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Loop: Corporeal and conceptual reflections on Loop (2011), an unsighted durational performance

ABSTRACT

Loop (2011) was an unsighted, live durational work that unfolded over six hours. It was presented at Siobhan Davies Studios London as part of 'What Now' (2011), curated by Gill Clarke and Fiona Millward, co-directors of Independent Dance. 'What Now' presented experimental work by artists working with expanded notions of choreographic thinking, addressing time, space, movement and the body in innovative ways.

This article discusses the kinesthetic experience of the unsighted six-hour performance. Additionally, it aims to contextualize this experience by weaving theoretical, critical and conceptual concerns from within the field of dance, with personal and affective reflections. It does so by highlighting the sub-headings; Gesture, Time, Anatomy, Seeing, Hearing and Embodiment, whose function is to act as readerly and writerly landmarks within the landscape of a six-hour process and within the context of my practice more broadly.

The document is illustrated by a selection of images from the performance and a visual score.

KEYWORDS

unsighted
duration
affect
object
embodiment
site
kinesthetic empathy

1. *Loop* was initially developed at Axis Arts Centre, January 2010, as part of the Curating Knowledge research project curated by Dr Jane Linden, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Loop was presented at Siobhan Davies Studios London as part of the festival, 'What Now' (2011), curated by Gill Clarke and Fiona Millward, co-directors of Independent Dance.¹ 'What Now' presented experimental work by artists working with expanded notions of choreographic thinking, addressing time, space, movement and the body in innovative ways.

Loop was an unsighted, live work that unfolded over the course of six hours. Referring to the improvisatory processes of dance artist Lisa Nelson, dancer and writer Melinda Buckwalter asserts that working unsighted is a process whereby, 'Instead of navigating with the usually dominant sense of vision, dancers respond to circumstances – compose themselves – by relying on other senses. [...] Sound, touch, smell, the kinesthetic sense, and memory all come into play' (2010: 53). The duration of the work was determined by the temporal structure of 'What Now's' programme and as such was performed for the equivalent duration of a full day's programming. Sited on the public balcony of Siobhan Davies Studio's, the work overlapped, both spatially and temporally, with other works in the programme and as such existed in a 'between', or, as art writer Yve Lomax asserts, within 'a set of co-functioning relations or times' (2000: 140). The work was witnessed in the time 'between' other performances and situated itself 'between' performance and 'non-performance' spaces. Therefore, any privileging of 'beginning' or 'end' as being climatic points within the work was initially a redundant concern. However, after six hours the performance culminated in an unexpected yet powerful affective experience. Throughout this article, I intend to pay careful attention to the accumulative *process* leading up to this affective experience, for it to be as Lomax comments; '[...] an exploration of the means, of the 'middle' ' (2000: 13). Therefore, this writing is an attempt to illuminate the kinesthetic experience of working unsighted during the six-hour performance and as such is fraught with tensions. Articulating kinesthetic experience in a language that often struggles to render affective dimensions communicable is intrinsically paradoxical. As dance theorist Sally Gardner comments, 'How is the kinaesthetic – which is not indexed in language as a modality of apprehension to be framed [...]?' (2008: 56). Therefore, this writing performs like the event of *Loop* and as such exists 'between' the boundaries of discursive and bodily practice weaving theoretical and conceptual concerns with personal, corporeal and affective ones.

Furthermore, this writing is punctuated by notions of Gesture, Time, Anatomy, Seeing, Hearing and Embodiment. They act as readerly and writerly landmarks within which to navigate and articulate the experiential landscape of a six-hour, unsighted process. Naturally, these notions blur, and as a non-linear mapping this writing moves backwards and forwards in time and shifts in-between concepts. The reader is encouraged to join the dots and bridge the gaps in my own knowledge with the richness of their own discourses and experiences.

GESTURE

Throughout the six hours of *Loop*, with eyes closed, I sensed my way across the expanse of a wall whose surface was punctuated by a constellation of almost 200 nails. *Loop* began as a task and as a perfunctory gesture, the action of looping thread. Holding a reel of fine black thread in my right hand, my left hand searched the wall's surface for nails, which in my unsighted condition became crucial spatial landmarks. Both materials, nail and thread, acted

as guides, enabling my movement to safely navigate the territory of the wall for the long duration, unsighted and therefore in relative darkness. I continually looped the thread around each individual nail and in turn a detailed web of lines emerged, stretching between each landmark punctuation. As a spatial and temporal graphic document, the thread marked the passing of six hours and simultaneously mapped my physical gestures throughout this time.

