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DEAR LADIES, THANK YOU
A Feminist Digital Performance

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ABSTRACT

Dear Ladies, Thank You is the title of my practical work described and interpreted in the present master thesis. It consists of three formally and conceptually different variations. However, the main topic is always the (in)visibility of women artists in art history and in the collective memory. The work therefore deals with a feminist topic and its specific artistic form is digital performance. The two terms *feminism* and *digital performance* are also the main subjects of my theoretical discussion in the present text.

In the first section of the text (3.1. Feminism(s)) I discuss some selected feminist topics, such as importance of feminism today and my view on some feminist issues. This is then related to the question of (in)visibility of women artists in art history and art theory (3.2. Art History), where the different reasons for such undeserved invisibility are investigated and challenged.

In the next chapter 3.3. Digital Performance, I discuss this artistic form, describe its historical precedents, and point out some recent digital performance works that are most closely related to *Dear Ladies, Thank You*. In 3.4. Related Works, I describe some additional artworks, which are not considered as digital performances, but are for different reasons related to my performance. In this chapter I also include descriptions of some of my related artworks. All these works and some from the chapter dedicated to digital performance, are, later in the text (mainly in chapters numbered 4.2.7. and 4.3.2.), juxtaposed with various aspects of the three versions of the performance *Dear Ladies* and used for comparison and complex interpretation of the performances. Beside this, the chapter 4. Practical Artwork is dedicated also to the formal, technical and conceptual description of the three variations of the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*.

Finally the chapter 5. Conclusion and Further Goals touches upon a quick review of the findings of the thesis and meditates upon the possibilities of future themes and artworks.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The artistic work I will, in great detail, focus my master thesis on is *Dear Ladies, Thank You*. This is a digital performance, which centers around questions concerning the construction of subjectivity, *feminism*, and the lineage and ideological background of mainstream art history. *Dear Ladies, Thank you* is a digital performance that has been until now presented in three different forms, and was conceived as a 'work in progress' or a work that evolves depending on the context in which it is presented, and/or depending on the last presented variation. In this paper I will present all three variations of the work, explain my motivations for its creation, and my objectives. I will draw some parallels to some of my previous works, and to works of other artists that can be linked to *Dear Ladies, Thank You* on a contextual or formal level. Before introducing the practical work, I will present the theoretical background which supports the ideas and conceptual framework of the artwork, and add a short and selective historic and theoretic overview of the term *digital performance*.

2. MOTIVATIONS

In my artistic practice I deal with many different topics in many different media. The themes I deal with are most often connected to *feminism*. We will see that feminist issues are the focus of *Dear Ladies, Thank You*, however, this subject is also present in my earlier works. The series of works entitled *Let me fly*, consisting of paintings, drawings on post-it paper, a sculpture, and a small animation, questions the cultural acceptance of, and public expectation on, sexual behavior. In another project titled *Translations 1*, which consisted of two magazines, one for men and one for women; the general type of the pictorial and textual content that is used for women's magazines, was swapped with the one we can usually find in men's magazines, and vice versa. With the two magazines I questioned the stereotypes and cultural position, that is designated to women and men through the imagery and texts found in popular magazines. I will return to this works in the chapter Related works, where detailed information, on the form and the ideas of the above mentioned works, will be explored along with other earlier works. The following chapter, on the other hand, will focus on feminism. In it I will try to show the reasons why I favor the term *feminism*, and what ideology and political views it promotes.

In the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*, feminism is expressed through questioning the visibility of female artists in art history and in art institutions. On different occasions I have noticed the low number of female artists, present in art history books, art institutions, and also in public media, where the topic of art history was centered around old masters.¹ Such selective art history has a great effect on the present day art scene, and can directly affect contemporary artists and art students. In the following chapters, I will explain my interest in feminism, try to underline its political importance, and moreover, give some insights of my own personal experience, that together, led me to create the performance *Dear Ladies*. These thoughts will be supplemented with a short overview on the construction of art history, what consequences its narrative has, and what is its underlying ideology.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. FEMINISM(S)

3.1.1. Why Feminism?

The reason for my interest, in the topic of feminism, is because I feel the question of women's position in society is still far from being answered. Or to put it simply and benevolently, I have felt on different occasions in my daily life that being a woman has proven to be a non-neutral position. Women's rights, the political and social position of women, and the ideology built around the purpose and role of the female sex varies tremendously depending on country, region, religious conviction, social status, race, and other factors. I will focus on examples from Slovenia in social and political situations, since I feel I can relate the most to it and know it intimately. Furthermore, I will cite examples from the western societies. The reason for doing this is because I feel a great deal of social influence come from the European countries and America, particularly in the last few decades, therefore, Slovenia's situation can be used in reference to them. Both Slovenia and the western world still discriminate against women, more often than not on a very hidden level, how will be explored in the following text.

Feminism has gone through many different phases and variations, and is still evolving under the influence of the new cultural and political

¹ In later chapters I will give a more detailed information on my observations.

structures that it encounters. At the *REDacting* feminist² conference it was said that every generation has its own feminism or rather, that there are as many feminisms, as there are feminists³. It is for this reason that I will explain what my view on feminism is, and why it is relevant.

I want to use the term feminism in connection to my performance for more reasons⁴, one being it's historic political importance. Alenka Spacal, an art critic and artist, summarizes Lucy Lippard's ideas explaining that feminist artists make art that reflects the political consciousness about what it means to be a woman in a patriarchal culture:

“[Lippard] declares the feminist art as a political position with a multitude of ideas about the future of the world, which at the same time also contains information about the history of women and the recognition of the women category.”⁵

The other reason for which I feel the use of the term is appropriate and even necessary, is to oppose the undeserved negative connotation it has been given. Koen Van Dael spoke about the unpopularity of feminism in the introduction to the publication *Feminism/s for beginners*⁶: “if somebody in Slovenia tells you you are a 'feminist', they probably don't mean it as a compliment”.⁷ He further discusses on other negative connotations saying that:

“Feminism is generally considered as monolithic; as a lost case; a thing of past /.../ In short, feminism is a movement, that we want to forget, or in other words: it is not worth mentioning, unless maybe in the footnotes of history textbooks. Rampant critiques of

2 *REDacting TransYugoslav Feminisms: Women's Heritage Revisited* was a conference that took place in Zagreb between 13th and 16th October 2011 and was organized by *Center for Women's Studies Zagreb*. My performance *Dear Ladies, Thank you* was presented in this occasion on 13th of October in the context of a simultaneous collaborative feminist event organized by *Red Min(e)d*, entitled *Bring In Take Out – Living Archive*. More information about this event is given below in the chapter 4.3. *Performance In Zagreb*. More about the conference can be found in the printed catalog: *REDaktura/REDacting Transjugoslavenski feminizmi I žensko naslijeđe/TransYugoslav Feminisms: Women's Heritage Revisited*, Zagreb, 2011.

3 Tea Hvala summarizes the words of one of the feminists talking on the conference, Rada Iveković, writing that she “half-jokingly said that there is (was) as many beginnings of feminism as there is (was) feminists, and that each generation has a feeling of starting from the beginning also due to historical revisionism.” From: Tea Hvala, (P)ostanki feministične levice, Radio Študent, <http://194.249.242.34/article.php?sid=29417>, Accessed on: 14/12/2011.

4 I would also not exclude the possibilities of usage of some other related terms like gender question or women question or even some other terms in related context.

5 Alenka Spacal refers to Lucy Lippard in Alenka Spacal, *O ženskih likovnih umetnicah in njihovem spolu v kontekstu spolne razlike*, *Likovne besede*, *Revija za likovno umetnost*, year 69/70, winter 2004, p. 29, referring to Lucy P. Lippard text *The Pink Glass Swan* (Selected essays on feminist art), *The New Press*, 1995, p. 172.

6 *Feminizem/mi za začetnice/ke*, *Mesto žensk*, *Peti mednarodni festival sodobnih umetnosti*, Ljubljana, 18. in 19. oktober 1999, *Društvo Mesto žensk*, *Založba x/*cf.*, Ljubljana, 2000.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

feminism, however, are not only present in the East, it has flourished also in the West. Conservatives like Camille Paglia and Katie Roiphe go so far as to blame the womens movement for all the evil, that happened in the end of the 20th century in the American society: from the crisis of the family, the growing number of teenage pregnancies, to men's depression."⁸

The negative connotations given to feminism is killing its political potential, and reducing its role of importance in the historic change it brought to the artworld, as well as to political and social landscape. This is why I am insisting on precisely applying this exact term. The negative connotations that feminism has received today are mostly the fault of a misinterpretation of its definition, or otherwise, an attempt to minimize its political attributes.

Tanja Salecl, the director of the *Office for Equal Opportunities*, in 2010 spoke of this phenomenon present in the wider public in a statement for a newspaper article. She stated that being a feminist has a negative connotation, due to the fact that there is belief that feminism is no longer necessary, since the opportunities are supposedly already equal⁹. Irena Štaudohar, the author of the article¹⁰, explains how the opportunities actually do not start out equal. This can be demonstrated through statistics, examinations of the media's representation of women, legislation that is being enforced or legislation that is not being enforced, general public opinion and atmosphere, and so on. In the following chapter I will underline where I currently see the issues that I regard as a feminist area of exploration and problematic. The primary focus is on case studies from Slovenia with some additional examples from the western countries. This is because many of the afore mentioned issues are connected to the capitalistic society.¹¹

8 Ibid., p. 4. This remark was written in 2000, however, I will list some additional examples of antifeminism in the following text.

