

# THEORIA CUM PRAXI OF PERFORMANCE ART 2022

FNAF 8  
EXPORT GDAŃSK

***NUDITY AS A POLITICAL  
GESTURE***

Performance  
Art Festival & Conference

Edited by Łukasz Guzek

# Lenka KLODOVÁ

## INTRODUCTION by FNAF 8 Curator

The eighth year of the Festival of Naked Forms takes place in the situation of the attack on the independent state of Ukraine by Russian troops. In the light of this conflict threatening the stability of the whole world, we want to highlight the arsenal that nudity hides in itself.

Copious evidence from folkloric tradition, especially in Slavic areas, but also historically dating back to antiquity to the times of Pliny the Elder, attest to the belief that a strong apotropaic power emanates from the naked body. An exposed bare bottom or nudity can ward off a natural disaster or bad weather, and like Medusa's head can petrify an enemy with its appearance. The fluid group Femen, which was founded in Ukraine and which enriched the Czech public space in a unique way when it surprised President Zeman during the 2018 elections, expresses this with the slogan: "hot breasts, cool heads and clean hands" (see: <https://femen.org/about-us/>).

Our performances certainly do not replace the weapons that would help with the defence of the attacked country, but they can clearly be a means. They can be a means of expressing our utter nakedness in the face of incomprehensible injustice, or a vehicle for calling ancient magical means to action. "The body seems to be

simultaneously anchored in the divine and natural order of things. This religiosity inherently includes significant expressions of physicality, in which we can observe that the intensity of physical exhibition corresponds to the importance and value of the goal to be achieved." (Alexandra Navrátilová, „Nahota v obřadní tradici české kultury,“ in: Iva Doležalová, Eleónora Hamar, Luboš Bělka eds., *Náboženství a tělo*, Brno – Praha 2006, 60). The value of the goal in this case is very high, the intensity and quality of the performances of the 8th year of FNAF will certainly correspond to this.

# Łukasz GUZEK

INTRODUCTION by FNAF 8 Export Gdańsk  
Curator

## NUDITY AS POLITICAL GROUND-BREAKING

Can you imagine a naked dictator? Nudity deprives of power. And it is a soft power itself. In 2000, Artur Żmijewski made a short (7') film showing the *Polish Army representation company*, which drills naked, marches with rifles on its shoulder in a four-line formation, makes turns, as if on a parade. Central Europe emerged from a militarist ideology that demystified the totalitarian system. The army was here a source of oppression and, maintaining political regimes. It was necessary to look at it critically. In this film, nudity proves its subversive power.

Since then, in the socio-political space of Poland, there has been a struggle for freedom for minorities who are denied a place in society by the ruling nationalist-Catholic political authorities. Putin's Russia's aggression against Ukraine created an additional context and gave reason to criticize the authorities reliance on violence. Art does not use violence. Instead, it creates a field for criticism, provides resources and space for dialogue. Nudity is a means of art, that, thanks to its radicalism, serves well to make things clear. Nudity vs. violence. In every form.

The collection of texts presented here comes from the conference accompanying the Festival of Naked Forms, which was established in Prague, Czech Republic, by Lenka Klodová in 2018. Since 2021, the

festival has its editions at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, as the FNAF Export. The model of the festival, combining presentations of performance art works and theoretical reflection, results from the assumptions of artistic and research methodologies. According to them, practice supports theory and vice versa, theory is the basis for practice. What cannot be shown in art forms can be articulated in a discursive text, what cannot be written can be expressed through art. Art and theory complement each other. In the name of creating a single space of freedom for artistic creation and academic research.

In the set of articles presented below, there are topics related to performance art workshop practice and research on history of this artistic discipline (Vladimir HAVLIK, "Framing the Performance and Its Documentation;" Joanna M. CZAJKOWSKA, "Nudity in Pomeranian Dance and Performance"), and those that analyze its use in the practice of socio-political discourse, described on the case studies (Ewa MAJEWSKA, "Nudity as a Feminist Gesture. In Defence of a Supposedly Lost Case;" Katarzyna PASTUSZAK, "Naked Care: Explorations of Naked Performance and Queer Political gestures"). The article by Darina ALSTER, "The Naked Body as a Symbol," opens this set as a perfect combination of art and research, in the individual art practice.

# Theoria cum Praxi of Performance Art 2022

## FNAF 8 Nudity as a Political Gesture

participants

DARINA ALSTER, JOANNA CZAJKOWSKA, DARIUSZ FODCZUK,  
VLADIMIR HAVLIK, LENKA KLODOVÁ, EWA MAJEWSKA,  
TAMARA MUYZES, KACA OLIVOVÁ, KATARZYNA PASTUSZAKA,  
NATALIA CHYLIŃSKA, TOMAŠ RÜLLER, MACIEJ ŚMIETARSKI,  
SADIE VELL, MARTIN ZET documentation: Marek Zygmunt

October 4-6, 2022

from 12:00 p.m. Patio Gallery  
Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk  
Targ Węglowy 6, 80-836 Gdańsk

PERFORMANCE  
ART  
FESTIVAL &  
CONFERENCE

curator FNAF: Lenka Kłodová  
co-curator FNAF-Expo: Gdańsk: Łukasz Guzek



T FaVU



Sztuka



MIĘDZYNARODOWY  
FESTIWAL Sztuki



MINISTERSTWO  
KULTURY



Kultura



# Darina ALSTER

Academy of Fine Arts in Prague

## THE NAKED BODY AS A SYMBOL

*Thrust in your inner beast!*

*Wildness of unapologetic nakedness beyond frames labels moralities...*

In 2019, French anthropologist Nastassja Martin published a book with the title *Croire aux fauves (Thrust in the beast)*.<sup>1</sup> In her anthropological studies she wrote about her liminal experience when she was attacked by wild bear in Alaska. And she survived... After he took away part of her jaw and she struck him in the groin with an axe. She was attacked, she was fighting and she survived, but her integrity was corrupted. Physically the woman acquired the psyche of an animal. The anthropological posthumanism of Martin has a symbolic value for us, who are dealing with our inner beasts rebelling against the stereotypes of our daily lives. Martin wrote about the liminal experience thus (quoting freely from her words):

When two beasts met, their territory collapses. Their fight is similar to lovemaking, their bodies are melting together... they are dreaming similar dreams.

Why are we returning to the animism at the edge of the Anthropocene?

Because we would love to accept our wild part, psychologically called Daimon. In the process of transformation of society we have to face our wilderness and gently transform our deep hurting emotions into a wisdom. We will not change the system by the same tools that it itself uses. This is well expressed by the classic words of Audre Lorde: „The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.”<sup>2</sup> Our system has not counted with our emotions and dreams, because most of our power is sub-conscious... But the inner beasts speaks... And she holds the tools which we need in her claws.

Anima as an archetype. Dark naked woman. Half human half animal is surviving in contemporary society stereotypes as the opposite of good girl. The good girl should be perfect and it is not easy to survive the requirements of the perfection and at the same time stay authentic. We should make ourselves kin with the Anima, our inner wild beast. We should enter the door of unconscious and embrace the liminal space inside. Nudity in performance is the way how to express the inner beast. Because we need her! Sure, she is wild, but under the level of our fears, she is wise. Treasures are hidden deep in the mud. The dreams which we have are ours and hers at the same time. The naked body in performance is a form of display of all those dreams. Nudity in performance is a transformative technique as well as being an emancipatory practice.

The feminist artist Barbara Kruger asserts: „My body is a battleground!“ It is the battleground of society and its stereotypes with hidden power games and inequalities.

The naked body in performance is always political.  
It is impossible to be impersonal with nudity.  
The naked body in the performance is always telling some story.

I am sharing my stories through my art in shared presence, in liminal time, in timelessness which generates the performance situation.<sup>3</sup>

Now I will take you to the tour around my personal tales.

Aramaic prayer is the original prayer of Christ in its original non-binary form, when translated directly from the Aramaic. I needed to understand this prayer deeper than my brain can do so I asked my close friends to cover my body with this prayer in original Aramaic form as well as in English, Czech and Ukrainian translation. They were using feathers dipped in red ink. It was embodiment of prayers going through my skin. When the work was completed, I was dancing naked covered just in prayers and with a Non-binary Madonna Flag.

The Non-Binary Madonna came to me in a vision and told me: I am relationship. I am a symbol of rediscovered relationships between people, nature and culture! We restore to Madonna her wild animistic potential. The Mother of Mercy does not hold a machine gun or a victory flag but the seed of wild herbs, her body is woven from Amazonian lianas. She is not trying to protect the old structures of power but life itself.

The Madonna is not only a feminist goddess, but above all a relational one. Today, the Mother of Mercy is rebuilding relationships between people and communities and helping to create a society that is not based on abusive power structures.

The Mother of Mercy will never cease to protect every child on Earth!

Nudity as a form of emancipation is shown in the project *Desire is all that exists!* This sentence I heard from the sea in Venice, when was visiting the Biennale in 2019. That time I just realized that *Desire* is over-personal, it is the power of lust flowing

everywhere spreading energy, the driving force of life. And I just express how to break out of the normative demands which contemporary society puts on woman goodgirlness, goodmotherhood, goodwifeness. Those demands are unrealistic, and often contradictory. And what stays after all the layers are gone, was my pure naked body swinging on a swing, laughing wildly like a goddess or child.

My version of the sculpture of *Penseur* by Rodin is showing that we should unlearn, unschool, all the frames of rationality to explore what presence means. My performative remake is called *Depense*. I was sitting on a family car in the position of the *Penseur* and was covered by black mud.

We all should dream because, especially in performance art, our fantasy is a regular tool more realistic than the consensual „rational“ reality that we are trying to transform.

We all desire of society its transformation, but we need to reach our inner power, which is not counted in our daily carousel of civilization. We should become kin with our dirty wild anima made from mud, because as I wrote before, she owns the wisdom.

We all have to stare into a Medusas face.

Because She is fucking beautiful! She is showing us the mirror and she is laughing! Her libido will produce far more political and social change than many others like to think.<sup>4</sup>

Performances have transformative power, which can materialize dreams and they come true. You never know what will happen in the next moment.

Performance as poetry speaks the same language of the unknown. It speaks directly from, and to, the unshaped aspects of our soul, which are reflecting the collective shared trauma from the history of society.

In togetherness, as a living web of care we can heal together our collective human and nonhuman hurt body. Through togetherness we can visit inner lands and be consciously part of the process of transformation. The whole process is silent and slow. We are all one body.

The cell of the heart loves the cell of the lungs.





*Death as a friend* (in collaboration with Jane Scalabroni, Maria Schormová, photos by Karolína Raimund). FNAF 8, Prague, 2022



*Hot wives go to heaven!* (in collaboration with Petr Váně, photos by Jolana Havelková). FNAF 8, Prague, 2021



*Aramaic Prayer* (in collaboration with David Josef Merta, Matěj Pšenička, Polina Revunenko, Sonya The Moon, Daria Kolodina, photos by Jevhenij Lar, Karolína Raimund). FNAF 6, Prague, 2020

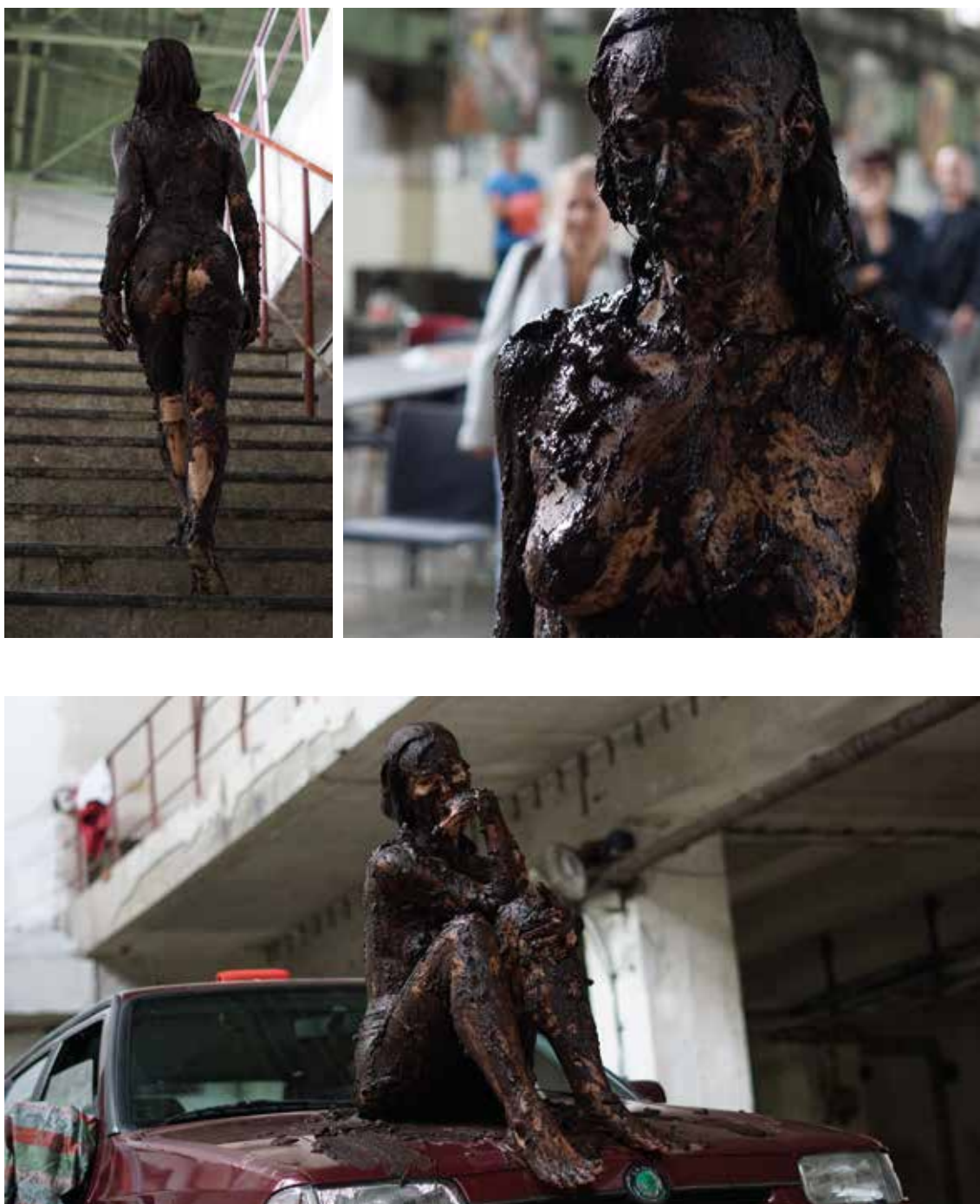




*Desire is what exist!* (photos by Robert Carrithers). FNAF 5, Prague, 2019



*Soil Woman* (in collaboration with Tereza Trnková, video Demian Kovalov aka Xerox), 2020



*Depense*, (in collaboration with Lukáš Mejstřík, photos by István Kovacs). FNAF 3, Prague, 2017





*Vision Babalon*, FNAF 1, Prague, 2015



*Fairytale*, 2012. Photo by Tereza Z Davle



*Multihanded woman*, 2009. Photo by Václav Beitler



*Piet* (in collaboration with Petr Skala, photo by Martin Kámen), 2005

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nastassja Martin, *Věřit v šelmy*, translated by Jana Bednářová (Prague: Neklid, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: eseje a projevy*, translated by Markéta Musilová (Prague: Tranzit.cz, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Darina Alster, *Kolektivní tělo* (Brno: Vysoké učení technické v Brně, Fakulta výtvarných umění, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Helene Cixous, The Laugh of the Medusa, “*Signs* 1.4 (Summer, 1976): 875-893. Translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. University of Chicago Press.

