

KLAXON 6





(when art lives in town)

URBAN EXPRESSWAY

For an Inclusive City

Antoine Pickels & Benoit Vreux

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URBAN EXPRESSWAY

For an Inclusive City Antoine Pickels and Benoit Vreux

This edition of *Klaxon* continues in a similar dynamic vein to our previous issue, which was also devoted to the theme of social justice. We would now like to introduce you to new forms of thinking on or artistic practices aiming to restore public space/s to bodies usually relegated to the margins: here, we will focus on experiences by women, by Roma, by young people and immigrants, by the homeless and the sick, by transgender people.

Our sixth issue thus opens with a text by feminist and queer geographer Rachele Borghi, whose thoughts are illustrative of these currents of thought that have vigorously nourished our approach here at Cifas over recent years in how we look at the issue of open public space. Feminist epistemology allows us not to dissociate the intimate and the domestic from the political and the social, all while clearly distinguishing that which in public space amounts to dominating apparatuses—particularly with regard to women, while cognizant of the fact that similar logics are at work for “every-body” who remains outside the frame. What particularly garners our interest is that Borghi touches upon performing arts; her thought engages with the body as a potential tool in those struggles, which can transform the performativity undergone (brought to light by philosopher Judith Butler) by a rebellious performance.

There are multiple ways to envisage such a rebellion against dominant apparatuses of normalization, this return of the marginalized to the heart of the city. It may simply involve modest actions, such as those carried out by curator Agata Siwiak in Poland with the Roma community (which in Poland, as elsewhere throughout Europe, is victim to violent xenophobic attacks): “micro-utopias”, as the author herself refers to them, which nevertheless are able to create communities embracing feelings and responsibility, under the aegis of taking care of others. Modest also in its geographical scope—a single neighbourhood in Dublin—but ambitious in its duration, the work of Fiona Whelan with young people in this neighbourhood, analysed by geographer Gerry Kearns, spans a dozen years and shakes up prevailing prejudices by re-crafting the link between young people, “always-already suspected” due to their youth, and the Dublin police force, by dint of artistic projects that bring them together in the streets or at the museum... The young and hyperactive duo of artists Habitants des images fight against the discrimination experienced by the “citizens from mixed cultural and social backgrounds who comprise the rich diversity of Brussels.” Their work, which Emmanuelle Nizou puts into perspective, combines role play, charade, photography, interventions in public space, citizens creating their own narratives, re-appropriating urban space, and revaluating shaken identities.

Artistic actions such as these, which demand substantial investment by artists and their possible social collaborators alike, call for courageous backing. This is certainly the case with the radical work undertaken at the Spill Festival in the United Kingdom, which alternates between London and Ipswich; for some years the festival has pressed ahead with artistically experimental and politically committed programming, one of whose leit-motifs is social justice. Numerous projects examine this directly in urban space, triggering debate on questions of origins, of illness or gender, as critic Diana Damian explains.

While all these diverse projects may differ in their respective angles of attack: from community-based (Siwiak) to territorial (Whelan); from public image (Habitants des images) to identity (Spill), they all share a common trait: their central vector is living bodies communicating. These bodies, as Borghi reminds us, constitute in themselves a space within public space. An illustrative example of this would be the New Zealander artist val smith’s performance *Gutter Matters*, to whom we dedicate a photographic report in this issue, realized during its iterations in Auckland (NZ), Turku (FI) and Brussels (BE). Engaged in a Gay Shame parade, smith’s body scrutinizes (in the company of

whoever wants to accompany them) the cities' sewer networks, thereby personifying a landscape of problematics, which we project onto transgender bodies, embodied by their crawling on the city sidewalks.

Public space, which by its very definition should be shared by every single member of society and be inclusive for any form of exchange, all-too-often reveals itself a normed and normative place, which excludes or stigmatizes as often as it brings together. Its shared use, far from ensuring a natural social cohesion, forces us to dismantle the mechanisms of injustice at work, whether political or more individual in nature.

Artistic work, even if not directly combatting the causes of these inequalities, can activate in us this rebellious performance, which Borghi evokes. By enabling each and every-body, in their very singularity, to re-appropriate a place, to inscribe a new social imaginary, art in public space contributes to living together in a way that might not be completely conciliated, but at least more harmonious.

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MAIN STREET

Bodies in Space, Bodies that Make Space

Rachele Borghi

Public space is neither neutral nor universal; every-body who passes through it cannot equally explore it and take ownership of it. Taking into account, however, the role that space plays as a vector of social norms is not obvious. Public space is conceived, managed, and modeled on the basis of a rigid binary design that reflects our vision of society and the diverse bodies that inhabit it (male/female, homosexual/heterosexual, white/non-white, fit/ disabled, young/old, rich/poor, etc.) This normativity of social space, however, is obscured by a supposed “neutrality” and a mythified idea of *agora*, of open public space.

It is in our physical bodies that the dynamics of social control are applied.

Space legitimizes, sanctions, and constructs the norm. Our use of space can consequently buttress, legitimize and replicate these norms, in a more or less conscious way. Spaces play a paramount function in replicating and naturalizing power structures; and, it is *in* bodies, *in* our physical bodies, that the dynamics of social control are applied. Public space will therefore acquire a highly normative character, which at once sanctions and excludes bodies and subjects, which do not conform with social norms. What, then, are these bodies that are *out of place*? None other than those very bodies that incorporate lifestyles not adhering to that which is deemed “normal”. Their stigmatization and spatial exclusion contribute to spawning notions of citizenship and a legal system built on the basis of normativity, even hetero-normativity. For these subjects, the use of public spaces can become very restrictive and anxiogenic. Is it possible to overturn the perspective? Is it possible to divert dominant discourses by dint of these very same bodies that have been maligned and sidelined?

Space and its uses equally play a part in buttressing social injustice. Everybody more or less consciously participates in legitimizing spatial norms through their daily actions; entering a toilet, for instance, marked “man” or “woman” legitimizes the existence of merely two categories, thus excluding transgender subjects who feel themselves as neither belonging to one group or to the other. And yet, we can reject norms, for example, through transformative uses of space, through reactions, actions, and by employing micro-policies in confronting, reversing and overcoming control of bodies and the imposition of dominant standards.

If the “dispositifs”⁰¹ are “a resolutely heterogeneous whole, comprising speeches, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions [...]”,⁰² can we think of physical space as a participant in the “dispositif”? Indeed, space is often instrumentalized to signify people’s otherness, and its corollary, their legitimacy or illegitimacy to appear in public. This is not limited, however, to material and ideal public space that political power produces, on varying levels, and public space of which dominant society fashions the norms of usage. It is thus possible to take advantage of the “stigma” of otherness in order to create spaces of resistance, or “counter-spaces.”⁰³

01. *Dispositif* is a term used by Michel Foucault to refer to the various institutional, physical, and administrative mechanisms and knowledge structures which enhance and maintain the exercise of power within the social body. It is translated variously as ‘device’, ‘machinery’, ‘apparatus’, ‘construction’, and ‘deployment’.

02. Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, volume III, Paris, Gallimard, coll. “Bibliothèque des sciences humaines”, 2004.

03. Claire Hancock, “Il luogo della differenza : stabilire l’uguaglianza, aprire spazi di soggettivazione politica”, in *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana* (under the direction of R. Borghi and M. Schmidt di Friedberg), 1, Rome, 2011, pp. 93-102.

Despised, stigmatized, and sidelined bodies can equally be transformed into instruments for affirming marginalized identities.

Indeed, those considered “other” with regard to the norm possess exceptional potential to subvert. Any minority, be it ethnic, sexual, gender, etc., enjoys a common denominator: the a-normalized body. Despised, stigmatized, and sidelined bodies can equally be transformed into instruments for affirming marginalized identities. This kind of switching can take place through performance. The relationship between performance and body is articulated in public space by breaking down the dominant order, notably staged by what can be termed militant “new movements”.

Here, the relationship/s between space, body, and performance is analyzed from the feminist queer approach and from feminist epistemology.

Feminist Glasses to Interpret Public Space

The evolution of modern cities has contributed to the deepening fissures between intimate space and public space, a context in which social life unfolds. As a result, the idea that some subjects are *out of place* in public space has been strengthened. Feminist critique has highlighted how the organization of urban space is linked to a male world-view and has contributed to underscoring a city’s hidden dimension/s. Feminist geography has included feminism’s theoretical contributions to explain and interpret geographical facts. Referring to the city’s gender dimension, geographer Dina Vaiou observes: “Women have not been absent from the urban process, as traditional research and urban theory reveal. In reality, they were hidden within / inside. Their absence results from research methods that replicate men’s experiences.”⁰⁴

04. Dina Vaiou, “(Ri)constituire ‘l’urbano’ attraverso le storie di vita delle donne”, in *La città delle donne. Un approccio di genere alla geografia umana*, under the direction of G. Cortesi, F. Cristaldi, and J.D. Fortuijn, Bologna, Ed. Patron, 2006.

The dominance of power relations in public space is also reflected in the prevailing sense of insecurity characterizing minorities’ urban experience.

Urban planning procedures often do not acknowledge the role the dominant system and its associated values assume in reproducing privileges enjoyed by certain social categories residing in the city. This triggers inequalities in accessing knowledge about the city and to urban resources. The dominance of power relations in public space is also reflected in the prevailing sense of insecurity characterizing minorities’ urban experience, most notably those by women. Patriarchal norms are embodied, for example, in sartorial conventions considered “conforming” with certain places, while deemed “out of place” for others. Consequently, some urban public spaces are transformed into “forbidden” zones. In this regard, urban planner Silvia Macchi denounces the fact that reinforcing security control devices (more public lighting, reinforced police presence, etc.) is not enough, for it does not call into question the dominant social relations and the system of oppression between the privileged and the minority (in this case women) in urban space: “We could ask ourselves whether the political project for the ‘safe city’ should not consider a more profound

change, which goes beyond merely reducing 'feelings of insecurity' so as to deconstruct the notion of urban in / security by dint of feminist criticism and give rise to the idea of an urban environment capable of freeing womans' urban experience from the image of victimhood."⁰⁵

05. Silvia Macchi, "Politiche urbane e movimenti di donne: specificità del caso italiano", in *La Città delle donne. Un approccio di genere alla geografia umana*, under the direction of G. Cortesi, F. Cristaldi and J.D. Fortuijn, Bologna, Ed. Patron, 2006.

Another source of knowledge about the city and public space, that takes into account differing experiences of space, and the impact of the gaze on bodies that have been cast as a minority.

