Although the project fits squarely into its visual art context and a particularly relevant way to begin thinking about performance in the context of Münster, whose next iteration intends to take into account this medium as a key development in contemporary art, along with the impact of digital technology and the privatization of public space. This essay will attempt to weave these themes together by looking at what happens when}

Claire Bishop

Black Box, White Cube, Public Space

Sculpture and Loop

This past June, I went to Central Park looking for David Levine’s Private Moment (2015), a collection of eight live performances that re-inserted classic movie scenes, shot in Central Park, back into their original locations: actors dressed in the appropriate costumes reperformed scenes from eight movies made between the late 1940s and the early 2000s. Although the project fits squarely within well-established trends of re-enactment and remediation, as well as invisible theatre – the eight performances were only loosely indicated on a map, so that only a handful of passers-by were aware that they were seeing a work of art – what I want to draw attention to in Private Moment is its temporal structure: the scenes, which varied from three to five minutes in length, were continually looped for six hours a day, two days a week, from mid-May to mid-June. Where possible, Levine used the site to create a physical support for the dramatic loop: for example, at the end of a scene, the characters would stroll around a rock, cross a lawn, or walk around a tunnel, in order to resume the script on arriving back in their original position.

Private Moment is increasingly typical of performance in the public sphere in that it comprises a hybrid of sculpture (a continual, fixed presence in space and time) and video (the continual loop of repeat playback). This hybrid has become necessary in order for performance to sustain itself over the course of the new temporality of performance art as it accommodates itself to exhibition-time. Because the scenes in Private Moment were all fairly short, it was tempting to watch several loops, during which time the work’s character started to change. At first the piece seemed to concern temporal displacement (the diegetic time of the film, the time of its filming and release, the time today), as well as medial displacement (a performance reformatted from its original site, to the cinema and back to the site). But the more I watched Private Moment, the more it seemed to be about work, endurance and invisibility for the performers: as you walked away, the performance became background or ambiance, as it was for the majority of visitors to Central Park. After a while, you weren’t watching the scene so much as aware of actors at work – a theme that happens to be recurrent in Levine’s practice as a whole. The labour-intensive and trans-medial condition of Private Moment seemed to me typical of contemporary performance in a visual art context and a particularly relevant way to begin thinking about performance in the context of Münster, whose next iteration intends to take into account this medium as a key development in contemporary art, along with the impact of digital technology and the privatization of public space. This essay will attempt to weave these themes together by looking at what happens when
the performing arts move into the discursive frame of visual art, surveying the consequences of this move in terms of labour and virtuosity, technology and public space.

**Everyday Virtuosity**

Many performance scholars have turned to recent writing on labour conditions under neoliberalism to account for the resurgence of artistic interest in performance art and performative turn of culture more generally. As Jon McKenzie argues in Perform or Else, neoliberal economies are fixated on performance as an index of evaluation. McKenzie presents performance as a condition operating on three levels: organizationally, technologically and culturally; failure to perform in these three categories results, respectively, in being fired, being obsolete, or being normalized (i.e. culturally invisible). Performance theorists Shannon Jackson, Nick Ridout and Rebecca Schneider have all turned to Italian post-Work-erist theory as a framework for contemporary performance and conversely, Italian post-Workerists have turned to performance to account for post-Fordist labour practices. Paolo Virno, for example, has argued that post-Fordism turns us all into virtuosos performers, since the basis of labour is no longer the production of a commodity as end-product (as it was on the Fordist production line), but is now a communicational act, designed for an audience. In his account, wage labour is based around the possession (and performance) of aesthetic tastes, affects, emotions and — most importantly — linguistic cooperation.

There are also reasons internal to art history for the resurgence of performance since 2000. The rise of the experience economy has been well-charted in relation to performative modes of visual art in the 1990s (such as Relational Aesthetics). Also notable is the emergence during this decade of what I call ‘delegated performance’, in which the unique charismatically present art, so essential to 1970s Body Art, is outsourced to non-professional subjects who represent an authentic social constituency (e.g. a particular class, race, gender, disability or other identitarian attribute). Works like these, which are instruction-based, became repeatable in different contexts and led rapidly to their monetization in the early 2000s, best seen in the meteoric rise of Tino Sehgal, but also in the market availability of works by previous generations. The event-score, whose open-ended iterability was so radical in the 1960s — implying that anyone and everyone could fulfil the work — has become, since 2000, a stabilizing force: a way to guarantee aesthetic continuity between different iterations and to ground meaning and value in a secure authorial figure.

The rise of the score and the extension of event into exhibition-time has changed visual performance from a question of individual charisma to a matter of continual presence by hired performers. The need for repetition and continual presence produces an intensification and foregrounding of performance as paid labour. Xavier Le Roy’s Retrospective at MoMa PS1, New York, comprised sixteen dancers working three-hour shifts, four days a week. An entire subclass of performer has emerged which specializes in the outsourced performance of other artists’ works, with contracts that are not quite zero-hour but certainly short-term and bereft of healthcare and insurance. At the same time, the recourse to shift-work sustains on older model of labour of employment, that of Fordism.

The comparison to immaterial labour goes further too, in that these outsourced performers are increasingly asked to draw upon their own experiences in order to lend authenticity and creativity to the artist/choreographer’s project. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, for example, it was sufficient to stage an identitarian (e.g. American veterans, deaf teenagers, Polish immigrants, etc.). Today this highly-criticized form of objectification has been replaced by more penetrating forms of affective labour. Sehgal’s These Associations at Tate Modern (2012), for example, required performers to draw upon their own experiences of when they felt a sense of belonging and when they experienced a sense of arrival; these stories were then repeated to visitors throughout their seven-hour shifts, four or five days a week, for three months. A crucial part of the performance was the performers’ ‘linguistic cooperation’ with the public. If delegated performance was widely criticized for objectifying social groups (the prime charge being that artists failed to give performers a ‘voice’), then recent modes of contemporary performance are arguably more suspect in exploiting an individual’s personal histories and linguistic capacities.