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Cixous, Helene. The Laugh of the Medusa. “*Signs* 1.4 (Summer, 1976): 875-893.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: eseje a projevy*. Translated by Markéta Musilová. Prague: Tranzit.cz, 2021.

Martin, Nastassja. *Věřit v šelmy*. Translated by Jana Bednářová. Prague: Neklid, 2022.

# Vladimír HAVLÍK

Palacký University Olomouc, Department of Art Education

## FRAMING THE PERFORMANCE AND ITS DOCUMENTATION

This paper is based on an attempt to generalize, or rather to put my experience of performance and its documentation into a broader context. For this reason, I will illustrate it with my own work and inevitably commit a subjectivisation that is rather unacceptable for academic research. May I be forgiven for this in this friendly circle.

When we talk about performance, we naturally touch on the psychophysical experience of the relationship to place and time. The performer appropriates the selected space, fills it with his energy, movement and gestures. In the words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty the performer "roots in the space."<sup>1</sup> I remember the contradictory experience of the *Attempt to Sleep* event (Fig. 1). In the middle of the meadow I made a bed (a pillow and blanket of grass sod) in which I intended to sleep. While the body was trapped under the weight of the earth, the mind expanded in all directions. I was both inside the action and its outside observer. Jan Patočka says: "In order to see relationships, we must first create a kind of scene on which they can appear, a scene of the relationships of things to our own

experience."<sup>2</sup> By installing my body in a defined space, in other words by 'framing' the experienced situation, I created a temporary place worthy of attention. A work that addresses the viewer, better said, a work that seduces the viewer.

It is not important whether the viewers are physically present. They exist in the performer's mind at that moment and his or her performance relates to them. The medium of transmission between the performer and the absent (secondary) spectator is documentation. In this case, a photographic record. The images frame the action, images created primarily by the performer, but of course also by the photographer. The close-up shot of the face draws into the psychological state of the performer while the distance shot (Fig. 2) frames the spatial relations of the performance. The performer is concerned with making the photographs civil and convincing the viewer of the truth of the executed action. I always instructed the photographer in this way and hoped that he would respect my wishes. Occasionally, however, the photographs' photo-ness came out in full force.



Three years before *The Attempt to Sleep*, I made *The Sleep* (Fig. 3) action and its documentation is unbearably aesthetic. But I am also to blame for this, because I stayed on too symbolic a level. So the content and formal framework of the performance itself remains fundamental. However, its documentation also has its regularities. The composition, the angle of view, the focus, the distance, the sequence, the number of frames all play an important role. But the most important one is the final choice of the performer. He/she is the one who releases the representation of his/her performance into the world. The second author's act comes after the execution of performance. But what we see in the photograph is only a snapshot, a fragment of the action. Everything else we have to imagine. The photograph is an impulse to our idea of the course of the performance itself. Even though sometimes the author helps us by selecting more photographs that indicate the temporal course of the performance in individual sequences, there are pauses, gaps, empty spaces between the photographs that we have to fill with our imagination. The linear time of the performance thus turns into a non-linear composition of ideas about its course. Sequentiality both dynamizes and relativizes time. Photography gives us clues to investigate how it was in the past.

We are all familiar with birthday photos of children with cake. Two candles, three candles, four candles, the scene identical, clear traces of the passage of time and its irreversibility (Fig. 4). But where is the mystery of the photography itself, that well-known atmosphere of the manipulation of the child by the parents to keep still and, above all, to smile, just to 'perform' properly for the camera. Unfortunately, we cannot see what was going on outside the frame at that moment. Although at one of my early events, my sister accidentally managed to catch what was going on behind the frame (Fig. 5). I am performing and my mother is watching from the window (Fig. 6), amused, but afterwards she has no choice but to exercise her parental authority and advise me not to fool

around and go and study instead. While it took a few seconds between shots for the Samurai event, it's always a whole year for the *Birthday Pieces* cycle (Fig. 7). So time passes differently, but the location (and therefore the framing) is always the same. A different kind of sequence is represented by a pair of 'before' and 'after' photographs. I was interested in making natural processes visible and experiencing them literally on my own skin. During the *Print in the Rain* event (Fig. 8), I lay down on the sun-warmed pavement before the summer rain and waited until the surroundings of my body were wet. The photo is taken from a bird's eye view, so unfortunately it looks like I'm climbing somewhere rather than lying on the ground. The angle of view caused inaccurate reading of the documentation and set unclear interpretative frameworks. This error can also occur in post-production processing of photos. The graphic designer considered the flying LP record as a smudge and retouched it. I didn't notice it during proofreading and so I have a photo of *Playing J. S. Bach for the Wind* (Fig. 9) without the LP in my monograph. Sometimes it is difficult to choose the number of photographs to represent a performance. For the *Controlled Fall* (Fig. 10) event, I always exhibited only two sequences of the fall from the snow-covered rock. However, I subconsciously feel that the third one, capturing the expression on my face just after the fall, is also important.

In sequential photography of natural processes we also determine the images, but chance comes into play to a greater extent. The sound of a match striking, the pain, the smell of burning hair, all of these are absent from the photographs, but we can imagine it through the photographs (Fig. 11). The loss of control over the shot was even more evident when the participant of the happening *The Orchard* took pictures with his eyes covered (Fig. 12). What to do with the documentation of the *Great Frottage*, which was accidentally shot twice on the same film and the double exposure created an unreal space (Fig. 13)? Is it valid as a testimony of the action that took place?

Sometimes the action has a natural frame, as in the case of *White Christmas*, where it was the gallery window. The image worked reversibly, with the audience watching the performers and the performers watching the audience, who thus also became performers (Fig. 14).

I would also like to mention a situation where something important is happening off-screen. I was detained and investigated by the police during the *Exchange* event (Fig. 15). That didn't show up in the original documentation at all. Subsequently, I wrote up this and other stories accompanying my performances and published them in a book called *Yesterday* (Fig. 16). I found that without the text it was impossible to convey additional layers of meaning. So I began to combine text with photography, although I had avoided text in my earlier work. How else to convey, for example, the anarchistic act of a Chinese participant in my performance in Beijing who, instead of throwing a paintbrush dipped in paint at me like the others, painted his chest, ran and jumped on my back (Fig. 17).

In the last 20 years I have returned to the original documentation and reinterpreted it in collaboration with artists of the younger generation (Barbora Klímová and later Petra Feriancová). For example, I printed and exhibited all the frames of scanned negatives (Fig. 18). Or I had a new edition of the documentation enlarged and framed and exhibited it in a kind of information cloud (Fig. 19). I realized that with all the manipulation of contexts and reframing of documentation, it was still impossible to avoid a linear return to the past (Fig. 20). In this sense only the internet and its Google 'shaker' is a perfectly non-linear master of temporal cocktails (Fig. 21).

In this context, I would like to mention Henri Bergson's notion of 'duration' and his theory of the changing (non-linear) relationship between the past and the present, where memory materializes into an image, opening up a new idea, reviving a past action and transforming its content into the present.<sup>3</sup> The complexity of the existential and at the same time conceptual act can also be

evidenced in Bergson's words: "The presence of perception places us at once in matter, and the presence of memory places us at once in spirit."<sup>4</sup> This applies both to the actions themselves and to their documentation. What interests me about documentation is its impermanence and openness to the viewer. Petr Rezek comments on this: "The meaning of documentary is not the dead document, but precisely the happening of meaning, which is newly constituted by the transformations of understanding."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Boris Groys argues that it is only through documentation that our lives become meaningful.<sup>6</sup> This is primarily related to art, which is temporal, unrepeatable, and can approach a secondary audience through documentation. Groys finds this mechanism in the creation of art installations based on documents, which thus acquire their place and context. Documentation is thus significantly transformed by the concept of new disclosure. The dynamics of the relationship between rational and intuitive approaches is important. In this context, Vilem Flusser's observation is accurate: "Conception is becoming more and more imaginative and imagination more and more conceptual."<sup>7</sup>

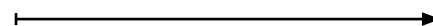
The existential, risk-taking, self-sacrificing commitment of performers in the seventies and eighties has been largely revised by conceptual distance. Analytical strategies relying on a post-conceptual approach prevail, where the performative act itself may be only one part of (post)production structure. As Adrian Heathfield, a prominent theorist of the performative arts, says: "Phenomenological aspects can no longer be seen in isolation from their linguistic and discursive constructions. Understanding performance is accomplished through the temporal paradox between specific experience in live performance and its equally specific revision in other instances of knowledge. Experience cannot be separated from thought."<sup>8</sup>

The relationship between action and documentation is becoming central in contemporary artistic practice and needs to be analyzed with the utmost criticality. While live

action attempts to dematerialize the artistic act through ephemeral, time-limited live action, performance documentation objectifies it and transforms it into a fixed artefact. There is a similar danger in the repetition (reenactment) of performances, which are generally shielded by institutional authority and easily commodified through maximized documentation. The institutionalization of performative activities significantly shortens the process between the live action and the report (documentation) of its progress. The ontological gap filled with a certain degree of indeterminacy and mystery disappears along with the elusive dimension of temporality (the passing of 'unmeasured' time). Performance retreats from process and becomes more of a 'sculptural or object artefact,' a methodically processed spatio-temporal structure made visible by photographic, filmic or verbal recording. In order to escape this trap of immobilization and transformation of performance into a product, it is necessary to unframe it again, to open it up, to accept ambiguity and mystery, to respect accidental twists and unexpected reactions. In my opinion, sharing situational precariousness and uncertainty is still one of the most important sources of freshness, renewal, recharging the energy field of the mind-body-space-time network structure.

Finally, let us return to the documentation and comparison of its photographic and video form. Photography is a poetic medium, offering a symbolic image that paradoxically refers more to the present interpretation than to the original performance (Figs 22, 23). Video is seemingly more factual, at least that's how we perceived it in the past. Nevertheless, it captures and frames reality selectively, incompletely and therefore semi-realistically. Both media (photography more, video less) create space for our imagination. So, in conclusion, I dare say that performance and its documentation are more poetry than reality.

