimate dwellers as sites of epistemologies.

IN NAVIGATING THROUGH THESE SPACES AND TIMES

We engaged with secret rhythms – that is to say physiological and psychological rhythms – that facilitate recollection and memory, be it in an oral, written, embodied or otherwise form, wholly encompassing the said and unsaid.

We explored the terrain of the secret, tried to tickle out lost or suppressed memories, which could be expressed performatively, photographically or sculpturally, trying to make this context of inaccessible movements and temporalities somehow accessible, but not necessarily transparent or blank.



- 1 This text was written for the project *Every Time A Ear di Soun*, a radio programme initiated in the frame of documenta 14. The title of the project is pulled from Mutabaruka's 1981 single of the same name. The conceptual point of departure for the project was the thesis that, especially in 'oral cultures', history is carried by the physicality of the sonorous and transmitted to the body. The project looked at various waves of Africans, and their auditory phenomena, as they moved into the diaspora. In particular, the project reflected on sonic genres such as Afrobeat, Benga, bikutsi, isicathamiya, Soukous in Africa, Gnawa, Liwa or Mizmar in North Africa and the Middle East, jazz, rhythm and blues or hip-hop in the US and Europe, Shango, kadans, zouk, rumba, meringue, reggae or calypso in the Caribbean. The project also encompassed 'bodily music' such as sound poetry, beatboxing, gumboot dance, tap dancing and even belly clapping.
- 2 Babatunde Olatunji, *The Beat of My Drum: An Autobiography*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005.
- 3 Sterling A. Brown, *A Son's Return: Selected Essays*, Boston: North-eastern University Press, 1996, 13.
- 4 Kei Miller, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*, Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2014, 19.

We engaged with public rhythms – that is to say social rhythmic phenomena like festivals, but also traffic congestions, city noise and more.

We engaged with fictional rhythms – verbal and gestural constructions, and cultivation of myth.

We engaged with dominating/dominated rhythms – that is to say we were interested in the power gradients manifested in spaces.

How did cartography, mapping, architecture become tools of power, and particularly how are the remnants and ruins of the colonial enterprise still exercising power and framing societies today?

We began with Lefebvre, but soon after we were thinking of drummer Babatunde Olatunji who once said, 'Where I come from we say that rhythm is the soul of life, because the whole universe revolves around rhythm, and when we get out of rhythm, that's when we get into trouble.'²

Then we were invoking Sterling Allen Brown who, like Louis Armstrong, talks about being 'rhythmical': 'I have a marvellous sense of rhythm not because I am a Negro but because I am rhythmical Or, as Louis Armstrong says, "rhythmical".'³

Thinking about the rhythm of time-spaces and bodies in spaces, we called upon Kei Miller's *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*, wherein the Rastafarian debates with the cartographer on the importance of mapping spaces:

The rastaman thinks, draw me a map of what you see then
I will draw a map of what you never see and guess me
whose map will be bigger than whose?
Guess me whose map will tell the larger truth?⁴

It is this larger truth that is not so obviously seen in spaces that was most interesting to our research. So how does one think of the rhythm of space if one is of a particular race, or gender, or class?

What does breathing mean today or what is the rhythm of breathing in the age of Eric Garner? It's not a matter of arrhythmia. He said, 'I can't breathe!' In the last months and years we have been experiencing a massive shift towards right-wing fascist politics all over the world. Some people have said we are living in dark times. What is this fascination about light and darkness with the latter being the negative? What about us, who, as Ralph Ellison put it, have been condemned to invisibility? What if that invisibility, or as you might call it 'darkness', is the space we have



sought comfort in? That space in which you can't see us, but we can see you and most importantly we can see us, as in each other? No, we are not in an era of darkness, but of light. That is to say, a shift to the radical Right is a state of over- or hyper-illumination. That is to say, a state where some of us are made hyper-visible and thus subjects, or prey to a system that puts a spotlight on us. So what is the rhythm with which we can navigate spaces in these times?

One recent morning, I was riding the bike with my son as a white guy stopped us and sprayed tear gas directly into my face. The question is: How do we teach our sons and daughters the art of analysing the rhythm of hate, xenophobia, racism, fascism? How do we teach them the rhythm of defence, both physically and spiritually?

What is the rhythm of the black body? Not as in dance or groove – as you would like to reduce it to – but as in what it costs. Rhythm as value. Body as resource. I heard someone ask once at a demonstration concerning the horrors of modern day slavery within the recent economy of migration, 'How can an iPhone cost more than a human being?' That is the groove, the rhythm of an age where humans have been re-devalued once more to mere goods.

So, what then is the rhythm in spaces where men of all races and classes have become predators and women their prey, as we see with the rampancy of sexual harassment and more?

How do women navigate such spaces and times?
How do we navigate the world in such an age?

I would like to end this act with a quote from my friend and colleague Kamila Metwaly. She posted the following on Facebook:

For years I have been harassed by men, intimidated by them, touched inappropriately by them, abused, thought of less and needing to constantly protect myself, prove myself and in all that be somehow diplomatic. And I am so tired. It's been only a couple of years now that I started taking more space for myself as a woman on the street, at work, among friends, at home due to the fact that I've surrounded myself with beautiful women and people who helped me out of a depression that I've suppressed for many, many years.



ACT II:
THE QUOTIDIEN IN DELIMITED
SPACE AND TIME

Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm.

– Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, 1992

The French sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs, in his posthumously published essay 'Historical Memory and Collective Memory' (1950), stressed the distinction between collective memory and history. He asserted that history aims at attaining an objective and universal truth cut off from the 'psychology of social groups while every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time'.⁵

This interconnection of a people's or society's memory and a specific space and time was also a driving force behind the works of sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre, renowned *inter alia* for his reflections on the politics of and production of space – representation of space and spaces of representation, as well as spatial practices – and his critique of the 'quotidien'. In his posthumously published *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, Lefebvre puts a spotlight on the concept of rhythm, in his effort

to synthesise a new scientific field of knowledge through rhythmanalysis.

In general terms, Lefebvre recognises rhythms in our everyday life, in our movements through space and our interactions with objects in space, i.e., in every interaction between the biological and the social. In this seminal work, Lefebvre tries to renegotiate the understanding of urban and rural space, things, media, politics, etc., through the concept of rhythm. It is about analysing everydayness, the mundane, the repetitive, the 'interference of linear and cyclical processes', just as much as the cycle of life, and all these supply 'the framework for the analyses of the particular, therefore real and concrete cases that feature in music, history and lives of individuals or groups'.⁶ Might this imply that rhythmanalysis is a possibility to read both the history of a people, its collective memory and understanding what a society has inherited from its ancestors, how it cultivates or cares for what is inherited, and how it bequeaths this inheritance to the next generation? Can the call to watch one's eco- and geo-systems in a natural heritage scheme be understood through the concept of the rhythm-analyst – just like the call for the preservation of both tangible and intangible attributes of any group of people, and their technologies, architecture and industries? In 'The Critique of the Thing', which could and should be

5 Maurice Halbwachs, 'Historical Memory and Collective Memory', in *The Collective Memory*, New York: Harper & Row, 1980, 84.

6 Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 25.



understood as a critique towards physical and non-physical entities, Lefebvre writes about the possibility of ‘crossing the notion of rhythm with those of the secret and public, the external and the internal’.⁷

THINKING WITH THE BODY IN LIVED TEMPORALITY

The rhythmanalyst will have some points in common with the psychoanalyst, [...] He (*sic!*) will be attentive, but not only to the words or pieces of information, the confessions and confidences of a partner or client. He will listen to the world, and above all to what are disdainfully called noises, which are said without meaning, and to murmurs (*rumeurs*), full of meaning – and finally he will listen to silences.⁸

In the chapter ‘The Rhythmanalyst: A Previsionary Portrait’, Lefebvre gives a vivid description of who the rhythmanalyst could be. He portrays an individual who looks at the intrinsic by listening to his/her body and who is open to the extrinsic by appreciating external rhythms, without any ‘methodological obligations’. The corporeal plays a very important role in this concept, as the ‘body serves as a metronome’⁹ ready to perceive rhythms without perturbing them or distorting time. The body, according to Lefebvre, is a collection of rhythms with different tunes

that result from history, facilitated by the calling on all senses, drawing on breathing and blood circulation, just as much as heart beats and speech utterances are landmarks of this experience. These embodied histories, in the form of rhythm, enable the rhythmanalyst to ‘hear the wind, the rain, storms; but if he considers a stone, a wall, a trunk, he understands their slowness, their interminable rhythm.’¹⁰

ARTISTIC PRACTICES AND NEW URBAN EPISTEMOLOGIES

In the hands of artistic practices within the rhythm-analysis framework, new and surprising knowledge about the urban quotidian can be produced. Everyday urban activities become an investigation into silenced histories and epistemologies, or a protest against demarcations and exclusions that shape urban spaces.

The complex circulations and mobility of bodies, things, information and sounds within the entities of cities, as well as between them, challenge the conception of ‘situated knowledge’ as a series of simple and direct relations between places, subjects and epistemologies.

7 *Ibid.*, 27.

8 *Ibid.*, 29.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*, 30.



**ACT III:
RHYTHMOGRAPHIES, OR HOW TO NAVIGATE
THE KWATS, MAPANGS AND SISONGHOS**

It must have been eight hours. Or maybe six or ten hours. Travelling from one African city to another is a matter of elasticity. Time is elastic. Geography is elastic. The physicality of space is particularly elastic.

So we left Yaoundé approximately six, eight or ten hours ago. Ironically, though we were leaving Yaoundé, we had the sound of André Marie Tala's 1977 hit 'Je vais à Yaoundé' (I am going to Yaoundé) blasting out of the car. That too is the epitome of rhythmography, but what is more interesting here is the embodiment of opposites. Leaving Yaoundé and playing 'Je vais à Yaoundé' is like saying 'On est ensemble' (We are together), when one says goodbye in Cameroon. It is the celebration of a coming and being together upon separation. So leaving Yaoundé one needed to hear:

Où vas-tu, paysan, avec ton boubou neuf
Ton chapeau bariolé, tes souliers éculés
Où vas-tu, paysan, loin de ton beau village
Où tu vivais en paix, près de tes caféiers
Je vais à Yaoundé, Yaoundé la capitale
Je vais à Yaoundé, Yaoundé la capitale
Où vas-tu, étudiant, tout de neuf habillé

Ton blazer à la mode, ton pantalon plissé
Où vas-tu, étudiant, le regard conquérant
Délaissant ton pays, ton beau bamiléké
[Refrain]

Je vais à Yaoundé, Yaoundé la capitale
Je vais à Yaoundé, Yaoundé la capitale
Par la Mifi et le Ndé, de Badjoun à Bafia
Je vais chercher là-bas, une vie meilleure.¹¹

But six, eight or ten hours later we were about to descend the station hill into Bamenda. As we left Ngola and drove through Obala, Monatele, Ombessa, Bafia, Ndikinimeki, Makenene, Tonga, Bagangte, Bandjoun, Bafoussam, Mbouda, Babadjou, Santa and finally into Bamenda, the rhythms ranged from bikutsi to manganbeu to mbaghalum to Afrofunk, Afrobeat and Afro-hip-hop. Each village, city, vegetation, people invoked and embodied the spirits of their lands in their music. But now driving into Bamenda, it was Jovi time.