9 The article written by Irena Štaudohar quotes: "Tanja Salecl, director of the Office for Equal Opportunities, explains that in her work she is noticing, the word 'feminist' has a negative connotation, as if to say that there is no need to take defence for women, since they have enough opportunities. However this is not true." In Irena Štaudohar, *Ženska je ženska. Kaj je danes feminizem?*, Delo, Sobotna priloga, 16/10/2010, p. 31.

10 Irena Štaudohar, *Ženska je ženska. Kaj je danes feminizem?*, Delo, Sobotna priloga, 16/10/2010, p. 30-31.

11 A thorough comparison between feminism that emerged in ex-communist countries and feminism that emerged under capitalistic sociological and political structure and also a comparison to other European countries would be highly interesting and most informative, though too extensive to fit into this thesis. It shall however be noticed that these different structures had different kinds of understanding of the position of the women, and therefore non of them can be simply dismissed as worse or better and both have left its consequences on the present situation in Slovenia as well as in Europe, and very likely even worldwide.

3.1.2. Feminism Today

Beginning with statistical examples Štaudohar points out that the number of female mayors in Slovenia is very low (only five), and the number is similarly low in the National Assembly (the lowest rank worldwide).¹² This indicates a worrying trend for Slovenia. However, this is not an issue exclusive to Slovenia. In some case studies, Slovenia is actually better, for example in the category of equal wage, Slovenia ranks higher in comparison to the European average.¹³

Sweden, one of the countries with the highest reputation of equality between the sexes, nevertheless, still suffers from gender inequality. In an article from 2006, the gender equality situation in Sweden was examined by Marjan Kramaršič who explained how the laws in Sweden try to attain a perfect level of equality by imposing '50% quotas.' The Swedish Government was then made up of an equal number of women and men. In the Councils of political parties, and in parliament, the situation was similar. However an unequal result was found even here: women in the municipalities (or kommuner) and counties, were "mostly politically active in the areas of social policy and education, and health, while in the sectors of taxation, finance and transportation [were] 'reserved' for men."¹⁴ In the private sector the situation was very different, the employment of women was more clearly unbalanced (37% employed were women and only 19% in the leading positions were women). Disparates were also found in wage, even though this was prohibited by law.¹⁵ In sum, even though Swedish legislation is promoting (even imposing) equality, inequalities and sexual division of labor persist.¹⁶

12 Štaudohar, *Ženska je...*, op.cit., p. 30.

13 According to Tanja Salecl the statistics show 8% in comparison to European 16%. From Patricija Maličev, *Teško je biti odličen v vseh vlogah, ki nam jih nalaga družba: Tanja Salecl, urad za enake možnosti, Delo, Sobotna priloga*, 5/3/2011, p. 5.

14 Marjan Kramaršič, *Enakopravnost žensk na Švedskem ni tako idilična. Razočarane feministke, razočarane ženske, razočarani moški*, *Dnevnik*, 4/2/2006, Available at: http://www.dnevnik.si/tiskane_izdaje/dnevnik/164238, Accessed at: 10/1/2012.

15 All information is taken from the article Marjan Kramaršič, *Enakopravnost žensk...*, op.cit. It has to be mentioned that, while I have quoted some statistical information from it, the rest of the article, where the author tries to interpret the 'feminist' issues in Sweden, is highly problematic. A precise, professional and much more informative response to its content was written by Lilijana Burcar an adept of feminist theory, who exposed the article as neoconservative and antifeminist, pointing out misleading and superficial interpretation of the data given by Kramaršič. The critique was published by *Media Watch*, a project established for monitoring and critical evaluation of the work of mass media in Slovenia, Available at: <http://mediawatch.mirovni-institut.si/bilten/seznam/26/druzba/#4>, Accessed on: 15/1/2012.

16 Rosi Braidotti spoke of similar problems in Netherlands, a country with great history of various attempts to stimulate changes. Braidotti warned that the legislations and laws are not enough and that changes are hard and slow. More on this topic in *Feminizem/mi...*, op.cit., p. 11-19.

Recent statistics¹⁷ show similar differences in practically all the western countries. However, feminism should not be reduced to economic independence of women, rather it must be regarded as a movement, the scope of which is much wider. It aims at equal opportunities for everybody, not only concerning the economic status, but also concerning equal educational opportunities, and naturally equal political rights. Moreover, feminism does not question only the domain of law and that which can be statistically measured, but it also questions the deeper structure of society, its ideology, on which bases norms on peoples behavior are being imposed. One way to theoretically grasp this issue is through power/knowledge relations, as defined in Michel Foucault's terminology.

Foucault used the two terms - *power/knowledge* - together, because they are deeply intertwined.¹⁸ He explained that power does not work only by laws or by jurisdiction, but also, or even more so, with knowledge of what is believed to be true.¹⁹ Power needs arguments to justify its actions, and for this purpose 'truths' about human beings were designed, thus, labeling certain behaviors as 'normal' or 'abnormal.' Various new scientific disciplines, such as psychology and sociology, and others, gave arguments for a supposedly scientifically supported truth about human nature.²⁰ These were and still are discourses of knowledge. Knowledge and power are complementary and one could not function without the other, and this is why Foucault grouped power/knowledge into a single term, because power needs the arguments of knowledge to justify its actions.²¹

Taking this into consideration, I perceive feminism also as a movement, one that questions the knowledge that is being constructed regarding women. As an example, these different representations of women or how a woman should be (what is 'natural' for her), that have been and are being constructed by disciplines like medicine, psychology, sociology and also the constructs of media (especially mainstream). Along with impacts of other disciplines, this form together the public imagery of how a woman should

17 The statistics I am referring to here are the ones published in The Economist on 26th November 2011 in *Special report Women and work*, p. 3-14. This article should not be regarded as the best source for examining the problematic of women wages and employment rate, especially when it comes to the interpretation of the statistics. My aim here is just to give some statistic examples as symptoms where we can see the equality has not been reached. However, what I am more interested in is the reasons for this inequalities.

18 Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity, Theories of the self from Freud to Haraway*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, N.S.W. , 2000, p. 59.

19 From chapter *Kako Preučevati oblast* in Michel Foucault, *Vednost – Oblast – Subjekt*, p. 135-136. (English version: Lecture two: 14 January 1976, p. 23-42 in Michel Foucault, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, Picador, New York, 2003)

20 Mansfield, *Subjectivity...* op.cit., p. 58-59.

21 Foucault, *Vednost...* op.cit., p. 136.

look, how she should behave, and what her role in society is. This imagery becomes a kind of matrix of comparison of what is 'normal' for a woman. It, therefore, has an enormous effect on women, but also on men, since both are subjects that constantly conform to these norms. Foucault in fact explains that *power/knowledge* works within the subject. Through the metaphor of the *Panopticon*, he explains, that the modern individual is isolated in order for her/his body to be monitored, and consequently analyzed, according to the knowledge about what is and is not appropriate behavior.²² Clear visibility of a subject, as a separate unique entity, is therefore needed, in order for this subject to be manipulated, and to create the feeling of accountability for her/his behavior.²³ The subjects consequently self-censure their behavior, in accordance to the generally accepted norms. Also the subject perceives all this as her/his own choice.²⁴ In other words, if general society's norms dictate that a certain behavior is appropriate for women, women will (sub)consciously (try to) follow this behavior.

For these reasons, I want to emphasize, aside from the political, economic, and educational structures, the effects of *knowledge* about 'what is right for women and true about women', that are present in discourses in different disciplines, as well as in public and media discourse, and also in the very influential area of private and family life.

Tanja Salecl, when asked about where she sees the biggest differences between women and men responded "It is mainly unequal on the labor market, and stereotypes²⁵ and again stereotypes."²⁶ She explained that the legislation is quite good, but that society hasn't yet acknowledged that women at the base still don't have the same opportunities because of prejudice and cultural patterns. The belief that a mother's nurturing is the essential and most appropriate caregiver for a child, and that mother should therefore stay at home, as long as possible, is just one example of the social pressure on women. We can also still find cultural belief that woman's sole

22 From chapter *Oko oblasti* in Foucault, *Vednost...* op.cit., p. 151-171. (English version: Michel Foucault (ed. Colin Gordon) *The Eye of Power in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Pantheon, New York, 1980, p. 146-165.)

23 *Ibid.*, p. 151-153.

24 Foucault opposes to the idea of a free inner self. Nick Mansfield explains his position stating that according to Foucault "all the things we identify as making up our individuality /.../ are really effects of power, designed for us rather than by us. As a result, we are not the antagonists of power, standing opposite (or 'vis-à-vis' it). /.../ What makes us such an effective 'vehicle' for power is the very fact that we seek to see ourselves as free of it and naturally occurring." From: Mansfield, *Subjectivity...* op.cit., p. 55.