Furthermore, when actors and dancers are hired by art institutions, there is a concomitant expectation of professionalization and foreseeability: repetition, performance and looming come to replace the unpredictable, one-off intervention. Here we might draw a contrast between visual art performance and the performing arts (i.e. theatre and dance). Bringing performing artists into the gallery or museum reduces the risk associated with the individual performance artist, especially those with a history of working against the institution. The performing arts, by contrast, are inherently collaborative and most choreographers are too flattened by a museum invitation and the prospect of bigger audiences to want to dabble in Institutional Critique. The result is a curious de-objectification of the institution, but in a way that everyone (including dance aficionados) finds difficult to criticize, because the luxury of watching multiple iterations of a performance — especially a historically important one — is so rare and enjoyable. Dance cannot do Institutional Critique in the museum, because its institution is elsewhere, i.e. the theatre stage/black box.

New forms of objectification ensue. While it is true to say that all performers are objectified on stage, there is a particular harshness to this objectification in the gallery or public space, where audiences have not necessarily paid to see the performance and can walk away at any moment. The visual art frame tests the stamina and virtuosity of performers, since they need to work extra hard to hold an audience’s attention. The migration from black box to white cube is accompanied by further frustrations: poor acoustics, hard floors, air-conditioning (designed to protect objects from moisture, but dehydrating for humans), no dressing rooms and security issues resulting from the audience’s proximity to the performers. Sculptures and paintings are protected by plinths and stanchions; people aren’t.

**Technology and De-skilling**

What ensues from this industrialization of performance — in other words, its reliance upon shift-work, outsourcing and repetition — is a new type of de-skilling and re-skilling. What do I mean by these terms? Historically, de-skilling describes the economic process of automation that decreases demand for skilled manual competences. In visual art, the term began to be used in the 1980s to describe the type of photography associated with Conceptual Art: work that reected pictorialism and tasteful composition in favour of an amateur aesthetic. As Benjamin Buchloh observes, this de-skilling was not just a dehistorication of traditional competences, but brought about its dialectical other, re-skilling. For artists like Hans Haacke, he argued, de-skilling opens up to a taxographic technique that ‘demands new skills, develops a different form of historical knowledge and addresses a social group and different modes of experience.’

At Tate Modern (2012), for example, it was sufficient to stage an identitarian (e.g. American veterans, deaf teenagers, Polish immigrants, etc.). Today this highly-criticized form of objectification has been replaced by more penetrating forms of affective labour. Sehgal’s These Associations
Today, technology’s impact upon performance can be felt as it accommodates itself to exhibition temporality, requiring ever larger teams of performers and systems of organization. To handle this, performance artists resort to the automated loop – a mechanism synonymous with the compact disc and the DVD, introduced in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. Performers repeat their scripts or gestures on a live loop for the duration of the exhibition. But because performers are precisely not machines, live looping requires shift-work – which leads not to fewer performances by virtuosic stars, but to an increase in the number of averagely virtuosic performers. Alexandra Pirici and Manuel Pelmuş, like many performing artists today, prefer to use a mixture of trained and untrained bodies in their works: their Immaterial Retrospective of the Venice Biennale (2013), for example, used ‘not just the “typical” dancer body. We have actors, dancers or performers who don’t have a training/background in movement.’

For a long time, the dominant rationale behind the use of untrained bodies in contemporary performance was the critique of virtuosity as elitist, coupled with a celebration of the everyday body (which was perceived as more ‘democratic’). These reasons seem less urgent in an economy that has redefined virtuosity and in a culture defined by social media – in which, as Boris Groys has argued, everyone is a conceptual artist, arranging images and text. The practical rationale for de-skilling today seems to be the accommodation of performance to exhibition time: the need for a low-waged body to be continually present in the space, the visible equivalent of the security guards and ‘visitor experience assistants’ who are paid a comparable wage.

If the loop has become the solution to the pressures of exhibition time, then the logic of the algorithm is the latest frontier to be negotiated. The algorithm responds to the increased scale of contemporary performance as it confronts larger exhibition spaces and longer exhibition durations. Rather than choreographing automated loops, Tino Sehgal’s recent work has moved into what his producer Asad Raza calls ‘sequence-choice mode’: in These Associations, changes in the cycles of movement, singing and storytelling were indicated to performers via variations in the Turbine Hall lighting. Four sequences were programmed, plus a fifth ‘free flow’ mode that included a feedback loop between performers and lighting and these sequences could arise in any order.

I should clarify that what I am concerned with here is the algorithm as a structuring device for performances in exhibition-time, rather than the use of the algorithm in choreographing movement (as explored, for example, by William Forsythe in the 1990s). The algorithm also needs to be differentiated from chance structures, as deployed by Stéphane Mallarmé and Tristan Tzara (in the 1890s and 1910s respectively) and Merce Cunningham and John Cage (in the 1950s–60s). A chance structure is, on one level, an algorithm: the parameters within which a preconceived range of actions might take place. The difference between chance and the algorithm is one of scale and speed and the fact that decisions are made by computer, rather than a human. Today, the algorithm is a way of organizing many different components of a performance: lighting, performers, the sequence of actions—all in response to the increased scale of biennials and exhibition venues. But there are important differences of degree: the technological paradigm of the algorithm minimizes risk and unpredictability and subordinates the unpredictable to pre-programmed variations. As algorithmic theatre-maker Annie Dorsen notes, if ‘Cage/Cunningham insisted on letting different elements operate autonomously from each other, [resulting in] unforeseen collisions and clashes’, then most contemporary artists using computers in performance ‘always seems to use the tools to sync things really precisely, [resulting in] total control of the relationship between elements.’ In other words, the algorithm ultimately reduces chance’s association with risk and unpredictability.

One work that does attempt to deploy algorithmic procedures on a more modest scale is Alexandra Pirici’s Delicate Instruments Handled with Care (2014), a performance in which four performers present a selection of over 50 ‘enactments’ drawn from a collective Western imaginary: Zinédine Zidane’s headbutt, Slavoj Žižek lecturing, Beyoncé’s Drunk in Love video, the death of Nicolae Ceauşescu, Bill Clinton’s apology and so on. The sequencing is determined by the viewers, who select from a ‘menu’ of performances available for viewing. For the performers, this can result in the endless repetition of certain pieces, especially Pirici’s mesmerizing enactment of Beyoncé’s video. Pirici notes that ‘There were moments where they made us work really hard and there was even a pleasure in that, in seeing how we struggle … and I guess it has a lot to do with how people think about “work”/the ideology of work.’ To date, Delicate Instruments has only been performed for three hours a day for three days, but one can imagine it lasting longer—as per Pirici’s collaboration with Pelmuş in Venice, which lasted for six months.