J'suis Bamenda et puis quoi ? (et p8 koi)
Tu as mon macabo et puis quoi ? (et p8 koi)
Tu ndem Eto'o et puis quoi ? (et p8 koi)
Va chier aux rails et puis quoi ?
(Va chier aux rails et puis quoi)
Va chier aux rails et puis quoi ?
(Va chier aux rails et puis quoi)

¹¹ Jovi, 'Et P8 Koi', *Kamer Lyrics*,
<https://kamerlyrics.net/lyric-562-jovi-et-p-koi>



Va chier aux rails et puis quoi ?
C'est ça qu'on mange ? (C'est ça qu'on mange)
C'est ça qu'on tchop ? (C'est ça qu'on tchop ?)
Va chier aux rails et puis quoi ?
(Va chier aux rails et puis quoi ?)
On vit au kwat et puis quoi ?
(Et puis quoi? Et puis quoi ?)
Je fume le gué et puis quoi ?
(Et puis quoi? Et puis quoi ?)
Tu bock la veste et puis quoi ?
(Et puis quoi? Et puis quoi ?)
J'ai quatre ngas et puis quoi ?
HEIN Perika you no be boss, I beg no make mame
I laugh

You aint money shit,
Between me and you, you be na handicap.
Bang for your ears, (hein) Ma rap don turn be na
slap.
Only bolo all time, man no get time for frap.¹²

The sound of a movement through the words of Jovi. The chants of a people segregated by the powers that be. The reality is that it took six, eight, or ten hours because as soon as one left the Francophone Cameroonian geographical space and got into the Anglophone Cameroonian space, the rhythm changed. The change was a physical change of vibrations caused by the non-road, and the thousands of potholes that the car had to navigate in and out of. Which is to say that

on the tarred roads from Yaoundé to Bafoussam, one comfortably did a three-and-a-half-hour drive. Fifteen years ago, one could do Bafoussam to Bamenda in forty-five minutes to an hour. Today one needs three to seven hours depending on rain or shine. Space in such a context is embodied. Driving on such roads is visceral. One feels the bowels churn. It seems as if the government of the country has neglected that part of the country for so long, and allowed the roads to completely deform, as a means of aiding digestion. With every pothole not only is a mastication process hastened, but also the mechanical process of digestion is stimulated by the rough jumps in and out of pits.

It is the stigmatisation of people from Bamenda as rebels, agitators and anarchists that has led to the nation-wide usage of the term Bamenda, not only as a geographical space, but also a synonym for rebellion and leftism, and even as an insult. That's why Jovi asks the question, 'Je suis Bamenda et puis quoi?' (I am Bamenda and then what?). But if there has been any political change in Cameroon in the past twenty-five years, it is thanks to Bamenda. We may not forget the days of the great Kotto Bass from Douala, who in his Makossa-Soukous crossover 'Yes Bamenda' sang, 'I no fit forget you, dat tam weh a dong cam fo you you dong keep me fine Bamenda eh manyaka. Bamenda eh I no fit forget e you.'

¹² Ibid.



But here we were trying to drive down the Bamenda Station hill, listening to Jovi, and suddenly this voice. This voice with a strong British accent interrupted the song with a 'please turn left'. We looked at each other, looked at the navigation device, and then it insisted 'please turn left now'. Now, the issue of turning left, while driving down a steep hill is not what one wants to do any day. Growing up in Bamenda, I remember being extremely scared in the car, clinging to my parents' seat, as they drove down that hill. Many a time, while on the hill, one would see the carcass of a car, that didn't make the curve on time, or whose brakes failed or for whatever reason, found itself downhill. Since those days, trees have been planted along the very curvy drive down the hill to serve as additional brakes and reduce the deaths upon an accident. This is exactly where, while negotiating our way downwards, the navigation system advised us, or indeed insisted that we take a left, which would mean a plunge of some hundred metres.

I have always been very suspicious of navigation systems. I have always been suspicious of cartographers and geographers. All those who look at land in terms of figures. Those who want to map. To make visible and measurable. Those who see land in terms of resources, in terms of what can be gotten from the land. Those who treat land

as passageway, instead of dwelling place for peoples and spirits. I have always been suspicious of those who tell me to turn left, even though I have to move straight on.

Cartography and mapping, as well-intentioned as they might want to seem, are always in the business of claiming and managing power, in the business of simplification of complex socio-political, economic and political issues, in the business of making invisible and worthless many things important to us the people to whom the land is sacred, and in the business of making visible some of those things that are indeed sacred to us.

I am with Critical Cartographers who, though they do not aim to invalidate maps, make visible the incestuous relationship between political power and geographic knowledge.

There isn't neutrality in maps and mapping, as mapping has always been a tool for dominating groups to have political and economic control over dominated groups. It is thus not only time that is money, mapping, too, is money. Historic as well as recent mapping projects like Google Maps serve as means to project desires onto land, as well as crystallise – often for sheer economic reasons – interests projected onto landscapes by the powers that be. Knowledge



on a piece of land is knowledge about oil, water, coltan, copper, plantations and more resources. Cartography as a discipline serves, amongst others, this purpose, no matter how hidden the agenda may be.