As a durational task-based performance, *Loop* set out to make work *with* things not *about* things. The unsighted and durational framework provided temporal and corporeal strategies for focusing upon kinesthetic sense perceptions transmitted between myself and the objects: nail, thread and wall. The task set out to circumnavigate any desire to communicate narratively or autobiographically. Similarly, it did not aim to affect an emotional response from a spectator, or myself. In this respect, *Loop* started with the intent to be 'an interrogation of matter; an exercise in exploring elemental states and spaces of material transition' (Cocker 2008: 18). However, there was something about the fineness of the thread coupled with the delicacy and slowness of my gesture in its impeded blindness that seemed to resonate on a more personal and intimate register. In spite of itself, the perfunctory gesture was already imbued. A gesture's sentience, as Emma Cocker notes with reference to the work of fine artists Marie Cool and Fabio Balducci, makes it 'difficult for the body to remain neutral in the way that an object might. It always carries other and existing meanings; it can never wholly shed the associations that have accumulated around it' (2008: 21).

Despite being situated on a balcony in a *public* space, the gestures in *Loop* emerged in close proximity to the spectator; subsequently, my sense is that a more *private* exchange began to take place. In this privacy, paradoxically afforded in a communal space, the spectator was able to come unusually close to the movement. The absence of theatrical conventions in this seemingly 'non-performance' space allowed for a proxemic relationship between performer and spectator that offered a unique perspective, one whereby a

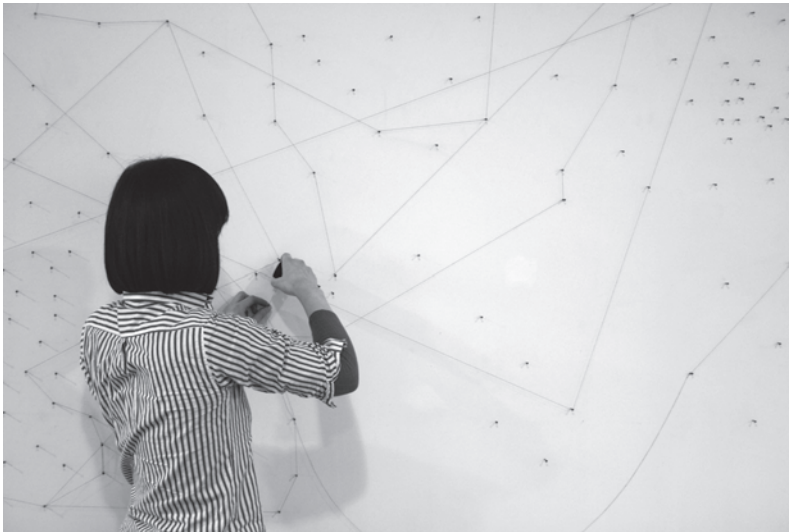


Figure 1: Victoria Gray, *Loop* (2010). Image courtesy: artist and Nathan Walker.

2. Recent works offering greater context include: Marina Abramović, *The Artist Is Present* (2010) at MoMA and, Alastair MacLennan, *Warp Wrap* (2009) at 'Marina Abramović Presents ...', (2009), Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester International Festival, where artists performed for four hours everyday for over two weeks.
3. 'How time can dispossess: On duration and movement in contemporary performance' by Bojana Kunst (2010) offers an important discussion of duration in dance performance, particularly in relation to labour and the potential for durational performance to have subversive political and social implications. Whilst acknowledged briefly, a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this article.
4. Recent works to note include: *Production* (2010) by Xavier le Roy and Mårten Spångberg at Hayward Gallery, London; *Panoramix* (2003) by La Ribot at Tate Modern, London and *Instead of Allowing Some Thing to Rise Up to Your Face Dancing Bruce and Dan and Other Things* (2000) by Tino Sehgal at Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011–2012).

heightened perception of detail was made possible. Each gesture, in its closeness, connoted to be personally directed towards the spectator, thus establishing a conversational intimacy 'between' spectator and performer.