In this type of work, we encounter a re-skilling of the performer: an ability to sustain a performance all day (rather than an hour or two), to cope with visitor inattention, to perform in buildings and spaces that were not designed for performance. And this is to say nothing of the artist/choreographer, who undertakes a further re-skilling by moving from one disciplinary domain (theatre/dance) to another (visual art). Often, this reskilling is rhetorical: an ability to talk about their work and present their ideas in public (most often, in terms that relate to the visual art context/audience). Given that the most frequent type of dance/theatre to be shown in the visual art context tends to be conceptual, that is, de-skilled rather than traditionally virtuosic, the virtuosity of the performance is therefore replaced by the virtuosity of the choreographer’s ‘linguistic co-operation’ with the audience. This is why the strategy of de-skilling is not simply the seductions of an amateur aesthetic, as John Roberts observes, but is a knowing renunciation of already acquired disciplinary competences, together with a convincing reframing of one’s practice in another field.

... and Public Space

So far I have addressed the movement from black box to white cube... what does all this have to do with public space? I hesitated for a long time to bring up the term ‘public space’ as it seems so outmoded, belonging to another century: since the 1990s, artists no longer identify as ‘public artists’, but instead think of themselves addressing multiple audiences through diverse platforms
(commercial galleries, museum exhibitions, talks programs, Vimeo, etc.). The indoor/outdoor divide seems less crucial an aspect of an artist’s work than at any previous historical period; artists today are as likely to make works outdoors as they are indoors, in part due to the proliferation of biennials and exhibitions like Münster. What has truly weakened the idea of public space, however, is the enormous restructuring of the boundary between public and private in the last decades – under the pressure of a neoliberal economic project, on the one hand and digital technologies and social media, on the other. Both formations have troubled the existence of ‘public space’ and both have an intimate relationship to social choreography and performance.

As is well known, the first of these formations, neoliberal economic policy, has drastically curtailed the existence of public space – defined here by the threefold criteria of ownership, access and social practices (primarily freedom of speech). Public assets are privatized (from utilities and services to buildings and natural parks) and state intervention is reduced to facilitating beneficial terms for the free market. The attenuation of urban public space is a symptom of this changing relationship between state and market: the public is constituted as a consumer, monolithically protected and the hybrid phenomenon of POPS (privately owned public space) is encouraged: parks and squares that appear to be public, but which are in fact owned, patrolled and video surveilled by private corporations, severely restricting the type of activities that can take place there. The social choreography of neoliberal space is one of stratifying social groups: those who do not conform to the consumer ideal (such as the homeless or certain racialized subjects) are excluded, evicted and pushed to the margins.

These changes to the urban infrastructure go hand in hand with a decline of politicization, in part because expressions of discontent – from distributing fliers to organizing protests – are minimized and dissuaded and in part because an ideological program of ‘there is no alternative’ (most recently under the guise of austerity politics) seems to have become acceptable medicine for most European voters. It is telling that, after Occupy Wall Street in 2011, performance has migrated into the safety of the museum, rather than take place on the streets. In tune with neoliberal politics, this work tends to be organized around consent rather than dissent and has a strategic definition of diversity (for example, racial difference counts, but not questions of class). Privatization affects not just space but also time, as we enter what Jonathan Crary calls ‘24/7’; a time without limits, which has no time of its own because ‘no moment, place or situation now exists in which one can not shop, consume or exploit networked resources’; it is a hallucination of presence. Does the adaptation of performance to exhibition-time in some ways also aspire to 24/7?

The second formation, the rise of digital technology and social media to support a neoliberal project of Big Data and perpetual consumption also disrupts the cohesion of place and time. We spend large amounts of our day in virtual spaces mediated by the screen, during which time we are both present in our physical environment, by digital natives). The reformatting of consumption also disrupts the cohesion of place and time. We consume or exploit networked resources’; it is a hallucination of presence. Does the adaptation of performance to exhibition-time in some ways also aspire to 24/7?

The temporal and spatial fluidity induced by digital technology is matched by the new fluidity of public and private (or collapse, if we want to be more pessimistic), brought about by social media. The temporality of performance in the early twentieth-century. What we need to understand is the relationship of this artistic temporality to the retemporalization of digital performance. Whether artists are merely a symptomatic and symptom of these hallmarks of our age, or attempting to produce meta-commentaries and alternatives to them, is, at the current moment, undecided.

How these tendencies play out in contemporary art is yet to be resolved, since we are in the early days of both phenomena, but it is striking that there is very little art that tackles both of these themes head on. Artists today are more likely to look backwards, nostalgically glancing at modernist architecture and overlooked archives than to examine the new corporate homogeneity of contemporary architecture and urban space (as, for example, Dan Graham and Martha Rosler did in the 1970s and 1980s). They tend to be swept up in their self-presentation on- and off-line rather than contributing to a greater understanding of this phenomenon (although Ryan Trecartin has produced his own seductively hellish vision of self-performance by digital natives). The reformating of performance from black box to white cube (taken here to be an abbreviation for the spaces of visual art in general) has changed the temporality of performance in the early twentieth-century. What we need to understand is the relationship of this artistic temporality to the retemporalization of digital performance. Whether artists are merely a symptomatic and symptom of these hallmarks of our age, or attempting to produce meta-commentaries and alternatives to them, is, at the current moment, undecided.

CLAIRE BISHOP is a professor of Art History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She is the author of Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship (2012) as well as the influential essays ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’ (October, 2004) and ‘The Social Turn: Collaboration surfing online); on the other, we perpetually self-perform for this gaze, taking selfies and posting updates on social media. Caught between this crossfire of surveillance and self-performance, the definition of ‘public space’ becomes an increasingly elusive concept.
Two Questions

In some historical works of endurance art, artists engaged the conditions of performance in an art context in order to articulate a political message—such as by performing for long stretches of time or by exposing their bodies to potential harm. How might what you’re arguing here relate to this legacy?