- 1 *The Attempt to Sleep*, 1982
- 2 *The Attempt to Sleep*, 1982
- 3 *The Sleep*, 1978
- 4 *The Birthday photos*, 1961, 1962
- 5 *The Samurai*, 1978
- 6 *Mother watching a Samurai*





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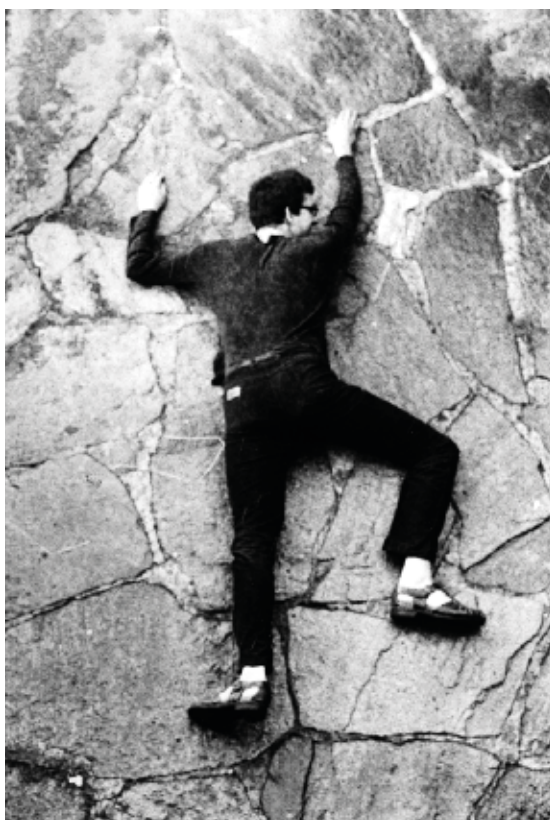
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7 *The Birthday Pieces*, 2013–2022



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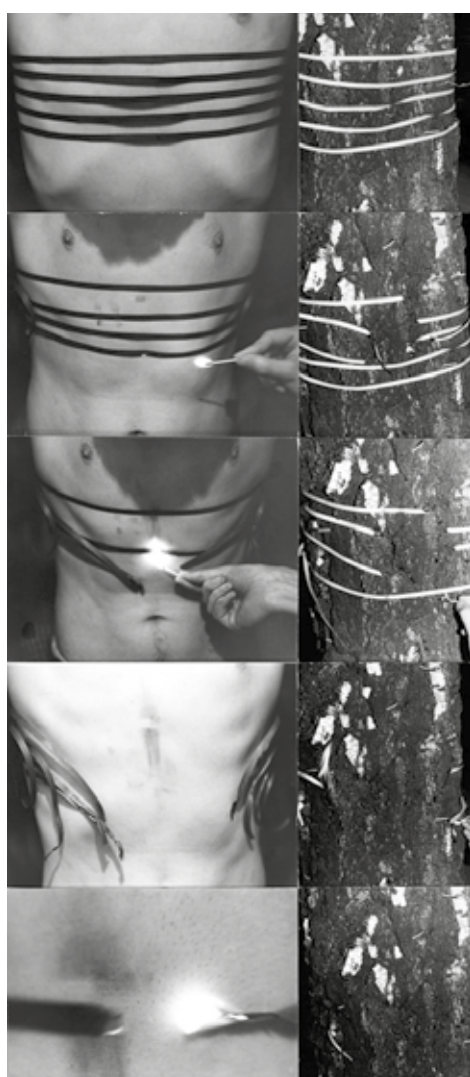
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8 *The Print in the Rain*, 1980

9 *Playing J. S. Bach for the Wind*, 1980  
Accidentally retouched LP record in  
the monograph



10



12

- 10 *The Controlled Fall*, 1980
- 11 *The Confrontation (Pain of the Tree and Pain of the Man)*, 1981
- 12 *The Orchard (Welcoming Spring)*, 1980
- 13 *The Great Frottage*, 1984
- 14 *The White Christmas*, 1990
- 15 *Exchange story in the book „Yesterday“*, 2009
- 16 *The Exchange*, 1980

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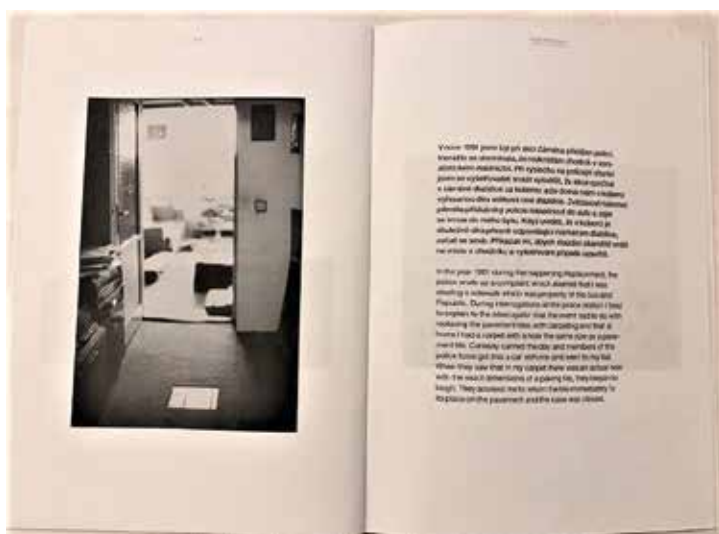




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17 *The Calligraphic Brush Throw at a Living Target*, Peking, 2013

18 *Documentary Relicts*, amt-project, Bratislava, 2016

19 *Reframed Records*, Fondazione Zimmei, 2020

20 *Performer's Biography, 1959–2019* (Gallery Caesar, 2019)

21 *Google search for name Vladimír Havlík*

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22



23

22 *The Geyser*, 2018, Festival of Naked Forms

23 *The rEVOLUTION*, 2022, Festival of Naked Forms

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologie vnímání* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2013).
- <sup>2</sup> Jan Patočka, *Umění a čas I, II. Soubor statí, přednášek a poznámek k problémům umění* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2004).
- <sup>3</sup> Henri Bergson, *Hmota a paměť: esej o vztahu těla k duchu* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2003).
- <sup>4</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>5</sup> Petr Rezek, *Tělo, věc a skutečnost v současném umění* (Praha: Jazzová sekce, 1982).
- <sup>6</sup> Boris Groys, "Umění ve věku biopolitiky: Od uměleckého díla k dokumentaci umění," translated by Vladimír Malý, *Sešit pro umění, teorii a příbuzné zóny*, Prague: VVP AVU, 4-5 (2008): 114-128.
- <sup>7</sup> Vilém Flusser, *Postdělžiny* (Mělník: Přestupní stanice, 2018).
- <sup>8</sup> Adrian Heathfield, *Live: Art and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

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# Joanna M. CZAJKOWSKA

Sopot Dance Theatre

## NUDITY IN POMERANIAN DANCE AND PERFORMANCE

The body is an essential tool in a dancer's work, so since the nineteenth century, artistic dance began to use so-called leotards, cladding the body thoroughly, or more precisely, the legs, so as not to offend the audience with nudity, but at the same time to be able to expose them. However, as Irena Turska points out, in the twentieth century the meaning of the leotard (often already covering the whole body of the dancer) changed - it became a stage costume, "which not only clothes, but also shapes the figure of the dancer, the leotard not only emphasizes the modelling of the body, but synthesizes it, simplifies it to a spot of colour."<sup>1</sup>

The twentieth century also saw the appearance of nudity as such on world and Polish stages, but it is still not a common phenomenon. It definitely appears more often in dance theatres or performance-type activities than in ballet theatres, because, as Turska explains, "when the body moves, there are spontaneous disorderly, uncontrollable movements of some of its exposed parts, and they are unintentional surpluses of movement

structures. Thus, they can attract the attention of the viewer, interfering with the course of dance reception."<sup>2</sup> Disruptive movement elements are not the only reason. Arguably, the approach to nudity is directly influenced by the aesthetic canon or that of meaning. Whether for the choreographer the body is supposed to be a 'colorful stain' or a real person. Therefore, one can risk the thesis that the presence or absence of nudity in the actions of dance artists is influenced by the form and place of the art they practice.

### Clothed nudity - the body as synthesis

The art of dance appeared in Pomerania after World War II with the arrival in Gdansk of choreographer and dance pedagogue **Janina Jarzynówna-Sobczak**, who founded a private dance school, led to the establishment of the Choreographic Lyceum in Narvik, which in time was transformed into the Ballet School in Gdansk.

From the beginning of her stay, she also worked as a choreographer, cooperating with the Wybrzeże Theatre and the Baltic Opera, where she was the creator, choreographer and manager of the ballet company between 1953 and 1976.<sup>3</sup> This company in the late fifties and early sixties, thanks to the work and vision of Jarzynówna-Sobczak, became one of the most interesting Polish ballet companies.<sup>4</sup>

Talking about her creative method, the artist herself claimed that she used “abbreviation, synthesis, which moved the characters to the plane of general meanings.”<sup>5</sup> The choreographer worked closely with the dancers in creating the performances: she introduced them to the theme of the show, to specific roles, to dramatic tensions, together with the dancers she used improvisation to find the final choreographic shape, and this process involved the dancers repeating a given sequence many times, in different variations of it, to find the final, satisfying form. She herself called the movement language she shaped a “deformed classic.”

Among the works that placed Janina Jarzynówna-Sobczak among the avant-garde artists of the time were, among others. *The Miraculous Mandarin*, *Four Essays* and *Titania and the Donkey*. In all of these works, the dancers appear in leotards that support the entire body, possibly with graphic elements that define the figures. *Four Essays* and *Titania and the Donkey* were also filmed, with the performers dancing in open spaces in almost transparent costumes.

This penchant for costumes that emphasize the silhouette, actually revealing the body of the dancers in the case of this outstanding artist, is the result of her search for a mental shortcut, but also her antipathy to classical ballet costume: “I think I'm the only one who didn't like those, degenerating the silhouette, stiff costumes, from under which stick out the pretty little pooches of the dancers. But I'm afraid to admit it out loud!,”<sup>6</sup> she said in an interview.

## Nudity shaped - the ideal body

Wojciech Misiuro, creator of the Expression Theatre (1987-2000), became Jarzynówna - Sobczak's direct disciple and successor in avant-garde activities. With his education and experience in dance and pantomime, as well as choreographic collaborations in dramatic theatres, Misiuro knew that he wanted to create a theatre that had not yet existed in Poland, a theatre in which the main tool would be movement corresponding to the “rhythm of the street,”<sup>7</sup> derived from everyday and sports movement.

The Expression Theatre was a stage of plastic naked male and female bodies - in dynamic movement on stage. Traditional dramatic actors were replaced by 'athletes' (...). They were selected on the basis of attractiveness and physical prowess, and then put through training by a 'master' to achieve expressive choreography (...). The performances were accompanied by opera or rock music, with no dialogue or individual role. Using the language of the super-body, at the intersection of dance, mime and sports, the Expression Theatre addressed in its performances mythical and cultural themes relating to fundamental questions of human existence. In this way, the perfect surface was combined with psychological and artistic depth, as evidenced by the titles of the performances: *The Dead Can Dance*, *Dantonians*, *Idols of Perversion* (...).<sup>8</sup>

As Majewska noted, the actors' bodies, shaped by training in sports, pantomime and dance, were close to the one on the one hand, to Greek ideals, on the other, they resembled ideal models from Bruce Weber and Calvin Klein advertising campaigns. Despite playing with the convention of erotic freedom, the performers' bodies remained enclosed in a specific form.<sup>9</sup> Nudity in Misiuro's performances appeared as an erotic symbol (*ZUN*, *Idols of Perversion*) or power and authority (*City of Men*), sometimes as a symbol of exposure accompa-

nying death (*PASSION, De Egipto*). Always, however, the actors-dancers of the Expression Theatre presented themselves in this nudity in an extremely catty, epic manner, like idealized sculptures.

### The truth of nudity – the truth of man

At the beginning of the nineties, the creators of the Gdansk Dance Theatre (1994-2001) appeared in Gdansk – the American **Melissa Monteros** and the Pole **Wojciech Mochniej**, bringing the methodology of teaching modern dance based on Jose Limon's technique, related to work with body weight and breath. On their initiative, a private dance school, an international workshop and a festival for young choreographers Dance Explosions were established, and they also served as advisors in the creation of an extremely important international festival for the dance community taking place in the Tri-City, the Baltic University of Dance.<sup>10</sup> Although nudity appeared incidentally in their performances, the activity of this duo, had great significance for the environment in terms of the new language of movement, in which technical skills were combined with the preservation of the dancers' individuality.<sup>11</sup> The art and environment created by Monteros and Mochniej, coexisted with the already existing Expression Theatre, the General Ballet School and the Baltic Opera, and the period of the last decade of the twentieth century was full of new initiatives and debuts. Actors of Wojciech Misiuro's theatre took on their own activities: Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz, Jacek Krawczyk, Bożena Eltermann, while the following made their debuts: Joanna Czajkowska, Anna Haracz, Daria Jędra, Magda Jędra, Aurora Lubos, Iwona Gilarska, Robert Przybył. Individuality has become a hallmark of Pomeranian dance – both in terms of the artistic path taken and the approach to stage nudity. However, the various approaches of Pomeranian artists have one common denominator – nudity has been humanized.

A harbinger of a change concerning nudity in dance was already the first performance directed by **Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz** (then Read My Lips Theatre, now LEON Theatre), which accompanied the exhibition of sculptures *Iron People* by Zbigniew Frąckiewicz at the State Art Gallery in Sopot (1995). The four men, in a dynamic, powerful dance, at one point shed their petticoats, and the audience could watch their bodies in direct confrontation with all possible “movement surpluses.” Although all the performers (Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz, Jacek Krawczyk, Piotr Pająk, Jarosław Filip) came from the Expression Theatre and presented excellent form, it was not the beauty of the body that mattered here, but precisely this directness and natural wildness of movement. Later, nudity became a permanent element of Dziemaszkiewicz's work: “Leon's group's productions are distinguished by certain fixed stage elements – a combination of psychodrama, carnival, humor, nudity and music. A frequent element of the performances is gender bending, i.e. performance based on changing roles between a woman and a man, balancing on the border between the sexes combined with strong expressive acting of the actors.”<sup>12</sup> The artist himself puts it this way: “Nudity is a very natural thing for me and I treat it as a means of affirmation, joy, as a manifestation of spontaneity and independence. I use it (...) in my performance actions partly as a provocation, (...) to spontaneously and unrestrictedly embrace the reality I present.”<sup>13</sup> He stresses that after using a scene with nudity, he usually changes the narrative thread absolutely. This, according to the artist, causes him to be accepted unconditionally.

