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Assignment #4
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Lines consist of an infinite number of points; planes an infinite number of lines; volumes an infinite number of planes, hypervolumes an infinite number of volumes...

—*The Book of Sand* by Jorge Luis Borges

I was writing score on my recent **sculptured-writing gesture** part of the collaborative portion of Jon Rossini 9 Papyri Writing Performance project. Papyrus #8 Participatory Papyrus “Writing Together A Part” took place on Zoom, Saturday, December 19t, 2020.

Experience-driven performance

For durational, processual, participatory, experiential events, the concepts of performer and witness significantly change. The strong presence of the abstract concept of witness is more important than the actual presence of eyewitnesses during the performance. The essential intrinsic quality of contemporary performance-installation is “no need in audience” and equally “no need in performer,” there is only one need that is a collective sharing experience and place.

Experiences within Zoom reality

Labyrinth is a good metaphor for improvisational collaborative explorations, and it brings to mind Jorge Luis Borges’s “The Garden of Forking Paths—“Time forks perpetually toward innumerable futures.”

Note on citation above: usually, I use this ‘labyrinth’ metaphor and the quote regarding structured improvisation experiences that I created with collaborators all these years, but this time it is a little bit different because we have a zoom reality, and the digital in addition to spiritual and physical connections. I feel these zoom paths through which the digital form of us as liquid substance streaming within this digital labyrinth.

Another thing to mention about this collective writing performance is that the preparation and actual experience were not only part of Jon Rossini’s “Writing Together A Part” project but also part of my recent research explorations of The Book: Current Diary that is a part of a bigger series The Book multimedia performance-installation that has started in 2010.

Process:

Pre-doings/pre-thinkings: tuning into co-existence within the **collective** as an autonomous **unit**.

Inspirational material:

Zangezi is a play by the Russian futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov, a so-called 'super-tale' "Zangezi", a sort of ecstatic drama written partly in invented languages of gods and birds. (1922). (*slovotvorchestvo*--Futurist 'word creation' ,Khlebnikov's linguistic developments also represent the possibility of becoming a poetic in itself – an otherness that exists within language."https://my-blackout.com/2019/04/14/velimir-khlebnikov-collected-works-1-2-3/)

- Preparing for an individual experience which is supported by collective structure and exchange of energy
- Meditating on whole and units interconnectivity
- Resembling and differentiating

Before:

I started to think about organizing my personal experience within this collective writing event about a week before. I wanted to create a certain level of autonomous experience within the collective. In the evening before the performance, I went through details—like what will be my materials, costume, content, set, energy, colors, continuity, time decisions, space engagement. I understood from the explanation of the event that time possibly would be three hours, but it might change during the course of the event.

Decisions:

Material - tracing paper that is my favorite material and the one that I constantly engaged with for about three decades. And one note on Zoom sharing experiences—I found that engagement with paper is very effective on Zoom—regarding communicative means to generate bodily presence in the Zoom environment. Engagement with the paper affects everybody in a very specific way, I am still thinking about it.

Colors - olive and beg would dominate. This choice was inspired by **Japanese old color wood-**

block print but with no bright black and red planes like to take into consideration only the background of print—empty space of a print which sustains the energy of invisible painted gestures.



Sangi Takamura (Ono no Takamura)
Fragment from Color Wood-block Print

Time:

one turn in 3 hours

Write all the time and fill out the time evenly (Yvonne Rainer “Trio A,” verticality of time, durational writing performance/installation). I decided to finish with the host’s ending.

Scoring:

Performance didn’t have a **structure**, but I might say I was meticulously prepared for the performance. The moving sculpture was the structure for this performance-installation (or the installation was a moving sculpture)

Entry

I was late -10 minutes.

I took some time to observe others—there was a lot of people (some of them perform their writing, and some of them witnessed others' writing)

Ready on my bed, sitting on my knees near a wooden panel (surface for paper) facing to screen (verticality of the time + horizontality and gravity of body was intensified by the bed)

All listed above and especially 'being on my knees' are key components that define the upcoming art/writing action-sculpture- installation. Maybe I need to explain why it is **performance-sculpture-installation**, and in fact, it is **an autonomous dance sculpture-installation within writing performance-installation**. It would be interesting to think about these qualities that make this thing an installation.

Focusing on the material (paper) - physical engagement (spiritual, intellectual implications not sure how to approach?).

I was writing on/to four sides (East, North, West, South) with the slow movement of body, soul, thoughts, and spirit.

Preparing paper—ritualistic kneading of paper as a dough—Ritualistic approach to the session, praying to meaningful nothingness, holding and keeping the sustainability. The ritual accompanies a very personal transition process and finds a place in the new frame for my art practice and research in a scholarly setting.

As I mentioned, earlier this sculptured-writing gesture was also a part of my ongoing explorations on the materiality of asemic writing-practice performances. So I have studied some material like lectures, talks, exhibitions, performances on materiality, time, and memory traces.