The circulation of economies around contemporary performance are more political than their content. In other words, the temporality of contemporary performance, which requires dancers or actors to work in shifts, can foreground questions of labour, precarity and the privileging of certain subjects (bodies, ideas, values) over others. They can also foreground questions of the body—its obdurate materiality and presence—that are increasingly elided in a virtual world. These questions reframe in an economic register (and in some cases replace) issues that prevailed in 1970s Body Art: the sovereignty and de-subjectivation of the body, the transgression of bodily limits in abjection, sexual difference (especially the non-neutrality of the female body), direct experience instead of mediation. The key difference is that it is no longer the charismatic single artist who undertakes these gestures, but a temporary workforce for hire and catharsis is no longer the goal.

for Claire Bishop

Would you say that some performative gestures—for example the ‘standing man’ among Gezi Park protestors in Istanbul or the phallus that Voina painted on Liteiny Bridge in St. Petersburg—gain something in not being framed in an art context, but rather finding a broad audience in the ostensibly public space of the Internet?

Of course: They gain visibility and attention, which as we know is an important currency. They can become a meme, a hashtag and attain enormous global reach. Both of your examples show how powerful this visibility can be: The first became an icon of the protests in Istanbul; the second humiliated the Russian government. However, the Internet also exacerbates a loss of complexity, because art relies upon its context to signal the presence of qualities other than those that are immediately apparent. As soon as an image (of any kind) is released into the world without art-institutional framing—be it public space or the Internet—there is very little space for self-reflexivity and meta-commentary. This is an increasingly important issue for all types of art today: social media unmoors a work from its context and renders it a literal image like any other. This is of particular concern with performances, as the nuances of duration and audience reaction get elided into a ten-second video post or 140-character message ... and can immediately incite a storm of ill-informed opinions from people who didn’t see the work. So we have to be careful. Social media is a great tool for the dissemination of images, but it also reduces analysis to opinions and feelings and inhibits deeper reflection.
Xavier Le Roy

The main parameters that need to be taken into account when framing performance in an art context are the time and space that condition, organize and make possible the experience of the work by and with the public. In the case of works involving live action, the performance itself, the performers will structure the time and space, and, at the same time, themselves be influenced by the context in which they take place.

The people who perform the work and their working conditions define the performance. Since the roles of the various institutions such as theatres were often built to accommodate performers at work and to allow them to perform their work, they have been designed with more exhibition spaces. In these spaces, it is important to avoid reducing people to objects. At the same time, these spaces are a good platform for questioning our understanding of the human being as an indivisible mix of object and subject – and other separations which lead to, such as work and leisure, visitor and spectator, public and private, etc.

Human beings are most often objects and subjects in various social contracts – wherein we negotiate between the free will of the art spectator versus the trapped audience ('When seeing becomes like seeing a thing').

Just in F. Kennedy

I must admit, my first impression was scepticism. I presumed that it was a hoax or at least some publicity scam for the gallery. Beyond the cold, clinical and academic 'something goes' attitude, where fiction and reality blur and onlookers can easily mistake an act of violence as an art-work, the incident also calls on us to take a closer look at the conditions for encountering a live artwork.

My roots are in theatre and dance, where the responsibility rests on the body of the performer to express outwardly (through the 'fourth wall') to an audience who sits in the dark. The presence of the performer and the various elements that make up the performance such as the audience or, in this case, the violence of delivery differs drastically from the full-sensory presence required to perform in art contexts. My work has been highly conditioned in the past four years namely in the work of Tino Sehgal: 'Yet Unfinished'.

Alexandra Pirici

The renewed presence of performative works in contexts must often focused on more static modes of display is of course related to a peaking economy of attention, event and experience in post-industrial, affluent societies. But while some criticism points to 'immortal' works and immaterial labor as perfectly fitting in in even or dominating our present neoliberal, necro-capitalist world, I'd like to point out that new power centers – new, big, fancy museum buildings; commissions; emerging collections; such as art fairs; franchises Guggenheims and Louvres like to point out that new power centers – new, big, fancy museum buildings; commissions; emerging collections; such as art fairs; franchises Guggenheims and Louvres

Performers Speak about Performance

Several leading artists now working in performance and choreography – some of whom will be included at Skulptur Projekte Münster for the first time in 2017 – originally came from theater, dance or music. Given such refractions, we thought to reflect on some is-sues concerning performance as art: What needs to be taken into account when framing performance in an art context? And how might the specific times and spaces of art production shape different possibilities and limitations – the white cube, commissions in public space, certificates and documentation? It often seems that art’s frames require negotiation, especially in terms of performance’s character as given and the presentence of a performing body. In fact, embodiment is one of performance’s paradigmatic concerns, at play whenever a viewer encounters a performing body – since this body is alive and that’s something both viewer and performer have in common. This begs certain questions: How might this complex subject-object relationship compare to or contrast with the way that some sculptures and installations make viewers acutely aware of their physical presence in time and space? In terms of the performing body, how is the encounter different when it’s a performer, rather than the artist or choreographer, executing the work? And how is the decision to work with a performer, at once structural and logistical, also a material concern as well as a socio-political one?

In 2013, and Tha Variation, 2012) and Adam Linder (Auto Ficto Reflexo, 2015, and Choreographic Service 2: Some Proximity, 2014). Both Sehgal and Linder challenge how choreographic art-works are to be seen. Traditionally, art (and theatre) is best witnessed from afar, with distance a requirement to truly access a work. However, the inclusion of live bodies as ‘art objects’ offers the potential for physical closeness and, consequently, for intimacy to take stakes between per-former and viewer.