25 Stuart Hall explained that the problem of stereotypes is that they "reduce people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are presented as fixed by Nature". These Characteristics are then used as an excuse for suppression. Stuart Hall, *Spectacle of the other, Cultural representation and signifying practices*, Sage, Milton Keynes, The Open University, London, 2000 p. 225-279.

26 Irena Staudohar, *Ženska...*, op.cit., p. 31.

job on earth, or at the very least, her most important one, is to be a 'mother.' 'Mothers' that take up serious career opportunities are many times seen as bad mothers, while the same is not true for fathers, and much more discourses occur about how to balance between job and family for women, while the same discourse should also be important for fathers.

The current political situation for women in Slovenia is, in my opinion showing worrying trends. These can be seen in the political arena. Some examples are bad jokes about the contraception pill, sexist political propaganda²⁷ - all in the scenario of the than (left) coalition.²⁸ A recent horrible 'achievement' unfortunately lay also on the side of the public initiative, as a referendum disputing a new family legislation was initiated by the people defending the 'traditional family' ideology. The restrictive discursive definition of family as one that has a mother and a father, discriminates against homosexuals, single parent families, and at the same time, reinforces stereotypes on roles 'most appropriate for women and men'.

Stereotypes that deeply affect women were discussed by Natasha Walter in her book: *Living Dolls*. Irena Štaudoher summarized a few of her conclusions regarding the so called 'new sexism':

“Girls and young women in Britain are being formed by consumer, materialistic, and at the same time hypersexual popular culture. [In her book] she starts with a description of girls who are now immersed in an artificial world in which everything must be pink - pink dresses, pink room, pink picture books. The toys for girls are becoming more and more stereotypical, and already at an early age, girls are encouraged to get increasingly obsessed with their appearance by the media and television. She continues with teenagers. When she asked them about their career choice, she found that more than half of them wanted to become models, and for a quarter of them the ideal profession was to be a pole dancer. All the others wanted to become the wives of footballers. This is a culture in which women are slowly turning into plastic dolls, with which they played as girls, and many define their selfhood only through their sexual attractiveness, and believe that sexual self-

²⁷ One of recent political incidents was an inappropriate joke made in a draft for a flyer for the referendum campaign on pension reform on which the following was written: “The pill is to be blamed”. Another stereotype being mediated by the government was a political campaign for the same referendum, on which a blond scarcely dressed woman made propaganda for the referendum. Both incidents received a strong oppositional statements from women and men, politicians and other visible women, and the politicians publicly apologized. However, this incident disappointed a lot of women.

²⁸ The new right coalition is, in relation to the topic, shortly put: even worse.

confidence is the only self-confidence that exists."²⁹

Walter portrayed the situation in Britain, however, a quick walk through a baby dress shop, a turn over of the leaves of numerous popular women's magazines, a day in front of Spanish soap operas on commercial TV channels, and American serials and series that can be found on all channels, would suggest Slovenia, in this sense, is not an island that managed to escape such influences. As also Štaudohar realized "today's popular culture has absorbed feminism, scaled down its political context, and all that remained is just the right to rampant subjectivity, which is being realized mainly in consumerism."³⁰

Stereotypes can unfortunately be found also in nowadays pseudo-scientific books. Academic psychologist Cordelia Fine pointed out how many popular, and unfortunately also very successful books (sold in millions of copies³¹) such as *The Female Brain* and *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* and others, try to theoretically prove a difference between 'female' and 'male' brain. In her book *Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference* and in public presentation of her book.³² Fine in a meticulous and hilarious manner attacks this type of book, one that is full of and promotes stereotypes. She clearly shows that they are actually based on bad and non-objective statistical research. Unfortunately, (too) many of these books have been sold³³ and people and organizations have failed to recognize these stereotypes that are being brought back into fashion. Fine also explains that educators are paying attention to this 'neuro nonsense', and during the presentation of her book, she explained that "in countries all over the world, including Australia, schools are handing on money, to pay the so called experts, to explain practical implications of sexual differences in the brain for education."³⁴ Due to this, in some cases, schools have gone so far as to organize single-sex education, in which the program is segregated for girls and boys. It is in this way that old fashioned sexism is, dressed up as neuroscience, infiltrating the

29 Irena Štaudohar, *Ženska je...*, op.cit., p. 31.

30 Ibid.

31 Irena Štaudohar, *Pet manjkajočih uč: zablode o spolu*, Delo, Sobotna priloga, 5/3/2011, p. 24.

32 Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender*, lecture at: Festival of Dangerous Ideas 2010, Sydney Opera house, St James Ethics Centre, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, video online, Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/tv/bigideas/browse/video_popup.htm?vidURL=/tv/bigideas/stories/2010/10/26/3047449-mediarss-full.xml&vidTitle=Cordelia%20Fine%20on%20Delusions%20of%20Gender&vidLength=Full, Accessed: 19/1/2012

33 Both of the books mentioned earlier, *The Female Brain* and *Women are From Venus...* were also translated to Slovene, while *Delusions of Gender*, at least at the time of writing this thesis, was not.

34 Ibid.

educational system and influencing the youngest, and most susceptible segment of the population with its stereotypes and inexcusably sexist ideology. Fine states that there is no evidence of biological difference in the brain, which would consequently have an effect on the ability to learn. There is, however, evidence showing the psychological side effects of one's belief in gender 'difference' in an educational environment. "Our minds are exquisitely socially attuned, and surprisingly sensitive to gender stereotypes"³⁵, she says. She shows that the idea that differences are hardwired and therefore natural, inevitable, and immutable, is the most dangerous and can affect the psyche. She gives examples of studies, that have shown, that by claiming there is biological difference in the brain between women and men, this kind of unamenable claims affected the performance of people in the study group. Some researchers have shown that

“/.../ people, who have just read scientific claims about hardware sex differences, compared to those, who were told, that the ideas were under debate, express more confidence that society treats women fairly. They are less confident that the gender status quo could ever change, and the men are much more supportive of discrimination in workplace after reading about hardwired sex differences. /.../ what science of differences really tells us is this popular idea of the male brain hardwired to understand, change and advance the world, and the female brain hardwired to take care of those who do, and iron their shirts, that does not enjoy the scientific support we are so often told it does, yet has the psychological power to create self-fulfilling prophecies and hinder progress towards greater sex equality.”³⁶

We could simply dismiss all of the conclusions of these pseudo-scientific books, because they contain bad research, but a problem remains. These are the texts that are popular or are growing in popularity, and are not a lone voice, the same ideas can be found echoed in newspapers³⁷ and magazines.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Even the journalist Irena Štaudohar fell for the claims of the book *The Female Brain* and in a later article where she discovers the book *Delusions of Gender*, she acknowledges she does not agree with the first one as much. Comparison of articles: Irena Štaudohar, *Ženska je...*, op.cit., and Irena Štaudohar, *Pet manjkajočih...*, op.cit.

On one hand we can observe in some countries how ideas about differences in brain are affecting institutions like schools, which should be the most objective, sensible, and above all, responsible regarding the content they provide. On the other hand we can observe how content that could actually help to encourage equality is not present or only poorly present in the school curriculum or in school textbooks. Speaking from a personal experience I could point out that information on women's historic struggles, feminist movement in the world and in Slovenia, information on suffrage movement, or discussions on gender issues in general are rarely present in the school system and are not given much importance. The same could be said for mass media. The 8th of March, The International Women's Day, for example, is mostly simply regarded as a day when women should get flowers or receive more help at home. Any political implications of this day, such as the possibility of using this day as a chance to think about the historic developments regarding the rights of women, or using it as an opportunity to explore women's position today, both at home and abroad, are not considered.

The education with its content and its system is another environment in which we can say collective *knowledge* is being formed and spread. And as Foucault showed, *knowledge* is a system of power that forms the subject. Knowledge constructs 'truths' which are presented deceptively as an unquestioned 'objective' reality. It is for these reasons that the questioning of mainstream art history and of the information, or rather knowledge, being transmitted through different *disciplines of knowledge* and mass media culture, has become important to me.

Above I already mentioned some personal observations regarding the information on feminism I received, or rather did not receive in school, or for that matter also on the Academy of Fine Arts which I attended. For this particular experience I can say feminist art or theory, though being more than relevant, did not seem to be given much importance in art or art history. Since I am only speaking by personal experience, I should probably discard this arguments as too personal view. The facts I can observe more objectively though are for example the following two: there is no gender study course at the academy and the number of female teachers is very low. One possible (really optimistic) explanation for the first fact is that there is no need for gender studies course since all of the theories we usually find in such course are already integrated in other present courses. I seriously doubt this, however, I will still move on to the next problematic fact. While I was studying at the Academy there was only one female teacher (who has

since left), that taught the main subject (painting), and only one (at present it is two) for less engaging subjects that were taught only once a week. I am focusing on this issue, since it was slightly meditated upon in the public space, at one round table entitled: *Position of Women in Art*,³⁸ where Rene Rusjan, a Slovene female artist, noted, that while she was replacing Marjetica Potrč (another female artist teaching on the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana) in a room of teachers (where they were discussing artworks of students), she was the only woman, whilst all the others were composed of fifteen male teachers. Marija Mojca Pungarčar, (who also studied at the Academy in Ljubljana) stated that we must be aware that such protest regarding the situation in the Academy was never publicly expressed. It might be assumed, that such low number of women artist teachers is due to their disinterest, however, the presence of female artist teachers on other academies or other art institutions (in Slovenia and abroad)³⁹ could lead us to the conclusion that there is interest in pursuing a pedagogic career among women artists, and that the reason for inequality found in the academic staff might be, or better – should be found elsewhere.