To unravel the mechanisms producing space, feminist epistemology has exposed their relationship with the production of knowledge about space. Generating knowledge is not objective but refers to those who generate that knowledge. It is, therefore, deeply connected with the power structures in place. Whenever power is (as is still often the case) exercised by men, it goes without saying that knowledge is not objective, but rather corresponds to a masculine and dominant position (and, more precisely, to the male gaze, to the masculine gaze). Universalism is founded upon the axiom that a God's eye view does exist, a position from which the world can be viewed from aloft and grasped in its totality. This position has been reinforced by the 'construction of drawers', that is to say by establishing rigid ideological lines, schemas of knowledge in which to classify the phenomena studied from a binary perspective (nature is pitted against culture, man against woman, etc.) Feminist critique has questioned this rigid fragmentation of the world, stressing the ramifications of standardizing the taxonomic method and its consequences on the links between research and the object of research, conceived as distant and detached. Feminists have focused their attention on another limitation in generating traditional knowledge: the belief that it is possible to observe the world "from outside", in an "objective" way. The researcher (male, white, western) is conceived as external to the reality being observed, without any place for his subjectivity. The method of research is often quantitative, adopting the third person writing style that is at once passive and underpinned by technical terminology. This allows the scientist to distance himself from any

kind of responsibility in relation to his own research, asserting the non-political nature of scientific research.⁰⁶ Feminist critique has responded to the idea that the scientificity (and hence the legitimacy) of content would be subordinated to this type of methodological and stylistic organization, by creating new methodologies that have emphasized not only the subjective component but also the relationship of mutual influence between researcher and subject of research (especially in field research).

Through these methods, they generate another source of knowledge about the city and public space, a knowledge that takes into account differing experiences of space and the impact of the gaze on bodies that have been cast as a minority, which constitute the mirror of how race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. have been assigned. Feminist critique has thus focused attention on the subjects themselves and the "hidden", irrational, emotional, and existential aspects linked to involving individuals in the use of space.⁰⁷

06. Deborah P. Dixon and John Paul Jones III, "Feminist Geographies of Difference, Relation and Construction", in *Approaches to Human Geography*, under the direction of S. Aikten and G. Valentine, London, Ed. Sage, 2006.

07. G. Cortesi, "Donne, società, territorio; il quadro generale", in *Percorsi di geografia sociale*, under the direction of D. Lombardi, Bologna, Patron, 2006.

This line of thought on generating knowledge and the role played by the producers and institutions in restating a knowledge that highlights privileged and dominant subjects, all while keeping minorities in the background, has been to the forefront of the approach adopted by queer theory, strongly fuelled by postcolonial studies. Queer theory has greatly contributed in bringing together theoretical research on the theme of sexuality in the second phase of cultural studies, marked by feminism and postcolonial criticism. By criticizing the dominant hetero-normativity and the social repression of the subordinated, queer theory has allowed the subordinated to legitimize their presence as active subjects of knowledge, as productive subjects and no longer merely "subjects studied". The term queer has spread in and outside the academic context and has fostered a proliferation of applications, both in the academic and activist spheres. Teresa de Lauretis employed the term queer (hitherto used as a synonym for bizarre, strange,

“fag”...) alongside the word “theory” in 1990.⁰⁸ She wanted to differentiate between her use of the term and that by Queer Nation, the activist organization. The term had already been circulating among subcultures, and deployed to demand the right to exist for those cast as minorities, bodies out of place, which have their place in (public) social space solely on condition that they agree to adhere to the integration policies in the dominant discourses and norms. Feminist and queer criticism has favoured exploring the physical dimension of the subject in its use and its perception of space, in its sense of feeling *out of* and/or *in* place, whenever the dynamics of social control is applied to bodies.

08. In Santa Cruz, at the University of California, during her address to the symposium “Lesbian and Gay Sexualities”.

Body and Space

The body is in a continuous relation with space. Not only is the body *in* space, but it is also space. The body is thus a social space; it interrelates with other spaces and it participates in generating space. The fact that the body is continually connected with space obliges us to “recognize that individuals in society are subject to decisions, even oppression, that are linked to their physical characteristics. The human body cannot be disregarded in research on how the individual conceives danger, distance, violence, hostility in the environment, health, and the spatial uses he or she creates.”⁰⁹

09. Francine Barthe-Deloizy, *Géographie de la nudité : être nu quelque part*, Rosny-sous-Bois, Ed. Bréal, 2003, p. 213.

The body is a social space; it interrelates with other spaces and it participates in generating space.

The body is an indispensable factor in analysing the relationship to the individuals' space, to their uses of and to their access to public space. Thinking about the body is thus closely linked to considerations given to spatial inequalities, whenever “the body marks the boundary between oneself and others, in the psychological sense but also in a social sense. [...] It is the means of making contact with space and experiencing it.”¹⁰ The body is also a primary medium for exercising state sovereignty: not only does it govern the populace, but also individual bodies, as productive and re-productive bodies. The body is also an issue in the world's great geopolitical visions and inequalities in organizing societies.

10. Gill Valentine, *Social Geographies: Space and Society*, New York, Ed. Prentice Hall, 2001.

According to Francine Barthe-Deloizy, the body's experience in space is at once phenomenological, social, and political. Strong socio-spatial structures co-exist in the body: it forms the boundary between the intimate and the public, between personal and individual space, where collective norms are integrated or contested. The body and its sexuality are therefore fundamental systems in generating space. And yet, space is a system to generate corporeity. Urban space, in particular, constitutes an important system involving submission and standardization, as well as the replication of differentiations and deep social inequalities, as an ideal ground for devising and managing citizenship.

Generating a definite social space equally serves to produce a certain “body” type.

Gender geography has applied Michel Foucault's thinking on space in order to reveal how it mirrors unbalanced power relations, while triggering strong and violent dynamics of social control. Generating a definite social space equally serves to produce a certain "body" type; a body conceived in its material dimension as well as in a set of socially constructed concepts and ideas. These ideas and/or concepts determine and sanction that which is "appropriate" (and thus normal and normed) for some bodies, and that which is not for others. The way of perceiving and considering bodies becomes a mirror of social construction and control over space; the location, the micro-scale where relations and concepts of social relations assume their form.

The body is transformed into a bio-political boundary; what is here at stake is the definition of legitimate spatial social order.

Should we zero in on gender, we can see how the female body is linked to certain values (paragons of beauty, virtue, freedom, and justice) that the nationalist imagination has customized to the nation's needs. Indeed, women have assisted in reproducing the nation from a biological, cultural, and symbolic point of view. In this discursive construction, men represent "normality". The male body thus becomes the "appropriate" body for public space, a body not only identifiable as "male", but "male", "white", "western" and "heterosexual". These categories construct the "norm", consequently determining "a-normality". But this codification process is often constructed by defining that which is not deemed "normal". Normality is thus taken for granted, as something "natural" and "obvious". According to how they adapt to the codified "norm", subjects are either excluded or included in public space and social space. The body is transformed into a bio-political boundary; what is here at stake is the definition of legitimate spatial social order.

If body and space are thus closely linked, the body can embody the first space to be mobilized in creating (public) space for reacting to imposed norms and systems of oppression. The *performative* body thus becomes an instrument for resistance and counter-production. What, then, is the link between thinking on the body-space and on performance?

Performance makes it possible to transform the body—stigmatized, rendered invisible, weakened—into an instrument to react against the prevailing urban order. Symbolizing social exclusion and marginalized circumstances, the body itself thus becomes, through inversion, a powerful anchorage point for reaffirming its own existence. It is thus possible to play around fixed identities by enacting and transgressing them. We thereby witness a symbolic transformation of the social body, which, through irony and contempt, resists the will to define itself in normative terms. Performance executes a subversive function of the pre-established order, which oppresses "other" voices and identities; it allows it to play around with codes and normative symbols.

The concept of performance refers to embodying or staging a creative act. It is a symbolic action in which the militant / artist / activist / artist renders visible the invisible with the help of aesthetic means (forms, colours, materials), and through his/her body. In this case performance refers to a body in action that perpetually creates a new reality.¹¹ If the performativity is compelling, it could represent a force for social and political transformation, for we can always transform the value of performance and employ it to affirm, demonstrate, make visible or simply focus attention on some particular matter. Hate speech, is a telling example: insults can be deployed in a distorted, creative, and positively deviant way.¹² Performance thus can subvert the norm instead of replicating it. How? By the same means as performativity: by dint of repetition, "inadequate reiteration", and performative discrepancy.

This is why performance is one of the new militant modes¹³ that have characterized collective movements since the 2000s. These are enactments, actions, performances that place the body at the centre of things, notably as an instrument to resist norms

¹¹ Nigel Thrift, "Afterwords", in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 18, London, Sage, 2000.

¹² Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech*, Routledge, London, 1997.

¹³ Jacques Ion, Spyros Frangiadakis and Pascal Viot, *Militar aujourd'hui*, Paris, Autrement, 2005.

and as a means to render visible and denaturalize hetero-normal space, invariably from an intersectional perspective, as, for example, in the feminist and trans-feminist militant movements, where struggles converge and an assertive and clamorous alliance between minority subjects emerges.

Audacity, vitality, movement, freedom, humour are becoming intrinsic characteristics of action.

Social conflicts are beginning to evolve toward forms of ad hoc action in order to confront the weakening of traditional forms of social mobilization. These new protest forms are linked to the emerging new generation of collectives responding to social issues such as the housing crisis, nuclear power, increasing urban poverty, migration policies, control over public space, surveillance, and so forth. The formal characteristic of these new movements is their use of games and play, of irony, of reversing norms, of an aesthetic employing the power of images, by introducing “the imaginary into the political realm, which has always essentially functioned according to real and symbolic aspects.”¹⁴ The situationist legacy is visible in the challenge to the alienation induced by market forces; this involves re-appropriating reality. Audacity, vitality, movement, freedom, humour are thus becoming intrinsic characteristics of action.

14. Sébastien Porte and Cyril Cavalié, *Un nouvel art de militer. Happenings, luttes festives et actions directes*, Paris, Éditions Alternatives, 2009.

From a structural point of view, these movements are characterized by a networking organization, without hierarchical structures, based on the model of the rhizome as described in Deleuze's concept. The use of the Internet reinforces the networking culture: an action carried out in physical space is underpinned by virtual space, which in itself has become a space for political expression.¹⁵ Consequently, the collectives are dissolvable, ephemeral, and malleable, while the actions are also thought of as media performances, acts of communication.

15. Jacques Ion, *La Fin des militants ?*, Paris, L'Atelier, 1997.

As a conclusion...

Performance thus makes it possible to open up creative spaces (more or less ephemeral, more or less temporary) through symbolic actions that render visible the invisible. It enables us scrutinize the relationship between individuals and social norms, i.e., the processes of internalization and the dynamics involved in replicating norms (of “race”, class, gender, sexual orientation). The body thus becomes the place where performance takes shape, a place that is inhabited, re-appropriated, the first space in which to elaborate thought, the creative act, and advocacy.