Alexandra Pirici works across multiple disciplines, such as choreography, visual arts and music. In 2013, she and dancer Manuel Pelmuş represented Romania at the Venice Biennale with the piece An Immortal Retrospective of the Venice Biennale.
Larisa Cranteu

I didn’t study dance, or acting, as did most of the other performers. My first important professional project was an Immortal Retrospective of the Venice Biennale, shown at the Romanian Pavilion in 2013. Actually, I think I was one of the last to arrive, after the project was already completed. I was supposed to start performing at the Romanian Pavilion in September 2013 but had to postpone until October 2013 because of the ‘necessity’ of being one of 21 performers. The performers who arrived before me had already formed themselves, as a group, around the memories of key moments in the history of the Biennale. First, the moment was introduced: the work’s title, the artist’s name, and the period of the work. It was essentially a short explanation of the medium or context. Then we illustrated it through movement, by striking a pose, by singing or quoting from it. The work required two types of memory—or let’s call it knowledge: (1) abstract knowledge, concerning the order of events, the information about them as well as the names that were hard to pronounce; and (2) corporeal knowledge, a less articulate form of knowledge having to do with the organization of movement and the position of your body in space.

During rehearsals with Alexandra and Manuel, I thought I had learned everything I needed to know about the work. But later on, other performers kept drawing my attention to aspects of the work that had apparently escaped me. Through repeated discussions on the process on which they had developed a sort of internal expertise, which nuanced and enhanced the work. There were all kinds of hacks and tricks on how to coordinate physical and emotional states: how to pace the cardio and standing still, how much makeup was okay to wear whether or not you had to make eye contact and how to smile. Yet another type of knowledge: (3) social knowledge, full of implicit meanings, alive and volatile. In the midst of the discussions, I was prompted, my colleagues carried me down, my outstretched arms describing a circle. A woman in the audience interpolated the space between my arms as a capsule she could enter, so she closed her eyes and leaned in close to my face. For about 30 seconds, I kept still. We looked into each other’s eyes. Then I separated my arms and brought them back together to form the circle, this time leaving her out. I wanted her to be able to know me was free, wide awake, intuitive. My body was a clay pot in an attempt to reach the highest level, or by building up the concept of performance (which in French has a meaning of high mystery, of onstage one’s limits). Every scene demands intense and sustained work by the artist, which is necessary to assume and integrate a new voice into oneself as well as incorporate the public’s perception.

Meeting Jârîma Béla shook up my beliefs about creation. To define the creative field better: Who gives you on stage? Who shows up and who performs? The one who is helping the creator (the choreographer or scenic designer) becomes the performer. We often transform knowledge into corporeal knowledge, which is something we can teach and remember. So what is remembered, and how we remember it, affects the work. Also, the work requires two types of memory—or let’s call it knowledge: (1) abstract knowledge, concerning the order of events, the information about them as well as the names that were hard to pronounce; and (2) corporeal knowledge, a less articulate form of knowledge having to do with the organization of movement and the position of your body in space.

Véronique Doisneau

Meeting Jârîma Béla shook up my beliefs about creation. To define the creative field better: Who gives you on stage? Who shows up and who performs? The one who is helping the creator (the choreographer or scenic designer) becomes the performer. We often transform knowledge into corporeal knowledge, which is something we can teach and remember. So what is remembered, and how we remember it, affects the work. Also, the work requires two types of memory—or let’s call it knowledge: (1) abstract knowledge, concerning the order of events, the information about them as well as the names that were hard to pronounce; and (2) corporeal knowledge, a less articulate form of knowledge having to do with the organization of movement and the position of your body in space.

On the invitation of Birjûmâ Lâlèvé, Jârîma offered to make that link in the heart of the Paris Opera: between classical, modern and contemporary speech—lots of words that shrink the field of possibilities, the creative openings. Larisa and I forget the promise of The Rite of Spring by Stravinsky at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées: scandal. The audience three rotten tomatoes and saw. Stravinsky had turned the codes of writing and especially listening upside down. Considering Nijinsky’s choreographic speech, he took a risk and returned to twos pointed inward, the archaic vision of the human being. Modernity is lived through everyday life. The artist offers a scene and a story to be received and to become something else through his or her imagination as well as the spectators. Why would anyone want to define borders, codes, differences? Everything is a scene and a chance to receive something, whether it is theatre, or in a museum, in school, etc. Let’s fool ourselves into mastering classical languages in an attempt to reach the performance, whether in a gallery or in a theatre. ‘When I perform, I’m free. I can connect with everything and connect in me. I am free, wide awake, intuitive, and then I return to me, which is determined and I am free: everything connects in me. I am free, wide awake, intuitive. My body is a clay pot in an attempt to reach the highest level, or by building up the concept of performance (which in French has a meaning of high mystery, of onstage one’s limits). Every scene demands intense and sustained work by the artist, which is necessary to assume and integrate a new voice into oneself as well as incorporate the public’s perception.

David Levine says acting is an antiquated technology of representation but a novel technology of artificial intelligence. In our work, we often switch between contexts. Key factors in that is the country and the city in which we perform and the artistic discipline within which we’re categorized. We sometimes make this decision ourselves, but it’s most clearly recall the face and expression of the woman who could do anything as long as the indications didn’t restrict it. In these days that I witnessed, I thought about all the different ways I could have reacted. I could have stayed in the same position until she left. I could have closed my eyes and gotten even closer to her face. I could have broken the work and let her sit there, with her eyes closed, thinking she was still the circles of my arm and she was there. But now, more than two years later, I can’t remember which moment we were re-encountering. I can vaguely remember the sensation of being carried on four pairs of arms. But I can clearly recall the face and expression of the woman who entered into the space formed by my outstretched arms.

9. Performance is a service, it cares for the situation. That is its agency.

10. A body is an exemplary non-linear archive, thus collective performance seems like a retrogressive move.

Adam Linder

1. Fact is, we’ve been doing our thing in the dark for quite a while—right now it feels good to be able to acknowledge the frame and look back at people feeling us think about the frame.

2. Having a body could have been the locus of reflection and the epitome of luxury, but it turned out otherwise, so rhythm can help with some of the reconciliation.

3. Immortality as reasoning simply does not suffice—we all use Macbook Pros to be able to put whatever we do anywhere at any time. A video in HD but performance has to remain analogical.

4. De-skilled United Colors of Benetton indeterminacy will everywhere—what is the identity of Canal Street, Prado. Video is in HD but performance has to remain analogical.