The above educational aspect is one of the problems that affect women artists. In the next chapter I will discuss the position of women artist within art history and art theory, since these are topics relevant to my practical work. For funny but insightful information about other issues women artists encounter, Guerrilla Girls are a perfect address. One of their sarcastic posters shown in Figure 1 shortly lists some other problems there exist.

38 Okrogla miza: Položaj ženske v umetnosti - Tanja Mastnak, Marija Mojca Pungarčar, Rene Rusjan, Alenka Spacal, Igor Zabel, Milena Kosec, Zdenka Badovinac, Mojca Zlokarnik, Likovne besede, Revija za likovno umetnost, year 69/70, winter 2004, p. 4-19.

39 Many renown women artists teach abroad or in other institution in Slovenia. For example, some of them are: Marina Gržinić at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Duba Sambolec at The National Academy of Fine Art Oslo, Rene Rusjan at School of Arts, Nova Gorica and School of Applied Arts Famul Stuart, Ljubljana, Polona Tratnik at Department for Cultural Studies, University of Primorska, Koper.

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST:

Working without the pressure of success
Not having to be in shows with men
Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs
Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty
Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine
Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position
Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others
Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood
Not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits
Having more time to work when your mate dumps you for someone younger
Being included in revised versions of art history
Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius
Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD
www.guerrillagirls.com

Figure 1: Sarcastic Guerrilla Girls poster on the advantages of being a women artist, 1988.

3.2. ART HISTORY

3.2.1. Why Art History

History is important for our present time. Nevertheless, the fact that there is a low number and less quality of information found in textbooks regarding for example the feminist movement, tells us that this issue is seen as an unimportant one. However, not long ago the right to vote, equal salaries and even the right to work for women were not implicit. Learning that women got their right to vote only in 1945 in Yugoslavia (1971 in Switzerland), that working as a teacher until after the First World War, for example meant that you lost your job as soon as you got married unless you vowed to celibacy, and that you were paid less for it only because you were a woman⁴⁰ might lead you to question the situation today. Is it really equal?

Emphasizing some historical facts regarding women's position in not so distant history therefore gives an opportunity to be more careful when

⁴⁰ Pozabljena polovica. Portreti Žensk 19. in 20. stoletja na Slovenskem, Tuma, SAZU, Ljubljana, 2007. p. 129.

analyzing the situation today.

Which topics are illuminated in art history books and which not, as well as which artist are declared as the main figures and which are not, is not an objective and permanent truth of history but depends on the present needs of a certain culture. Artists that were once declared as modern, excellent and important are in another period totally forgotten. Moreover, art and its history is not a cultural phenomenon unrelated to its historic, political, social and cultural situation. Quite contrary, it is also the political, social and cultural history that has to be observed. History is being constructed depending on the needs of the present time and on the needs of a political or/and cultural conviction of a certain group of people. This is why a constant questioning of the historic line is so important. Because it is the historic line that gives ground to the present art practices or the present in general. So if a mainstream history of art includes almost no female artist we have to ask ourselves why. And if mainstream history (or for example history written in primary school textbooks) does not include much topics on the emancipation of women, we again have to ask ourselves, why is that so. An investigation on the reasons for discrimination of women tends to reveal written and unwritten laws, on which the social structure is built.⁴¹ A thorough questioning of the position of women in a certain culture or political structure can therefore address also the discrimination of other marginalized individuals, that are constantly being declared as inappropriate, non-assimilated, non-natural etc.

I do not claim to give a complete explanation of all the supportive facts to my viewpoints. At this point the topic is too wide for me to dig into in an appropriate manner; this is why I will focus only on some facts that will illuminate the position of female artists in art history in the following chapter.

3.2.2. Position of Female Artists in Art History

In history of feminism there were many ways, in which different artists and art theoreticians dealt with the question regarding the number of female artists, that have been present in mainstream art history. Some have researched on the female artists that history erased, brought attention to their work or strengthened the importance of the few artists, that have managed to remain present in mainstream art history. All this work is of

⁴¹ One example of this will be discussed in the chapter 3.1. *Position of female artists in Art History*.

course very important and valuable, but it is not enough to only look for these 'lost' artists. We have to ask ourselves questions concerning the 'great' artists that are present. The question will then become 'Are there similarities between the artists that are the main figures in art history? What are these similarities? And why these similarities are not presented as important facts?' These questions revolve around the myth of the artist's Genius, which Linda Nochlin addresses in the article *Why have there been no great women artists?* In her text Nochlin questions this statement explaining that:

“There are no women equivalents for Michelangelo or Rembrandt, Delacroix or Cezanne, Picasso or Matisse, or even, in very recent times, for de Kooning or Warhol, any more than there are black American equivalents for the same. /.../ [A]s we all know, things as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class and, above all, male. The fault lies not in our stars, our hormones, our menstrual cycles, or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions and our education-education understood to include everything that happens to us from the moment we enter this world of meaningful symbols, signs, and signals. The miracle is, in fact, that given the overwhelming odds against women, or blacks, that so many of both have managed to achieve so much sheer excellence, in those bailiwicks of white masculine prerogative like science, politics, or the arts.”⁴²

The Guerrilla Girls, a group of women artists and arts professionals, who fight discrimination, reformulated Nochlin's question, asking: “Why haven't more women been considered great artists throughout Western history?”⁴³ They also affirm that:

“despite prejudice, there have been lots of women artists throughout Western history. From ancient Greece and Rome there are account of women painters who earned more than their male counterparts. In the Middle Ages, nuns made tapestries and

⁴² Nochlin, Linda, Zakaj ni bilo velikih umetnic?, Feministična teorija umetnosti (izbrani teksti), Teoretska priloga revije Likovne besede, Revija za likovno umetnost, n. 69/70, 2004, p. 4. (Translation to English from online publication *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* at: <http://www.miracosta.edu/home/gflore/nochlin.htm>, 15/11/2011.)

⁴³ The Guerilla Girls, Introduction and Conclusion to the Guerilla Girls' Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art, The Feminist and Visual Culture Reader, ed. Amelia Jones, Routledge, New York, 2003, p. 349.

illuminated manuscripts. In the Renaissance, daughters were trained to help their fathers' ateliers; some went on to have careers of their own."⁴⁴

Most importantly both Nochlin and the Guerrilla Girls, on their posters, book publications (Figures 1, 2 and 3) and through their actions, point out that "the history of art has been a history of discrimination."⁴⁵

Books like Rozsika Parker's and Griselda Pollock's *Old Mistresses, Women, Art and Ideology*, and The Guerrilla Girls *Beside Companion to the History of Western Art* are just two of the many written books on the theme of forgotten, or, more appropriately, 'erased' artists (female, black, non American, or non western european). Their names, works, and stories were and still are sabotaged by the ideology behind the discrimination in art history which mainly promoted white male artists from western society, usually coming from the bourgeois class. At the same time this art history lineage is presented as universal and neutral. To question this ideas I will now concentrate on Nochlin findings regarding the ideology of the Genius myth.

Nochlin focuses our attention on the fact that there still exists a shallow perception of the artist, as an unique talented individual, and of the art as being a 'direct and personal expression of a persons emotional experience.'⁴⁶ The artist that makes the art piece is believed to be a *Genius*, which means he is a unique individual, who possess an "atemporal and mysterious power somehow embedded"⁴⁷ in himself. Nochlin explains that "such ideas are related to unquestioned, often unconscious, meta-historical premises that make Hippolyte Taine's race-milieu-moment formulation of the dimensions of historical thought seem a model of sophistication. But these assumptions are intrinsic to a great deal of art-historical writing."⁴⁸ This is why we always read about certain artists (for example Michelangelo or Picasso) being talented from childhood and of anecdotes of career struggles where at the end of the biography the artist is portrayed to the reader as a hero. Nochlin points out that "What is stressed in all these stories is the apparently miraculous, nondetermined, and asocial nature of artistic achievement; this semireligious conception of the artist's role is elevated to hagiography in the

44 Ibid., p. 350.

45 Ibid.

46 Nochlin, *Zakaj ni bilo...*, op. cit., p. 4.

47 Ibid., p. 5.

48 Ibid.

nineteenth century, when art historians, critics, and, not least, some of the artists themselves tended to elevate the making of art into a substitute religion, the last bulwark of higher values in a materialistic world.”⁴⁹ The closer examination of the less than fairytale-like circumstances of how a person becomes an artist, leads us to different perceptions of artists, art, and art history.

The social and institutional structures, in which an artist works are not usually discussed when reading through an artist's biography, making it appear as if all his achievements are his own solitary work. It is this so called “golden-nugget theory of genius and the free-enterprise conception of individual achievement”⁵⁰. In truth, understanding the social and institutional structures of an artist's time are crucial, because they allow us to understand, who had (and at present has) the privilege to enter into the art world and who doesn't.