The issue with cartographic and navigation tools, is not just their embeddedness in and flirtations with power, it is also their reliance on the dominance of the sense of sight. While we tend to put much value on what we see, the things in the world that can be seen are actually significantly small in comparison to the things we can hear, feel, smell and sense spiritually. In the situation of driving down the station hill, not only could the GPS navigation system not smell, nor feel, nor hear, it couldn't even see properly. Such is the case that thanks to GPS on our phones, in our cars and on our computers, our sense of direction and ability to navigate spaces have been outsourced to these devices. Downtown in Bamenda, aka Abakwa, where there are hardly any street names and hardly any cardinal coordinates, any GPS is as good as a fish on land. In Abakwa we go out to visit our friends on a time scale more accurate than any clock, which is the position of the sun, or after the rain. Then when we get into the kwat, the mapang or the sisongho, we find our ways by orienting ourselves first and foremost through the smell. We follow the smell of the Achombo houses. That fresh smell of fried puff-puff and cooked beans.

As my friend put it:

When you pass dat first mamy Achombo e house, you go fo ya right. Conner road you go see some electric pole. You mak lek say you wan pass the electric pole, but you no pass am. You look fo ya left. You go see the second mamy Achombo e place. Dat place weh plenty pipo di always stand fo ouside. When you pass mamy Achombo you go see some tap. Dat tap di work na only fo evening time. Dat mean say if you cam fo evening you fit ask any of dat pikin dem wussi wa house dey. If you cam na morning morning time just pass the tap then look pikin go fo ya right until you see dat durty place. Pass dat durty place until you rich for dat store weh e di sell sim card. Wa house just dey na fo back dat store.

This too is rhythmography – the drawing of the rhythm of a space. This rhythm is shaped not only by the mapping of the space in terms of length and width, but the smells of the Achombo house, the rubbish piled by the street side, the smell from latrines, as much as the scents of jollof rice, waterfufu and eru, achu or ndole that happily escape the kitchens of mothers and grandmothers cooking. This rhythm is informed by the people that will interrupt and talk to you kindly or hastily. It is informed by the Okada driver cruising by in what he imagines to be the speed of light, but the rhythm is also marked by the sound of car engines and horns that



constantly create a mechanical soundscape across the city of Abakwa.

To navigate the kwats, the mapangs or the sisonghos of most African cities, one needs to sharpen one's sonic, olfactory and visual bearings beyond the banality of the GPSs of this world.

Maybe this too was what Henri Lefebvre was thinking of in his reconceptualisation of the notion of 'Rhythmanalysis' in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*.

What emerges in the concept of 'Rhythmanalysis' in relation to Rhythmography is thus the point of encounter between the rhythm of the rhythm-analyst and the rhythm of the space they find themselves in. Rhythmography is the connections of the dots that make this relation, and that are informed by smells, spirits, sounds, visuals in the space and its visual and non-visual vicinities, while taking into consideration the animate and inanimate dwellers of the space as sites of epistemologies. In the kwats, the mapangs or the sisonghos, darkness is the norm. Visibility, sensuality, sensibility and smells reign in the darkness.

Choreography of a Collective Imaginary


Choreography of a collective imaginary

By Cráter Invertido

Online and offline bodies, meeting to translate how *corpuliteracy* challenges us in Cráter Invertido Collective from our processes of assembly (dis)organisation, self-publishing practices, exercises of (dis)learning, and the insistence of collective drawing. We seek these tools to find out our own rhythms and arrhythmias that allow us to continue dancing - accompanying us in the creation of horizons, sustaining day-to-day, through the montage as a game. Therefore, this text-image is an allegory of how we draw and organise ourselves.

How to read this collective image?

Choose a colour - follow the path - go back - interrupt - jump from one colour to another - choose another colour and articulate it with other colours.



I feel normativity and precariousness in my belly. A hardened swelling, in the form of colitis. The urgency for money... to make rent, to get food, to fulfil economic agreements with other beings. Playing house in times of war, genocide, violence and State-police terror. A migraine tells me that, also, air pollution is soaring. Trying to catch a proper breath in the city is only a nice wish. We live with smog up to our necks.

I've been to the eye doctor twice because my eyes hurt. First, a man doctor saw me and said I have 'dry eye syndrome', very usual when hours are spent in front of the computer.

What is this that my body remembers but my mind struggles to place?

This void of feeling redundant

Lack of closeness excess bodies

I pull back

Don't touch

Laser beams out of my gaze



There is no separation between mind and body

The body does not follow the mind, nor the other way around.

The connections between eyes, hands, brain and all body parts are infinite and uncountable. Drawing is dancing as it leaves a bodily pathway on gestures. A way of communicating, creating a world in common. It opens the possibility of other worlds.


It's about embodying the possibility of inverting a copy, a threat to the identical, and to boost the imagination in the connection of lines and shapes, blurring the limit between the singular figure and a collective map, blurring the distance between the lines of the image and those of the body.

I wonder, what shapes does my body delineate?

What scriptures does it make when I ride my bike, swim, or do a Muay Thai kick?

What lines do my organs doodle when I eat, when I shit, when I fuck?

I try to think of writing as a manner of drawing; my writing is illegible, mostly.



I write quickly and ridden by anxiety, tracing traces of a body written as illegible, a body that erases, crosses over, rewrites itself.

One has to blink many times during the day to keep the eyes hydrated.

Choreography is, in its etymology, the writing of dance. To write dancing, circulating, navigating. To experience the act of drawing as a choreographic action would involve the entire body and its rhythmic motion set by the flow of the materials to be used: ink, graphite and colour, on one hand; the surface, paper, tables and fabric, on the other. Creating an image with many pairs of hands, sharing, imitating, repeating, creating echoes and resonances.