Furthermore, gesturing unsighted in this way had the powerful affect of significantly slowing down my body, rerouting my own attentions inwards to composing my body through kinesthetic sense perceptions, an activity that 'usually happens so reflexively that it goes unnoticed' (Buckwalter 2010: 53). My sensory awareness focused upon what the gesture and the materials *felt* like rather than what they *looked* like. As a methodology, this slow, unsighted temporality gestured inwards and engaged with the density of activity taking place invisibly *between* gestures, attending to my body as it *composed* itself for action (Buckwalter 2010). An attentiveness to the *process* of arriving in a gesture became the 'work', rather than the *product*, defined by the 'image' of the gesture itself. Here, as French critic Laurence Louppe states, 'movement is de-centered – it is the ongoing perceptual/organizational change or deformation that is taking place in the experiencing body before any movement is 'figured' or becomes visible' (cited in Gardner 2008: 56).

TIME

The durational nature of the performance produced a particular attention for both performer and spectator, and, was a temporal device for framing the corporeal and material changes. These temporal strategies are not unique and reference a history of durational performance throughout the twentieth century concerned with notions of 'presence' and 'ontology'. For example, in the visual arts this can be seen clearly in the work of performance artists Marina Abramović and Alastair MacLennan.² Development of durational modes of presentation in dance, I believe, can be traced simultaneously with the emergence of a critical discourse in the early 1990s in contemporary European dance theory, most notably theorists such as Bojana Cvejic, Bojana Kunst and Andre Lepecki.³ This sustained discourse has radically challenged the ontological nature of the dancing body and can be evidenced in work by choreographers such as La Ribot, Xavier le Roy, Mårten Spångberg, Jérôme Bel and Tino Sehgal.⁴ Not coincidentally, the 'Move: Choreographing You: Art and Dance' exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London (2010) and 'Dance Your Life: Dance and the Visual Arts in the twentieth and twenty-first Centuries' exhibition at Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011–2012) signals a resurgence in the siting of dance works in gallery spaces. The 'BMW Tate Live: Performance Room' (2012) and the fifteen-week festival, 'The Tanks: Art in Action' (2012), both at Tate Modern, are current examples of this trend. A key work that exemplifies my own observations is, *These associations* (2012), Tino Sehgal's recent commission for the Turbine Hall. These paradigmatic shifts challenge spatial *and* temporal modes of making, presenting and viewing dance works in the twenty-first century and concur with the curatorial aims of 'What Now'.

These historical and contemporary contexts significantly informed the process of making *Loop*. In order to perform the work for the duration, I made a necessary commitment by *giving* time and in turn asked spectators to commit too by offering their own time. Rather than stipulating that spectators must watch for six hours, the openness of the public space implicated spectators in the decision to stay or leave. In actuality, *Loop* was a six-hour performance; however, no spectator stayed for the entire six hours and,

perhaps, nor did I expect them to. This expectancy, both on my part and the viewers, raised interesting questions related to spectatorship. Maintaining the focus and attention to sustain a six-hour performance as a performer and as a spectator is highly demanding, but why is this so? Especially demanding we might say, in a performance where the kinetic, described by philosopher Peter Sloterdijk as a 'mode of realization and existence as advancing and progressive' (2009: 4), is circumnavigated, producing an attention to the kinesthetic. In the kinesthetic mode, times attention is turned inward to perceptions of what is sentient, we might say, those sense perceptions that exist *within* the kinetic but are often deflected or made hard to grasp within the time of its advancing movement. In our mediated culture and the temporality of our times, we are required to focus for ever shorter time frames. Institutional constraints and the temporality of formulaic touring productions have conditioned us to cope with roughly one-and-a-half-hour performances with an interval in between. These temporal devices, dictated largely by the logistics and economy of dance in mainstream theatrical contexts, I believe, have affected our ability to *experience* time, both in performance and in our daily lives. A commitment to what Louppe describes as the 'long corporeal path' (cited in Gardner 2008: 56) is shortcut and our mindfulness to what dance theorist Una Bauer describes as the 'movement of embodied thought' (cited in Allsopp and Lepecki 2008: 5) distracted and desensitized. The duration of *Loop* aimed to question all of these observations; therefore, there was no music, nor any counts that bound my body to being 'on' time, rather the intention was to be 'in' time. *Loop's* time exceeded and therefore sat parallel to that of the more 'conventional' programmed works, those timetabled and therefore able to be contained within the Siobhan Davies Studio's performance space. *Loop's* excess pushed it out of the received temporality of 'performance' space and time, into the blurred and overlapping time of public space. During the performance, I was unaware of the actual time of day; indeed, whether it was morning, early or late afternoon was unclear to me. Instead, I experienced a *sense* of time, working *with* time as a material like the thread and like my body. As such, I hoped that this temporal experience would be inter-corporeal and that the spectators would be compelled to ask of themselves, when making the decision to stay or go, what does six hours *feel* like?