Starting from my archaic spontaneous actions in clubs, in the Sphinx Club, in the Spatif Club or still in my student days, nudity has always been for me a means to draw attention to myself and direct the perception of the viewer, the audience, mainly as a means of spontaneity and provocation to reject any canons of judgment. Starting with my first performances: the Read My Lips, where nudity is definitely used in



a very ostentatious way, through *Live-act* or the *National Drag Queen*; all these performances had an undertone of a very personal message (...). They were not subject to any template, that is, neither a political pretext, nor a moral pretext, nor a rebellion against someone or something.<sup>14</sup>

The language of movement used by Dziemaszkiewicz has evolved over all the years of his work - from physical theatre, where choreography combined processed natural movement and sequences composed of strong, exertional dance, to the currently used movement reduction, performative a turn toward inner experience, where the body undergoing artistic treatment is more a body in action than in dance.<sup>15</sup> At the opposite pole to the artist described above, are the creators of the Dada von Bzdülów Theatre - **Leszek Bzdyl** and **Katarzyna Chmielewska**. They started working together at the very beginning of the nineties, and although they came from different techniques (Bzdyl was a mime artist, he appeared in the Tri-City at the invitation of the Expression Theatre, in which, however, he did not stay long, Chmielewska graduated from the Ballet School in Gdansk). Thanks to their cooperation with the Gdansk Dance Theatre and the inner need for development, they began to shape their own theatrical and choreographic language. Bzdyl's previous theatre experience, as well as a period of study at Katarzyna Chmielewska's P.A.R.T.S school, were of great importance.<sup>16</sup> Working with natural body weight, contact improvisation, and the release technique, in which the body moves with the most economical effort possible, and the joints remain relaxed, full of 'air' yet with anatomically correct body structure, brought new results. "The group has managed to develop a unique style, drawing from the Polish (and world) theatrical and literary tradition (Witold Gombrowicz is the unofficial patron of the group), as well as the avant-garde Dadaist movement, from which the group's name derives. In its work, the group uses movement, dance, text, and its particular distinctive feature has become the play

with theatrical and dance conventions, as well as such artistic means and procedures as pastiche and grotesque, bringing original, intertextual performances, rich in interdisciplinary references and allusions."<sup>17</sup> Dancers appeared naked in such performances as *UFF...!*, *Barricade of Love*, *Non-Existent Duets*, *Red Grass*, *Factor T*. Leszek Bzdyl said that he treats nudity as "an expression of freedom, and at the same time a stage sign inscribed in the narrative. It seems to me that I don't use my body for any kind of manifestation. Nudity in the stage space is either inscribed in the necessity of the dramatic statement, or it is a sign. It is significant for the transformation of the character, it is a transition from state to state, or it is a counterpoint for stage actions."<sup>18</sup> In the Dada von Bzdülów Theatre, the undressing of the artists is thus an effect of the work on the performance, a kind of transgression of the character, although, as Bzdyl notes, the effect of transgression can also be achieved in another way - through close contact and direct exposure of the viewer to the corporeality (not necessarily completely naked) of the dancers.<sup>19</sup> Here we see how important and significant in the viewer-dancer/performer relationship are the place and distance of the action. Given Chmielewska and Bzdyl's language of movement, nudity also appears in a more »accidental« guise, when during the dance the costume reveals bare breasts or intimate area, which often happened, for example, in the *Magnolia* performance - it is then treated as a natural consequence of the free body in motion.

An artist associated for years with the theatre of Chmielewska and Bzdyl, who at the same time developed her own creative path, is **Anna Steller**. In her independent work, she has moved from dance theatre to performance, and the language of movement she has used has evolved from dance in release technique to movement reduction and physical action. "As a performer, she mainly focuses on the transparency and sincerity of her message and on radical artistic solutions. The interdisciplinarity of dance and performance is an area she has been exploring for years, trying to understand and convey important content and concepts to the audience."<sup>20</sup> The artist has

collaborated many times with Magdalena Jędra as the **Good Girl Killer** collective, and Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz. She says the following about the use of nudity in her works (including *Displacement*, *Danger Zone* with Read My Lips Theatre, *You're doing it all wrong*): "Nudity arises out of necessity, it has no other connotations, it is only an element needed to visualize the artist's specific ideas."<sup>21</sup> She also adds: "In my work, it is usually related to something that lies deep inside me, and it is only through the use of nudity in which I am simply just a person that I can convey content that is important to me."<sup>22</sup>

Artists who also use nudity as an expression of essential content that cannot be shown through the clothed body are **Joanna Czajkowska** and **Jacek Krawczyk**, creators of the Sopot Dance Theatre founded in 1998. The artists, who have been working closely together for a quarter of a century, have developed a specific model of it - they take turns creating group performances, with the director of a given title taking the final say on scenic solutions. Duets are created rarely, the performance is then always a product of the ideas of both. Krawczyk, who was formerly an athlete and then a long-time actor-dancer at the Expression Theatre, who has a diverse experience of corporeality, talked about this in an interview: "In the Expression Theatre earlier, according to the director's point of view and vision, corporeality was exposed, its sporting and energetic qualities emphasized. I try to look for a certain melancholy in my works, suspension between the world of good and evil, poetics".<sup>23</sup> Thus, nudity or partial nudity in the performances directed by the artist appears in various scenic and thematic circumstances - as the exposure of a character, his transgression, sometimes emphasizes eroticism (*2FACES*, the *Discreet Charm of Picasso*, *manRay*. *The Barbarian*), the exposure of nudity, however, is always a stage sign shown in a certain aura of understatement, poetics. Joanna Czajkowska, who previously (in the nineties) worked with Read My Lips Theatre and Gdansk Dance Theatre, as far as the language of movement is concerned, is comfortable with Limon and release techniques,

and her preferred theatrical forms are dance theatre, physical actions, and performance. She herself diagnosed her approach to movement language as follows: "Dance or dance technique was not the clue, rather we (Sopot Dance Theatre) used there structured everyday movement, sports movement, physical movement, which was later seen in our performances, such as our first performance with Jacek Krawczyk *Niunia seriously thinking about life*, *Square. Version 6*, *Empty Body* or *Lechistan Pany Arka*, where the scenes were based on gestures and physical movement, but there were also dance sequences. This happens when I recognize that the eruption of movement in a given structure will properly convey the theme or content."<sup>24</sup> About her approach to nudity Czajkowska says this: "For me, the body is a container and transmitter of thoughts, emotions, the whole inner cosmos. I use nudity only when it is really important and relevant and when it gives the viewer something that the performer's clothed body would not be able to give. Regardless of whether I'm talking about intimacy, love, weakness, pain, truth, the naked body expresses it all."<sup>25</sup> And so nudity in her performances appears in exceptional circumstances in which the artist reveals herself as a human being (*Magnification - Zoom Out*, *Introspection*. *Object of Inestimable Value*, *OCTOPUS*. *Talk to me* in collaboration with Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz), or as a cultural sign (*Object of Inestimable Value*, *Ono/Lennon were right, but wrong*).

The connection between the language of movement, theatre form and nudity can also be seen conclusively in the case of Amareya Theatre & Guests, which moves at the intersection of Japanese butoh and physical theatre. The undisputed leader of the group is **Katarzyna Julia Pastuszak**, and the theatre's long-time members are Agnieszka Kaminska, Aleksandra Sliwinska, Natalia Chylinska. "Nudity in butoh is also an aspect of costume and another form of shedding the social body. (...) When the body appears nude in butoh, it is usually partially covered, often smeared with mud and whitened. Nudity is stylized in butoh, and the costumes are metamorphic. They change along

with the dance....”<sup>26</sup> Nudity used in this way is very characteristic of the first period of Amareya Theatre's activity (e.g. *Xenos*, *Anatomical Theatre - Mystery of Life and Death*, *Dream of Icarus*) however, with the development of the company, also the way of exposing the naked body has changed, and performers sometimes play completely naked (e.g. *Nomadic woman*, *2 Improvised Duet*, *Kantor\_Tropy*, among others). “Amareya's first Eastern inspirations led to the formation of the phenomenon known as Polish butō - an original aesthetic, combining Japanese influences with the Polish tradition of theatrical avant-garde. It can be said that a dramatic theatre actor translates the experience of the body into signs, while a butō actor/dancer makes this experience itself visible - the conflict takes place in the space of corporeality itself. In the case of the European, and especially the Polish, butō tradition, it is an attempt to use the body as such for artistic activities, with the dancer here becoming both the performing subject and the matter, working on his own body and allowing the viewer to witness these activities”.<sup>27</sup> So the artists have moved from stylized nudity, to the truth of the naked body, which, through the themes they take up, often shows the human being in suffering or borderline situations.

To sum up: nudity, as a stage phenomenon in Pomeranian<sup>28</sup> dance, has transformed from the symbolic presentation of nudity in the clothed body, through the posed body with model ideal shapes, to nudity as a theatrical sign and personal confession. Important elements are the artistic form and the language of movement preferred by the artists, and consequently the place of presentation. And here, as surprising as it may seem, the proximity between the performers and the viewer of their art matters, though not explicitly. What is important is simply the authenticity and intimacy of the message.

## Janina Jarzynówna - Sobczak The Baltic Opera

ballet theater -  
going beyond classical thinking about the dancer's body



"Tytania i smok"  
kadr z filmu

## Joanna M. Czajkowska, Jacek Krawczyk Sopocki Teatr Tańca

dance theatre



"manRey the Barbarian"



"Magnification - Zoom Out"



"Wzrost i ciężar"  
Opera Bałtycka  
Aleksa Bonuszko, Janusz Wojciechowski



"Cztery kweje"  
Opera Bałtycka  
Aleksa Bonuszko, Zygmunta Jasiński

# Wojciech Misiuro / Teatr EKSPRESJI

movement theatre

language of movement: sport, everyday movement, pantomime  
body architecture / dynamic stillness



ZUN  
Teatr Ekspresji  
Andrzej Chorab, Bożena Eltermann, Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz



## Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz Teatr Patrz Mi na Usta i Teatr LEON

physical theatre, performance



## Katarzyna Chmielewska, Leszek Bzdyl Teatr Dada von Bzdülów

dance theatre



"Non-existent dance"



"Non-existent duets"



"Magnolia"



"Barricade of Love"1

## Anna Steller

dance theatre, performance



"Displacement"



Katarzyna Pastuszak  
Teatr Amareya and Guests  
butoh based physical theatre



"Kantor Tropy Collage"

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Irena Turska, *Spotkanie ze Sztuką Tańca* [Meeting the Art of Dance] (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 2000), 38.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>3</sup> *Encyclopedia of Gdansk*, Gdansk Community Foundation, accessed December 1, 2022, <http://www.gedanopedia.pl>.
- <sup>4</sup> Irena Turska, *Almanach polskiego baletu 1945-1974* [Almanac of Polish Ballet 1945-1974] (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1983), 36.
- <sup>5</sup> Janina Jarzynówna-Sobczak, and Kanold Barbara. *Rozmowy o tańcu* [Talk on Dance] (Gdańsk: Polnord, OSKAR Publishing House, 2003), 21.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibidem, 67.
- <sup>7</sup> Zofia Tomczyk-Watrak, *Teatr Ekspresji Wojciecha Misiuro* [Wojciech Misiuro's Theatre of Expression] (Gdańsk: BROWAT Publishing House, 2003), 12.
- <sup>8</sup> Jadwiga Majewska, entry "Teatr Ekspresji Wojciecha Misiuro," accessed December 1, 2022, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/teatr-ekspresji-wojciecha-misiuro>.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>10</sup> Katarzyna Pastuszek, entry "Gdański Teatr Tańca," accessed December 1, 2022, <http://slovníktanca.uni.lodz.pl/gdanski-teatr-tanca>.
- <sup>11</sup> Joanna Czajkowska, "On Different Ways of Education in Contemporary Dance in the Tri-City" (MA thesis University of Gdansk, Department of Theory of Education, 1999), 147. Under the supervision of Dr. Maria Szczepka-Pustkowska.
- <sup>12</sup> Paweł Leszkowicz, *Art Pride. Gay art from Poland / Polska sztuka gejowska* (Warszawa: Abiekt.pl, 2010).
- <sup>13</sup> Interview with Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz, online, October 27, 2022 (author's material).
- <sup>14</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>15</sup> Self-analysis of the artist's work.
- <sup>16</sup> P.A.R.T.S - School of Contemporary Dance founded by renowned choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, <https://www.parts.be/>.
- <sup>17</sup> Julia Hoczyk, entry "Teatr Dada von Bzdulow," accessed December 1, 2022, <http://slovníktanca.uni.lodz.pl/teatr-dada-von-bzdulow%D3%A7w/>.
- <sup>18</sup> Leszek Bzdyl, Mikołaj Mikołajczyk, and Maria Stokłosa, "Naked truth in dance theater," interviewed by Majewska Jadwiga, *Theater* no. 9/09 (2012), accessed December 1, 2022, <https://e-teatr.pl/naga-prawda-w-teatrze-tanca-a143439>.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>20</sup> Biography of the artist, accessed December 1, 2022, <https://cialoumysl.pl/artysta/anna-steller/?f=21-c-u-2022>.
- <sup>21</sup> Interview with Anna Steller, October 5, 2022 (author's material).
- <sup>22</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>23</sup> Interview with Jack Krawczyk, September 29, 2022 (author's audio material).
- <sup>24</sup> Joanna Czajkowska, interviewed by Katarzyna Wysocka, *Gazeta Swietojarska*, accessed December 1, 2022, <https://gazetaswietojarska.org/polecane/teraz-jeszcze-bardziej-zmierzam-do-konkluzji-w-ruchu/>.
- <sup>25</sup> Statement from the lecture at the FNAF 8 conference, Academy of Fine Arts, October 10, 2022.
- <sup>26</sup> Sondra Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 56.
- <sup>27</sup> Jadwiga Majewska, entry "Teatr Amareya," accessed December 1, 2022, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/teatr-amareya>.
- <sup>28</sup> Pomeranian dance is diverse and constantly evolving, with some artists changing their life paths over time, changing their profession or place of residence, but there are also younger generations, in some of whose performances there are scenes of nudity (e.g. *Solo for four helmets and lost time* by the Hertz Haus group, choreographed and directed by outside artist Anna Piotrowska). However, in my text, I present those artists in whom nudity is not a one-off or accidental affair, and who reach for it consciously as a means of artistic and personal expression.