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Performances by activist movements in public space are closely related to space. Their effectiveness and impact is contingent upon on their visibility in both physical and virtual

space. In this way, spheres of counter-power are created, whose objective is to react against the dominant system by breaking down order and normative space.

Considering the relationships between body, space and performance allows us to think about the possibility for minorities to participate in creating benevolent spaces,¹⁶ inclusive and appropriative spaces, where dominant social norms are suspended. If we strive to move away from binary conceptions of space (public/private), we could rethink this relationship to places and introduce intimate dimensions, namely, those of emotions, desire, sexuality, affection, and care for others. This is possible by attributing more relevance to the physical dimension, to the linkage between body and space, a dimension that enables us to expose the identity of public space and institutions for what they are—hetero-normal.

16. Cha Prieur, *Penser les lieux queers : entre domination, violence et bienveillance : étude à la lumière des milieux parisiens et montréalais*, Dissertation, Paris IV Sorbonne, 2015.

Translated from French by John Barrett.

BIOGRAPHY Rachele Borghi



Rachele Borghi aka Zarra Bonheur is a lecturer in geography at the Sorbonne Paris IV University and an academician pornactivist. Currently working on performative transgressions in public space as a reaction to imposed standards and on the body as a space, laboratory and tool of resistance. Her research focuses on the visibility of standards in public and institutional spaces (including university), on strategies for breaking them and on contamination spaces between academics and activists. Her contacts with queer groups questioned her field practice, her positioning, and raised the urgency to experiment approaches in order to not reproduce the binomial theory-theoretical production / practice-militant production. Together with Silvia Corti aka Slavina, she founded the group Zarra Bonheur, project which aims at converting scientific research into performance and to contaminate spaces through transforming the theoretical corpus into a collective body.

bit.ly/2iVY9up

Photo : © RR.

REMARKABLE EVENT

Beyond the Limits of Fear

Agata Siwiak

The shape Polish cities assume mark out (in)visible limits built upon fear. Fear of what is ethnically and culturally foreign, incomprehensible, other. Polish cities are akin to organisms distressed by the idea of being touched by others, fleeing proximity from that which comes from outside.

The Roma living in these cities constitute an ethnic minority recognized by the Polish law, present in these lands since the 15th century. According to the 2011 national census, 16,725 people identified their nationality as “Roma”, yet according to some activists their actual number is estimated at 35,000 for a nation of 38.5 million inhabitants. Four groups dominate among them: the Polskas, Bergitka, Lovàris and Kalderàšis, to which can be added immigrants from Romania and Moldova with irregular status, and who generally live in slums.

For the “ethnic” Poles, the Roma constitute a homogeneous mass, differentiated solely by its economic status. The well-to-do Roma—considered “too noisy and shameless” in shopping centres and restaurants—trigger hatred, whereas the wretched immigrants with dual status as “foreigners”, for they are not accepted by other Roma—are considered repugnant. Moreover, their encampments are often razed to the ground by local authorities.

The well-to-do Roma trigger hatred whereas the wretched are considered repugnant.

Polish Roma are poorly educated, only reinforcing their cultural isolation; According to Anna Markowska, an activist with the Bahtafe Roma Foundation, their rate of illiteracy reaches 70%. The more traditional Roma are hostile to education; they fear losing their authority over their children and grandchildren, and hence limit their access to school. If some boys do manage to escape this predicament, girls, living in highly patriarchal structures, have next to no chance of doing so.

Some hundred non-governmental organizations are working in the fields of education and culture of Poland’s Roma community. Their work is complex: even if they succeed in convincing families to send their children to school, the children often do not want to go, because they will become subject to attacks by classmates, raised in a xenophobic society. Nor is any help from teachers forthcoming; not only do they not fight against discrimination, but sometimes even participate in its dissemination. Cases are known where Roma children have been referred to schools for the mentally handicapped, due to their poor academic performance resulting from their lack of knowledge of Polish.

In my work as curator of artistic projects, I have been able to work on the Roma theme twice, in two Polish cities: Bydgoszcz and Konin. The starting point for both projects was identical: violence toward the Roma community.

I created and directed a program commissioned by the Greater Poland Region¹⁷ entitled *Wielkopolska: Rewolucje* [Greater Poland: Revolutions]. The revolutions were based on a simple idea: some renowned experimental artists visited villages and small towns

¹⁷ Greater Poland is one of the sixteen voivodeships (administrative regions) of Poland.

in the region, subsequently crafting an artistic project with local communities. These exchanges made it possible to survey many social, economic, and cultural subjects, as well as micro-stories emerging from memory, or again from the forgetting of places and events. I intuitively proposed themes and places and / or in relation to the participating artist's habitual practices.

During my research, I met Elżbieta Barszcz in Konin, who at the time was curator of the exhibition, and is currently director of the local Cultural and Artistic Centre. She informed me of events rarely spoken about in the region. Serious acts of aggression against the Roma community took place in Konin in the 1980s; the Roma were driven from their homes toward the river and their cars were torched. Given the prevailing censorship during the Communist era, scant information on this subject is to be found in the municipal archives; memories of these shameful incidents are at once tenuous and distorted.

To work on this subject, I proposed a collaboration with Joanna Warsza—artist and curator, whom I knew for her outstanding projects with Warsaw's Vietnamese community, as well as for the project she realized with Artur Żmijewski: the 7th Biennial of Contemporary Art in Berlin, revisiting relations between art and politics in contemporary society.

To carry out an artistic action that would have a therapeutic function for the city traumatized by the events of the 1980s.

We jointly decided to carry out an artistic action that would have a therapeutic function for the city traumatized by the events of the 1980s. In her outline of the project, Warsza wrote:

“The proposal was to look at the largest minority in Europe as a source of atypical yet nonetheless necessary political and societal inspiration. The Roma are stigmatized or marginalized even in the official programs whose stated objective is to work with minorities, for they define the norm and pits it against anything that doesn't fit into their framework.”

For this project called *The Roma Issue. The Majority Project*, we started, jointly with Joanna Warsza and Angelika Topolewska, by seeking to come into contact with the local Roma community. We swiftly realized that very few of them remained as the majority had fled the city following the hostilities. We then decided to extend our collaboration with Roma throughout the Greater Poland region, while retaining Konin—symbol of violence and exclusion—as the locus for events.

We inaugurated the project with an installation by Roma activist Marek Miller. The Roma flag was hung from the old Water Tower—located in a strategic location right next to Konin railway station, and clearly visible from the windows of passing trains. A symbolic gesture to return Konin to the Roma.

An art exhibition opening by the Moldavian artist Pavel Braila took place after the inauguration. The exhibition featured two videos: *Baron's Hill* that documented the typology of Roma villas in the Moldavian city of Soroca, as well as *Talking Letters* on the Romani language.

The event's highlight took place the following day: in the Roma villa we rented, we scheduled a day full of actions, held in a “consultative” atmosphere with Roma activists. We encouraged the Poles present to ask questions without any taboos or concern for being politically correct. The aim was to put a finger on the stereotypes, and then seek to analyse them. Questions ranged from “Do Roma steal?” to “Do they steal their own wives?”

This discussion was followed by a significant address from Professor Piotr Marcinik, *Constructing Dreams: Architecture of Polish Roma Villas*, for his lecture paid tribute to this architectural form disdained by non-Roma. Furthermore, an exhibition presented the documentation of rehearsals of the shows staged by the well-known Hungarian director Árpád Schilling, with the participation of Roma children, Tamara Moyzes's video *TV T_error*,

which presented the Roma as the most pacifist people's in the world, as well as a sound installation on the life of Papusza, the renowned Roma poet.

The two days culminated in a party at the home of the Roma mayor, Adam Paczkowski, to which Konin residents were duly invited, among whom were perhaps those responsible for the flight of the Roma some three decades earlier...

Romville

The show *Romville*, still running at the Polski Theater in Bydgoszcz, was my second project, created as part of the "Interventions" program. In my detailed proposal, I wrote that the project "is for theatre to intervene into reality, to break through institutional walls and search for experiences in the extra-theatrical world." Together with the theatre management team—Paweł Wodziński and Bartosz Frąckowiak—we wanted to involve the city's wider Roma community. *Romville*'s premiere was the first time I was able to witness Roma in a theatre setting: both on stage as well as in the auditorium.

Romville starting point was the incident that took place the previous year in Legnica: during a soccer match of the local club Miedź, where scarves and badges with slogans such as "gypsy hunters" were passed around. The police did not respond to this provocation. The following day, a few high-school students wore the "gifts" they had received during the match.

The show was based on reports collected in various parts of Poland by journalist Justyna Pobiedzińska and film director Elżbieta Depta. Both authors had already dealt with the Roma issue: Pobiedzińska had written news reports, while Depta had organized theatrical workshops with Roma children and had done research on the education of this ethnic group.

The show's dramaturgy plays out on two levels. The text is based upon written testimonies of meetings and discussions with Roma; a Roma couple even acts in the piece. Notwithstanding, it was a challenge for the actors who by and large came out of their roles and fought on stage against their own prejudices against the Roma community. One of the actresses, Martyna Peszko, comments:

"I learned that right beside me were living people, who are Poles like me, but whose lives are utterly different. The Roma live in their hermetic world, cut off from ours. We know very little about it. *Romville* is a project that does not show us as actors—we are simply humans. For me, it was a real challenge; I had the opportunity to express myself in a personal way—not through the role, but by myself. Acting in this show requires a lot of courage and responsibility—for theatrical expression, but especially for upholding the cause of the people we are talking about."

These micro-utopias give rise to common sentiments and responsibility in relation to violence.

These artistic projects, addressed to some Poles and some Roma, undoubtedly just create micro-utopias and do not bring about major political changes. We continue to live in separate, isolated worlds without really knowing each other. And yet, these micro-utopias

give rise, albeit momentarily, to common sentiments and responsibility in relation to violence, based, as Carol Gilligan put it, on the “ethics of care”. And, I am convinced that care and empathy ought to be the founding blocks of democracy.

Translated from French by John Barrett.



The Roma Issue. The Majority Project

Marek Miller hanging the Roma flag on the old Water Tower

Konin, 2014

© Agata Kiedrowicz



The Roma Issue. The Majority Project

View from the Roma villa

Konin, 2014

© Agata Kiedrowicz



The Roma Issue. The Majority Project

View from the Roma villa

Konin, 2014

© Agata Kiedrowicz



The Roma Issue. The Majority Project

Encounters at the Roma villa

Konin, 2014

© Agata Kiedrowicz



The Roma Issue. The Majority Project

Prof. Piotr Marcinik lecturing.