Materiality -- Amelia Jones on Material traces and Karen Barad's lectures. (working on it now-- here is a link to artist talk by artist Heather Cassils <https://vimeo.com/61731587#> It is interesting how all these things relate to sculptured structures...)

Inspiring images: nomadic style of food cooking; lower level, earth level and even under-earth level of preparing food and everyday rituals of people who lived in Asia (Kazakhstan).

I had this in my body because I was born and raised in Kazakhstan. I danced Kazakhstani dances from earlier childhood.

Lower and horizontal level of the way of being on the earth

endlessness of the steppe

earth of deep connection to
abstraction of the stomping action
ancient games were played on horses
men and women were strong competitors
stories and tales they told are taken
whipping gestures and stomping actions
movements of wrists were ornamental
the ancient music weight patterns are not square
bodies of reaching out lines
long
dark hair
in the wind of stomping actions
of women and horses
sweeping color patterns
the ancient games of nomads were played on horses
the ancient
music
weight
patterns
are
not
square

photo by Said Atabekov, a collaborator from my hometown and internationally- known artist



Content

chance-work (books connected to the body or artists speaking)

—” An Oak tree” by Michael Graig- Martin--conceptual artwork-sculpture-text-installation

I thought about the random number of a page and the number of a sentence. I opened a book on this page ... and this is my favorite sculpture that has a deep meaning for this process of experiencing/presencing within writing-sculpture of the moment because “An oak tree” sculpture is more text rather than sculpture and has its sculptured roots and structure.

Note (connection to minimalist sculpture):

“His early work of the late 1960s was influenced by such American Minimalist sculptors as Robert Morris (born 1931), to whose work he applied his own brand of Conceptual thinking.”¹ Link to the” An Oak tree” by Michael Graig- Martin: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/craig-martin-an-oak-tree-102262>

Perception within—sculptured writing in action, change of light, shades, hues, mood, sensing temporality, timing writing

¹ Manchester, Elizabeth, <https://www.artforum.com/print/201210/tim-griffin-37474>, december 2002

Ending

back to the screen, took notes from chat—an audio recording of humming, mumbling, and reading from chat

beginning position, rolling up the paper and twirling paper on my arm, and turning on the button with the host's announcement about ending. Holding feelings inside my body on the endurance and elasticity of the time, writing, paper, body ...

Contextual frames:

Usually, for each of my improvisational performances, I do have a structure that I am haunting while preparing for performance. For this performance, I didn't have any. Thus I was curious to read my memory about this performance after the event. I discovered the structure shaped by an invisible force from different moments of recent research on the relation between text (verbal, visual), dance and visual art.

I am learning how to practice theory and inhabit scholarly space, finding/creating a new direction for my art practice. In other words, I am inclining towards 'writing as action' rather than 'action as writing.' This event was essential for this transition and could even be considered a "rite of passage" at that moment in time or at least fictional memory about it tracing/mapping this passage.

Text (verbal and visual), Dance, and Visual Art

I didn't have a structure and had no idea what I would do during this collective writing. Though I meticulously prepared for the experience by meditating on different aspects of the future process, preparation creates a possibility to immerse myself in the real and digital environment. I have personal techniques I usually use to begin when I don't have a plan. One of this kind is to ask what ancestors would do. In this case, some logistics defined in pre-beginning created this ancestral image. It was a very artificial construct of mutant that partly belongs to the surrogate entity of nomad, preferably in horizontal and lower level. This image is complex because of the geography of my life and affected by childhood memories significantly.

Childhood sentiments

I was about two years old, and I was running around a table while all the adults were celebrating something. I wished to never stop running, moment by moment, circle by circle—I was dancing!

I loved to go to a steppe near my house to sit and observe the monotonous, monochrome landscape with never-changing blue sky and snowy mountains far away. I dreamed about my future.

What my Dance Body Holds

My movement training is diverse and rooted in classical ballet, character dance, traditional folk dance of Kazakhstan, modern dance, release technique, contact improv, and Butoh.

The dances that my body holds are not mine, in a sense that I have no legacy to any of the listed above conventions. Dances that my body holds are not existing or not mine, but their creation is based on genuine human traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and still alive games. Do the dances live in my body? Do I have the right to own these dances?

Kazakhstani dance, which never existed and could be defined as an “invented tradition.”

Character dances of Soviet Republics are a sort of invention too. It is folklore that was transformed using classical ballet techniques to resemble all dances of Soviet republics. I studied classical ballet from early childhood through my whole life, but my body never fit into this system. Modern dance was transmitted to me by my Cuban friends/teachers, and this one was made up from Afro-Cuban folklore and Marta Graham technique as an outcome of a colonial project. I never had a conventional relationship with any mentor of any of the following techniques strongly present in my body— Release, CI, and Butoh.