ANATOMY

Choreographically, the nails suggested the anatomy of a compositional structure and as such acted as a score for the performance; metaphorically speaking, they became joints to the sinew or limbs of the thread. The sparse, skeletal arrangement of the nails on the wall corresponded to a visual score that I devised by extracting only punctuation marks from excerpts of Sadie Plant's text, *Zeros and Ones* (1997) (Figure 2). The subject matter of the chosen text was particularly relevant to *Loop* and had significantly shaped the concepts that I was working with in conceiving of the work. In *Zeros and Ones*, Plant addresses the relationship between women and machines, reaffirming the foundational impact of crafts traditionally associated with women such as weaving on the development of digital technologies. The complex anatomy of networks and interfaces necessary to enable such technological advances are often disembodied or commonly attributed to men. *Zeros and Ones* and therefore *Loop* re-wrote the history of their development as embodied from a female perspective. Therefore, the coordinates of the nails were not only a

choreographic score for performance, but also a graphic re-presentation of the text. With each looping and weaving of the thread, the text was metaphorically, invisibly re-written onto the wall and into the space. The spatial arrangement of these marks on the wall behaved like punctuation on a page, affecting the grammar of the resulting movement and its phrasing. The spatiality of the nails directed pathways and gestural range whilst punctuating the phrasing of my movement with pauses. Here, *Loop's* rhythm was metered internally by breaths, some long and heavy as fatigue and boredom set in, some short and sharp as the panic of sensory disorientation set in.

Therefore, the continuity of the performance depended upon my ability to remain in contact with the thread, although over time, a sensory disconnection began to happen. Through the extremity of repetition, my fingertips lost sensation, having become overly accustomed to the texture and feel of the thread. At times, it was as if the thread had disintegrated or merged with my own skin. Coupled with this, the thread was very fine, almost like hair and so often I felt I had dropped the thread, when in fact I was still in contact with it. This de-sensitization called for a hyper-awareness and an increasing attention to my perceived sense of touch. Dropping the thread was disarming, like falling over, forgetting the choreography or arriving late for a cue. However, these moments of 'falling' were wholly necessary as it was here that I tuned my senses to relocate the thread. In these moments of being disarmed or surprised by my inability to maintain contact with the thread, I began to know something of my changing corporeal state. Particularly, noticing that fatigue, sensory disorientation and lack of visual stimulation had affected my ability to 'perform'.

Each time I was divorced from the thread, the flow of the work seemed to break. A vocal equivalent would be a loss of words that leaves one stuttering, panicking and gasping. Often, I would unconsciously hold my breath until I located the thread again. These breathy pauses invoked by the pressures of performing caused a leaning and a pressing against the nails and the wall for support. Dropping the thread caused a fault in its taut line, we might say, similar to the line break in a poem. Aware of the danger that my movements would fall into an auto-pilot mode, these breaks were important as they troubled the comfortable continuity of the movement phrasing. Here, the line of my movements verse was challenged to move along a new trajectory, and therefore as places of potentiality these breathy pauses and breaks were most engaging because here something was at stake. The audibility of my breath underlined and made visible these quibbles, mistakes and indecisions to the audience, moments that in most performance scenarios I had become highly trained to disguise. In this vulnerable space of indecision, there was a potential; I was forced to ask whether to project my gesture forwards, backwards, up or down, or, to break with the continuum and perhaps remain still. These mistakes, recuperations, repetitions and pauses slowed down and in some instances halted my actions. In effect, they returned me to an awareness of my own subjectivity. As performance theorist Bojana Kunst asserts, '[...] there is a lot of redundancy, slowness, motionlessness, ineffectiveness, stasis and non-functioning in the way in which we experience subjectivity' (2010).