Konin, 2014

© Agata Kiedrowicz



Romville

Polski Theatre

Bydgoszcz, 2015

© Monika Stolarska



Romville

Polski Theatre

Bydgoszcz, 2015

© Monika Stolarska



Romville

Polski Theatre

Bydgoszcz, 2015

© Monika Stolarska

BIOGRAPHY Agata Siwiak



Agata Siwiak is a culture anthropologist, teatrologist, curator and producer of theatre and interdisciplinary projects, and an academic. She is in charge of the cycle “Interventions” at the Polski Theatre in Bydgoszcz, and the artistic director of the festival *The Close Strangers* at the Polski Theatre in Poznań. In 2015, she lead together with Grzegorz Niziolek the POP-UP Theatre, an ephemeral and critical counter-institution in Krakow. Agata Siwiak has also been the creator and curator of the social-artistic programme “Wielkopolska: Rewolucje”, commissioned by the Greater Poland voivoideship, and curator of the project “Trickster 2011” during the Polish Presidency of the EU. Before that, she lead the Dialogue of Four Cultures Festival in Łódź (with Grzegorz Niziołek); the Baz@rt Festival at the Stary Theatre of Krakow; and the Eurodrama Festival at the Polski Theare in Wroclaw (with Pawel Miśkiewicz). She teaches at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where she leads the cursus for theatre curators and producers.

Photo : © Agata Olejnik.

STROLL

Gutter Matters: **Queer choreographic practice in city gutters** val smith

Gutter Matters is a choreographic practice that investigates the relationship between urban designs, ecological thinking, and a queer politics of pride and shame. The project began in Auckland city, Aotearoa New Zealand, pondering a parallel between the way consumerist Western societies conceive of and treat the body of the city, and the bodies of people from gender and sexual minorities. The piece was presented as part of the *to and fro* exhibition at Artspace gallery on Karangahape Road, which is one of Auckland's Central Business District main strips. The street has a reputation for its queer and bohemian culture, and as a red light district. The piece was later developed in Finland and Brussels for New Performance Festival Turku and SIGNAL, performed in busy pedestrian streets.

The work indirectly invites the public to engage with a gutter ecology through 'systems of elimination', starting points for psycho-physical explorations of the gutter.

Nine systems of elimination

1. Nowhere further to fall

Score: Roll and fall as far as you possibly can. Stay down there for as long as you possibly can. Who are you?

Nowhere further to fall imagines fluid failures as interstitial modes of travel; a dispersal of performance from dancer, to street, to underground cracks and cavities.

2. Channels of shame

Each gutter encountered reveals specific human habits, along with the specificity of a city's attitude towards cleanliness, or an ethics of the ecological. Socio-economic issues, and attitudes towards homelessness and cultural minorities, are also mirrored in the state of health of a city's gutters (where all your dirty little secrets go, where no one looks, no one sees).

Score: Reorient for a close-up encounter with a gutter water-scape. An impressionistic portrait that highlights the passing of time?

3. You're draining me!

Score: Lymphatic drainage from standing to lying, over 15 minutes.

I want to sneak through the cracks of the city, to follow its flows and blocks. I want to make friends with the hair bunny, the chicken bone, the scrawny leaf, and talk to unspeakable spaces.

4. Meta Gutter

Start here: A mapping of the metaphorical gutter. Archive unconscious social symbols and constellations through shamanic journeying. From prostitution to destitution to institution; distinguish on paper (or wall, or roof) our culturally specific associations and memories.

Then: Stand around a gutter and share stories.

5. Mind in the gutter

Thought experiment: Float across a dirty-clean spectrum of images associated with the gutter. Draw a diagram depicting the lifecycle of water-thoughts.

Categorisation: Thoughts-feelings-behaviours worksheet. Clean up your psycho-physical gutter ecology. DON'T WORRY; the flow chart will eliminate any blocks you may encounter.

6. BLOCK

Rituals for healing blocks:

1. Change the pattern or direction of flow
2. Clear it out (with a stick)
3. Sweep
4. Wait for the rain (upside-down)
5. Channel
6. Blow

7. Detox Programme

Social performance: Enact an elaborate, ritualistic, sincere, spiritual detoxification of the body together. Consider herbal concoctions, electromagnetic treatments, contrast showers, colon cleansing, water fasting, or foot baths. Is this performance an allegory?

Counter / intuitive performance acts throughout the night: Toxify/detox/retox your system, systematise your detox.

8. Gay Shame Parade

Can shame be a celebrated productive force, engaging our identities from the inside out, rather than the outside in? Can bodily experiments re-write a culture of the gutter?

Score: Pride parade for one person (whose face we never see). Finish with a horizontal slow motion pompom routine that focuses on the experience of minute movements in the joints of the body.

9. After Party for Introverts

Score: Invite introverts into a utopic queer space (content notes – claustrophobia). How small can we become? The After Party is pitch black with just a pen torch and tiny disco ball to light the event.

Introverted socialization can occur through a small hole that interconnects the individual party zones.



Gutter Matters
val smith

"to and fro" (Artspace Gallery)

Auckland, 2014

© Nina Gastreich



Gutter Matters
val smith

"to and fro" (Artspace Gallery)

Auckland, 2014

© Nina Gastreich



Gutter Matters
val smith

New Performance Festival

Turku, 2014

© Hannu Seppala



Gutter Matters
val smith

New Performance Festival

Turku, 2014

© Hannu Seppala



Gutter Matters
val smith

New Performance Festival

Turku, 2014

© Hannu Seppala



Gutter Matters
val smith

SIGNAL Festival

Brussels, 2015

© Colin Delfosse



Gutter Matters
val smith

SIGNAL Festival

Brussels, 2015

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Gutter Matters
val smith

SIGNAL Festival

Brussels, 2015

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Gutter Matters
val smith

SIGNAL Festival

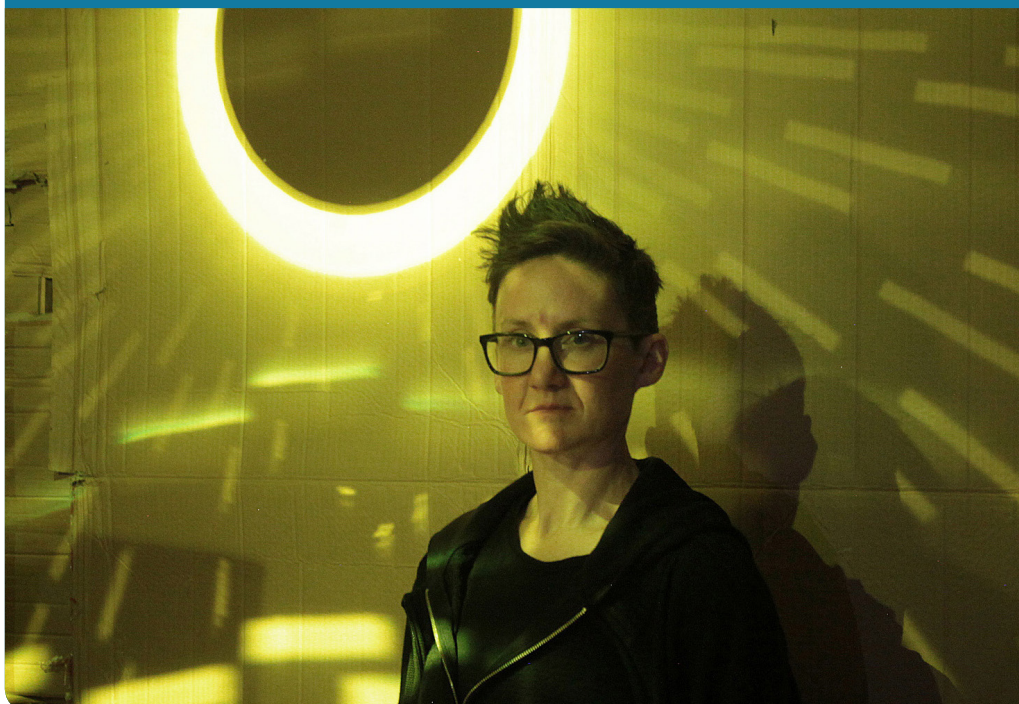
Brussels, 2015

© Colin Delfosse



Watch the video here: bit.ly/2jgQJpG

BIOGRAPHY
val smith



val smith is a white genderqueer choreographic artist and dance educator based in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Their performance work rethinks the political body through experiments that challenge the conventions of spectatorship. Queer, feminist and post structuralist theories underpin choreographic tests in a fluid relation with collaboration, somatic pedagogies and site-oriented practices.

She is also part of a live art riot girl boi band, Double Pussy Clit Fu*k.

bit.ly/2jmRZGy

Photo : © Justin Spiers.

ITINERARY

Fiona Whelan Enduring Place Gerry Kearns

Rialto

Rialto abuts the centre of the City of Dublin on its south-western side. When Fiona Whelan came to a studio there in 2004 she felt 'immediately drawn' to this predominantly working-class neighbourhood.¹⁷ Much of its public housing has since been demolished taking the population of the parish from 6,395 with 44% in public housing in 2006, to 3,639 including 24% in public housing in 2011.¹⁸ Whelan came because she 'wanted to make art with young people.'¹⁹ and, since 1980, the area had been home to one of the most progressive youth programmes in Ireland: 'In an age of inequality where working class communities are oppressed the Rialto Youth Project is working towards bringing about social change providing an integrated youth service based on the needs of young people and in particular those most at risk.'²⁰ Whelan had first planned to stay nine months but after a dozen years she is still in Rialto: 'for me, it's an energy.'²¹ The exuberance of the young people and the ambition of the artist youth work team have been fed and sharpened through two long projects: *What's The Story* (2007-11), and *The Natural History of Hope* (2012-16).

17. Fiona Whelan, *TEN. Territory, Encounter and Negotiation: A Critical Memoir by a Socially Engaged Artist*, (Dublin: Fiona Whelan, 2014) 27.
Available at bit.ly/296yYIG

18. Central Statistics Office, Ireland; cso.ie.

19. Jim Lawlor in Jim Lawlor et Fiona Whelan, "A Partnership Preamble", *IN2* (2010).
bit.ly/2jmFNpo

20. bit.ly/2iqdQOd

21. Fiona Whelan, "Understanding Difference", *Practice 1:1* (2009).
bit.ly/2iu4uwb

Ideas, stories, art

Each of these projects of collaborative public art resolves into a chain of ideas, stories, research, and publicity. Whelan speaks of 'the learning in the work,'²² and, reflecting upon *What's The Story*, she shares her 'practice-based knowledge' of how collaboration was realised.²³ Collaborating around 'large ideas' rather than upon the need to produce a particular work gave Whelan a sense of 'excitement and freedom.'²⁴ The question that drew the group together was the request that they tell of a time when they felt powerful, or when they felt powerless, but beyond the large idea of power, the commitment of all was sustained, also, by an appetite for art and storytelling. Rather than an abstract idea it was precisely this creative dimension, crafting and editing, that brought youth workers, artist, and young folk together, week after week. The stories came from the core group, collected primarily by Whelan, and then shared anonymously within the group over one long evening. A period of analysis identified experiences with the *gardai* (police) as a prominent topic of stories of powerlessness. The core group drew in academics and other experts to nudge along the learning. Soon, the moment of publicity began. Having heard each other's stories, people wanted others to hear them too. They also wanted the listeners to respond and some forms worked better than others. When one exhibition form allowed passive consumption, the young people were disappointed, 'want[ing] a deeper engagement with each visitor.'²⁵ More satisfying was the public event where invited guests read the stories before each other and in the presence of the anonymous authors.