I have no rights to all these dances. My body holds no dance agency; all these dances are appropriated or replace (fabrication, simulation). My body is full of something that might be illegal to have and transmit. Still, from another side, I had a very personal experience of the body I own, and that body produced, after all, it's unique and the only technique.

For ten years, starting at a very young age, I danced and performed with a **Kazakhstani dance** ensemble. Interestingly, because there is no historical evidence of this dance form, there is still a debate as to whether an ancient folkloric dance of the region of Kazakhstan actually existed. The current cultural dance of Kazakhstan, was created after the Russian Revolution and subsequent reorganization and is based upon many elements of Kazakhstan's ancient nomadic horse-riding culture as well as draws inspiration from the beautiful, endless landscape. In this sense, we can see Kazakhstani dance as an “invented tradition” that exists very much in the minds, bodies, and cultural memory of people living in Kazakhstan. This invented tradition mattered to me because I drew from it while creating performances in the U.S.

For example, in 2011, I created a performance called *Rustling Silk*, which was inspired by my childhood landscape: the steppe horizon, infinite line, and the immense flat territory experienced by nomads. *Rustling Silk* explored the lost civilization of the ancient nomadic horsemen. In this full evening, the multimedia performance, I combined structured improvisation, dance, music,

video, and live painting to uncover our forgotten past— aggressive and constantly moving—in an innovative and visually rich exploration of humankind’s deep roots in rootlessness.

The project—an exploration of the ancient nomadic culture of inner Asia and our deep roots in rootlessness—is socially relevant. Contemporary society has begun to redefine the meaning of “home” through technology, particularly the internet. I cannot say that I have roots in a specific country, and for a long time, I have felt ungrounded and without a true home. With technology, I have begun to feel that my sense of rootlessness is not only natural but a common phenomenon. Society’s sense of roots, home, and community has changed, and we see a resurgence of the feeling of freedom as if we were the ancient nomadic horsemen in our contemporary society.

Thinking about sculpture, movement, and installation

I was wondering why I like to make a thing from a movement rather than choreograph moves? I am not sure that I am explaining it in the right words, still thinking about that. I have this spontaneous aspiration toward creating an object-movement. I enjoy choreographing a “stillnessing movement” but not a “moving movement.” My obsession with stillnessing movement connects to the last two decades’ intensified presence of dance in the art world. I spent a good amount of time thinking about this tendency and creating dance installations for open space. I am obsessed with the idea of approaching movement as an object as a thing. Is it because of the materiality of the movement, like trying to assert its material value... I am not sure how to approach this observation.

These object-movements could exist as a mobile structure and in constant repetitive movement pattern (kinetic concept and mobile shape-structure)

Connections to sculpture, dance, and linguistics:

I am interested in comparing Text in Art and Text in Dance and thinking about its interweaving history. In this respect, some information from Tim Griffin’s article about curator Laura Hoptman’s “Ecstatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language” exhibition could be very useful. Griffin mentioned that Hoptman used text as the exhibition’s fulcrum and created ‘an intriguing historical perspective’ by exhibiting avant-garde artists’ works from the beginning of the 20th century to the present.

“WRITING DURING A VERY DIFFERENT MOMENT IN ART, scholar and critic Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, seeking to construct a genealogy for contemporary conceptual practices, famously

asserted that the artist Robert Morris irrevocably altered the reflexive constitution of artmaking after modernism by **introducing linguistic theory into his engagements with sculpture**. In so doing, Buchloh suggested, the sculptor necessarily extended the parameters of art about itself outward to include the very architectural surfaces and frames that provided any artwork with its physical syntax and, for later generations, the institutional infrastructures that gave art its circulatory grammars. To make a work of art (or even just to examine it critically), in other words, subsequently demanded some consideration of the context that gave rise to its very visibility.”

— Tim Griffin, “Ecstatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language”

About whom written in the passage above, Robert Morris was one of the most prominent theorists of minimalist sculpture; he also made significant contributions to the development of performance art, land art, the Process Art movement, and installation art. It is essential to mention that dancers impacted the artworks of minimalist sculptors and vice versa. Richard Serra said, “Artists were interfacing with a lot of dancers at the time. We thought that there were more ideas generated in dance than being generated by sculptures or painters.” Interesting to note that Robert Morris is Simon Forte’s ex-husband, also other marriages between artists and dancers like Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, among others ...

This material provoked questions about and revealed parallels with the innovative dance world and its impact on changes that happened in artmaking through 1960th-70th in the USA, specifically the interrelation between avant-garde dance, minimalist sculpture, and language.

Also, it was interesting to notice changes in text manifestations in material and space, depending on the timeline of exhibited works. Griffin wrote, “If artworks from earlier times here suggested an ordering of space effectively being unlocked by language, such more recent pieces then suggested how language is always imbricated in social context and inevitably gives rise to kinds of signification—and, further, the possibility to write in space anew.”