Over time and with patience certain repetitions evolved; movement motifs and phrases began to emerge out of this spatial score and became more established as my muscle memory embodied the terrain. Therefore, like a feedback loop, conversational rather than dictatorial, democratic as opposed to didactic, I became an extension of the thread and the thread became an extension of

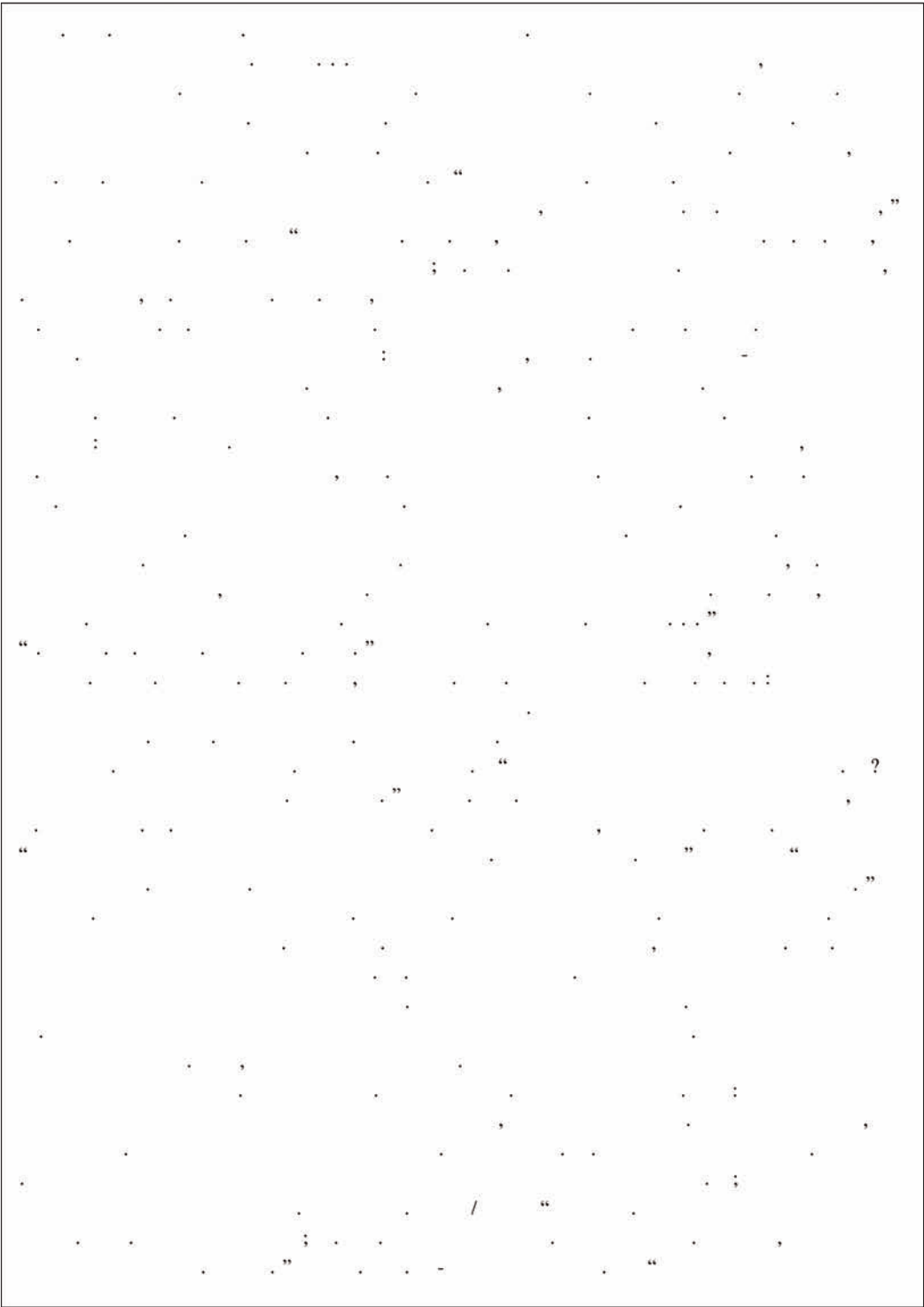


Figure 2: Punctuation extracted, Plant (1997).