22. Fiona Whelan and Kevin Ryan, "Beating the Bounds of a Socially-Engaged Art? A Transdisciplinary Dialogue on a Collaborative Art Project with Youth in Dublin, Ireland", *Field 4* (2016).
bit.ly/2jxNTCr

23. Fiona Whelan, *TEN*, 20.

24. Fiona Whelan, *TEN*, 52.

25. Fiona Whelan, *TEN*, 121.

The 'power of re-enactment' came in part from how this anonymity produced a 'tension in the readers and in those whose stories were read aloud.'²⁶ Further torque was applied when police recruits accepted an invitation to contribute to the project, and in a staged event at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, they themselves read some of these stories before their anonymous authors. This in turn produced a film, and an exhibition and residency with more discussion at Dublin's The LAB gallery, which included an extended invitation to other youth groups in Dublin that collected a further twenty stories, as well as a process to develop new local police training focused on treating young people with more dignity and respect.

26. Fiona Whelan, *TEN*, 111.

Aesthetics

The learning is far from merely processual. Story-telling, anonymity, re-enactment, and listening, each has affective and aesthetic dimensions that demand and nurture creativity. The authors of the stories wanted them to be heard, attended to respectfully. At The LAB installation, the stories were held in boxes in a darkened room, and visitors could check out one at a time, and then take that story into a illuminated part of the room. Whelan explains that: 'We wanted to avoid any scanning of these personal accounts, preferring that fewer stories were read by an individual visitor as long as each visitor read with a little commitment; these aesthetic decisions would have an influence on the reader's experience of the young people's accounts.'²⁷

27. Fiona Whelan, *TEN*, 178.

Against the notion of social inclusion, Whelan offers difference as a more honest description of the power relations within the project.

The triangular form of the seating for the room at many of the public events 'initially evolved from the particular constitution of the Collective'²⁸ (young people, artist, youth workers) in recognition of their different interests, and perhaps accepting the way each mediates the other. It might seem that there is a sort of equality in a triangle, at least when laid flat, although the separate seating is a recognition of difference. Against the notion of social inclusion, Whelan offers difference as a more honest description of the power relations within the project and explained the triangle's place in representing this recognition: 'Any removal of subject identities represented a risk of suggesting some kind of neutralized equality [...]. So [...] the triangle was symbolically laid flat, highlighting our differences in knowledge, class, background and our commitment to a horizontal process.'²⁹ This aspiration is more risky in the public events. In one sense, the project must move between studio and stage and in doing so it negotiates two distinct but related realms of difference and power. Kevin Ryan has described Whelan's work as addressing: 'Two forms of relational power: one that articulates inequalities between those who exercise power and those who are subject to power [...] and another whereby power is co-produced through collaboration.'³⁰

28. Kerstin Mey, '... But Where is The Art?' *Policing Dialogues Review*, (Dublin: Fiona Whelan and Rialto Youth Project, 2011) 6-7, 7

bit.ly/2izhKCI

29. Fiona Whelan and Kevin Ryan, "Beating the Bounds".

30. Fiona Whelan and Kevin Ryan, "Beating the Bounds".

In the gallery, then, inviting the police to the triangle is to hope for a common commitment to a horizontal process of speaking and listening. With the police along one side, the artistic collective sit acutely alongside, and on a third side other invited guests including youth workers, artists, and cultural activists. Each is aware of the other but does not need to look directly at them. They can address a common empty space within the triangle, might project something respectful there. But, of course, once elevated, a triangle has a peak, and outside the boundary conditions of the triangle in the gallery, horizontal engagement is well nigh impossible. The triangle proved a useful symbol to think with

giving power, as Ryan noted, a clear 'representational form within the context of [Whelan's] collaborative practice.'³¹ Understanding is an exercise of imagination as much as cognition.

31. Fiona Whelan and Kevin Ryan, "Beating the Bounds".

The learning in the work

The learning in the work is substantive as well as formal, and these are imbricated. Whelan describes going to Philadelphia with a group of young Irish people to work with local youth on a mural project, and recalls how irritated the young people were when Fox News reported of this as a visit from Dublin's 'saddest housing project.'³² On another occasion, one young person left the project when he heard that Rialto Youth Project was funded only because it served a deprived community of 'marginalised' and 'at-risk' youth, 'labels he found unhelpful and offensive.'³³

32. Fiona Whelan and Kevin Ryan, "Beating the Bounds".

33. Fiona Whelan, *TEN*, 141.

The power of the mass media to label people produces real consequences.

For members of the project, engaging with various publics highlights differences between how they might describe themselves and how they are perceived by others. The power of the mass media to label people produces real consequences. On another occasion, an irresponsible press report suggested, not that the police had been invited to listen to the working-class stories, but that local youth were trying to help the police in their police work making at least one member of the project 'very uptight and nervous about how my mates would see me.'³⁴ Within the project, then, people became increasingly aware of how working-class youth are represented and in wanting to speak for themselves they learn not only how better to speak to the press, but perhaps also project what Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge wrote of as a counterpublic, grounded in working-class experience and challenging the illusory social unity expressed in the hegemonic bourgeois public sphere.³⁵ As Vagabond Reviews, Ailbhe Murphy and Ciaran Smyth commented that in talking back as a subaltern voice, *What's The Story* spoke truth to power in a fashion akin to Michel Foucault's account of *parrhesia*.³⁶

34. Michael Byrne, "It's Personal", *Policing Dialogues Review*, 9-10, 9.

35. Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993 [1972]).

36. Ailbhe Murphy and Ciaran Smyth, "Speaking the Truth to Power: The Case of the What's The Story Collective", *Policing Dialogues Review*, 20-21.

Territory

The research and publicity phases of the project produce their own distinctive learning. In the case of *What's The Story*, this was not only about the pervasive experience of humiliation at the hands of the *gardaí*, but included a heightened awareness of how Rialto could be rendered toxic to its own inhabitants. After the first public readings, 'Ciaran Smyth identified a core theme related to territory, with stories describing places where people felt safe, felt at home, or where home itself was not always one's own territory.'³⁷ A similar theme emerged in *The Natural History of Hope* where, again, stories were collected and then analysed. In reporting back to the group, sociologist Kathleen Lynch identified 'lack of safe space' as one of the core themes in the stories.³⁸

37. Fiona Whelan, *TEN*, 113-14.

38. *Natural History of Hope*, programme, (Dublin: Project Arts Centre, 2016) 7

bit.ly/2jMviJ5

Territory is understood as an area over which one has some control, but we often pass into territory controlled by others.

Commonly, territory is understood as an area over which one has some control, but, of course, we often pass into territory controlled by others. Geographers speak of territoriality as the control of people through the control of space.³⁹ In his reflection on the stories collected for the *What's The Story* event at Dublin's LAB, sociologist Aogán Mulcahy remarks that the 'relationship between police and young people is [...] about the nature of public space [...] over which the police claim jurisdiction.'⁴⁰ *Gardaí* consider it suspicious behaviour to be a young person in a place where drugs are sold, although for these young people that place is their neighbourhood, and thus young people come to accept that they have no right to public space. Taking up the challenge of helping to train police is not only a counter-assertion of humanity in the face of this irradiation of public space, but it is also a wager on hope, however futile that often feels.

³⁹. Robert D. Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

⁴⁰. Aogán Mulcahy, «The Sociology of Power», *Policing Dialogues Review*, 18-20, 19.

bit.ly/29rEFxZ



The Day in Question

What's The Story? Collective

Irish Museum of Modern Art
Dublin, 2009

Video still © Enda O'Brien



The Day in Question

What's The Story? Collective

Irish Museum of Modern Art
Dublin, 2009

Video still © Enda O'Brien



Policing Dialogues

What's The Story? Collective

The LAB
Dublin, 2009

© Michael Durand



Policing Dialogues

What's The Story? Collective

The LAB
Dublin, 2009

© Michael Durand



Fiona Whelan at the TEN Seminar and Book Launch

NCAD
Dublin, 2016

© Ray Hegarty



New School for Girls, Natural History of Hope

Fiona Whelan and Rialto Youth Project

Studio 468, Rialto
Dublin, 2015

© Fiona Whelan



Natural History of Hope

Fiona Whelan, Rialto Youth Project and the Brokentalkers

Project Arts Center
Dublin, 2016

© Ray Hegarty

BIOGRAPHY
Gerry Kearns



Gerry Kearns is Professor of Human Geography at Maynooth University. He is the author of *Geopolitics and Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2009), co-editor of *Spatial Justice and the Irish Crisis* (Royal Irish Academy, 2015), and author of more than one hundred articles and chapters on Political Geography, Historical Geography and Cultural Geography. His current projects include *The Geographical Turn* with Karen Till about the relations between Art and Geography, historical work about empathy and sexuality in Irish nationalism for Fearghus Ó Conchúir's *Casement Project*, *Making Space of AIDS* about the inventions of metaphors to aid survival during a lethal pandemic, and *Geopolitics after Auschwitz* concerning how we can think geopolitically and critically even when the very subject has been colonized by the worst fascist politics.

Photo : © Karen Till

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Habitants des Images New Social Imagination for the City Emmanuelle Nizou

The opening of the second segment of the film *Dazibao BXL* titled “Europe, my Eldorado, my Dream or my Sad Lie?” is a beautifully condensed rendering of that which makes the trademark *Habitants des Images* [Images Dwellers] so unique. bit.ly/2hwuUAd

What lurks behind the city's image and its media coverage?