In her article Nochlin exposes some of the typical pathways to professional success for artists, starting with family connections. We read how painters, especially in the 17th and 18th century, almost always had a close male family member (usually the father), who was also a painter and how important this connection was *not* in terms of genetic talent, but in terms of introduction to the profession.⁵¹ Relatives enabled careers also for some women artists,⁵² however, the number of such cases was very low. The (potential) support of a father could not compensate for the other discouraging, segregating social, and institutional structures that hindered a woman's artistic career. Nochlin gives the example of the period starting from the Renaissance to late 19th century, when women were not allowed to study nudes - a study that was extremely important for any artist that intended to create an important works of art.⁵³

Slovene art critic and historical anthropologist (with a special interest

49 Ibid., p. 6.

50 Ibid., p. 7.

51 Nochlin writes about how common the transmission of the profession from father to son was in terms of 17th and 18th century French Academy and how sons of the academicians did not have to pay the fees for lessons. She mentions examples like Holbein, Dürer and Bernini and also example of some modern artists like Picasso, Calder and Giacometti. Ibid., p. 7.

52 Nochlin explains that also (almost) all of the women that managed to become visible in the artworld were daughters of artists, for example: Rose Bonheur, Lavinia Fontana, Artemisia Gentileschi, Elisabeth Vigée – LeBrun and Angelica Kauffman; or (especially later in the 19th and 20th century) had close personal contacts with an artist, like the impressionist artists Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassat. Ibid., p. 12.

53 A History Painting generally accepted as the highest category of art could be made only with the previous careful and prolonged study of the nude. *Ibid.*, p. 8. Nochlin explains that the prohibition of the study of the nude was as though “a medical student were denied the opportunity to dissect or even examine the naked human body.” *Ibid.*, p. 9. Until 1893 women students at the Royal Academy in London weren't allowed to draw from live nude and even after that the model had to be 'partially draped'. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

in gender studies) Tanja Mastnak gives even more detailed examples on the situation in Europe, describing the differences in education for female and male artists in the article *Ivana Kobilca⁵⁴ and Possibilities of an Artistic Education for Women in the 19th Century⁵⁵*. She explains that education was different for women and men not only in the art sphere, but in general. A general tendency in education of women can be observed in the Europe of the 16th to the 20th century. It was almost always conducted in the domain of the Church, usually in monasteries, and the establishment of a proper catholic moral, the basics of hygiene and upbringing were of more importance than knowledge.⁵⁶ This shows us how moral norms were posed on women, which designated their place in the home and did not encourage them to pursue a professional career.

As mentioned, women were not allowed to study nudes at art academies, however, Mastnak explains, how some female artists tried to get their education elsewhere. The easiest solution was to marry a painter. This at the same time solved the status of the ownership of a workshop, since women were not allowed to own one.⁵⁷ When it comes to education, the situation varied a bit from country to country and from institution to institution. Toward the end of the 19th century there were initiatives for women to finally attain education in Fine Arts, which was in part also a result of the women's movement becoming a greater political force.⁵⁸ They succeeded at the end of the century in some, and in the beginning of the 20th centuries in other European countries. Paris was at that time the artistic center to which the whole of Europe looked up to, and their academies were the best path to success. But women were not allowed admission.⁵⁹ However, the interest for Fine Arts was still very high. Consequently private schools emerged all over Europe,⁶⁰ still, the students of these schools were mostly seen as dilettantes,⁶¹ and the women in general were not considered true

54 Ivana Kobilca (1861-1926) is the most famous (she was also the only woman that appeared on the Slovene banknote of 5000 tolar) Slovene female artist, who also managed to receive recognition abroad and who studied in different parts of Europe. With the female artists from the München group she fought for an equivalent status of female artists. However most of their fights regarding the studies as well as the opportunities in the latter professional recognition became true only in the 20th century. From: Tanja Mastnak, *Ivana Kobilca in možnosti likovnega izobraževanja za ženske v 19. stoletju (Ivana Kobilca and Possibilities of an Artistic Education for Women in the 19th Century)*, Magazine for the Criticism of Science, year 32, n. 216/215, 2004, p. 94.

55 Mastnak, *Ivana Kobilca...* op.cit.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 98-99.

59 L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts open their e doors to women only on 1897.

60 The education of women was profitable, because of the high interest, because the ateliers were crowded, and because the tuition was very high. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

professionals despite their 'education'.⁶² In addition to these obstacles, the title of 'master' was only given to students of academies,⁶³ and because women were not entitled to the education there, they didn't possess the right to enter into competitions and for the most prestigious awards like the *Prix de Rome*.⁶⁴

Both Nochlin and Mastnak also pointed out that being a professional artist was connected to a certain social class. Both women and men artists came mostly from the bourgeois social class and never from the aristocracy (except maybe Toulouse-Lautrec) even though many of them took up amateur painting.⁶⁵

All of the mentioned social and institutional basis show, how becoming an artist was never, and is still not, a matter of talent. For the majority of the population becoming an artist was not possible, and the obstacles were far greater for some than for others. However, these facts were rarely being taken into consideration, and it is to this Nochlin responds:

"It is no accident that the crucial question of the conditions generally productive of great art has so rarely been investigated, or that attempts to investigate such general problems have, until fairly recently, been dismissed as unscholarly, too broad, or the province of some other discipline, like sociology. To encourage a dispassionate, impersonal, sociological, and institutionally oriented approach would reveal the entire romantic, elitist, individual-glorifying, and monograph-producing substructure upon which the profession of art history is based, and which has only recently been called into question by a group of younger dissidents."⁶⁶

The present day *problems* women face in the art world are different, and such institutional barriers in European academies have, fortunately, fallen, however, the myth of the romantic 'genius' artist still lives on, and many other discriminations persist.

A more recent text on the other issues regarding the visibility of women artists was written by Mira Schor. *Patrilineage (1990, postscript 1992)* which talks about a phenomenon that we can safely say is still very much

62 Nochlin, *Zakaj ni bilo...*, op. cit., p. 10.

63 Ibid., p. 100.

64 Women were finally admitted to the Paris Academy in 1897 and gained the possibility to compete for the *Prix de Rome* only in 1903. Ibid., 103.

65 Nochlin, *Zakaj ni bilo...* op. cit., p. 7.

66 Ibid., p. 5. We should keep in mind that the article was written in 1971, and that fortunately these days the mentioned sociological, institutional and also political backgrounds are being more considered, although not nearly enough.

present. Art critics, when interpreting a contemporary artwork, usually draw connections to older artist works. Schor explains that “Reviews at the back of the major, mainstream, international art magazines are generally short texts that usually refer to at least one other artist or author to offer context and validation for the artist being considered. /.../ Such references do not usually involve serious efforts at comparison and analysis but rather function as subliminal mentions.”⁶⁷ These serve the purpose of legitimation, and as Schor reveals the references are, with few exception, always drawn with male artists - legitimation of one's work (female or male artist's) is established through the 'fathers' – hence patrilineage. Beside the art-historical legitimation through earlier artists or mega-fathers, as Schor calls them (like Duchamp, Warhol or Beuys), invocation of other particular groups of authors is also predominantly male (e.g. Benjamin, Foucault, Lacan, Freud).⁶⁸

Schor is especially disappointed when a formal or content based relation is more than obvious, and even more so when it comes to not realizing the problem of referencing only male artists also within the feminist thought.⁶⁹ The *Patrilineage* article offers many examples of reevaluation of the male-referencing reviews of female or male artist work, with Schor offering much more sensible connections with female artists and theoreticians. Her explanation for the phenomenon of constant male-referencing is that mostly art critics rather referenced new artists to male artists, since this consequently brings more success to their work.⁷⁰ However, the problem is a magic circle, because without references to female artists and writers their visibility will also fade. Schor points out the long-term consequences of such shortlisted references:

“Women may feel they risk a lot by linking themselves to women progenitors as well as to men, but while the magazine review linking a woman artist to a male progenitor /.../ may bring short-term career benefits, in the long term, experience shows that the art history text book will name only the mega-father, and the artists who were described as 'like' or 'unlike' him will become simply, 'and followers,' among which women will be the last to be named.”⁷¹

67 Mira Schor, *Patrilineage*, *The Feminist and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones, Routledge, New York, 2003, p. 250

68 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 252-254.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 252

71 *Ibid.*, 254-255.

WHEN RACISM & SEXISM ARE NO LONGER FASHIONABLE, WHAT WILL YOUR ART COLLECTION BE WORTH?

The art market won't bestow mega-buck prices on the work of a few white males forever. For the 17.7 million you just spent on a single Jasper Johns painting, you could have bought at least one work by all of these women and artists of color.