my gesture. Out of this conversation, a choreography of materiality emerged and each fine line of thread became the bones of a compositional structure. An anatomy of thread became a choreography that was not only exclusive to bodies but was also performed by objects, by performing and embodying objects. *Loop* explored this notion of choreographic objects by considering how the thread, wall and nails affected my body, choreographing its gestures, postures and movement patterns. The changes and shifts that took place over six hours were relatively small and invited a 'microscopy of perception' (Lepecki 2001: 2), performing a micro-choreography perceived by audiences and myself on a kinesthetic, rather than kinetic plane.

SEEING

Throughout *Loop* I worked constantly for six hours regardless of the presence of an audience. As I worked unsighted, over time it became increasingly disconcerting and disorientating not knowing whether a spectator was in fact present at all. This affected me psychologically and manifested itself physically. Over the course of six hours, I noticed that the pressure of knowingly and unknowingly being watched propelled me to want to move more, adopting a nervous kinetic drive. On becoming aware of this affect, I renegotiated this disconcertion by attending to my breathing and through simplifying and reducing my gestures to a micro, almost imperceptible scale. Additionally, the sensation of being looked at instinctively made me want to return the gaze. However, working unsighted and therefore choosing not to open my eyes for the duration made this reciprocation impossible, making me feel both, visible *and* invisible, powerless *and* empowered at the same time. My negation to return the spectators gaze could be perceived as rendering me passive; however, this was an active passivity, one of my own agency. For the most part, I performed with my back to the audience (Figure 3) and in my own duality of presence I am reminded of Trisha Brown's solo, *If You Couldn't See Me* (1994) whereby the entirety of the work is performed facing away from



Figure 3: Victoria Gray, *Loop* (2010). Image courtesy: artist and Nathan Walker.

the audience, directing attention to the articulations of the back. Brown's negation to face the audience has the powerful effect of controlling what the audience can and cannot see. Paradoxically, however, dance theorist Ramsay Burt, echoing the assertions of dancer Steve Paxton comments, 'Paxton thus acknowledged Brown's vulnerability when he suggested that the spectator's avid eyes try to invade her privacy' (2006: 184). Whilst my own negation to acknowledge the spectator with eye contact produced a vulnerability, the intention was to transform vulnerability into a *positive* not negative condition of the work. In fact, it was my aim to provoke spectators to look 'avidly' and to 'invade' my privacy, thus challenging normative viewing conditions. Perhaps, without the possibility of direct eye contact I afforded a situation whereby the viewer felt more comfortable to adopt a close and intimate proxemic relationship to me as performer. Furthering Paxton's account, Burt comments, '[...] her device of not facing the audience allows her to redirect energy that she would otherwise have had to divert into a reactive process of deflecting avid eyes, and thus to focus instead on infinity' (2006: 184). In my opinion, the spectator is also implicated in the often uncomfortable act of deflecting the performers gaze, their energy too is diverted and perhaps distracted. Therefore, my own strategy of being unsighted in *Loop* performed a double function; it re-focused my own energy to kinesthetic sense perceptions, however, simultaneously and perhaps most importantly aimed to affect the same shift in the spectator.