On screen is a static photographic montage, depicting two young men and two women in two simultaneous situations: on the right they pose in a gallery window, with newspapers pasted on the wall and the floor. One of the young women wears a veil and involves us, the spectator, in the scene: she looks at us in a mirror. To the left, we see all four crossing the gallery's threshold, bags on their backs, bags in their hands. Observed from the street, the ground floor of this building clearly situates the action in Brussels. The soundtrack blends the din of the Belgian capital and the filmmakers' playful comments. The effect of zooming in and out, and the shifting from one scene to the next swiftly gives way to a form of “making of”: viewers soon see those who posed, camera in hand, in full rehearsal for their entry into the film set. The microphone is ever ready to collect the various utterances of those who are building Brussels and inventing Europe. With *Habitants des Images*, the viewer's attention is constantly engaged and ushered through a photographic montage. Invited to enter the fabric of the concrete world, viewers follow their fellow citizens, their peers, to plunge into the heart of urban space/s and cross through its multiple layered reality: through the magnifying glass we observe that which hitherto remained invisible and imperceptible, as seen from above. What lurks behind the city's image/s and its media coverage? Let us make a foray into the city and its multiple questions.

The spectator is never duped: everything is montage, everything is pure invention.

“To echo that what which constitutes society” implies tackling such fraught issues as democracy, identity-politics, immigration, integration, freedom, the reaction to terrorism... In order to de-dramatize and emancipate them from the media's schematic presentation, the *Habitants des Images* pit the force of an artistic stratagem that induces a change in the rules of the game, a shift in perception, against this mediatic onslaught. Through direct action and intervention on the ground, the artists constantly superimpose the art of enactment on what they confront. The depiction re-surfaces in that which was perceived as real. In their latest audio-visual works, *Dazibao BXL* and *Public Shooting*, reality and illusion intermingle constantly in such a way that the spectator is never duped: everything is montage, everything is pure invention. In their latest exhibition at the Maison des Femmes in Schaerbeek (a popular district of Brussels), they tackle the subject of street harassment, borrowing aesthetic codes used in a photo-story so as to pinpoint the power relations between citizens experiencing discrimination and gender prejudice on a daily basis and those who engender these prejudices, or those who simply witness them. Students from the Sainte-Marie Institute partaking in the project assume the roles of executioner, victim, and witness. The narrative bubbles make it possible to clearly pinpoint the issues at stake. “Get back to your country, thief! You're taking our jobs. The veil is

forbidden here.” Then, the perspectives shifts: using the identical photographs another scene unfurls in which the roles reverse. As for the video *Public Shooting*, it deals with how the terrorist attacks of March 2016 impacted public spaces throughout Brussels: in Molenbeek, in front of the Stock Exchange, in the streets adjoining the Grand-Place, and how events reorganized spatial arrangements and induced new forms of social behaviours. Coloured hats enable us to distinguish between city residents, security personnel, nationalists, militants, and the city’s political figures. Each scene is re-enacted several times with different actors, some recruited prior to the shoot, others directly at the location where the action unfolds. In the final edit, nothing is erased. Everything is plainly visible: clapping boards, actor’s lapel microphones, and the hammed-up takes. The sound engineer, the photographer, the cameraman as well as the entire production team are visible. The overarching tone is almost farcical: it caricatures the media’s catastrophic laden utterances in a post-attack climate; it introduces somewhat coarse changes of identity. Romain calls himself Josiane, while the blonde Belgian woman with fair skin plays a North African woman. The simulation aims at liberating and overcoming the speech’s complexity: it rehabilitates the dearth of nuance in the utterances. This opening up of a theatrical space within the urban fabric, however, is not meant to furnish an unequivocal and moralizing message. Changing points of view not only enables us to better understand what the other might or has experienced, but, above all, to permanently de-frame reality and its fictions; this small sidestep, which is much more powerful than we may believe, can execute wide-reaching shifts.

The simulation aims at liberating and overcoming the speech’s complexity.

This change of perspective is not only played out in the final product; it is at work in the very experience that shapes it. On meeting the Habitants des Images, we soon can, for our part, become one of them. The form that will mark the culmination of a very outgoing process is indeed the result of a collective composition. “It is essential to bestow responsibility at every stage in the process, to feel that it is open, that there is also a place for deciding on how it will be shaped.” From the initial outings “on the ground”, participants soon find themselves using tape-recorders, microphones, cameras, hand-held cameras. The time assigned to edit a project is so condensed that the tools must be accessible enough to facilitate mastery. Participants, for their part, are then ready to become engrossed in the role of investigator.

Each new project invariably offers the opportunity to fathom language and social narratives.

But who, then, are these Habitants des Images? At their core is a duo of urban-based artists. The encounter between Adèle Jacot and Mélanie Peduzzi at the École nationale supérieure des arts visuels of La Cambre [ENSAV] crystallized their common yearning to prioritise urban life and the media as their fields of action: to quit contemporary art circles and to go and directly interact with urban society’s prevailing mechanisms, to explore the relationships and the relations of force at play there. “We wanted to work with the city in the city, to launch ground-breaking research on what we experienced there before we tackled the exhibition. We also wanted to vibrantly convey this research.” It is around these two pioneering urban explorers that a group of creators and inventors, regular collaborators, architects, videographers, visual artists, teachers, dancers, curators, experts on Europe gravitate... soon joined by those who could just have remained “participants”, but who have appropriated the two founding Habitants unique methods. Their function is to incarnate Brussels, to embrace those points of view that count equally as much as those of the city’s leading figures. They are citizens who make up Brussels’s rich diversity, with its highly contrasting cultural and social origins. At times it embraces those rejected and kept on the margins, and whose opinions do not seem to be a priority. These citizens might well be those who have just arrived in the Belgian capital, who queue up at the Immigration Bureau at the foot of the World Trade Centre in the city’s business district,

the women who have passed through the doors of the Centre Exil, an association dedicated to rehabilitating refugees who have been victims of violence in their country of origin. They could also be the prostitutes from the Yser district, or the regulars and homeless from the park close to the Porte de Hal, from the Gare du Nord, from the Stock Exchange and the Grand-Place. Amongst Habitants des Images, exchange and confrontation lead to the revelation of that which makes Brussels unique: each new project invariably offers the opportunity to fathom language and social narratives, to fill History's lacunae by enhancing the role of our individual legacies. The experience of the eight women in the project *Corsets de corps et d'esprit* (Corsets of Body and Mind) posing in the traditional costume of their country of origin presents us many other life stories than those embodied in the official narrative.

Intimate and collective mythologies take shape during workshops on reflection and how to express oneself, and where, ultimately, freedom of expression is attained. Take the example of the *Journal intime de quartier* [Private Neighbourhood Journal], or the photo exhibition *Entre 2 clichés* [Between Two Clichés]... During the process, each group creates a micro-society in a given context. At first sight, it is a question of properly understanding resources, "to take the utmost care of them, to create a cocoon in which to securize them, the goal being not to restrict speech but to make it possible." This level of trust requires that we jettison all our preconceptions and any pretension to bring any expertise or knowledge prefabricated in advance. "We don't have a conclusion or any solution to offer; we ask questions rather than provide answers." Starting from... not directing. Jacot's and Peduzzi's artistic work does not function as social therapy; in listening attentively to the various life stories, they do not set out to deliver participants of their individual suffering. Their process doesn't exploit the intimate, or indulge in voyeurism or sensationalism that would draw on life experience's most dramatic characteristics. What is paramount is what people have to say about the challenges of these social relations, and how life experience can then serve as a tool for future use. At the start of a workshop, Jacot and Peduzzi make it clear: "the objective is to tell others that which you are experiencing so as to benefit them." To avoid any form of withdrawal into the self, "the shift must always be from inside toward the outside."

Living together is no longer an empty shell supposed to overcome impotence in politics in the face of poverty and exclusion.

Moreover, transferring responsibility acts as a guarantor for a positive and constructive dynamic. By constantly building bridges between art, society, and politics, the border at times is tenuous, with many pitfalls to be avoided so as not to surpass the limitations of the artistic framework, and to commit irreparable blunders from a human point of view. Whether dealing with the women invited to write in the *Journal intime de quartier*, the students of the Sainte-Marie Institute, the women at the Centre Exil, the encounters never take place without forethought and supervision by competent associations. "With the prostitutes, the question has been raised several times. The participants come in search of something other than writing a diary: an encounter, a presence... It might swiftly transform into something else, and we do not see ourselves as social assistants or psychologists. It is essential to oversee this work with different professional people." Jacot's and Peduzzi's political ethics does not shout from the rooftops, but manifests itself with deep humility. Their yearning to work for collective solidarity and social justice is reflected in the symbolic re-evaluation of the place occupied by citizens all-too quickly ranked as victims, catalogued as "jeopardised" or "undermined". In the multiple social interactions involved in bringing the project to fruition, they see these fellow citizens as peers whose intimate sphere must be put into perspective by means of a common action. Living together is no longer an empty shell supposed to overcome impotence in politics in the face of poverty and exclusion, nor is it the pretext for a participatory art that usurps its name. To make, to build, to compose with alter egos in the theatre of urban space, thus affirming themselves as the first cornerstone upon which to imagine a new equitable and just society.

Translated from French by John Barrett.

bit.ly/2iWDVkk



Dazibao BXL

Project by Adèle Jacot and Mélanie Peduzzi

Text, video and photography project with students of Institut Sainte-Marie.

"Next generation, please!", Bozar
Brussels, 2016

© Mélanie Peduzzi



Public Shooting
Project by Adèle Jacot and Mélanie Peduzzi

Performance and film about the memory of the terrorist attacks of March 2016, performed and shot in Brussels in two days, with people encountered on the street.