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## NUDITY AS A FEMINIST GESTURE: IN DEFENSE OF A SUPPOSEDLY LOST CAUSE

Griselda Pollock rightly argues in her book *Vision and Difference* that simply 'adding women' to art history will not necessarily make it more feminist. She claims: "Women's studies are not just about women – but about the social systems and ideological schemata which sustain the domination of men over women within the other mutually inflecting regimes of power in the world, namely those of class and those of race."<sup>1</sup> This structuralist positioning of the gender question within a wider spectrum of class inequalities and racialization, which we should enlarge today to embrace also the LGBTIQ+ struggles, allows for an intersectional approach to the question of art history, hopefully without stabilizing the category of womanhood, but rather presenting it as a historically adequate description of some art historical struggles for equality, today deconstructed in the process of queering, de-binarisation and embracing transgender identity. I need to add this general statement, as I intend to use the words 'women' and 'men,' in a non-essentializing, non-normative

way, as they depict historical struggles for equality central for any discussions of nudity, artistic representation and equality within those histories and struggles.

It is much more popular to associate nudity with innocence, transparency and immediacy, than with strategy, opacity and distance. Art history and theory however complicates this popular belief by adding the dimension of performativity to the supposedly stable human body's image. Images can therefore do things, like words in John Austin's *How to do things with words?* Such suggestion however is far more difficult to explain than performativity of certain words. However, while the judge's 'guilty!' or the priest's 'I now pronounce you husband and wife' clearly do something to the materialized, historical reality, images might be more complicated that way. The image of God in a Catholic church might make people do things, just as well as the white and red stripes on the border territory signalize the end of the territory of

the Republic of Poland, therefore making anyone going beyond these stripes a border crosser, and possibly a criminal, if they carry no documents with them. Road signs also have the magic power of allowing the police or city guard to demand a sum of money, or even our driving licence, after we behave in certain ways behind the wheel. But is the image of a nude woman also that powerful? Or is it only sexual agency, which has this power? But then – what is sexual agency? Or sexual organs in action? Was professor Marian Filar right, when he argued that it is the intention to show sexual agency that makes an image pornographic?<sup>2</sup> Was Robin Morgan right saying that "pornography is theory, and rape is practice" (of violence against women in patriarchal society)?<sup>3</sup>

Feminist artistic interventions have been central to proving that the perception of nudity has been to a large extent profiled to please the male gaze. One of the central distinctions, organizing our perception of the artistic nude, opposes nudity to pornography, and in some countries found its legal formula too, where the latter is forbidden by law. This distinction has been discussed in Poland as well, and while we currently do not have a law prohibiting pornography as such, we have various legal norms foreclosing the possibility of abuse of someone's image, good name, privacy, integrity etc.<sup>4</sup> Performativity in the context of nudity could lead directly to its condemnation as pornography, according to those who argue that what makes them special is 'the ability to cause action,' in this case: sexual arousal. But – isn't any nude body possibly a sort of excitement? How would a distinction be made between a body, which explicitly seeks such result of its appearance from that which is not meant to cause such effect? For some – it is the context that changes everything, and in many cases this is right – we might experience nudity very differently depending on whether it appears on a wall of a church, in an art gallery, museum, porn magazine or a shabby VHS tape from the early nineties. Due to the historicity of artistic representations as well as the cultural and generational changes in taste, we might now see as pornographic the representations of bodies, which

– in the intention of the authors at least – were not meant to incite sexual response.

Feminist perspectives on the female nude, as well as on pornography, have been as diverse, as feminists can be. Robin Morgan's claim "pornography is theory, rape is the practice" united those authors and activists, who proclaimed the necessity of a legal ban on pornography. Angela Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon participated in campaigns aimed at introducing such a ban in the state of Minneapolis (1983) and Indianapolis (1984), both attempts were finally unsuccessful, as the legislation was voted against. In 1976, the young feminist photographer, Jacqueline Livingston, working as an assistant professor at Cornell University, probably paid the biggest price for the anti-porn campaigns, as she was accused of spreading child pornography, enforcing the sexualization of a child as well as violating her duties as parent. Each of these accusations led to a court trial, which she eventually won in the early eighties, however as in the meantime no gallery would exhibit her work, she was fired from the university, which led to her change of profession and moving to Hawaii. In 2009, two Polish curators, Mariola Balińska and Małgorzata Zwolicka, invited Livingston to make a solo show of photography in the National Museum in Gdańsk (in Pałac Opatów). Some journalists discovered the scandalous past of the artist, and published articles inciting protests, regardless of the fact that the exhibition was not one on pornography, and the pictures presented in it were a tender collection of everyday family images. I met Jacqueline on this occasion, and we maintained very friendly contacts until she died in 2013. She offered me a beautiful photograph for my first book's cover.

Many feminists disagree with the anti-porn perspective, rightly claiming that there is no scientific proof of Morgan's statement, and therefore it cannot be legitimately argued that pornography leads to violence. The plethora of these perspectives was collected by the much missed feminist theorist and organizer, Ann Snitow, who made the amazing effort to collect opinions from all sides.<sup>5</sup> Lisa Duggan and Nan Hunter on the



other hand have been documenting the 'sex wars' since the early nineties in their groundbreaking anthology, composed of theoretical essays, but also a calendar of events concerning sexual politics as well as that of its visual representation.<sup>6</sup> They have also been one of the central voices for the feminism opposing censorship, in visual arts and more widely – in all cultural production. Duggan sees censorship as part of the neoliberal pact – where the state and capital withdraws from its obligations of care and safety, a conservative narrative offering a dummy of actual protection is installed, giving an appearance of genuine concern of the state about the population.<sup>7</sup> The same can be said about the anti-child porn EU regulations, which seem to replace the care for the protection of children from sexualization and abuse by the means providing safety to the gaze of the adults. The fact that a mature person will not see a fictitious image of child porn will not save children from sexual violence, logically the opposite can be expected, as with the preoccupation with what the adult may see, the state forces get distracted from following the actual criminals abusing children.<sup>8</sup> My own experience of being accused of defending child pornography by the editors of an art magazine in 2009, when I was merely defending Adorno's claim that while we focus on what adults can see, children are still suffering domestic violence, proves that such reasoning can be true. I was told by some of the magazine's editors, that even though I actually train teachers and educators in the prevention of sexual harassment of minors and children in schools, I have no clue about what children need, because I do not have any. Luckily Grzegorz Borkowski, another editor of said magazine, found a way for my article about Jacqueline Livingston to be published anyway and did not submit to the accusations.

Some authors, such as Linda Williams, argue that pornography might actually succeed in preventing violence, as the play with images can allow a phantasmatic realization of forbidden passions, thus saving their potential victims.<sup>9</sup> Such claims are further complicated by such legal norms as the EU directive from 2006, which demands punishment for child pornography created without

using any actual models (in this case: children and minors), and thus making completely fictional images almost as dangerous as those, which were produced with actual presence of real children and their sexualization by adults.<sup>10</sup> This directive leads to creating appropriate legal norms in European countries, which are quite similar one to another, and to legal practice, which can differ between EU countries. In my book on politics of art from 2013 I discuss two cases of artists put on trial because of their work being accused of promoting child pornography.<sup>11</sup> The feminist artist from Finland, Ulla Karttonen, presented an artwork aimed at criticizing the omnipresence of child pornography on the internet. She used printed images of young women published online, trying to pick those, who did seem to be minor. However, as we well know, such distinction is particularly volatile, and so therefore the artist was tried and sentenced by courts in Finland, and sentenced for promoting child pornography, although the court decided not to act upon the verdict in recognition of the feminist good intentions of the artist. She decided to make an appeal to the European Tribunal of Human Rights in Strasburg, where, after a long discussion, which still can be found online, the verdict of the courts in Finland was supported.

The Polish artist Krzysztof Kuszej on the other hand wanted to critically address the very painful topic of sexual molestation of children by Catholic priests, of which he was one of the victims as a child. In his artwork from 2007, he used found footage press images of sexually harassed children, which he inserted in large scale paintings, thus also in his case we cannot speak of any use of children to produce sexualized images. After an exhibition of his work in Łódź in 2008, he was arrested, and his artworks, as well as computer and other equipment, were taken as evidence of possible guilt. He spent seven months in jail, which is a very long period of time. The judge of the local court invited several experts and eventually cleared the accused artist of all charges. In the verdict's explanation, the judge claimed, that it was an act of enormous courage and responsibility for the future generation to produce such artworks and therefore also to re-



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1. FEMEN activist, 2010.  
Wikipedia

2. Alexis Hunter,  
*Model's Revenge*, 1978.  
Compliments of the artist

3. Ewa Partum homage  
a solidarnosc 1982  
compliments of the artist

4. Ewa Partum,  
*Samoidentyfikacja*, 1980

open the artist's own trauma. Kuszej worked in the context of critical art, which the judge claimed to have learned for the purpose of better preparing to the trial. The artist was declared innocent and apologized for the long arrest. No appeal was made, therefore the verdict seems to be final.

As we can see, Polish and Finnish courts interpret the agency of artists as well as their use of found footage very differently. One thing remains true: the Baudrillardian argument about the things being replaced by simulacra, or better – Debordian claim about social relations being replaced by images in the society of the spectacle, is becoming true also by means of the (almost complete) equation of the production of child pornography with and without the presence (and therefore also abuse) of actual children. We need to discuss this troublesome equation without fear of being accused of promoting violence, and yet with the growing culture of cancelling and readiness of the social media to provide immediate acceptance or rejection for any controversy, we might be willing just to resign from such discussions. My own example of facing severe accusations mentioned above shows why most lawmakers, lawyers, artists and journalists, not to mention scholars, prefer silence. Yet, cases such as that of Kuszej, and the unbiased, bold defense provided by the judge in his case, show that the neoliberal productivity mode, smoothing all controversies for the better acquisition of profits, does not always win.

The controversies concerning pornography have shaped our perception of the nude body. While a naked child's picture in the seventies would just be seen as a nice memory shot from someone's childhood, today any posting of nude babies on social media cause outcries about protection of children from abuse. The protection of children and their privacy is a legitimate concern, but what matters here, in a discussion concerning nudity and its visual representations, is above all the immediate change of standards, which has taken place just in the last two decades. The protection discourse has intensified to such extend, that it is surprising that naked images abound on the one hand, and on the other – even more cases

of child abuse are reported to the police and media. How can this be explained? As you might already guess, my response is that the protection of the gaze of the adult is by no means an effective substitute of legal, social and cultural protection measures helping the actual, living children of flesh and bones to be safe from violence and sexual abuse. The fake protection measures are today replacing the actual ones. This claim cannot be substituted by even the most elaborate criticisms of the abuse, stereotypes and inequality of genders, racialization and exclusions performed in pornography as it is produced today, at least in its mainstream versions.

Entire groups, companies, collectives and art projects have been devoted to creating pornography free of abuse, exploitation, stereotypes and non-consensual violence. Festivals such as the *Post-Porn Fest* in Warsaw, *Porn Fest* in Berlin, their sister projects in Vienna, Brussels and other cities are collective entities dedicated to building a sexually active, diverse community without exploitation, abuse and discrimination. They gather porn producers offering alternative visual representations, as well as business and art production models, in which the abuse rightly criticized by the anti-porn feminists, Marxists and others are not accepted. It is in such circumstances, that what is now called 'sex-positive feminism' abounds, just as expressions of LGBTQI+ erotica and representations. Agnieszka Szreder, the co-curator of the Warsaw *Post-Porn Fest* speaks of postpornography as if it was a "whole new language, expressing the world and experience of it in new categories." It is important to notice that – as many active and former sex workers claim – such contexts really bring alternatives not just to bodies and their representations, but also of work conditions and atmosphere in porn production. Some of these sex workers are feminists, as Annie Sprinkle, as well as the authors of the amazing anthology of texts, *Whores and other Feminists*.<sup>12</sup>

With such feminist and LGBTQI+ sexual productions, as well as authors such as Brian McNair, we enter a whole new era of what he called 'porn chic' – a new sex-positive fashion for pornography, mostly understood either as class-

emancipatory transgression to what was taken to be 'low aesthetics,' or as a newly established feminist sex-positive canon.<sup>13</sup> The porn-chic is therefore a strong claim to aesthetic as well as political emancipation, by means of pornographic imagery, usually produced (or: claimed to be produced) in an ethical, abuse-free way. Such new fashion works against the marginalization of what Lynda Nead labelled 'obscene,' excluded from the stage, and therefore becomes a way of granting visibility to the persons, bodies, sexual practices and orientations, which were not particularly visible before. Emancipated, self-conscious, and also sexually explicit femininity, various versions of gay sexuality and desire, lesbian S/M and other marginalized visual representations of sexual life, are entering the stage with and by means of porn-chic, making of them the most attractive images adding surplus value to any product. This popularity of the marginalized is obviously contaminated by the risk of immediate commodification, and yet for many it also becomes a way to disturb, subvert and reverse or even transform the canon of visual representations, thus making it possible for the fat singers, gay porn stars, trans lap dancers or lesbian dommes to become pop icons, movie or social media stars etc.

Such abundance of atypical naked bodies in the public visual sphere most certainly has emancipatory and empowering effects. It is common to see children becoming fascinated with queer pop culture icons, non-binary movie characters or trans singers. Such fashions create what Jack Halberstam called the safe-spaces of 'Gaga feminism,' in which the countercultural does not necessarily mean 'opposed to the market economy,' but it most definitely means "resisting neoliberalism AND the heteromatrix."<sup>14</sup> This emancipatory and empowering impact that the changes of visual representations of bodies have on the population, cannot be perceived as proof that everything is fine in the sector of visual representation. Social media provide drastic examples of opposite tendencies, particularly when it comes to their influence on teenagers, especially girls. While we observe the growing popularity of

atypical bodies represented publicly, websites and social media profiles advising unhealthy, or even deadly eating and behavioral patterns abound. In a recent scandal, a whistle blower, Frances Haugen revealed, that Facebook (now: Meta) knew about several Instagram profiles promoting diets and lifestyle leading to severe eating disorders, such as anorexia, and did not close these accounts until the scandal was revealed.<sup>15</sup> It should however be noted that teenagers are just a part, albeit extremely important, of social media users. It is therefore interesting to see, how with the growing preoccupation of what the adult eye should or should not see, the border between pornography and sensuality is blurred, at least this is one of Brian McNair's conclusions.