Additionally, working unsighted demands a trust between performer and spectator and is thus further reflexive. In witnessing a person perform in public space with their eyes closed, the viewer is implicated in a position of care. Furthermore, as I chose not to wear a blindfold, I was asking the spectator to trust that I would not open my eyes over the course of the six hours. I must also trust myself that I would not break this commitment, either to the spectator or to the work. My eyes were therefore closed by choice and not by force and quite vocally some spectators were sceptical of my commitment to remain unsighted for the duration of the work. These mutual positions of trust and care, like the decision to stay with the performance for the entire six hours, rest with both the spectator and the performer and thus raise interesting questions related to the inter-subjective dynamic of their relationship. As Burt asserts, albeit in relation to the era of Judson Dance Theater, this mutuality not only '[...] prompted dancers to develop new kinds of embodied sensitivities, it also made demands on spectators to acknowledge physical presence of the dancing body in ways that departed radically from spectatorship of mainstream theatre dance' (2006: 53).

HEARING

Working unsighted fostered alternative modes of seeing, negating scopic drives that seem to dominate in the proliferation of modern mediated experience. Through this, I allowed other sense perceptions to guide and consequently experienced a heightened awareness of sound. Interestingly, spectators appeared to forget that I was there, as if by having my eyes closed I rendered myself invisible or at least, not actively present. I believe a disorientation of senses took place for the spectator as my inability to see seemed to be inextricably connected to an inability to hear. It is uncommon in most conventional performance situations that the performer is privy to the conversations of the audience, and in this case, hearing spectators discuss my work whilst in the work had consequences. Since my own presence constitutes

the 'work', the 'work' and my own 'body' as autonomous entities cannot be argued for. Crucially, it is also problematic to assume that I am able to detach my own subjectivity from the performance, since my own affective experience of the 'work', experienced through my own 'body', constitutes the work itself. As performance theorist Adrian Heathfield comments:

The physical entry of the artist's body into the artwork is a transgressive gesture that confuses the distinctions between subject and object, life and art: a move that challenges the properties that rest on such divisions. Performance explores the paradoxical status of the body as art: treating it as an object within a field of material relations with other objects, and simultaneously questioning its objectification by deploying it as a disruption of and a resistance to stasis and fixity.

(2004: 11)

Therefore, any attempt to assume a universal or 'objective' perspective of *Loop* after the performance, or in this case during the performance, is futile and negates the embodied perspective from which the performance and this writing intend to speak from. Furthermore, as dance critic and theorist Isabelle Ginot asserts the validity of somatic practices '[...] can only be measured by the effect they produce on a given subject, in his/her encounter with a given context' (2010: 18). As such, the value of this reflection cannot be detached from myself as subject of the work or the context of this performative encounter of writing about it.

However, in my experience, my ontological presence, for the spectator at least, seemed to fluctuate between being object *and* subject. At times, I was discussed loudly as if I were a canvas on a wall, others whispered in hushed tones. Throughout *Loop* I was party to these conversations, some constructively critical and others not so constructive, philosophical ruminations blurred with the mundane. I was acutely aware of the affect that this live commentary was having on the movement decisions that I made during the performance. I tried simply to notice these conversations without making judgements of myself based upon them. However, by affecting change in my emotions, thoughts and feelings, this external commentary internally affected my movement, gestures and postures. There was a strong desire to reply to some of the comments as a way of fielding the criticality, operating like a defence mechanism built into the performance itself. Despite this reactionary impulse, I remained silent, developing strategies for responding physically and not necessarily orally. I developed corporeal responses, ways of replying by tuning my listening so much so that I could locate spectators spatially. For example, I would rotate from the wall to face people, I would move closer to people, or, I would try to act in opposition to the predictions or assumptions overheard in their conversations. Gradually, as I became more accustomed to the surrounding space through touch and sensory memory, I was able to take more risks, venturing away from the security of the wall, albeit maintaining my connection to it via the thread. In some cases, I was able to take a seat next to people on the bench that had been provided for spectators, situated some metres from the wall. This technique affected the spectator's performance of being a spectator and in turn affected their own physical and oral response to the work. I found the physical as opposed to oral response to be a powerful and articulate methodology for reciprocity and communication between performer and spectator.