... and this, who drew this? Hmm.. dunno, maybe J or T.

Maybe it's D's redrawing A or A reinterpreting a drawing from... maybe I drew it myself.

I guess this is one of the main implications of drawing collectively... when you work and share from the political-affective within a collective. To tell where whose trace begins where and someone else's ends is sort of diffused. Individuality is undone, not completely erased, while sketching other bodies. Collective bodies that inhabit and build a common imaginary.

Body, territory in common, made up of diverse organisms.

Collective body, inhabitable, where individuals are places and places are living things. There are sidewalks and volcanoes, over their skins we walk. At the same time, the air we share in the common space filters through all of our lungs. Just as this common breathing, the collective body is composed of everything that goes straight through us that, at the same time, we each transform with our presence and participation. A story made of multiple stories, makings, and collective practices, a common economy. I am interested, rather than how other people read us, to give a careful listen of how we signify ourselves. What codes do we share to read each other? What alphabets are we creating?

The gaze of the other pierces us. Where does this affectation go? Sometimes we do not know. Sometimes it is avoided, sometimes it is incorporated as criticism, we select what resonates for our own questioning/transformation. Many other times it takes us time to digest the *other* and we end up tracing circles to, sooner or later, try to sketch dialogues/diagrams that break with the circular tracing.



Grind it

Grind it

Grind it

to the ground

the fury of a thousand hips respond

other bodies gather around mine

not breathing

exhaustion

hunger thirst

thirst

exhaustion

For drawing sessions we prepare our bodies by doing stretching, breathing and warm-up exercises: hands, arms, hips; switching positions, sometimes standing, sitting, bent over, the choreography of a continuous motion of bodies flowing in synchronised lines on the common draft.

It's interesting that you need a mirror to look at your eyes.

The eyes cannot see themselves on their own.

It's in the interstices where life is.

There still is and will always be an unheard possibility.

We must step our bodies up to the game, so everything can be recreated at once.

Drawing has never been an individual affair. We must reunite with the collective imaginary so that, from there, we can start new traces, but now together, way beyond the figure of the artist as a sole author. Drawing as any other creation, has never been individual. We must reunite with the collective imaginary so that, from there, we can start new traces. The figure of the sole author does not exist.

Most definitely, typing this at the wee hours of the morning will not improve our dry eyes.

Outside, a truck drives by blasting its speakers and, amid the folk music, I can tell it's touting a political candidate.

The bodies of my friends also have colitis and migraines, their knees also hurt and healing is costly. We'd best forget our ailments since there are no monies for the checkup.

The doctor prescribed some droplets, very expensive ones, to keep my eyes hydrated and to make good tears.





The body is also an alphabet. The body can be a letter, as a sign, a clue, or a traffic signal. Within the motion the body needs to leave a print on paper, a collective memory is manifested. But it's also possible to create new imaginaries.

More than a possession or a corporality of the self, the collective imaginary is a complex being, made up of living and morphing scraps. It feeds on experiences, emotions, metaphors, gestures and signs that populate our dreams and nightmares. Focusing on violences we could tell apart different aspects and consequences of the many wars that are lived in Mexico: disappearances, femicides, racist and colonialist school systems, dispossession of lands, precarisation of life, and many others. And from this view, if we made an emphasis on the defence of life, we could also find a vast array of tales of resistance, different ways to procure the dignity of living, and to create alternatives to capitalist normalcy.

What causes me discomfort, crumbles

I make every effort not to fall along with

I allow hate to take over me

Insults float through my mind

A smile in front of my eyes



And so, dry eye syndrome happens when you read or spend time in front of the computer because one stops blinking as usual, so the liquid that shields your eyes, that is your tears, starts to dry.

Create patterns and shapes to get into a world that can suddenly be seen as an endless continuum of lines coming from endless bodies. The world as a giant drawing that we've made to guide our steps, to remember our story, with all its fortunes and misfortunes.

We have and are our imagination, the habit of drawing ourselves to read and reread us. The everyday exercise of taking up the past sketches of who we were and transforming them little by little. We have and are open images, mosaics of figures, families of forms. We draw letters sent to times past and future, to other geographies and multiverses.

To reflect, to smile, to philosophise, to communicate in the doing and in the movement of bodies flowing around the contour of a table or some other substrate.

To repeat a shape proposes an infinite possibility, to generate a world both creatively and by hand, from the technique to the conceptual planning.



This common imaginary, under constant construction, has been one of our tools to tell our collective tale. An autonomous space where the co-construction of images allows us to digest the abundance of tales that piece us together and which we are a part of at different stages: intimate and social.

Every living thing leaves remnants of its existence around itself, in its motion or by its simple permanence in time. We label as culture all those records of our passing as human beings through this world, but before we can see it as such, there is an intermediate step between the full apprehension of language and the possibility of conscious and coherent writing, able to articulate speech.

Maps-routes of articulation.

A trace on paper.