A very interesting example of a project allowing to situate the otherwise hardly ever present border between the pornographic and the nude or – as it might also be called – between the sexual and the sensual – is a recent series of photographs of the Warsaw based artist, Mariola Przyjemska (*Victoria's Secret*, 2019-20). In her psychogeographic walks around the city, she often visited Christian churches, and photographed the body of Christ, represented in paintings and sculptures. These images, meticulously framed and only rarely showing the face of Jesus, could very easily be confused with any Catholic saint's representations (of St Sebastian for example), but also with a contemporary or historical dead body in a morgue, possibly a victim of sexual crime; a woman's or intersexual body (as the gender of legs or arms is not clearly defined). With such a plethora of connections and interpretative possibilities, the body of Christ became a common denominator not just for all identities and genders, but also – for all those interested in rethinking the meaning of the body and sacrum. By offering this, Przyjemska made a great post-secular use of what stands as the most central and most important mystery of the Christian religion – the embodiment of God in human flesh. This religious secret becomes in her work once again an interesting and engaging problem, as her pictures inspired by it, open discussions of gender, embodiment, but also topics





5. Judy Chicago, *Red Flag*, 1971

6. Mariola Przyjemaska, *Victoria's Secret*, 2019–2020. Compliments of the artist

7. Mariola Przyjemaska, *Victoria's Secret*, 2019–2020. Compliments of the artist



such as sanctity and violence happening to various bodies, including those most holy. In today's discussions and conflicts surrounding gender and sexuality, and the trans- and non-binary persons and bodies in particular, the *Victoria's Secret* photographic series performs a fascinating role of respectfully opening a debate, which otherwise could easily become painful. For the Christian religion on the other hand, Przyjemska opens a new trajectory of becoming something, which it rarely is today – a peaceful common denominator for a contemporary debate, usually occupied with dogmatism or exclusions. Instead of this, Przyjemska's work becomes an opportunity for a Paulinian 'coming community' – for which – like Giorgio Agamben rightly claims – it does not matter whether one is a Christian or a Jew, a man or a woman, a Greek or a Roman....<sup>16</sup>

It always strikes me, how easily and how fast the naked woman becomes a naked body in male-dominated, patriarchal society. This happens in the musings on seduction, offered by Jean Baudrillard, it takes place in Agamben's *Nudity*, it is very central in George Bataille's *Erotics*, however in this last case, it is a part of a very meticulous, and I would argue also a very pertinent, adequate discussion of, the sexual act, in which the (male) subject emerges, while the (female) subject disappears, after being stripped – like in the case of Carl Schmitt's *enemy*, also in Bataille's analysis – of all its human characteristics. While in Bataille's work the dehumanization correctly depicts the patriarchal sexual act based on the violently unequal gender social contract, in Agamben it is a Freudian slip, revealing the extent to which the otherwise perfectly emancipated and egalitarian thinker is still thinking along the cruel, patriarchal lines.<sup>17</sup> Agamben's depiction of Vanessa Beecraft's 2005 performance in Berlin focuses on the vulnerability of the fully dressed spectators walking between 100 almost naked women (wearing only transparent pantyhose). From my own, feminist perspective, it can be understood, that a man who grew up in Italy, surrounded by the canonic representations of the art historical, mainly female nudes represented solely to please

the audience, must be terrified seeing one hundred living women naked, but in a pose of full physical capacity, staring at him with a gaze suggesting possible action, not necessarily aimed at his pleasure, must be terrified. However the transition of his narrative, the move between 'women' and 'naked bodies' is to me even scarier, as it reveals the lively tendency mimicked by Bataille in his depiction of the sexual act and the disappearance of the woman in it in *Eroticism*.

In the process of shaping gendered representations of human bodies in art history, adding 'more women' might actually end up with further perpetuation of gender inequality. This argument is today often being used against pornography, sex work and its various media representations of bodies and genders, as well, as against including trans-, queer-, non-binary, lesbian, gay and other non-normative nudity into the public visibility, as I would like to call the generalized areas of artistic representations, but also – media visibility, internet images and other elements of today's visual culture, in which they also function as elements of the public sphere. The public sphere should not be merely treated as 'what is outside of home,' neither should it be reduced to 'what is outside the buildings,' it should rather be seen as what Jurgen Habermas calls a debate of the common issues, accessible to all, or – as Kluge, Negt, Fraser, Warner and other authors describe as a debate of common issues, hegemonized by the male, white, privileged, straight minority.<sup>18</sup> As we can already see, what I try to emphasize, following Rosalyn Deutsche and her wonderful analysis of public art from the nineties, is the discursive, conflicted, and active nature of the visual cultures, often presented a *de facto* impossible *universum* of some petrified images, which neither interact nor cause trouble (Deutsche, 1992). Just as in Deutsche's analysis, public art is one which questions the existing divisions between the private and the public, also the body representations subsume the role of activating or petrifying processes of representation, stabilization, consent making or conflict among different practices and visions of body politics. Therefore, they are also

susceptible to colonial processes of epistemic violence, which always complicate not just the discursive, but also the visual dimension of the representations of the subaltern, as Gayatri Spivak argues in *Can the Subaltern speak?*<sup>19</sup> As she writes, “For the (gender-unspecified) »true« subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there’s no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual’s solution is not to abstain from representation. (...) The woman of whom I will speak in this section was not a »true« subaltern, but a metropolitan middle class girl. (...) She was made to unspeak herself posthumously, by other women. In an earlier version of this chapter, I had summarized this historical indifference and its results as: the subaltern cannot speak.”<sup>20</sup>

Spivak does not, and in fact never did, condemn the efforts of representation and/or its analysis. On the contrary, she argues – following Althusser in that matter – that a meticulous ideological work is always already present in such acts of constructing representation, as well as discussing it. Thus, as Karl Marx wrote in *The Capital* the commodity is just like the Shakespearean character, Quickly (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), we can never be certain, which part of her exactly we grab.<sup>21</sup> Spivak emphasizes, that “a postrepresentationist vocabulary hides an essentialist agenda,”<sup>22</sup> thus proving, that ‘difference,’ just as the *homo sacer*, the proletarian or the refugee, is not ungended, and undergoes a painful procedure of ideological differentiation. By installing *catachresis*, synecdoche or scripting ‘of the reproductive body’ Spivak also opens the possibility of escaping the binary narrative of men/women, however – as this binary itself contains elements of violence, its dismantlement cannot avoid certain amount of repeating.

An interesting connection between the body and representation, was made by Rene Magritte. In the painting *Representation*, from 1937, he offers a realistic image of the woman’s body, from just below the breast down to the middle of the thighs. As we might remember, Magritte only painted his wife, so what we see seems to be the belly, vagina and tights of *Georgette Berger*, in a

golden, simple frame, which in shape follows the body’s contour. As we know, the other painting of Magritte, *The Treachery of Images* from 1929 became the object of the painter’s discussion with Michel Foucault, who in his book *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* (*This is not a pipe*) beautifully deconstructed Magritte’s intention. Magritte’s reasoning is one far more similar to the critical deconstruction of ideology performed by Spivak and the other members of the Subaltern Studies Group – he does not say that representation does not exist, which is Foucault’s conclusion; he says something opposite – that within the operation of representation, several processes are present, including the word/image/object triad, which cannot be solved merely by the correspondence theory of truth, in which the accuracy between the words and the things is unproblematically taken as *prima facie* criterium of the quality of a statement. This unproblematic realism is undermined in any theory of suspicion, be it that of Marx or Freud, or any their followers. It also is central in feminist analysis, therefore also art history, however due to its preoccupation with gender, sometimes class, ethnicity and sexuality are less present or openly marginalized, and thus the white straight middle class women become *THE* subject of feminism.

The decolonial perspective, as useful and necessary as it is to preserve the somewhat denied autonomy of the oppressed subject, will not save us from the violent political epistemology of the hegemonic European Subject. It will allow us, however, to express, preserve and value the epistemology of the oppressed, as one shaped in the dialectic process of sublation of the plethora of oppressions. The decolonial perspective focuses on the subaltern by means of intended neglect of the oppressor. In my view, however, by claiming that the hegemonic subject does not exist, we might allow its strength to reemerge.

The art strategies organizing political uses of (female) nudity are obviously tacit hostages of the above mentioned conflicts at the core of representation debates. In the art historical field perhaps the most interesting theory allowing the location of these tensions,

was offered by Lynda Nead, who used the ancient term 'obscenity' to discuss the process of exclusion and resistance of certain bodily representations in the field of Western art history. The notion of obscene, meaning 'ex-cluded' or 'out-of scene,' as the word's etymology suggests, opens a common denominator for all those bodies, subjectivities and genders, which do not fit in the representation regimes of the West. Nead argues that this means for the contour of the woman's body in the painting, sculpture and later also other media to always be 'closed' (the exclusion of body liquids and vagina), and positioned in ways convenient for the male heteronormative viewer. Before feminism the women's bodies could not be presented as active or professional, with some minor exceptions for professions traditionally reserved for women. The similar exclusion is experienced by any non-normative bodies, and the exceptions in the art history only prove the general norm.

We can divide the acts of resistance to these norms of representation into those expressing vulnerability, as in Yoko Ono's performance *Cut Piece* from 1964, where the viewers are cutting pieces of the artist's clothes, while she patiently sits and allows her almost complete undressing. Another strategy focuses on the expression of disagreement, resistance and/or scandalization of the unequal norms of representation, as in Judy Chicago's *Red Flag* or the performative actions of the Ukrainian and international group Femen.

Femen's strategic nudity has been discussed by feminists, who are divided between those who think that these Ukrainian and international artists are following the patriarchal script of aesthetic canon, exposing mainly young, female bodies in their happenings, and those authors, who – like Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza – see their actions as a successful feminist takeover of nudity, effectively employed to challenge structures of domination.<sup>23</sup> She explains that nudity has been strategically employed in protests as an act of resistance for many decades, and in various parts of the

world: "in the Philippines, 'undress' was a form of protest first used by Cordillera women against the Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth century. During a protest action against the building of the Chico Dam in the seventies, the Cordillera women bared themselves as a symbolic act with the intent of shaming the dam engineers into leaving the dam project behind."<sup>24</sup> Similar protests have been held in Cameroon, India and Nigeria. In Ukraine, Femen was first created to contest the sex tourism (albeit not sex work as such). The young women perform with bare breast also in other countries, like Belarus, where they protested against Lukashenko's dictatorship, in Poland (during the Euro 2012 Football Cup, held simultaneously in Poland and in Ukraine), France (after rapes of women by policemen in Tunisia in 2012) and Germany, where Femen's activists presented themselves around the surprised Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, to demand his support of Ukraine in the time of Russia's invasion in 2022. The group's members claim to be the new Amazon's, employing their bodies for the women's cause, sextremism for the women's rights. They fill in the 'Barbie woman' standard, depicted by Oksana Kis as one dominating Ukraine's politics since at least the former Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko.<sup>25</sup> The Guardian journalist, Chitra Nagarajan, criticized Femen for cultural imposition of European values onto women of the Islamic countries. Their bare breasts offend some of the members of the Muslim communities, thus making it impossible to discuss the problem of violence against women and thus also building solidarity networks with women in these communities, not solely supporting them from the outside. While this argument is relevant, its author mistakes part of the group's activities for the whole thing and criticizes all Femen's actions based on a specific case, thus committing a *pars pro toto* mistake. The legitimacy and even effectivity of Femen's actions in Ukraine, Belarus and Poland, as well as those performed in other countries, but without any connection to religion, seem to be effectively supportive for the oppressed groups. The criticism of the group should therefore be more nuanced to better construct its arguments in the debates.