5. David Levine says acting is an antiquated technology of representation but a novel technology of artificial intelligence.

6. Although Michaela made the audience raise their hands to be ushered across the stage if they wanted to leave in the middle of her 2014 Whitney Museum show. Liberty of the exhibition meets the complicity of theatre.

7. Costumers perform seem to be an unbridgeable habit: an incessant caloric counting for some kind of a collective authenticity.

8. The term interdisciplinarity is bogus, it’s like flirt- ing, once the action is acknowledged it can no longer happen.

9. Performance is a service, it cares for the situation. That is its agency.

10. A body is an exemplary non-linear archive, thus collective performance seems like a retrogressive move.

ADAM LINDEER’S choreographic works have been commissioned, presented and hired by HAU Hebbel Am Ufer, Institute of Contemporary Arts London, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Museum of Modern Art Warsaw, American Realness NYC, Kampnagel Hamburg and Friza/LIVE London, amongst others engagements.

Monika Gintersdorfer/Knut Kloß

In our work, we often switch between contexts. Key factors in that is the country and the city in which we perform and the artistic discipline within which we’re categorized. We sometimes make this decision ourselves, but it’s most often made by the host institution. We often perform in theatres, sometimes in public spaces, occasionally in palaces or museums, or in a nightclub. Each elocation relates somehow to the artistic qualifications of the group’s individual artist members.

Our permanent German—Ivorian team consists of an actor and a director, three dancers and singers and one fine artist, who guest from other disciplines and countries. This means there’s always at least one team member who knows the structures of the artistic discipline in question, and in all sorts of performing spaces. We often work with the artists, whether in a Parisian studio or in the Ivory Coast, and the artists often work with us.

VÉRONIQUE DOISNEAU has taught at the Paris Opera Ballet School since 2006 and was a dancer in the corps de ballet of the Paris Opera from 1981–2005. She was the subject and sole performer of the piece Véronique Doisneau by Jârîma Béla, which premiered at the Paris Opera in 2004.

For the Ivorian showbiz stars, it can be liberating to perform without the restrictions and responsibilities of the Ivorian performers are exposed to more ungovernable factors. As a result, the performers are forced to form the circle, this time leaving her out. I wanted her to be able to know me was free, wide awake, intuitive. My body is a clay pot in an attempt to reach the highest level, or by building up the concept of performance (which in French has a meaning of high mystery, of onstage one’s limits). Every scene demands intense and sustained work by the artist, which is necessary to assume and integrate a new voice into oneself as well as incorporate the public’s perception.

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Director MONIKA GINTERSDORFER and visual artist KNUT KLOß have been working together with a team of associates from Germany and the Ivory Coast—dancers, singers, actors and sometimes legal experts—on dance, theatre and film projects since 2005.
Communicative capitalism is a concept for theorizing what networked media does to politics: it eliminates the space of critique, reformatting political acts and expressions as economic activity. Communicative capitalism designates the convergence of capitalism and democracy in and through networked media. Democratic values take material form in networked communications technologies. Expansions, intensifications and interconnections of global personalized media realize ideals of equality, inclusivity and participation.

What does this realization of democratic ideals in a networked media space look like? Equality is the equality of the utterance or contribution. No opinion is worth more than any other (they each count as one comment on my blog, one like, one tweet). Each adds something to the communicative flow. Whether a post is a lie or ill-conceived is unimportant. What matters is simply that something was said, that a comment was made, that a post was favorited or forwarded. Critique becomes indistinguishable from endorsement as the adage ‘there’s no such thing as bad publicity’ comes to characterize all mediated interactions – at least someone was paying attention. With the communicative equivalence of utterances, quantity replaces quality. The channels through which we communicate reward number, getting us to believe through our practices that more is better, that popularity is the standard of value. Communicative interactions take on the dynamics and attributes of markets.

The realization of the ideal of inclusivity in networked media means addition, expanding the pool, reach or conversation. Again, the more the better. Growth in inclusion changes the forms of our communication. No one has time to read everyone else’s opinion. No one has time to comment on everything shared on our feeds. Short and snappy starts to have more currency than long and detailed. Digitally native forms like the blog post and the tweet set the standard for ever more kinds of communication, from the dwindling numbers of newspapers to more long-form pieces of writing. The effects extend to face-to-face interactions in groups as organizers come to prioritize hearing everyone’s opinion over considering longer, more in-depth lectures or statements. In the domain of communication, expanded inclusivity leads to contracted contributions. The immediacy of an image – even when its context is opaque – becomes more appealing than words. A picture is worth a thousand of them.

Participation provides the content that circulates in communicative capitalism. People are enjoined to create, express, give feedback and share. In the name of co-production, of democratic engagement, we are told that we are gaining new opportunities to take part, to be involved. Yet expanded participation in a communicative network expands inequality within that network. There is a striking difference, we can say, in network value. Popular media expresses the idea as the 80/20 rule. The few have a lot while most have a little (whether we are talking about a lot of influence, attention, money or anything). The phenomenon is widespread in communicative capitalism: on the internet there are a handful of giant hubs and uncountable millions of small websites; a few megastars on Twitter have tens of millions of followers while the majority have less than 100; many novels are written but only a few become best-sellers; most works of art remain unknown, but some are world famous. When communicative capitalism enjoins participation, it produces a field where more and more contribute but ever fewer benefit. Not only are paid positions eliminated (such as journalist, photographer or filmmaker), but people become willing to work for the possibility that they might be paid in the future. Most won’t be. Expanding the field produces the One.