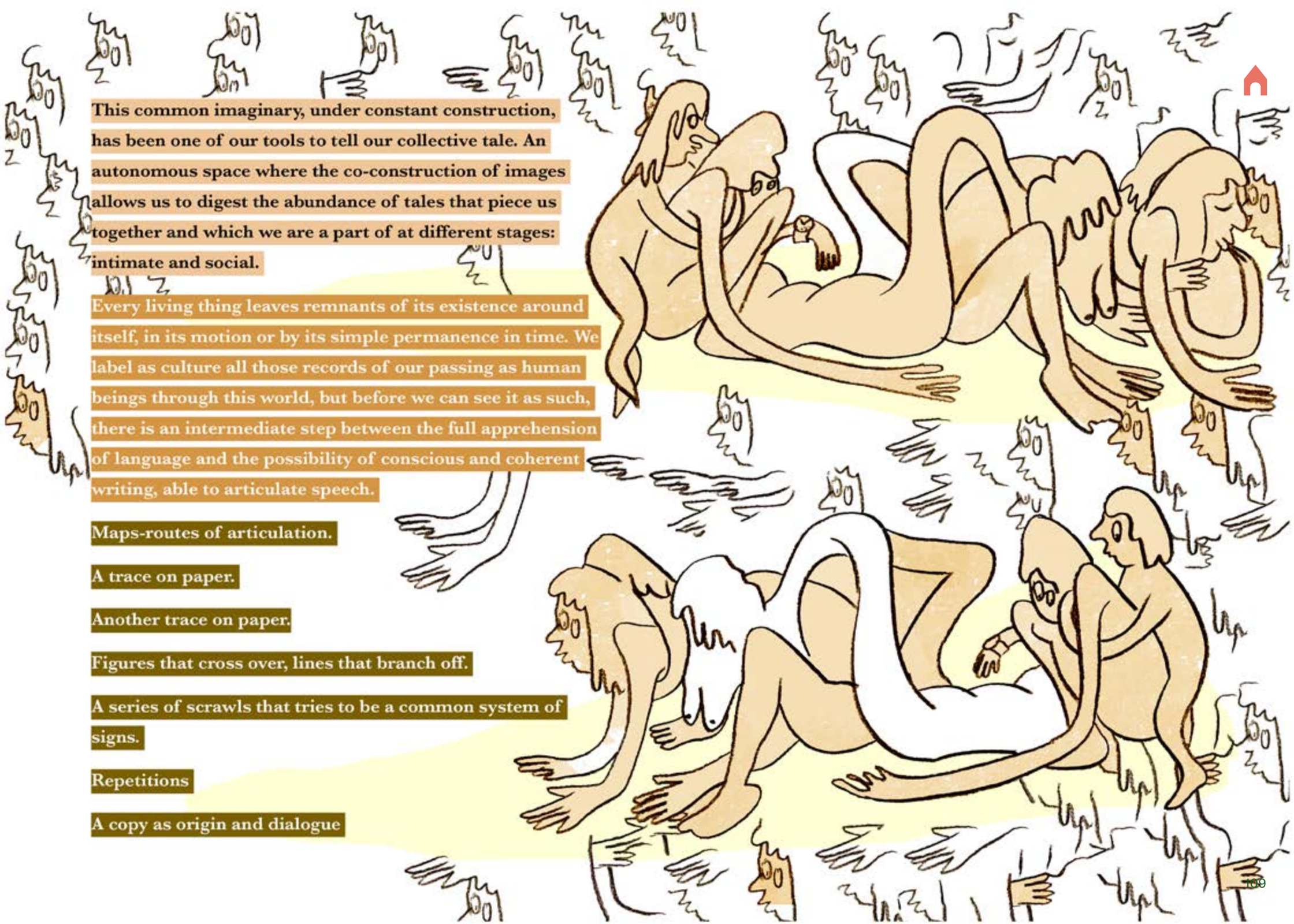
Another trace on paper.

Figures that cross over, lines that branch off.

A series of scrawls that tries to be a common system of signs.

Repetitions

A copy as origin and dialogue



Characters that come out once and again in the narratives
and references of our crew.

Images that crutch on bodies to find a gait.

Scribbling as a performance: to explore, learn and talk in
connection to the sensory.

I abandon myself to gain mobility

Dodging

animal, respond

respond

don't leave me with this head ignited

searching for what to say

fag sarcasm (being myself one)

I shield with colours

and darken my sight

all out of words

I show all of my skin

as a challenge



Drawing, redrawing, pause, back to drawing as an infinite
act of resistance. Resistance in the face of the violence
of being narrated by one single History. We insist
on cultivating the common imaginary to nourish the
possibilities of narrating ourselves in different ways as a
defense of self-determination.

The lady eye doctor explained to me that no matter how
much I cry, my eye will still be dry because my tears
aren't any good. A good tear is made up of an oil element
(fatty bit) a water element (watery bit), and a mucous part
(boogery bit). She also prescribed some ointment thingy for
the little corners of my eyes, they're called 'conjunctiva',
and told me to apply packs of warm seeds before sleepy
time, so that the accumulated fat of my eyelids can move
down. Of course I have done none of that because I always
end up exhausted.

My belly swells and hardens as a contention mechanism.
The image of my swollen guts and an inflamed ovary inside
their container seems cute. The pain isn't as cute, but I
resist. Is this what being on the edge feels like?

all of me

nipples like claws

and a throat in dangerous proximity



We learn language, then writing from a particular socialising, never replicable, never the same as anyone else's. The way in which we start to articulate our first words and our first traces about the world, under the shape of any substratum, is always unique. Our voices as in our writings, the affective processes that make us up are etched within. From there, any notion of literacy brings notice of the body, its affections, feelings, movements, touchings and sexuality.

Any process of literacy carries a process of repression, we know this, but also a process of love, care, and even eroticism.

I curse in French, what we are taught as the language of love.

We don't conceive drawings as conclusions or certainties but as moments of open significance. We draw one thing to say another thing, many others.

I don't know if I can pay for it

Pay to cry

Paying makes me cry.