EMBODIMENT

Over the course of the six-hour performance, I used approximately 300 metres of thread; the diagrammatic result was an echo of this conversation between my body, the thread, the nails and the wall. It also became a material document of time. The following day, this sculptural document remained as a wall installation and was experienced by spectators who may or may not have seen the live performance that generated it. Out of context, the installation itself felt disembodied and my desire was to explain to new audiences of this incarnation of the work, in detail, the physicality of its coming into being. I retain that *Loop*, despite generating an aesthetically pleasing installation, was about the *process* of its creation and not the *product*; however, to separate and unpick the two becomes almost impossible. As Sadie Plant comments, 'Because there is no difference between the process of weaving and the woven design, cloths persist as records of the processes which fed into their production [...]' (1997: 65–66). Just as my hands began to embody the materiality of the thread thus affecting a sensitive and careful dynamic, it is possible that the thread embodied something of my hands. Here, form and content are not exclusive but are inextricably linked. The resulting installation manifested as a web of lines had a fragility to it that certainly echoed the quality and execution of my corporeal gestures. In turn, even without my presence the work seemed to retain its poignancy. As contemporary sculptor Ian Pedigo comments, this might owe to the fact that, '[...] our memories become embodied within the materiality of the object itself, leaving it as a repository of our thoughts or ideas that can be touched upon later' (2011).

Over the course of six hours, my body shifted its ontological state, having undergone a physically and psychologically demanding process. Paradoxically, having committed to this process with the desire for it to be, as Portuguese writer and dramaturge Paula Caspão describes, 'much more about (felt) transitional intensity than just about personal emotions or feelings', I ended realizing that it is precisely this felt experience that 'allows personal feelings to intensify and enlarge their potential of actualizing differently' (2009: 134). Shocked the minute I opened my eyes post-performance a secondary performance actualized itself with what writer Virginia Woolf, in her autobiographical writing *Moments of Being* (1976), describes as the 'sledge-hammer force of the blow' (1989: 81). Here this manifested itself in sudden tears, uncontrollable shaking, weak legs, dizziness, an inability to speak coherently and an inability to stand. Six hours of working unsighted, it seemed, had opened up, 'An ontology founded on liquid' (Lomax 2000: 193). The liquidity that this process actualized affected a corporeality that I willingly relinquished myself to. The fear of a lack of physical and emotional control that in my experience was engendered by the regulations of conservatoire training had been enacted through the 'object' of my dancing body. This somatic experience has been a particularly valuable recourse to accessing the dormant yet rich subjectivity that I had suppressed, propagated through habitually re-performing certain dance-based, bodily techniques of power.⁵ Paradoxically, these techniques that promised a better articulation of self, in my experience, became all too effective as intelligent techniques of concealment. To problematize my own earlier assertion that the vulnerable, painful and slightly embarrassing performance of self that took place post-performance was in fact 'secondary' to the performance of *Loop* is indicative of my own contradictory slippage in hierarchical value judgements. To challenge myself therefore, I would like to

5. I assert this whilst being acutely aware that somatic's in physical practice also constitute techniques of the body with the potential to produce similar effects. This important argument is beyond the scope of this article yet a developed discussion of this can be referred to in Isabelle Ginot's essay, 'Shusterman's somaesthetics to a radical epistemology of somatics'.

propose that the performance only ever really began at the moment of my emergence at the end of six hours, with the physical and emotional effects caused by *time* and the affective 'force of the blow' (Woolf 1989: 81). Perhaps this affective 'place' or 'state', which is now beyond my writerly grasp, is the 'elsewhere' that Emmanuel Levinas describes when stating ' [...] time is not the simple experience of duration, but a dynamism which leads elsewhere than towards the things we possess' (cited in Lomax 2000: 154). Working somatically throughout *Loop* served to reveal, not conceal, my subjectivity 'in' and 'as' the work, and so without inertia against this force I intend to 'give in' to myself again.

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Invisible Country Four Polish Plays

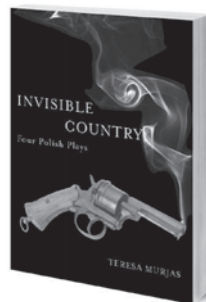
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The late nineteenth and early twentieth century marked a tumultuous period in Poland's history, with artists and writers working under difficult socio-political conditions. Well chosen and carefully annotated, these translations provide important insights into this under-explored area of Polish dramatic history and practice, and facilitate greater understanding of its role in the development of European theatre.

TERESA MURJAS is a senior lecturer in theatre at the University of Reading.



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