The female nude can be a threat to patriarchal norms and exclusions, but it can also become a problematic tool of incels and other agents of the misogynist *old regime*, targeting women in their supposedly emancipated lives, especially in the domain of sexuality. As many authors have argued, the internet has become a zone of stalking, harassment and abuse, regardless of the cyberfeminist optimism surrounding it in the nineties. Women's naked images and deep fakes, used predominantly against famous women, but also employed by the men harassing more ordinary colleagues, former lovers or complete strangers, become a difficult weapon, sometimes causing more damage to women's psychic lives than earlier forms of gender-based aggression. In the times of social media and online dating platforms, as well as expansive backups of any private information, sometimes regardless of the individual decision of the device's owners, leaks of personal information, including passwords, but also photographs and videos stored on machines and online repositories, such as iCloud, become women's worse nightmare. Kaley Cuoco, Scarlett Johansson, Alexandra Daddario, Miley Cyrus and so many other actresses have their nude images still floating in the internet. Many other women are threatened that such a leak might occur, if they do not surrender to threats. As I argued in *Feminist Antifascism*, these tendencies and problematic behaviors should not be seen as undermining the generally emancipatory developments in the field of women's nudity, sexuality and gender politics. They are symptoms of the inability of some men to adjust to recent changes in gender role social division, similar to those analyzed by Anthony Giddens in *The Transformations of Intimacy* from 1992. Just as in 1990, it was still difficult for some men to understand that their female partners have had other husbands or boyfriends before them, now it is absolutely impossible for some men to accept rejection.<sup>26</sup>

Without a deeper reconstruction of the evolution of the feminist perspectives on nudity and pornography, it is hard to establish a feminist sex-positive view on nudity today. As this article

shows, there are multiple controversies concerning the uses and abuses of women's bodies in the visual public sphere, however it is clear that most of them if produced by feminist artists, activists and protestors, serve to dismantle the patriarchal power structures rather than to strengthen them. The subversive uses of nudity in activism have their laboratories in the form of emancipated pornography, as well as in feminist and queer art today. With some exceptions, they can be politically potent in deconstructing, subverting or overcoming the male dominance in visual culture, and furthermore – politics and society.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.
- <sup>2</sup> Jacek Sobczak, "Sztuka a pornografia," *Santander Art and Culture Law Review* 1(4) (2018): 21-44.
- <sup>3</sup> Robin Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Random House, 1977).
- <sup>4</sup> See: Sobczak, "Sztuka a pornografia"; Ewa Majewska, *Sztuka jako pozór. Cenzura i inne formy upolitycznienia kultury* (Kraków: Korporacja Ha! Art, 2013).
- <sup>5</sup> Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983).
- <sup>6</sup> Lisa Duggan, and Nan Hunter, *Sex Wars* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
- <sup>7</sup> Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).
- <sup>8</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models. Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
- <sup>9</sup> See: Linda Williams, *Hard Core. Power, Pleasure and the „Frenzy of the Visible”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Linda Williams, *Screening Sex* (London: Duke University Press, 2008).
- <sup>10</sup> Ewa Majewska, "Censored bodies, censored selves. Towards a feminist critique of neoliberal anti-porn legislations," *Transverse* 10 (2010): 51-57.
- <sup>11</sup> Majewska, *Sztuka jako pozór. Cenzura i inne formy upolitycznienia kultury*.
- <sup>12</sup> Jill Nagle, *Whores and other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
- <sup>13</sup> Brian McNair, *Striptease Culture. Sex, Media and the democratization of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2002).
- <sup>14</sup> Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Boston, Ma: Beacon Press, 2012).
- <sup>15</sup> „Facebook knew Instagram was pushing girls to dangerous content: internal document,” *CBS* 11 Dec 2022, accessed December 16, 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/facebook-instagram-dangerous-content-60-minutes-2022-12-11/>.
- <sup>16</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
- <sup>17</sup> Georges Bataille, *L'Erotisme* (Paris: Editions du Minuit, 1957).
- <sup>18</sup> See: Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991); Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26/ (1990): 56-80; Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).
- <sup>19</sup> Gayatri Ch. Spivak, *A Critique of the Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).
- <sup>20</sup> Ibidem, 272-273.
- <sup>21</sup> Karl Marx, *The Capital, Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Classics, 1992).
- <sup>22</sup> Spivak, *A Critique of the Postcolonial Reason*, 271.
- <sup>23</sup> Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza, "Women's naked body protests and the performance of resistance: *Femen* and *Meira Paibi* protests against rape," *Philippine Political Science Journal* 35:2 (2014): 251-268.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibidem, 256.
- <sup>25</sup> Oksana Kis, "Beauty Will Save the World: Feminine Strategies in Ukrainian Politics and the Case of Yulia Tymoshenko," *Spaces of Identity* 7 (2) (2007): 31-75.
- <sup>26</sup> See: Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* (New York: Zero Books, 2017); Jen Schradie, *The Revolution That Wasn't: How Digital Activism Favors Conservatives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).



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## NAKED CARE: EXPLORATIONS OF NAKED PERFORMANCE AND QUEER POLITICAL GESTURES

### In lieu of an introduction

I am a forty-two-year-old woman. I am white, Polish, European, educated, homosexual, the daughter of Elizabeth and granddaughter of Wanda. I stand naked. I stand next to Natalia Chylińska— my partner in life-art. It is the ending of our performance at the Festival of Naked Forms 8 in Gdańsk, October 5, 2022. Our bodies—gendered, female, non-heteronormative, queer—are covered with patchouli oil and soil. I am naked-with, naked in relation, attempting to activate the common space of shared relationality.<sup>1</sup> I am holding a container made of transparent glass. It is filled with dark soil and human hair – my pubic hair and Natalia's head hair which we cut for each other during the performance. A humid earthy and sweet smell embraces us. I contain and carry, I am carried and contained by the performative action of the nudity-in-flux that continues its hidden life with/in the ecosystem of interrelations and entanglements. The object that I am holding is

not a flag of protest, and the nakedness that I am exposing is not a fist in the air accompanied by a fierce protest song. It is the vulnerability of the private and intimate body that demands attention and invites new modes of co-existence based on care and recognition of differences that lie at the heart of the uncontainable multiplicity of human and non-human worlds.

### From black flag to soft political gestures

In 2018 I wrote an article titled *#MyBlackVenusProtest*. The article summarised a series of naked performances and actions that were part of the Black Venus Protest project.<sup>2</sup> In the opening of the article, I chose a moment from one of the BVP performances as a frame for situating myself at the intersection of the private and the public, the political and the corporeal, the subjective, the collective, the symbolic. I wrote:

I am a woman. A Polish woman. My mother bore me in Gdańsk, in the hospital on Kliniczna street, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1980, at 6:50 a.m. Two kilometres away, in the Vladimir Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk, a strike was going on. Thirty-seven years later I stand naked, facing what is left of the Shipyard, facing the greyness and the lazy movement of the sun that pierces the clouds. I am holding a black flag.<sup>3</sup>

Being naked and holding a black flag in the BVP performances was a clear political gesture of resistance against the oppression targeted at women in Poland and elsewhere. These performances “supported the Black Protests and women’s strikes by transferring them in the sphere of visual arts, and thus bringing the Polish movement of feminist counter-audience into the global women’s solidarity movement.”<sup>4</sup>

Four years later, in 2022, when developing the score for the FNAF8 performance, together with Natalia Chylińska, we questioned the very possibility of making a political gesture and began searching beyond the “conventional forms and gestures of political activism: a fist in the air, a demonstrator holding a placard, people assembling for a march or a sit-in.”<sup>5</sup> Understanding that “the power of the political field that operates according to the principles of domination, power, and progress, results in the dominance of representations of resistance and protest based on the use of force.”<sup>6</sup> Hence, we asked ourselves – How can we talk about violence and resist oppressive structures without reproducing violence and without multiplying violent imagery? How can we confront what we called ‘the inner politician’ in us, who tries to convince us that tenderness and care (of queer subjects) cannot be a political gesture? We also asked – How can we can “be political by means of performance in the context of representative democracy as the ruling political system in Europe”<sup>7</sup> and in the current socio-political context, i.e., the ongoing Russian

invasion in Ukraine (violations of human rights, including cases of sexual and gender-based violence and the use of mass rape as a weapon of war<sup>8</sup>); the anti-government protests in Iran where Iranian women were shaving off their hair in a gesture of protest, grief and anger;<sup>9</sup> the continuous attempts in Poland of the leading party PiS (Law and Justice) to further limit women’s rights and tighten abortion laws, which are among the strictest in the EU.

Assuming that performance itself is “a repository of critical and resistant knowledge,”<sup>10</sup> we decided to explore the caring “minor gesture”<sup>11</sup> – a gesture that can shape Rancière’s “common sensorium”<sup>12</sup> and whose political potential may lie in the fact that it activates a field of relations and marks “a space of cohabitation where differences are cultivated and produced.”<sup>13</sup> Focusing on this minor gesture and using the shape-shifting potential of relational movement, we attempted to create “a space of democracy that is empty, inviting the public to engage in inventing the people who populate it and create the social imaginary.”<sup>14</sup>

## Performance score and relational movements and gestures

Meanwhile, I would like to briefly outline the score of the performance and point out several traces that can accompany us in the explorations into politicality of performance.

Performance outline (K is for Katarzyna, N is for Natalia) [Fig. 7–15]:

- K and N enter the space. K – carrying a transparent glass container with soil, N – carrying a transparent glass container with patchouli oil and scissors.
- Place glass containers on the floor, stand face to face (soft eye-contact), undress.
- Stand naked face to face (soft eye-contact).
- K puts the soil from the glass container on the floor.
- N kneels in front of the heap of soil and gives scissors to K who kneels next to her.
- K cuts N's head hair and places hair wisps on the soil heap.
- When N's hair is very short, K puts the scissors on the floor and takes the oil container and covers N's head with patchouli oil.
- K ends the oiling, stands up with her pelvis facing N.
- N takes the scissors and cuts K's pubic hair, placing hair wisps on the soil heap.
- When K's pubic hair is very short, N puts the scissors on the floor and covers with patchouli oil K's pubis, groins, thighs, underbelly, hips.
- K and N move towards the heap of soil and hair; K and N place their bodies on the heap in a position, in which the bodies are closely intertwined like a knot, forming an image of an entanglement.
- K and N smear the oil and the soil with their hair onto their bodies, moving slowly and gently, keeping the eye contact. Finally, they stop the movements. A moment of silence.
- K and N stand up and leave the PATIO.

The performance score was based on relational movements, gestures of care and offering one's vulnerability to other(s) – the other performer, the witnesses, who were with us in the PATIO space of the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. We handled the objects (scissors, glass containers, soil) and each other with care, delicacy, and attention. We carried out physical practices of the everyday such as cutting the hair, oiling the body, holding each other in a firm embrace with an intention of creating a common safe space. We realised that placing oneself naked in the hands of another person who has a sharp tool is a gesture of trust but also a step into uncertainty. As highlighted by Natalia Chylińska, “exposing and experiencing a body that is naked, vulnerable, caring, and longing for care and protection, is about placing oneself in a state of uncertainty – uncertainty about the power of the gesture, uncertainty about its agency and political potential.”<sup>15</sup> It is a state, in which the internalised structures of patriarchy shake, and it is by entering the state of uncertainty that we create space for new caring gestures of protest that do not reproduce political gestures based on the demonstration of force, violence, self-violence, destruction, self-destruction.”<sup>16</sup>

Let us not forget also that hair holds a special place in Polish and Slavic traditional culture and folk rituals, where it was associated with the magical and ritual sphere and “(...) commonly regarded as a carrier of life forces, vitality and energy.”<sup>17</sup> Hair also functioned as a denominator of the social status and played a key role in the rites of passage, reflecting the relationships between the individual and a larger group/community.<sup>18</sup> “Destroying, combing, or cutting hair, including shaving it, were among the gestures with a strong ritual and religious character. They signified a ritual death”<sup>19</sup> of an individual and his/her passage into the realm of the new social status. It is in the light of these connotations that we intended the performance score to be a form of ‘fake ritual,’ whereby the nudity and the act of cutting each other's pubic and head hair, followed by placing/planting them



in the soil, serve as elements of our personal rite of passage towards visibility – whereby we become caring queer subjects, exposing naked care and creating “queer time and space”<sup>20</sup> for non-binary and non-normative relationality to sprout outside the paradigm of birth, marriage, reproduction and death. In a gesture of trust, we entrust the cut hair to one another, we entrust a part of ourselves. Additionally, to transform this potentially aggressive act into a caring gesture we encased the act of cutting in a series of tender gestures and small movements that enabled us to project the intention of care and empathy, and to activate performative feedback between us and the witnesses, a circulation of attention and attentiveness, a sense of cohabiting a safe space, in which we are breathing together. In this space, the physical and emotional closeness and vulnerability of intimate naked bodies emerged as a gesture of protest against the public sphere and its system of order and oppression. Following the act of cutting the pubic and head hair we covered these areas with patchouli oil that has protective and nourishing properties and is used for healing wounds. The oil was used “to create an actual, yet transparent and sticky, protective layer in the areas that were exposed, with the intention of healing the wounds that are not physical.”<sup>21</sup> As if the act of oiling one another was able to heal our invisible and silenced queer subjectivity, by bringing it to a full pronouncement in the public/institutional space of the Art Academy. A sensual and sensuous encounter, in which proximity and the physical and emotional aspects of touch, shape intimacy and open a space for a collective socio-political body of doers and witnesses to emerge and move and indulge in the intimate sensory experience. The gaze of the witnesses is following the slow movement of the hands as they spread the oil on one another, making the naked bodies glitter, as if the affects and sensations were coming to the surface – a sticky, sweaty, oily, substance of attraction and desire. The gaze traces the hands, joins them in their tender passages along the lines of muscles, the folds, curves, surfaces, points where

the fingertips sense the fascia sliding under the skin. The doers and witnesses join in a “dance of attention,”<sup>22</sup> through which the normative and non-normative identities can come together in a gesture of care, resistance and pleasure.