Bernice Abbott
Anni Albers
Sofonisba Anguisola
Diane Arbus
Yanessa Ball
Isabel Bishop
Rosa Bonheur
Elizabeth Bougereau
Margaret Bourke-White
Romaine Brooks
Julia Margaret Cameron
Emily Carr
Rosalba Carrera
Mary Cassatt
Constance Marie Charpentier
Imogen Cunningham
Sonia Delaunay

Elaine de Kooning
Lavinia Fontana
Meta Warwick Fuller
Artemisia Gentileschi
Marguerite Gérard
Natalia Goncharova
Kate Greenaway
Barbara Hepworth
Eva Hesse
Hannah Hoch
Anna Huntington
May Howard Jackson
Frida Kahlo
Angelica Kauffmann
Hilma of Klimt
Kathe Kollwitz
Lee Krasner

Dorothea Lange
Marie Laurencin
Edmonia Lewis
Judith Leyster
Barbara Longhi
Dora Maar
Lee Miller
Lisette Model
Paula Modersohn-Becker
Tina Modotti
Berthe Morisot
Grandma Moses
Gabriele Münter
Alice Neel
Louise Nevelson
Georgia O'Keeffe
Meret Oppenheim

Sarah Peale
Ljubava Popova
Olga Rosanova
Nellie Mae Rowe
Rachel Ruysch
Kay Sage
Augusta Savage
Vavara Stepanova
Florine Stettheimer
Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Alma Thomas
Marietta Robusti Tintoretto
Suzanne Valadon
Remedios Varo
Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun
Laura Wheeling Waring

Please send \$ and comments to: **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD
Box 1056 Cooper Sta. NY, NY 10276

Figure 2: Guerilla Girls comment on the value of women artist's art pieces.

The vigilance required towards this issue is a constant struggle to remember female artists and all other overlooked artists, like for example people from non western societies, cultures, and race.⁷² Schor for this reason also warns about the importance of education. She gives a few examples of the decline of the importance of feminist art programs in America, and explains that most schools do not provide enough information on women artists.⁷³ She then concludes:

“All studio art and art history students should know the names listed on the Guerrilla Girls poster [Figure 2]. They should be aware of multiplicity of feminist art history, practice, and theory. If there is a resolution or a solution to the persistence of patrilineage, it must be at the level of education. /.../

⁷² Adrian Piper, for example, warned about the forgotten colored women artists in: Adrian Piper, *The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artist, The Feminist and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones, Routledge, New York, 2003, p. 239-248. An issue more related to us is the question of the visibility of artist from the countries from the Eastern part of Europe and the Balkan.

⁷³ The article was written in 1990. I can only hope the situation is now different. In Slovenia it is not.

*The end game of postmodernism turns on the eternal ritual killing and resurrection of a limited type of father. Other models might provide a path to a new art history and a different system of validation and legitimation. And maybe some bastards and orphaned daughters (and the entire Third World) could find homes and genetic placement.*⁷⁴

The above are just a few examples of the unequal position of women in the art world. We should bare in mind this position, varies from country to country, but the problems can be observed in many countries. There are other problems that are present and I have not touched upon, like for example the absence of women artists in museums and galleries, the fact that the work of women artists are collected less because their artworks are not valued as highly etc.⁷⁵ But most of all, it is important to recognize that as the Guerrilla Girls declared “history of art has been a history of discrimination.”⁷⁶ It is placed upon the new generation to make sure it evolves, to start to include all the artists – who are discriminated against by gender, race, nationality and so on. Otherwise, the least that the art history books could do, is to bear other types of covers, like ones that The Guerrilla Girls suggest (Figure 3).

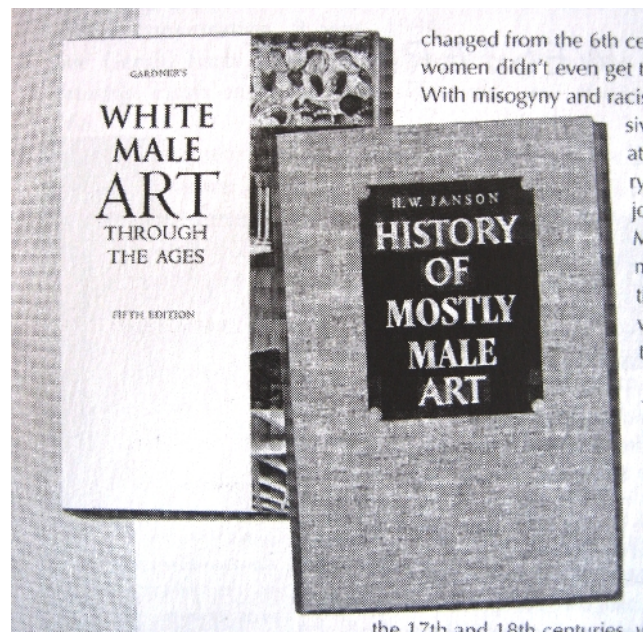


Figure 3: Image from The Guerrilla Girls' book *Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art*.

74 Schore, *Patrilineage...*, op. cit., p. 254.

75 Guerrilla Girls, *The Feminist and Visual...op.cit.*, p. 350.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 349-353.

Up to this point, I have addressed some of the issues regarding feminism and art history, which relate to the content and conceptual guidelines of my practical work. In the following chapter, I will focus on the formal appearance of the work, which I understand as a type of digital performance. I will explain what this is and where its aesthetic comes from.

3.3. DIGITAL PERFORMANCE

During the later decades of twentieth century, computer technology played an important role in live theater, dance and performances. There are many different terms, such as inter-media performance, new media performance, interactive performance, multimedia theater, etc. that, began to be and are still used by artists and critics. These terms define or describe performances (meaning not only performance as a practice, that appeared in the visual scene in the seventies, but also performance in a wider sense, which includes the different types of theater and dance) that in one way or another, include the use of technology. Steven Dixon created a historical and theoretical overview of this practice in the book entitled *Digital performance, A history of new media in theater, dance, performance art, and installation*⁷⁷. Throughout this chapter, this book will be my main reference regarding this subject.

Digital performance is the term that Dixon chooses as the most appropriate one for artistic practices that conjoin performance and technology. However, not all of the conjunctions are defined as digital performance, Dixon is more specific, explaining that “it concerns the conjunction of computer technologies with the live performance arts, as well as gallery installations and computer platform-based net.art, CD-ROMs, and digital games where performance constitutes a central aspect of either its content (for example, through a focus on a moving, speaking or otherwise 'performing' human figure) or form (for example, interactive installations that prompt visitors to 'perform' actions rather than simply watch a screen and 'point and click').”⁷⁸ Technology plays a key role in content, aesthetics and delivery form, in these performances and if we were to try to list all of the forms, we should say it includes “live theater, dance, and performance art that incorporate projections that have been digitally created or manipulated;

⁷⁷ Steven Dixon is cited as the primary author of the book on its cover, however another substantial contributor to the texts was also Barry Smith.

⁷⁸ Steven, Dixon, *Digital performance, A history of new media in theater, dance, performance art, and installation*, 2007, p. x.

robotic and virtual reality performances; installations and theatrical works that use computer sensing/ activating equipment or telematic techniques; and performative works and activities that are accessed through the computer screen, including cybertheater events, MUDs, MOOs, and virtual worlds, computer games, CD-ROMs and performative net.art works.”⁷⁹ Since the overview covers an already a wide range of practices; it deliberately excludes the ones where digital technologies are used in fields of music, cinema, TV, and video.

To understand the conjunction of technology and performance, it is informative to look at some of its historic predecessors and their accompanying theory, the typical discussions or questions that are or were brought up by theorists and artists provoked by the emergence of these new art forms.

Theater, dance, and performance were always interdisciplinary practices, since, apart from the body movements, they include sound, spoken text, music and visual elements of scenography, costumes, props, etc. However, one of common discussions that has come up in connection to digital performance, is the question of dealing with the duality between the various performative arts and the new technology. This duality is often also perceived as a conjunction between an 'old' traditional medium (theater, dance) and a 'new' one (digital technology).⁸⁰

Steven Dixon defends two positions regarding this viewpoint that seem at first to be contradictory. On one hand, he argues that obviously no medium is totally 'new' and it will always incorporate elements from older media.⁸¹ This is why, in several chapters, he examines in detail the pre-digital historic artistic periods, from which clear parallels can be drawn to contemporary practices, that involve new media to help us understand and better examine contemporary digital performance. He explains that “digital performance is by definition an additive process. New technology is *added* to performance, a new ingredient that is delicious for some, but unpalatable for others. In digital performance, extra technologies are added, extra effects, extra interactions, extra prostheses, and extra bodies.”⁸²

On the other hand, he also argues the “conjunction of performance and new media has brought and does bring about genuinely new stylistic and aesthetic modes, and unique and unprecedented performance experiences,

79 Ibid., p. 3.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid., p. 4-6.

82 Ibid., p. 28.

genres, and ontologies.”⁸³ Also new technologies had an effect on 'old' ones (theater, music and performance) and in many ways left a positive creative influence expanding the possibilities of the medium. An example of this is the increasing use of short scenes, cross-cut parallel actions, use of flashbacks, and use of lightning to create sharp montage or gentle dissolve effects in mainstream and experimental theater, which were all practices that came with the integration of film aesthetics.⁸⁴

The most interesting point of view regarding the above mentioned discussion is introduced by Sandy Stone, who gives us two potential answers to the question 'What's new about networking?' “The first answer is 'Nothing', since the tools differ little from technologies such as the telephone, but the second answer is 'Everything', since networking has transformed ideas of cultural and performative space.”⁸⁵