SIGNAL Festival
Brussels, 2016

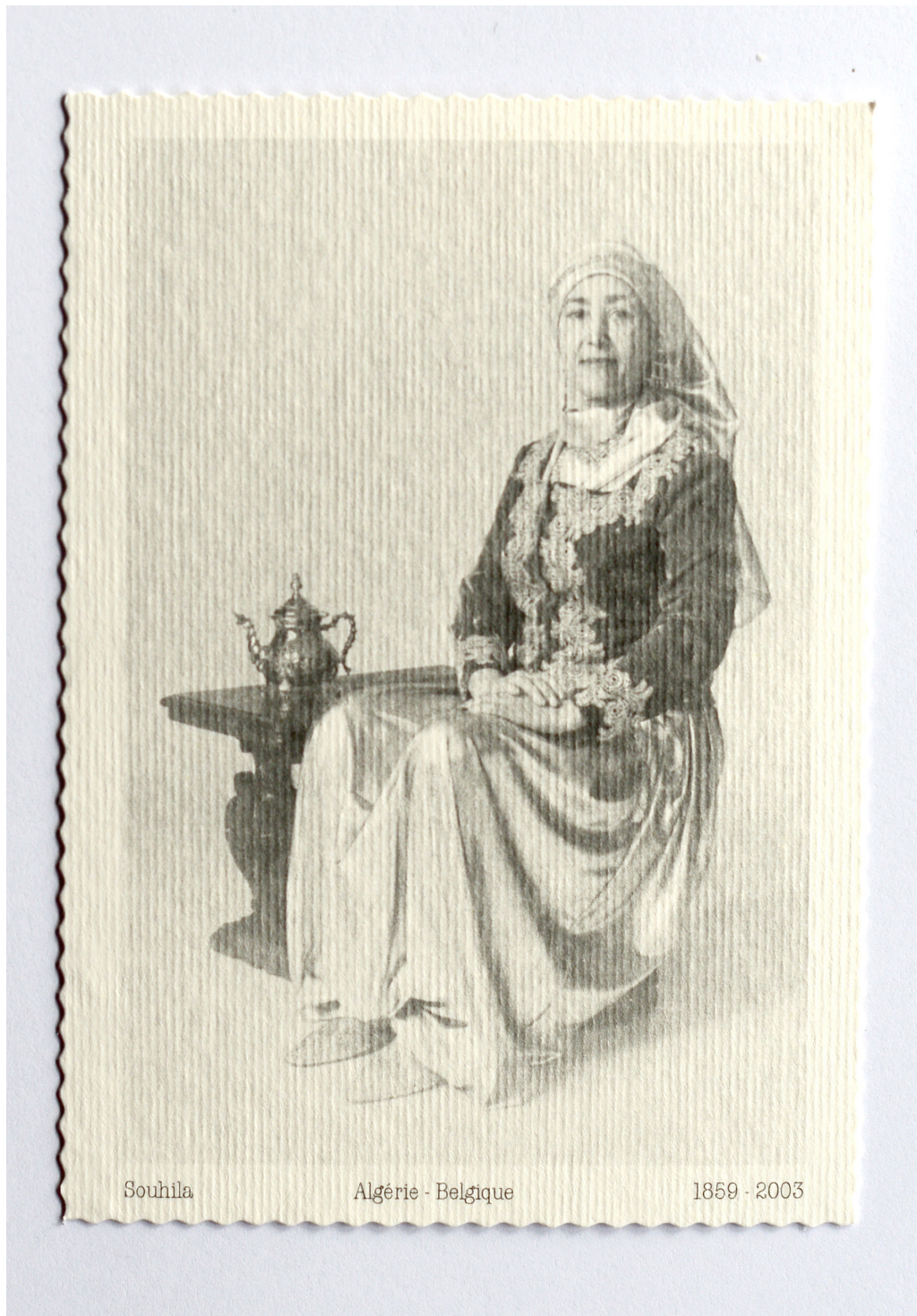
Video capture © Habitants des images



Entre 2 clichés
Project by Mélanie Peduzzi

Text and photographic work in a prostitution area: view from the exhibition in a "hourly hotel" room.

Brussels, 2015
© Mélanie Peduzzi



Corsets de cœur et d'esprit: Souhila
Project by Kris Carlier and Mélanie Peduzzi

Fashion design and photographic work made with eight women of different origins, relating to their grand-mothers' outfit.

Lace Museum

Brussels, 2016
© Mélanie Peduzzi



Parking — Île de Hal
Project by Adèle Jacot and David Zagari

Performance and installation work in a public park, chalk-drawing the invisible divisions of the park and planting flags with its users' testimonies.

SIGNAL Festival

Brussels, 2015
© Mélanie Peduzzi



Parking – Île de Hal
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Performance and installation work in a public park, chalk-drawing the invisible divisions of the park and planting flags with its users' testimonies.

SIGNAL Festival

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Performance and installation work in a public park, chalk-drawing the invisible divisions of the park and planting flags with its users' testimonies.

SIGNAL Festival

Brussels, 2015
© Mélanie Peduzzi

BIOGRAPHY
Emmanuelle Nizou



Artistic coordinator of several European Networks (A Space For Live Art, Young European Performing Art Lovers), and of “collaborative projects” at Halles de Schaerkeek from 2007 until 2016, Emmanuelle Nizou developed a specific approach to curating based on testing habits and perception of the spectator and on experimenting contributive, immersive concepts, taking into consideration recent digital evolution. She also contributed to some research projects with several collectives standing between art and philosophy, such as the European collective kom.post. With the collective Loop-s, she develops site-specific projects, and transmedia narrative formulas in space which are not assigned for art. Today she works in La Bellone, a space dedicated to research and reflexion, a tool for dramaturgy aimed at performing artists.

Photo : © Frédéric Cornet

NEIGHBOURHOOD

**Habitants des Images
New Social Imagination for the City**
Diana Damian

Spill Festival of Performance 2015 saw a transgender body burning briefly on the stage of the National Theatre and on the main square outside Southbank Centre, a local confrontation with a naked female body perched poetically on the top of a building in the East End, and witnessed another body move slowly, with intent and care, across histories in Whitehall. A year later, for its local edition in Ipswich in 2016, Spill took some of these political interventions into the urban space in a new direction, to claim space for marginalized bodies: ill bodies and bodies that have passed, and a body claiming history and identity.

It is not solely what feels like a momentous political event that brings these two iterations of Spill together; it is a consistent and persistent process of curatorial questioning about the ways in which such radical body-based work might be both local and global, claim space but also make space, activate but also invite, stir but also action. And whilst Spill 2015 sought a careful interrogation of the city and the bodies that assemble within it, the 2016 edition focused on identity politics and the local tensions that make them visible, that fuel fear of difference, that might also provide an opportunity for living together: and a different vision.

**As a kind of beginning:
politics and bodies in urban space**

The winter cold is starting to settle in, the darkness has taken over, and we're a small congregation watching a fire burn, feet half frozen, standing near the edge of the Thames, in the otherwise closed off Whitehall Gardens. We have just followed Kris Canavan in his intervention *Dredge*, and are marking its end in the darkness, with a burning sheaf. It is November 2015, the London edition of Spill Festival of Performance. bit.ly/2iqCizf

We have been walking for hours, a procession from Parliament Square, past Westminster Abbey, Whitehall, the Supreme Court, Houses of Parliament and Downing Street. Westminster is a London neighbourhood that houses an impressive concentration of power, a place for clearance badges and bodyguards, a place for walking by fast on your way to elsewhere, or for stopping and gazing and moving on, or for taking selfies with London Met police officers on horses or by red phone booths- a transient, legislated public space.

Dressed in a black suit and wearing a funeral sheaf piercing his tongue, Canavan crawls backwards across this stretch of power. At first, a small congregation of witnesses gathers to follow, but as we march down Whitehall, others join, accidental, bemused, unsure; there's a strong atmosphere of ceremony, and a real tension with the urban space, slowly becoming a landscape, an exhibition of its own history.

A body making way for others that have been, or have yet to come, or are not seen at all.

Canavan's intervention is a kind of mark-making, from its most literal implication—we follow this figure of the undertaker over a period of time as his body begins to tire, remembering all the events that have been witnessed or occurred in these spaces, in the slow pace of ritual, of ceremony—to its most poetic—a body making way for others that have been, or have yet to come, or are not seen at all. Canavan's body becomes a stand-in body, a kind of gentle interruption into the rhythms of an area of London that is deceptively still, busy only with bodies that march in and out in anonymous haste.

Canavan's *Dredge* is in part, a tribute to the Jarrow crusaders who marched to London on the same October day in 1936 in protest against unemployment and poverty. With hindsight, the politics of the intervention do not just remain contained within the event of the walk itself, powerful for the ways in which it rubs against so many political tensions embedded in this Westminster urban landscape. Canavan's slow movement, the sheaf he carries with, the hierarchy that his body creates with those standing around him, become a form of poetic tension. This mark-making, this territory-claiming, echoes differently in a year that followed, when the very notion of foreignness is redefined under Brexit. Canavan's work is an intervention into public space that raises two fundamental questions: whose spaces are we occupying, who is the occupant, and who legislates what 'public' means in these urban concentrations of power?

On the poetics of fire

It's 2015, I'm in the Dorfman at the National Theatre, here to watch a two-part performance by transgender artist Cassils called *Inextinguishable Fire*. The lights of the theatre are on, and on stage, a near-naked body stands, facing us, all save for their briefs. A deep whirring comes through the speakers, barely noticeable; a stunt is being prepared—a stunt that places the body in real danger. bit.ly/2iWKi6Y

In front of me, on stage, is a trained body. It is a body of a body-builder, but also a deliberately altered body. Over a period of fifteen minutes, we watch Cassils undergo preparations for an act of self-immolation with a team of stuntmen. The artist has undergone an extensive period of preparation for this work, working and training with stuntmen in the US to develop the piece as a response to Harun Farocki's 1969 film with the same name on the impossibility of representing certain forms of trauma or violence. This is a precise, technical process underlined by a particular use of space: the lights of the theatre never go down fully; the only sound is that of a low drone emerging from speakers on stage. Once ready, one of the stuntmen will ask for absolute silence, and we will watch Cassils burn for fourteen seconds before the fire is put out.

We watch Cassils put on safety gear—layers of clothing drenched in fire-resistant gel, fire-resistant material, white suit and balaclava, nostrils and body drenched in cooling gel—Cassils needs to undergo a state of temporary hypothermia in order to combat the fourteen second burn.

There are layers of critique of representation here that unfold through the witnessing of this two-part event. The live burning occurs behind closed doors, but it is followed by a film of the same act, a fourteen second burn as a fourteen minute film, a slow panning out that reveals a body of spectacle, a body of trauma, a body that destabilises all the

mechanisms we might draw on to read the violence we are witnessing. If in the theatre, the stage becomes a space of abstraction, an anti-spectacle, what is projected on the side of the Southbank Centre in a public space is a different kind of encounter; passers by look to it unsure of what to expect. Side by side, we witness self-immolation as critique, as politics, as violence, as trauma, as spectacle, from a transbody who becomes a body undergoing an act—a destabilisation in and of itself. It feels momentous, witnessing this at the National Theatre, for one night only, but there's a quiet subversion to this one-time only event that lingers in the history of that building.

Inextinguishable Fire does not just speak to these forms of protest, to the sensationalism and mediation that intervenes in our ability to perceive the complexity of an act of immolation; it also speaks of choice and violence, of the visibility of trauma in public space, and attests to its contemporary echoes through a deliberate, conceptual ambition and process of abstraction.

There is, however, a different kind of witnessing happening in public space in London's East End, this time for Poppy Jackson's *Site*. Perched on the top of Artsadmin's building, naked and menstruating, statuesque and remarkably still, Jackson is accessing a different temporality and presence of the female body in this public space—the internal through the external. bit.ly/2jy0cWa

If Cassils' is a work that addresses violence through its embodiment, *Site* attempts to occupy without laying claim; it gently speaks to the power of quiet presence, but also to the histories of the female body and its relationships to architecture—one could access different viewpoints of the four-hour performance, which occurred over several days; one could gaze and stand with Jackson, notice her by gazing upwards, or simply pass by without notice.