Crying life away.

many others



Beyond this evident materiality we also have and are our collective memory, with its ups and downs, laughter, tears, sweat, pains, subjectivities and versions.

Building, nurturing and sharing this common imaginary goes way beyond drawing itself. It's been the shelter we go back to, recognising ourselves and keep wondering. It's a space to bond (to bind), throw ourselves off centre and keep on resisting.

For good tears, I'll have to pay for these expensive little droplets for the rest of my life.

But I don't know if I'll be able to pay the rest of my life.



Biographies



NICK AIKENS is research curator at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven since 2012 and a PhD candidate at HDK Valand, University of Gothenburg since 2019. Recent curatorial projects at the Van Abbemuseum related to this epublication include *Yael Davids: A Daily Practice*, 2020 and *Positions 5: Telling Untold Stories*, 2019–20 including the work of Mercedes Azpilicueta and the three-day programme in 2019 *Museum Takeover: Bodies of Knowledge* with *Passing*, a commissioned performance by Joy Mariama Smith.

MERCEDES AZPILICUETA is an artist born in La Plata, Argentina. She was an artist in residence at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam from 2015–16, and received the Pernod Ricard Fellowship in 2017. Solo exhibitions include: *Gasworks*, London, 2021; *CAC Brétigny*, Brétigny-sur-Orge, 2021; *Museion*, Bolzano, 2020; *Van Abbemuseum*, Eindhoven, 2019; *CentroCentro*, Madrid, 2019 and *Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires*, 2018. Her work has been featured at *Villa Vassilieff*, Paris, 2018; *REDCAT*, Los Angeles, 2018; *MACBA*, Barcelona, 2018; *CA2M*, Madrid, 2017; *TENT Rotterdam*, 2015 and *IMMA*, Dublin 2014. Azpilicueta was nominated for the *Prix de Rome* 2021.

PAULINE BOUDRY & RENATE LORENZ have been working together in Berlin since 2007. They produce objects and installations that



choreograph the tension between visibility and opacity. Their films capture performances in front of the camera, upsetting normative historical narratives and conventions of spectatorship, as figures and actions across time are staged, layered and reimagined. The most recent exhibitions have included: *(No) Time*, Frac Bretagne Rennes, 2021; Seoul Mediacity Biennale, 2021; *Moving Backwards*, Swiss Pavilion, 58th Venice Biennale, 2019 and *Ongoing experiments with strangeness*, Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin, 2019.

RENATA CERVETTO (Buenos Aires, 1985) holds a degree in Art History from University of Buenos Aires and was part of the curatorial programme at de Appel Amsterdam (2013–14). From 2015–18 she coordinated the Education Department of the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, and in 2016 with Miguel López edited *Agítese antes de usar. Desplazamientos educativos, sociales y artísticos en América Latina*. From 2019–20, she curated the 11th Berlin Biennial, *The crack begins within* together with Agustín Pérez Rubio, Lisette Lagnado and María Berríos.

COOPERATIVE CRÁTER INVERTIDO is a space of articulations between artistic practices and collective processes to create common imaginaries. They self-manage a multidisciplinary

house-workshop in Mexico City, inhabited by a risographic printing press and an experimental radio (Radio Tropiezo) among other tools for dialogue, encounters and self-publishing. The coop is also nourished by a variety of decentralised processes related to care and defence of territories, biodiversity, shared learning and commonality/ies. Among others, Cráter Invertido has participated in *Conundrum of imagination*, Vienna 2017; Gwangju Biennale, 2016; Sonsbeek '16, the Netherlands, 2016; 56th Venice Biennale, 2015 and Jakarta Biennale, 2015.

Yael Davids lives and works in Amsterdam. She studied Fine Arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam; Sculpture at the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY and Choreography and Dance Pedagogy at the Akademie Remscheid, Germany. From 2017–20 she was the first candidate of the Creator Doctus programme, co-initiated by the Rietveld and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Her practice draws on a sculptural and performative vocabulary, in which the body is understood as a vessel wherein knowledge, memories and habits are archived and enacted on a daily basis. As a trained instructor in the Feldenkrais Method, Davids often employs the method as a device for examining how the forces of psychology and physics influence perception, movement, relationality and self-awareness.



THE DUTCH SIGN CENTRE (NEDERLANDS GEBARENCESTRUM) has been the independent national centre of expertise for Dutch Sign Language (Nederlandse Gebarentaal – NGT) since 1996 and has been recognised by the Dutch Department of Education, Culture and Science as the Lexicographic Institute for NGT since 2004. The mission of NGC is to maintain and promote NGT through mapping, documenting and sharing the lexicon of NGT. The IGT&D is the leading academic institute for NGT that mainly educates teachers and interpreters in NGT. The Queer Sign Glossary is a collaboration between the queer deaf communities, the Nederlands Gebarencentrum, Instituut Gebaren, Taal & Dovenstudies at University of Applied Sciences Utrecht and the Van Abbemuseum.

JESSICA GOGAN is a researcher, educator, and curator and director of Rio de Janeiro-based Instituto MESA. In addition to *Domingos da Criação: Um coleção poética do experimental em arte e education* (2017) published in collaboration with Frederico Morais, she is coordinating editor of the institute's bilingual online magazine *Revista MESA*. She completed her PhD in art history in 2016 and is currently collaborating professor at the Postgraduate Program in Contemporary Studies of the Arts at Federal Fluminense University.