Before Dixon began to describe the historic ties that relate to the contemporary digital performances, he warned about the phenomena regarding the fetishization of technology. This is a constant issue I think of when conceiving my work, and I would therefor like to emphasize its importance. The simplicity of use of new technology, aesthetically pleasant projections, light manipulations, simple, cheap video manipulation and so on, that can be made with it, as well as the excitement that new technology provokes is able to present a great problem in theorizing a certain work. This problem is the result of the fetishization of technology. The consequence is that the technological aspects of an artwork are the primary interest, while the artistic vision and content are of secondary or no importance. To put it simple, it is a question concerning the aesthetic of the technology versus its application, in order to form and express content. In this matter, I agree with Dixon's point of view, that the use of computers, expensive high-tech gadgetry, or any technology should never be perceived and judged as its only criteria. The spectacular aesthetics of the medium, should never be the most important, and the central interest above the content, meaning, and message of the work.⁸⁶

3.3.1. Historic Overview

Digital performance is a relatively new term (it's use became more frequent only after the year 2000), it has, nevertheless, a long historic

83 Ibid., p. 5.

84 Ibid., p. 10.

85 Ibid., p. 38.

86 Dixon discusses on this issue in Ibid., p. 4-6.

precedence. Dixon traces its origins from futurism, constructivism, Dada, and expressionism. From the beginning of the twentieth century through important events in the sixties, such as: the New York *Nine Evenings* (1966)⁸⁷ performances, and the London exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity* (1968). The consideration of these historic art forms is helpful to understand the different levels of expression and context, that can be found in late twentieth, and twenty first century digital performance art forms. In the following chapters, I will present this history discussing more in detail, the pieces that seem most relevant to the content, and aesthetics of my own digital performance *Dear ladies, Thank you*.

As mentioned in this text, performative practices have always been interdisciplinary. Theater, for example, has always tended to include the newest technology of the times (for example, perspective painting, mechanical devices and later electricity and lightning effects) to enhance the aesthetic effect, sense of spectacle of the production, and its impact on the viewers.⁸⁸ Therefore, the use of contemporary digital technology is a logical continuation of its tradition. However, Dixon choose not to start his trace of the use of technology in performance art, from its earliest beginning. He rather starts at the beginning of the twentieth century with the avant-garde movements, because many clear parallels can be drawn to contemporary digital performance in its form and ideological connotations.

Predating this era, another concept Dixon finds it worth mentioning, is *Gesamtkunstwerk* a term coined by Richard Wagner (in the middle of the nineteenth century) which promoted the creative unification of different art forms, such as theater, dance, music, singing, poetry, design, visual arts etc. "Wagner's conception is central to the lineage of digital performance both in its advocacy for grand theatrical spectacle and in the paradigm of 'convergence' that unites the *Gesamtkunstwerk* with contemporary understanding of the modern computer as a 'meta-medium' that unifies all media (text, image, sound, video and so on) within a single interface."⁸⁹

3.3.2. Early-Twentieth-Century Avant-garde

Dixon claims that Italian futurism is, in spite of its problematic connotations as a result of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the movements leader's political inclinations and the movement's highly problematic

87 E.A.T. The story of Experiments in Art and Technology, NTT InterCommunication Center, 2003, p. 30-43.

88 Ibid., p. 39-40.

89 Ibid., p. 41.

attitude toward women⁹⁰, of key importance in digital performance origin. He sees its importance not only for its aesthetics and practices, but also for its philosophy. Futurists expressed great faith in technology. They were interested in dynamic, fragmented, alogical imagery, simultaneity (e.g. parallel actions on stage) and the involvement of the audience.⁹¹ “The Futurists produced a succession of interactive plays and performance events called *serate* and *sintesi*, which called on the physical involvement of the audience.”⁹² Futurism is therefore historically important for the beginnings of interactivity as well as performance art, “since they rejected 'fourth wall' conventions and involved non-narrative and often task-based actions with performers being 'themselves' rather than representing characters.”⁹³

The period of the futurist movement was, in a way, similar to our recent past. Since the beginning of the twentieth century also brought about many technological inventions (automobiles, airplanes, electricity, mechanization, telephone, photography, film, x-ray) that brought cultural and sociological transformation.⁹⁴ The use of these innovations in everyday life changed habits, lives, and the way of thinking. The movement of people became faster, communication easier, working habits changed and began to adapt to the ideology of quick and effective labor.⁹⁵ Bojana Kunst, who in the work *The Impossible body*, follows the different perceptions and ideals of the body represented in theater from the Enlightenment on, also discusses the great changes that took place at the end of the 19th until the beginning of the 20th century.⁹⁶ In the book, she talks about the idea of the '*impossible body*' as the model that the every-day body aspires to reach. These ideas were found in the artificial as it could be observed and explored in the then new technology.⁹⁷ Kunst explains that:

“The development of science and technology in the 19th century caused machines to increasingly take over the industry, brought man and machine into a relation of every day coexistence /.../ Thus the body is forced to adapt to the rhythm of

90 The first futurist manifesto was destructive and reactionary, and denigrated women. Mina Loy, an initial female follower of the movement who also wrote a feminist futurist manifesto and a number of futurist plays, left the movement and was critical of its misogyny in her satirical play *The paperers* (1916). In the movement's defense Dixon goes on to explain that later manifestos supposedly did not include such overt misogyny and that futurist plays and performances were rarely political and none were explicitly Fascist. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 49-50.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 676.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

95 *Ibid.*

96 Bojana Kunst, *Nemogoče telo: telo in stroj: gledališče, reprezentacija telesa in razmerje do umetnega*, Ljubljana, Maska, 1999, p. 137-149.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 247.

machines /.../ [T]he body is faced with mechanisms interfering with its way of life, reshaping its muscular mass, rhythm, energy, directing it to adapt to a new functionality and form. /.../ [T]his cultivation of the body into an impossible body, [was] one of essential aesthetic strategies of body representation in avant-gard theater. At the same time it is also becoming an aesthetic, ethical and political ideal of every-day bodies.”⁹⁸

I would like to present here Dixon's argument as a juxtaposition to the above text; he observes that from the end of the twentieth century on, a similarly great quantity of new technology was introduced into western⁹⁹ civilization and (especially when it became cheaper and more accessible) changed our lives and how we think, just in a different manner.¹⁰⁰ If before technology was very visible and big, today's technology is just the opposite – small and in many cases it works invisibly (Internet, mobile technology).

If futurism provided a philosophical and conceptual basis for digital performance, we can say that constructivism is important for its formalist methodology.¹⁰¹ Vsevolod Meyerhold, one of most visible representatives of constructivism, who was first associated with Russian futurism, was known for his training system – '*biomechanics*', which was influenced by the American industrial period's time-and-motion studies of Frderick Winslow Taylor. Taylor pioneered '*scientific management*' and studied the movement of production-line workers to define what were the most effective standards of work movement to maximize output.¹⁰² Mayerhold mirrored these ideas for his training of physical performance and compared the 'actor of the future' not to the machines, “but to a skilled industrial worker who demonstrates rhythm, balance, stability, and an absence of movement superfluous to productivity.”¹⁰³

Beside theater, Dixon argues that the most relevant influences on digital performance are to be found in cinema's radical engagement with

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 249-250.

⁹⁹ Although many times it is being said that the new technology has connected all parts of the world, this is not entirely true. It is still mostly a privilege of the western societies and higher classes. Dixon stresses that there is a “ 'digital divide' that separates industrialized nations from the so-called third world. Further divisions are traced, from the dominance of the English language (which marginalizes digital performance works using other languages) to the border and frontier metaphors of cyberspace, and the battles between 'proprietary' and 'free' computer code. From: Steven, Dixon, Digital performance..., op.cit, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 64

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 64-65.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 65.

image editing.¹⁰⁴ Sergei Eisenstein, who's artistic philosophy can be counted to Meyerhold's in relating art to industrial labor, is of key importance concerning his theories on shot construction, and editing, known as the 'montage of attraction'. Dixon further explains:

*“The pounding rhythms and increasing tempos of his montage editing technique intensified the sensory and dramatic impact of his films, while the dialectical shot juxtapositions operated simultaneously on the audience's intellectual understanding and interpretation of the films' ideological substrata. Eisenstein's montage technique thus effected shocks to both sensory and intellectual reception, in a praxis he compared to the rapid and cumulative explosions that activate the internal combustion engine.”*¹⁰⁵

Another figure of constructivist cinema, whose work and thought has parallels with futurism and surrealism, is Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov. His film *Man With A Movie Camera (1929)* is famous for its unusual montage, which included screen splits, speed manipulation, superimpositions, camera shots from extreme high angles, from moving automobiles, and trains, etc.¹⁰⁶ His Kinoki (or 'Kino-Eye') theory talks about the film being able to create a 'perfect man' who is a composition of 'thousands of different people', which can easily be related to visual compositions made with the use of a computer. This type of composition is a common theme found in digital performance, although they mostly don't represent a 'perfect man' but rather fantastic figures.¹⁰⁷

After futurism and constructivism, the other early avant-garde movements, which provided inspiration to content and artistic expression for digital performance are Dada, surrealism, expressionism, and Bauhaus. Bauhaus's representative Oskar Schlemmer experimented with different stage solutions like using mechanical devices to move flat figures around the stage, and radically transformed the body, its movement, and actions on stage, by using very unusual and unwieldy costumes.¹⁰⁸ Another Bauhaus artist, Walter Gropius, considered the use of theater space, and how to redesign it in a way in which the space itself would transform during a play

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid., p. 66.