All it takes is a still, nude female body to stir anxieties around who has claim to occupy public space.

It's of course, testament to this particular intervention into public space that, when spotted by a near-by onlooker from a different building, Jackson's work became a local tabloid sensation, led by the hashtag 'nakedwomanonroof.' All it takes is a still, nude female body to stir anxieties around who has claim to represent and occupy public space and how—this return of the body and identity politics as a site of contestation is particularly apt in a city that houses difference, but often fuels disagreement.

By way of ending: identity and the local

It's the 2016, Ipswich edition of Spill Festival, one packed with guided tours led by locals, commissions dedicated to exploring heritage and place, work for younger audiences and public interventions on climate change, race, identity and illness—a balancing act between the local and the public at a time of palpable social tension, following June's Brexit result. Spill has had an ongoing presence here since 2012, following the development of a local edition of the festival in the hometown of Robert Pacitti, the festival's Artistic Director. The challenges to curating, framing and presenting radical body-based work are different here; aside from the fact that the UK has not engaged in the same kind of de-centralisation of cultural infrastructures and funding as other European countries. Ipswich is, in Pacitti's own words, a town of mixed fortunes.

In the market just outside Ipswich's Town Hall, Nigerian-born Vivian Chinasa Ezugha is sweeping the brick floors, wearing a hair mask that covers her face, her body obstructed by cloth. *Because of Hair* is, in part, a work of autobiography, one that emerges from an experience of migrating from Nigeria to the UK, and the tense cultural relationships to hair across those two different territories. Chinasa Ezugha's intervention unpacks both a personal history that poeticizes hair as a matter of culture and identity, juxtaposed with the image of service, a recall to histories of slavery and the age of colonialism, but also to the complex ways in which identity is oppressed and read in contemporary Britain.

The radical is constantly redefined in relation to identity politics in the urban landscape.

And not unlike Jackson's own work, Ezugha faced some challenges in the ways in which passers-by reacted to her work, to the presence of a black body in a private space distorting her own representations; and like many works across these two editions of *Spill*, there is a sense that the radical is constantly redefined in relation to identity politics in the urban landscape, particularly in instances when the local is used as a means of legislating public space.

The 2016 edition of *Spill* ends with a performance that reverberates across histories of performance and humanity, working away from the local—St Clement's Church in Ipswich—to create a sanctuary of sickness in Martin O'Brien and Sheree Rose's *Sanctuary Ring*. It's an apt ending, particularly as it is a different consideration of what publicness might encompass, a claiming of space for bodies that are ill, bodies that are ageing, bodies that have died, bodies that are marginalized and othered. Sickness is at the heart of O'Brien's work, who draws on his own experience as living with cystic fibrosis, as the late artist and Rose's husband Bob Flanagan, who is recalled in *Sanctuary Ring*. bit.ly/2iqC2jo

Sanctuary Ring is a structured ritual that speaks to pain and submission, but it is also a reclaiming, a life-affirming process in which sickness is fought with sickness, pain with pleasure, death and sex, gender and age collide. For Rose, this is a feminist engagement with sexual politics, with questions of ageing and power; for O'Brien, an engagement with endurance that both accounts for illness, and destabilizes the structures that marginalize ill bodies. Over a period of twenty-four hours, through piercing and impaling and flogging and spanking, witnesses that come and go, an open door on consecrated ground, identity is affirmed and battled, played out and attached to the political nuances that tie it down.

Publicness not just as a space for everyone, but as a productive collision.

And in the time that had passed over the course of that day, and in the body that burned for fourteen seconds, and then on and on in cinematic temporality, and the woman that revealed herself under a mask of hair, and in a man crawling backwards down a stretch of power, a kind of publicness emerges that can only be a beautiful, powerful contemporary multiplicity. Perhaps the urban spaces whose publicness is being questioned and legislated might be opened up by those from the margins, whose actions are minute, precise and loud, amplified by the tensions that they reveal. We watch bodies crawl and burn, stand and sweep, suffer and transgress; and in that, a new politicization emerges that redefines publicness not just as a space for everyone, but as a space of multiple selves and histories, a productive collision.



Dredge
Kris Canavan

Westminster

Spill Festival of Performance
London, 2015

© Guido Mencari



Dredge
Kris Canavan

Westminster

Spill Festival of Performance
London, 2015

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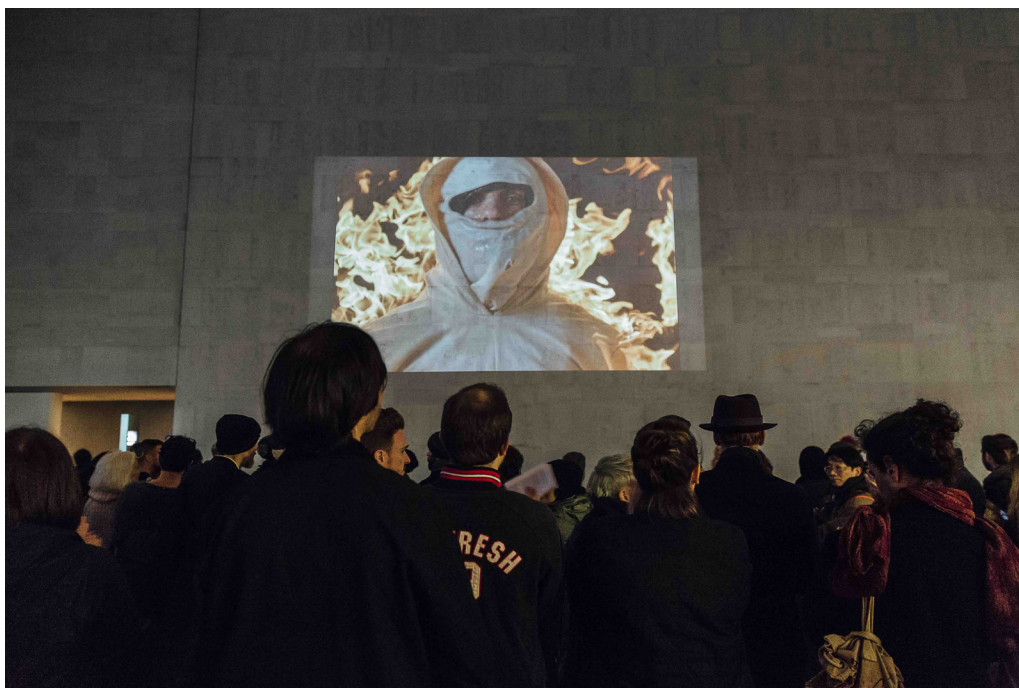


Inextinguishable Fire
Cassils

National Theatre

Spill Festival of Performance
London, 2015

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Inextinguishable Fire
Cassils

Near Southbank Centre

Spill Festival of Performance
London, 2015

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Site
Poppy Jackson

Artsadmin's building, Hackney

Spill Festival of Performance
London, 2015

© Guido Mencari



Because of Hair
Vivian Chinasa Ezugha

Outside Ipswich's Town Hall

Spill Festival of Performance
Ipswich, 2016

© Guido Mencari



Because of Hair
Vivian Chinasa Ezugha

Outside Ipswich's Town Hall

Spill Festival of Performance
Ipswich, 2016

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Sanctuary Ring
Martin O'Brien and Sheree Rose

St Clement's Church

Spill Festival of Performance
Ipswich, 2016

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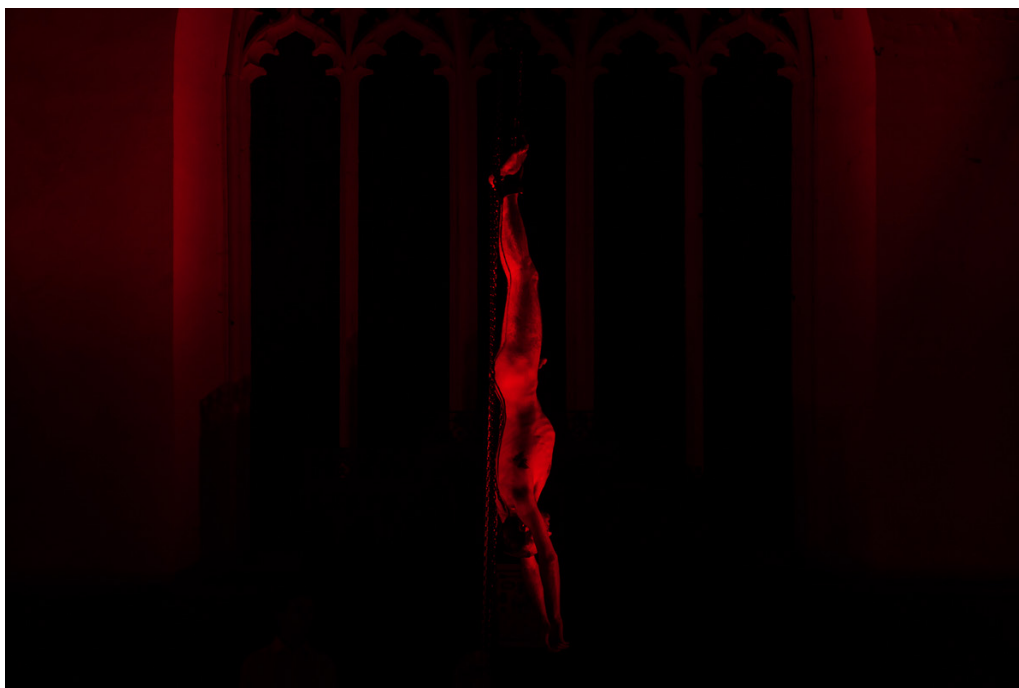


Sanctuary Ring
Martin O'Brien and Sheree Rose

St Clement's Church

Spill Festival of Performance
Ipswich, 2016

© Guido Mencari



Sanctuary Ring
Martin O'Brien and Sheree Rose

St Clement's Church

Spill Festival of Performance
Ipswich, 2016

© Guido Mencari

BIOGRAPHY
Diana Damian



Diana Damian is a theatre and performance critic, writer and theorist. She is a lecturer in Performance Arts at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, and a contributing editor for *Exeunt Magazine*. She is the co-founder of *Writingshop*, a collaborative, pan-European project examining the processes and politics of contemporary critical practice, and of *Department of Feminist Conversation*, an open-ended project with Mary Paterson and Mary Costa, looking at the intersection of feminist politics and criticism.

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Photo: © Gareth Damian

Klaxon
(when art lives in town)

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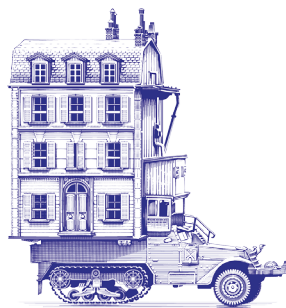
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