In sum, communication in communicative capitalism joins together the communicative equivalence of utterances with the inequality of their network value. Not only has the space of critique become absorbed in the circulation of contributions, but expanding or inciting these contributions increases inequality. The realization of democratic ideals of equality, inclusivity and participation in networked media has undermined the capacity of democracy to inscribe or register political possibility.
Protests in public space have become an expensive affair in Spain. Since July 2015, protesters are under threat of hefty fines, an authoritarian reaction to earlier anti-austerity protests. Under the Citizen Safety Law—otherwise known as ‘the gag law’—which was passed by the governing People’s Party, protesters are liable to fines up to €600,000 for marching in front of Congress, blocking a road or occupying a square. The law is the most recent attempt by the government to curb a wave of popular protests that has swept the country since 2011. At that time, protests around the world saw citizens trying to reclaim their right to public space. Though numerous commentators pointed out the role played by new technologies such as social networks and smartphones in facilitating the protests, it was the city square, as old as political thought, which was the true common denominator. According to Hannah Arendt, the word polis doesn’t just describe the physical location of the Greek city-state; it also denotes the public realm of a political community. It is ‘the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together.’ Thus it’s fitting that when the People’s Party of Spain passed its draconian law, demonstrators were quick to seek an alternative to presence in physical space. Their solution was a hologram protest, the first ever—as media outlets were quick to point out—skillfully choreographed and artfully projected in front of the gates of Congress in Madrid.

Cristina Flesher Fominaya, a spokesperson for the activist group that organized the protest, explained how it came together: Messages and voice recordings were crowd-sourced online and synced with holographic images filmed in a nearby city. The resulting image was meticulously reworked to match the scene in front of Congress and set to play on a loop. By representing people in a cool blueish tone reminiscent of surveillance camera footage, the organizers seemed to allude to the popular depiction of a dystopian totalitarian state. Specters—for once quite literally—haunted the sterile streets, voicing the grievances of those barred from assembling there. Instead of inhabiting public space, the demonstrators inhabited a new medium. This was a proxy protest fit for the age of proxy politics.

The word proxy derives from the Latin procurator, meaning someone responsible for representing someone else in a court of law. These days, the word is often used to designate a computer server. The word proxy derives from the Latin procurator, meaning some- one responsible for representing someone else in a court of law. These days, the word is often used to designate a computer server acting as an intermediary for requests from clients. These servers afford indirect connections to a network, thus providing users with anonymity. However, proxy servers can also be set up for one purpose: to monitor traffic. Proxy politics—defined by artist, writer and RCCP (Research Center for Proxy Politics) member Hito Steyerl as the ‘politics of the stand-in and the decay’—is characterized by fraudulent contracts, chimerical sovereignties and void authorities. The concept of the proxy is emblematic of our post-representational, post-democratic political age—one increasingly populated by bot militias, puppet states, ghostwriters and communication relays. Disembodiment, invisible politics and the increasing subordination of politics to economic interests have become the norm. Still, proxy politics can be understood as both a symptom of crisis in representational politics as well as a counter-strategy aiming to critically engage the existing mechanisms of security and control.

Double Governance

In his book Post-Democracy, Colin Crouch argues that, within the current political conditions, power is increasingly relinquished to business lobbies and non-governmental organizations. As a result, ‘there is little hope for an agenda of strong egalitarian policies for the redistribution of power and wealth, or for the restraint of powerful interests.’ As a corollary to the rise of neoliberalism, the vision of an autonomous, potent, political subject is devastated by the growing power of privileged elites standing at the nexus of transnational corporations, extra-juridical zones, infrastructural authorities, non-governmental organizations and covert rule. Similarly, for Jacques Rancière, post-democracy refers to ‘the paradox that, in the name of democracy, emphasizes the consensual practice of effecting the forms of democratic action. Postdemocracy is […] a democracy that has eliminated the appearance, masquerade and dispute of the people and is thereby reducible to the sole interplay of state mechanisms and combinations of social energies and interests.’ At the heart of this condition lies an ontology of deception, wherein the public realm becomes a series of smoke screens, false flags and simulations—primarily through the proliferation of media and endless opinion polls.

Political theorist Michael J. Glennon has recently introduced the notion of a ‘double government’ to describe the current political reality in the USA, where political power is split between elected government officials and a network of institutions constituting a ‘disguised republic.’ This phenomenon can be traced back to World War II and President Truman’s signing of the National Security Act of 1947, which established, among other things, the Central Intelligence Agency. Since then, the United States has moved toward a ‘double government’, wherein even the president ‘exercises little substantive control over the overall direction of USA national security policy.’ Similarly, in Turkey, Egypt, Yemen and Syria, political commentators have used the notion of the ‘deep state’ to describe the nexus of police, intelligence services, politicians and organized crime allegedly responsible for the exertion of violence and covert rule. Surely secrecy is as old as politics itself, but its recent resurgence under the guise of democratic rule reveals that the secrets of governance, Arcana Imperii, are anything but arcane. Today’s governments thrive on secrecy.

The age of proxy politics is thus one in which power is displaced: whether by way of covert institutions, vetted bills and classified budgets, organized crimes and grey markets or, no less disturbingly, through gross privatization and the rise of transnational corporations. Already in 1971, with her Lying in Politics, written in response to the revelation of the Pentagon Papers, Arendt lamented the dawning of an age in which image-making—i.e., elaborate thought manipulation, self-deception and slick advertising methods—had become the core values of American global policy. When image-makers govern, the institutions of representation democracy are destined to become a mere semblance. A recent example came in May 2015 as the House of Representatives voted to end bulk surveillance by the NSA. However, the vote did not actually end bulk surveillance: ‘While [the vote took] the government out of the collection business, it would not deny its access to the information. It would be in the hands of the private sector—almost certainly telecommunications companies like AT&T, Verizon and Sprint.’ In other words, even after seemingly successful governmental reform, it was revealed that the corridors of power lay elsewhere, between politics and the private sector.
Opacity for Everyone

How might proxy politics be more than just a condition, more than the name of a political regime that thrives on obscurity, opacity and decoys? How might it also designate a corresponding mode of resistance? Ideally, proxy politics would encompass myriad modes of withdrawal – both technical and metaphorical. Its tools could be a VPN, a holographic surrogate, a stock image or a double. Its outcome is always concealment, evasion, subterfuge. In a way, proxy politics is an answer to the ‘terror of total Dasein’ (Steyr), whereby the increasing monetization of presence is responded to with absence by way of decoys or placeholders. The hope is that strategies such as these might be effective now, a time in which the difference between real virtuality and virtual reality, the tangible and the digital, is increasingly difficult to discern. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly evident how severely controlled both spheres are – the World Wide Web by way of its architecture and protocols and public space via increasing privatization.