GRUPO DE LOS DOMINGOS (Sundays' Group) is a collective initiative named after the dynamic series of participatory happenings 'Domingos da Criação' (Sundays of Creation), organised by Brazilian critic and curator Frederico Morais in 1971 at the Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, at the height of the country's military dictatorship (1964–85). Drawn together by a common interest in collaborative investigation and learning, the group's focus is to study and collectively translate critical texts by Morais (1968–72), exploring the radical legacy of the events he organised, and reflect on synchronicities and contemporary resonances. Established in September 2020, the initiative comprises seven artists, researchers, educators and curators from different Latin American countries, contexts and organisations: Ignacia Biskupovic, Renata Cervetto, Jessica Gogan, Mónica Hoff, Lola Malvasi, Nicolás Pradilla and Mariela Richmond. Original texts and Spanish translations with accompanying critical/poetic reflections are published in Autumn 2021.

MEGAN HOETGER is a historian and hard femme. She holds a PhD in Performance Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. Currently, Hoetger is a curator with the Amsterdam-based arts organisation If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution, and she is a 2021–22 fellow with the BAK Fellowship for Situated Practice, Utrecht. Her archival and curatorial



practice maps the political economies in which underground performance and media networks were formed transnationally through the Cold War period and into the era of the European Union.

MIRJAM LINSCHOOTEN is a visual artist, researcher and graphic designer living and working in Amsterdam. She completed an MA at the Dutch Art Institute, Arnhem, the Netherlands and a BFA at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam. Her multidisciplinary practice is concerned with how cultural heritage institutions represent history, exploring tactics of representation and the way memory is constructed, forms of collecting and aesthetics of display. Her work includes installation, film, publications and performance. Her work has been exhibited at institutions nationally and internationally, including: Stroom Den Haag; Cemeti, Yogyakarta; de Appel, Amsterdam; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Het Wilde Weten, Rotterdam; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Vicki Myhren Gallery, Denver; Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver; Trankat, Tetouan, Morocco; artellewa, Cairo and Sanat Limani, Istanbul.

OLLE LUNDIN is a curator, cultural producer and designer. His work involves becoming embedded within educational and institutional frameworks, devoting time and attention to methods for social change in regards to meaningful participation in public space and cultural institutions. Lundin

worked at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven as coordinator of the Queering the Collection initiative from 2016–19 and as Constituent Curator through 2020. He is currently programme manager of Design and Architecture at Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam.

FREDERICO MORAIS's career spans six decades of over 70 exhibitions and art events in Brazil and abroad and over 40 books on Brazilian and Latin American art, during which he pioneered the site-specific project *Do Corpo à Terra* in 1970, introduced new forms of criticism and made audio-visual works. As course coordinator at Museum of Modern Art (MAM), Rio de Janeiro, he promoted the museum as a laboratory, culminating in the participatory happenings known as Domingos de Criação, held in 1971 at the height of the country's military dictatorship. Morais was art critic for the Rio de Janeiro-based newspapers *Diário de Notícias* (1966–73) and *O Globo* (1975–87) and contributed to numerous magazines and periodicals. He also played a key role in bringing the artist Arthur Bispo do Rosário, who was interred in a psychiatric hospital, to public attention, and was a curator for the 1st Mercosul Biennial of Contemporary Art (1997), Porto Alegre, Brazil.

DANIEL NEUGEBAUER was educated as a literary scholar and is interested in the interfaces of communication and educational work. Trained



at the Kunsthalle Bielefeld, from 2012–18 he headed up the division of marketing, mediation and fundraising at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. In 2016/2017 he coordinated marketing for documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens. In recent years, inclusion and queering have been the focus of his institutional practice.

MARIELA RICHMOND is a visual artist and educator. She holds an Academic Master in Performing Arts. She forms part of the collective La Ruidosa Oficina, of the Fundación Memoria de las Artes Escénicas, and the Red de Pedagogías Empáticas (Empathetic Pedagogies Network). Her daily life is divided among artistic practice, education and research.

JOY MARIAMA SMITH is an installation and movement artist, activist, educator and architectural designer. They* studied at the Dutch Art Institute, Arnhem, the Netherlands; the New School of Architecture & Design, San Diego and L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, Paris and Oberlin College, Ohio. Their work has been performed internationally, including at If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part of Your Revolution, Edition VI – Event and Duration, Amsterdam; SoLow Fest, Philadelphia; Freedom of Movement, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Ponderosa Movement & Discovery, Stolzenhagen, Germany. Currently, they teach at the School for

New Dance Development (SNDO) in Amsterdam and was a BAK fellow from 2019–20.

*They/them/their: third person singular gender-neutral pronoun. (Eng) [hen/hun in Dutch].

Dr BONAVENTURE SOH BEJENG NDIKUNG is an independent curator, author and bio-technologist. He is founder and artistic director of SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin. He was curator-at-large for documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel, and guest curator of the 2018 Dak'Art Biennale in Senegal. Together with the Miracle Workers Collective, he curated the Finland Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale, 2019. He is currently guest professor in curatorial studies and sound art at the Städelschule, Frankfurt; artistic director of the 12th Rencontres de Bamako, a biennale for African photography, 2019; as well as artistic director of sonsbeek 2020–24, a quadrennial contemporary art exhibition in Arnhem, the Netherlands.

YOLANDE ZOLA ZOLI VAN DER HEIDE is exhibitions curator at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Previously she was deputy director at Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons, where she began as an intern in 2008. Her interests lie in intersecting perspectives and modes that decentre the oppressor in practices of freedom and liberation, to influence art institutional practices.

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I Think My Body Feels, I Feel My Body Thinks: On Corpoliteracy

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