As I return to the simple structure and the organic flow of our performance, I see two bodies in motion and am immediately reminded of Erin Manning’s passage on relational movements and their often-ungraspable politicality. The movements of these two bodies create the space, they are agents of body-worlding.<sup>23</sup> These two bodies “stand close, facing one another, reaching-toward an embrace that will signal an acceleration of the movement that has always already begun. The movement within becomes a movement without, not internal-external, but folding and bridging in an intensity of preacceleration. (...) Our embrace quickens the molecules that compose us. An adaptation occurs—we begin to recompose. Volumes, always more than one, emerge from surfaces, recombining with lines, folding, bridging, knotting. This coming-together proposes a combination of form-forces where preacceleration potentially finds passage. (...) To move together, the connection must be alive. As they move, they reconnect. Call it a relational shape-shifting.”<sup>24</sup> The relational movements of “the two of us moving together—provides a glimpse into the ways in which movement creates the potential for unthinking dichotomies that populate our worlds: abstract-concrete, organic-prosthetic, alive-dead, mind-body, actual-virtual, man-woman. It’s not that movement directly undermines these dialectical concepts. It’s that movement allows us to approach them from another perspective: a shifting one. When we are no longer still, the world lives differently.”<sup>25</sup>

Our naked vulnerable bodies in motion shape-shift the binary oppositions and invite new combinations of experience-in-motion and experience-in-relation, and “the micropolitical potential of its in-betweenness.”<sup>26</sup> In this coming-together and moving-together of two bodies, “(...) a politics is made palpable whereby what is produced is the potential for divergent series of movements. This is a virtual politics, a politics

of the not-yet. In-forming analogously to the interval, these politics of touch are substantial but ungraspable. These are not politics we can choreograph but politics in the making. These are politics not of the body, but of the many becoming one, increased by one. The body-in-deformation is a multiplying sensing body in movement: many potential bodies exist in a singular body. These are politics of that many-bodied state of transition that is the collective.”<sup>27</sup>

### Seeds of minor political gestures

Between May and September 2021, I undertook several performative actions that later fed into the FNAF8 performance. On the one hand, these actions were part of the artistic research project *Anatomies of the Process* that I carried out with Natalia Chylińska.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, they were part of my personal process of healing the wounds of sexual abuse and reworking elements of this experience via performative practice, as well as exploring the theme of gender identity. These actions were a mode of “re-membering”<sup>29</sup> and healing by the means of revisiting personal hurt and exploring my “material geo-neuro-biography.”<sup>30</sup>

The first of these actions took place on May 31, 2021 and was witnessed and documented by Natalia Chylińska [Fig. 1–4]. The action comprised cutting my pubic hair and securing the hair in a hand-folded paper envelope. I carried out the action in my apartment in Gdańsk using scissors and a thick grey A4 paper. I began sitting naked on a chair. I placed the paper between my legs, so the pubic hair that I was cutting would fall on the paper. I was cutting the hair in a slow and caring manner. “Careful and caring in the act of taking care of”<sup>31</sup> myself. Touching the genitals and making the vulva more visible by cutting the hair that covered it. I was trying to push my fingers deep into my own flesh, touching the pubic bone, softly pulling at the skin that covers my pubis and my groins, digging into the layers of skin, muscle tissue, fascia, nervous tissue, folding and

unfolding the labia. My fingertips wanted to see thorough the cartilaginous pubic symphysis, investigate the uterus, tubes, ovaries, and vagina. My primary concern was to reconnect with and care for a site in my body that has been violated and the borders of which were trespassed at numerous occasions. While continuing the act of cutting the hair, I kept reconnecting also with the concrete geographic location where the sexual assault took place, namely the Jaśkowa Dolina Park in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz. The act of cutting my pubic hair with an intention of reconnecting with the location and the experience of being raped, became - using an anatomical metaphor - a connective tissue bridging the present and the past, and opening them into the future via a minor gesture<sup>32</sup> of caring for my intimate story and securing a material element of myself - pubic hair - in a hand-folded envelope, for future empathic engagements. It was “an embodied practice of re-membering - which is not about going back to what was, but rather about the material reconfiguring of spacetime-mattering in ways that attempt to do justice to account for the devastation wrought as well as to produce openings, new possible histories by which time-beings might find ways to endure.”<sup>33</sup> In this sense, the minor gesture of caring for my intimate story and securing a material element of myself is “the activator, the carrier, (...) the *agencement* that draws the event into itself. It moves the nonconscious toward the conscious, makes felt the unsayable in the said, brings into resonance field effects otherwise backgrounded in experience. It is the forward-force capable of carrying the affective tonality of nonconscious resonance and moving it toward the articulation, edging into consciousness, of new modes of existence.”<sup>34</sup>

Hence, the action carried out on the May 31, 2021 that encompassed a gesture of self-caring, as well as unfolding and folding of the self and matter, was also an act of detaching myself from my own hurt and opening my “isolated, autonomic, anthropocentric and agential »I«”<sup>35</sup> to a complex process of mourning understood as a “political embodied labour,”<sup>36</sup> that creates new

entanglements with the world. In this sense, “the conjunction between the minor gesture and life-living is a political ecology that operates on the level of the in-act, asking at every juncture what else life could be.”<sup>37</sup>

The second action that grew out of the above-described process was a continuation of the embodied and political mourning process, in which I attempted to untangle my relationship with the actual location of the sexual assault (Jaškowa Dolina Park in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz) and find new openings and new entanglements with life that could be born of minor gestures.

On June 30, 2021 I revisited the Jaškowa Dolina Park in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz to reconnect with the landscape that I associate with violence and loss, and symbolically heal it. [Fig. 5–6]

My visit at the site was part of the long-duration performative walk carried out as part of the *Anatomies of the Process* project created by me and Natalia Chylińska. The performative walk encompassed a journey through Gdańsk during which me and Natalia revisited places that are of special importance to us and interacted with them. We also collected stones from each of the places/sites we interacted with, a material fragment of the place, and we labelled each with a word or phrase that for us resonated with this place or with our experience of this place.

Together with Natalia Chylińska, we pushed a table into the woods of Jaškowa Dolina Park and arrived at the small clearing – the exact site of the sexual assault. This is where I decided to plant the pubic hair I cut on May 31. I found a stone on the edge of the clearing. I lifted it in a caring manner, dug a hole with my bare hands and placed the pubic hair from the paper envelope in the ground, buried it, and then covered it with the stone. A minor gesture of planting a material part of myself in a place where another part of me has been lost, muted, fragmented, and violated by means of a brutal gesture of assault. This gesture was accompanied by the wish for the hair to grow, to be like seeds that can germinate or become a fertilizer for the growth of other lives. New entanglements.

## The continuum

The gestures that emerged in the performative actions described above were transformed by me and Natalia Chylińska and became part of the score of our FNAF8 performance, calling forth the ecology of which they were part and creating new relational fields. The performance was a condensation of a long-term process into several gestures and movements that bring forth an actual change. The act of entrusting the other(s) with one's nudity, vulnerability, and uncertainty is a practice of relationality that broadens the field of political gestures and opens new potentialities for collective acts of nurturing minor narratives and fostering non-dominant modalities of protest. The practice of naked care is about personalising the political questions, bringing them into the microscale of an individual person and their ecology, asking oneself – What do I need in my personal process of protesting? What alliances can help me foster care and “response-ability”?<sup>38</sup> What new entanglements can my caring and careful gestures activate and what new human and non-human configurations do they create?



1, 2, 3, 4. Katarzyna Pastuszek  
*intimate ritual*, 31.05.2021, Gdańsk  
 Phot. Natalia Chylińska





5, 6. Katarzyna Pastuszek and Natalia Chylińska – long-duration performance *Anatomies of the Process*, 30.06.2021, Jaśkowa Dolina Gdańsk, Phot. Vero Szafran





Katarzyna Pastuszak and Natalia Chylińska – untitled performance, Festival of Naked Art Forms 8, Academy of Fine Arts Gdańsk – PATIO, 5.10.2022

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2012): 134-151.

<sup>2</sup> Black Venus Protest – a project initiated in 2016 by the Polish artists Magdalena Mellin and Monika Wińczyk in co-operation with the Colombian artistic collective Caldode Cultivo (Unai Reglero, Gabriela Córdoba Vivas, Guillermo Camacho). The project was produced by Łaźnia Centre for Contemporary Art of Gdańsk (Poland), within the framework of the European project *Artecitya.eu Envisioning the City of Tomorrow*. In 2017 and 2018 BVP was realised in Gdańsk and Gdynia and encompassed a series of performative interventions/protests in the public space carried out by BVP group I (2017) – Magdalena Mellin, Monika Wińczyk, Katarzyna Pastuszek, Magda Doborzyńska, Agnieszka Sprawka and BVP group II (2018) Katarzyna Lewandowska, Monika Wińczyk, Joanna Krysiak, Vanessa Szymikowska, Katarzyna Lewandowska, Magdalena Mellin. See katarzyna lewandowska, "Why Do We Need Women's Freedom? Feminist Artistic Activism Against Power. Anarcho-Porn-Resistance (Anarchopornopór)," *Sztuka i Dokumentacja* (Art and Documentation) no. 25 (2021): 279-292.

<sup>3</sup> Katarzyna Pastuszek, "My #BlackVenusProtest," *Artecitya. Artist Residencies as a Process of Mutual Learning* (Gdańsk: ŁAŹNIA Center for Contemporary Art, 2018), 46.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 55.

<sup>5</sup> Claire Bishop, "Rise to The Occasion. Claire Bishop on the art of political timing," *Artforum*, vol. 57, 9(2019), accessed January 12, 2023, <https://www.artforum.com/print/201905/claire-bishop-on-the-art-of-political-timing-79512>.

<sup>6</sup> Natalia Chylińska, Conversation with the author, 12 January 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Ana Vujanović, Livia Andrea Piazza, "Introduction: People Are Missing...", *A Live Gathering: Performance and Politics in Contemporary Europe* (Berlin: b-books, 2019), 13.

<sup>8</sup> The allegations of a "systemic, coordinated campaign of sexual violence by Russian forces" were voiced in late March/early April 2022, after the initial period of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. See. Bethan McKernan, "Rape as a weapon: huge scale of sexual violence inflicted in Ukraine emerges," *The Guardian*, accessed January 15, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/03/all-wars-are-like-this-used-as-a-weapon-of-war-in-ukraine>.

<sup>9</sup> The outburst of protests in Iran were caused by the death of Mahsa Amini. Amini was arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly violating the country's strict Islamic dress code and died in the custody. Amini's death was internationally condemned and triggered numerous acts of solidarity across the globe, including female politicians and celebrities who symbolically cut off their hair in a gesture of solidarity with Iranian women. See. Celine Alkhaldi, Nadeen Ebrahim, *Grief, protest and power: Why Iranian women are cutting their hair*, accessed: January 4, 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/09/28/middleeast/iran-hair-cutting-mime-intl/index.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Ana Vujanović, Livia Andrea Piazza, "Introduction: People Are Missing...", *A Live Gathering: Performance and Politics in Contemporary Europe* (Berlin: b-books, 2019), 15.

<sup>11</sup> "Minor gesture" – a term devised by Erin Manning and analysed by her in the book *The Minor Gesture*. Manning develops the concept of the minor gesture by analysing it from a variety of theoretical perspectives including art criticism, critical theory, and literary analysis and insights into the practice and experience of the minor gesture that open new possibilities of understanding politics, art, agency, and resistance. Manning situates the minor gesture in opposition to major/grand gestures, rooted in discourses and narratives of the majority and by linking it to Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, explores its potential to shift power relations and introduce social change by altering perception and allowing the emergence of new ways of living and expression. See. Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Ana Vujanović, "Notes on the Politicality of Contemporary Dance," *Dance, Politics & Co-Immunity. Current Perspectives on Politics and Communities in the Arts*, Vol. 1, eds. Stefan Hölscher and Gerald Siegmund, Berlin: Diaphnes (2013): 181-191.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Natalia Chylińska, Conversation with the author, 12 January 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Natalia Chylińska, Conversation with the author, 12 January 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Anna Figiel, "Symbolika włosów w polskiej kulturze ludowej," *Zeszyty Wiejskie*, no. 23 (2017): 126. See also: Anna Targońska, "Symbolika włosów i manipulowanie włosami w kulturze ludowej," *Lud* no. 82 (1998): 157-176.

<sup>18</sup> Anna Figiel, "Symbolika włosów w polskiej kulturze ludowej," *Zeszyty Wiejskie*, no. 23 (2017).

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, 128-129.

<sup>20</sup> Judith Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Space. Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York and London: NY University Press, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Natalia Chylińska, Conversation with the author, 12 January 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Tsing,

<sup>23</sup> Erin Manning, *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2019).

- <sup>24</sup> Erin Manning, *Relationships: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2019), 13.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibidem, 14-15.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibidem, 28.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibidem, 27.
- <sup>28</sup> *Anatomies of the Process* – an artistic project created by Katarzyna Pastuszek and Natalia Chylińska in 2021, financed from the funds of the City of Gdańsk within the “Artistic Scholarship” programme.
- <sup>29</sup> Karen Barad, “Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: re-turning, re-membering, and facing the incalculable,” *New Formations* 92(2017): 56-86, accessed January 12, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3898/NEWF:92.05.2017>.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 83.
- <sup>31</sup> Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 73.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>33</sup> Karen Barad, “Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: re-turning, re-membering, and facing the incalculable,” *New Formations* 92(2017): 63, accessed January 12, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3898/NEWF:92.05.2017>.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibidem, 7.
- <sup>35</sup> Monika Rogowska-Stangret, *Być ze świata* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2021), 77.
- <sup>36</sup> Karen Barad, “Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: re-turning, re-membering, and facing the incalculable,” *New Formations* 92(2017): 70, accessed January 12, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3898/NEWF:92.05.2017>.
- <sup>37</sup> Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 8.
- <sup>38</sup> “Response-ability” – a concept that lies at the core of a post-anthropocentric feminist ethics, broadly discussed by such theorists as Donna Haraway, Vinciane Despret, Katharina Hoppe, Karen Barad, Hanna Meissner, Natasha Myers, Monika Rogowska-Stangret, among others. See Bibliography to this article.

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Sadie Vell



Sadie Vell



Emilia Rodziewicz



Emilia Rodziewicz





Darina Alster

Ptaki wylatują z mojego serca  
 Staram się to schować pod kurtką  
 Ale one po prostu tam są  
 A kiedy nikt nie patrzy  
 Latają tam i spowrotem  
 Chyba zrobiły we mnie gniazdo  
 I wywiodą młode...  
 W ruinach starego świata  
 Wyrasta nowy świat

Ze srdce mi vylétávají ptáci  
 Snažím se to skrýt pod bundou,  
 Ale jsou prostě tam  
 A když se nikdo nedívá  
 Létají dovnitř a ven.  
 Asi si ve mně udělali hnízdo  
 A vyvedou mladé...  
 V troskách starého světa  
 Vzniká nový svět

Darina Alster



Katarzyna Pastuszak / Natalia Chylińska



Katarzyna Pastuszak / Natalia Chylińska



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