Within such a condition, there is a rise in the politicization of themes related to absence and presence, such as invisibility, opacity and anonymity, which are gradually replacing the politicization of time or space. As Alexander Galloway has observed, ‘We are witnessing [...] new struggles around prevention, the therapeutics of the body, piracy and contagion, informal capture and the making-present of data (via data mining).’ According to Galloway, recent protest movements’ refusal to make clear demands is a form of ‘black boxing’, a conscious withdrawal from political representation and collective bargaining. The choice is for ‘relations, relays and links’ – in the words of Édouard Glissant – all qualities associated with the proxy. This politicization upholds the ‘right to opacity’, rather than reverting to the age-old demand for transparency. For Glissant, opacity is ‘the force that drives every community: the thing that would bring us together forever and make us permanently distinctive.’ Opacity enables otherness. Judith Butler has suggested that protest in public space has ‘become politically potent only when and if we have a visual and audible version of the scene communicated in live time, so that the media does not merely report the scene, but is part of the scene and the action; indeed, the media is the scene or the space in its extended and replicable visual and audible dimensions.’ Image-making has become imperative for protesters and governments alike, an essential part of contemporary politics. Recently, in Paris – where the state of emergency declared in the wake of recent terror attacks prevented climate change activists from assembling in public spaces during the climate summit – protesters installed over 10,000 pairs of shoes at Place de la République, the artist Trevor Paglen and theoreticians such as Tung-Hui Hu and Keller Easterling have drawn attention to the materiality of the internet: data centers, underwater cables and routers, which in turn rely on hydroelectric power stations and dams. These places, as well as railway lines, are the backbone of communication routes. The web, until recently associated with immateriality, virtually and spacelessness – as exemplified by the popularity of the term ‘cyberspace’ – clearly has a body: a sprawling physical infrastructure and ever-growing ecological footprint. The benign sounding ‘cloud’ is no less than a publicity ploy for a vast campaign to centralize digital data and turn software and hardware into a black box. As our computers have become thinner, the weight of the cloud has only grown greater.

The Body of the Web

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the retterritorialization of the Internet. The artist Trevor Paglen and theoreticians such as Tung-Hui Hu and Keller Easterling have drawn attention to the materiality of the internet: data centers, underwater cables and routers, which in turn rely on hydroelectric power stations and dams. These places, as well as railway lines, are the backbone of communication routes. The web, until recently associated with immateriality, virtually and spacelessness – as exemplified by the body politic is now intertwined with the body of the web. And the web, though worldwide, is constrained by national policies and geographical realities. In October 2015, citizens in Thailand protested against their military government’s plan to channel Internet traffic to international servers through a single network gateway, with the intention of perfecting state surveillance and censorship. This political move was dubbed ‘The Great Firewall of Thailand’. As in Madrid, the choice of protest space corresponded with the space the new law was tailored for. The military government’s websites were targeted and downed for several hours by Denial of Service attacks. The online action was reported beyond activist platforms in international media; however, it lacked images that could represent the bodies of those who would literally be barred from leaving Thailand – were the government to follow through on its plans for greater surveillance and censorship. In the meantime, the hacker collective Anonymous declared cyberwar on the Thai government. OnSingleGateway targeted Thai police servers in an effort to demonstrate the actual vulnerability of virtual state institutions.

Proud to Relay Flesh

How can one possibly grasp the current relation between the digital and its outside? Back when the Internet was still thought of as synonymous with cyberspace, both were clearly defined as separate, unreal. ‘Cyberspace, as a virtual non-place,’ writes Wendy Chun, ‘made the Internet so much more than a network of networks: it became a place in which things happened, in which users’ actions separated from their bodies and in which local standards were impenetrably distinct.’ Opacity enables otherness. In what way does virtuality challenge our conception of public space and the mobilization of human bodies? As we’ve seen, the digital and the real coalesce in ever new forms and devices and – despite the gaming industry’s recent success in bringing early visions of VR to technical perfection – prior myths of virtual reality are slowly but surely eroding. The old demarcations between the human body in physical space and the so-called immateriality of the digital sphere are being superseded. Attempts to conceptualize the effects of this synthetic, face-to-screen situation either warn that this is the downfall of the sovereign subject, or they extricate emancipatory potential from the entanglement of humans and technology. How then might a proxy give way to different bodily modes and morphologies – a body both present and absent?

Whereas Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti have attempted to destabilize the subject as it was conceived during the 20th century, exploring notions such as the cyborg and conceptualizing a feminist posthumanism, the proxy might antagonistically re-stabilize a very concrete subject in a synthetic situation. Is a proxy a techno-body? Does it have flesh after all? Might it serve as the abject ‘other’ of the high-tech, clean and efficient bodies endorsed by contemporary culture – clearly has a body: a sprawl-
Proxies lack a human silhouette, face, or fixed physiognomy and can be associated with numerous individuals, wherever they are. Unlike the avatar, a creatively designed pawn in a networked gaming environment, proxies assume either a transformative form, or none at all. Proxies are counter-figures to capitalist self-improvement, a Glissantian opaque ‘other’ to confront the Western gaze. Proxies provide an escape route from a schizophrenic situation that denies or limits bodies to being mere vessels of biotechnological information. Proxies offer a path toward a new, if fleeting, relation as sovereign bodies.

Between September 2014 and August 2017, the RESEARCH CENTER FOR PROXY POLITICS (RCPP) will host a series of workshops at the Universität der Künste, Berlin, revolving around the politics of digital networks, the political economy of crypto-currencies, the genealogy of networked thought, the mediality of physical landscapes and strategies of opacity.
I look out on the landscape and I see many young people with tattoos. Summer is coming soon - 2017.

Not Quite Underground

We do anything, anywhere!

Tribal - Traditional - Contemporary - Gypsy - Country - Tribal - Traditional - Contemporary - Gypsy - Country
Colors - Fonts - Stamps - Signs of the zodiac - Patterns

Tattoo Studio

Notes

Your body is our canvas

Official

Tattoo Time Line

1950 - 1977 (Skulptur Projekte)

Spellcheck

Michael Smith
Not Quite Under_Ground Tattoo Studio
Proposal for Skulptur Projekte 2017