107 Ibid., p. 66-67.

108 Ibid., p. 39.

with help of different technology (e.g. spotlights and film projections in different parts of a specially designed architectural interior), and through this method completely involve the audience with the actions on stage.¹⁰⁹

Dada and surrealism's collages and cutups, which create different virtual realms, are easily put in comparison with computer modified images, but also with the structure of dadaist performances, which combine performance, music, manifestos, theory and art images. Central themes of surrealist art, film, and theater, are the representations of the subconscious, dreams, and fantasy worlds that are also commonly explored in digital performance.¹¹⁰

Expressionism the last avant-garde movement Dixon discussed links to digital performance through its “use of distortion and exaggeration in visual forms, from the human face and body to scenic vistas and virtual worlds.”¹¹¹ Expressionist theater's prime concept was to represent outward something that is essentially interior. Dixon summarizes: “metaphysical realms, astral bodies, alchemy, altered states of consciousness, the depiction of souls, and related spiritual narratives all emerge as significant themes and fascinations within digital performance.”¹¹²

In the next chapter I will present the performances from the sixties that were important to the development of digital performance. There are theoretical and practical developments that are important in order to understand the period prior to the sixties, and which were not included in the avant-garde historical lineage. This will be also discussed in the following sub-chapter.

3.3.3. Performance and Technology Around the 1960s

After futurism in the 1910s, the period around the 1960s is one of the most important periods in the history of performance. Why this is so I will explain shortly. But before jumping to the sixties, some artists from the Multimedia theater scene in the period from 1911 to 1959 shall be briefly mentioned.

Theater, which incorporates and uses digital media and computer generated projections has a long historical precedent. Dixon considers dancer Loïe Fuller's experiments – with film and light projections on her diaphanous robes while dancing (Figure 4, right) – as one of the first

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 43-44.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 70.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 71.

technologically-supported theaters dating one hundred years back.¹¹³ Another author who in the 1920s started using film in theater was Erwin Piscator. He was famous for projecting documentary footages on the stage during a play (Figure 4, left), to emphasize the political aspect of his theater.¹¹⁴ Traugott Müller designed the stage for some of Piscator's plays. They used projections of slides and films in order to show different locations (for example prison cells, living rooms, hotel rooms and offices in back-projections) thus creating the scenery with the use of projections instead of the traditional, less manipulable stage design and props. “This technique of using projections in place of traditional scenographic materials (wood, fabric) has been used to place performers within changing locations throughout the history of multimedia theater ever since.”¹¹⁵

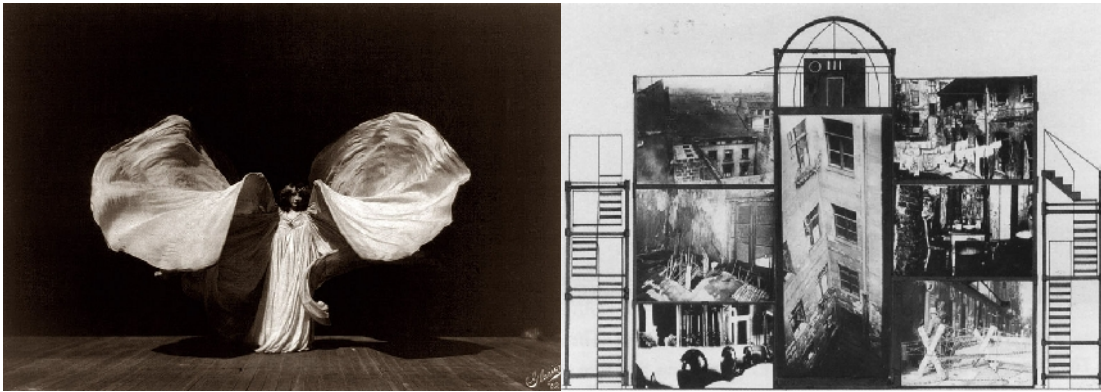


Figure 4: Left, *Portrait of Loïe Fuller* (by Frederick Glasier), 1902; Right, Erwin Piscator's *Hoppla, wir leben!* (by Ernst Toller) Theater am Nollendorfplatz. 3rd Sept, 1927.

The period after the Second World War until 1951 was less productive than the time before, and is more important for the theoretical considerations of multimedia theater. The theater designer Robert Edmond Jones was the first to consider this topic extensively, and in the period from the 1940s to the 1950s he toured the United States to give lectures on his vision of the fusion of theater and cinema.¹¹⁶ He had specific ideas about how this fusion should be carried out. Mainly claiming that it would offer the possibility to express the two sides of the human self – the more subconscious one, which should be presented with the medium of film and the corporeal one, which was present in the body of the actor.¹¹⁷

113 Ibid., p. 40-41.

114 Ibid., p. 77-80.

115 Ibid., p. 78.

116 Ibid., p. 80-83.

117 Ibid., p. 81.

Laterna Magika should be mentioned as the final example of theater, famous for particular multimedia innovation, in the period prior to the seminal watershed of the 1960s. It was founded in 1958 in Czechoslovakia and is still present on the theater scene (Figure 5). This theater used multiple projections, large conveyor belts and other movable mechanics on stage to create great engaging spectacles.¹¹⁸



Figure 5: Image from early (left) and contemporary (right) theater of Lanterna Magika.

Computer-generated images started to emerge as an art form in the 1960s. In 1965 there was already a significant exhibition organized entitled *Computer Generated Pictures*, which presented these works of art at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York. In the same period video also became more accessible because of new cheaper cameras (Sony Portapak in 1965), and later in the 1970s, the editing equipment became cheaper also.¹¹⁹ Despite this, Steve Dixon warns that “the catalysts for 'revolutionary' developments involving analog and electronic media within theater, dance, and performance during the 1960s, particularly in the later half of the decade, were more inspired by cultural and ideological changes than technological leaps or the emergence of computer art.”¹²⁰ This was the period of the women’s rights movement, and the gay right movement. In Europe the anti-establishment Left reached a peak in the Paris student revolution movement of May 1968, and in USA it was the period of the anti-Vietnam War movement, which was accompanied by hippie subculture, experimentations with psychedelic drugs, political activism, and new body politics that emerged through the sexual revolution which also affected most of western societies.¹²¹ The influence of these movements echoed in the art scene and

118 Ibid., p. 83-85.

119 Ibid., p. 88.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.

the performing arts. The 1960s mark the emergence of a new form – performance art. Performance artists such as Carolee Schneeman, Hannah Wilke, and Vito Acconci radically questioned the politics of the body. Changes however were radical also in theater and dance. There was a break with the classical dramatic text and dance distanced from classical and modern rules. Theater and dance experimented with new forms of interdisciplinary, visual, and environmental performance, and made different attempts to dissolve the 'fourth wall' with the aim to more directly involve the audience.

The new forms of performing arts aesthetics and ideologies that emerged in this period are numerous and span from political theater, instruction based art of Fluxus, simple everyday movements aesthetic like walking, chance structures, geometric patterns and repetition of different artists that emerged from The Judson Dance Theater in New York, and many others.¹²² For our interest I will consider more in detail the art forms that have greater relations to digital performance, though this is far from suggesting that all of the performing arts from this period used digital technology for its works.

The before mentioned Judson Dance Theater was a collective of authors from different artistic practices that conceptualized and showed different intermediate performances, a form that begun to proliferate in 1960s. In Al Hansen's performances, for example, there could be seen interesting innovations of use of film projections such as handheld projections which the performers moved around the space in different speeds, directing projections of airplanes and parachutists around the walls and ceiling.¹²³ Another innovative use of film in theater was projecting clips onto a performer's shirt.¹²⁴

Dancer and choreographer Trisha Brown, a founding member of the *Judson Dance Theater*, has played with projection in a different manner. In *Homemade* (1966), she danced with a projector strapped to her back, which was showing the same dance (Figure 6). Thirty years later, during her retrospective at the *Brooklyn Academy of Music*, she danced again with a projector, on which the same old film was rolling, juxtaposing this way her dancing body with the younger self.¹²⁵ Another of her famous piece,

122 Ibid., p. 89.

123 Ibid., p. 89.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid., p. 541.

characterized by Dixon as 'digital dance' was *Set and reset*.¹²⁶ It was made in collaboration with Laurie Anderson, who wrote the score, and with Robert Rauschenberg, responsible for the set.



Figure 6: Trisha Brown performing *Homemade* in 1966, with a working projector strapped to her back. Photo by Peter Moore. © Estate of Peter Moore / VAGA, NYC.

Robert Blossom experimented with a particular use of film on stage which he called *Filmstage*. In his performances he used different combinations of live and filmed dance pieces and played with the synchronization of both.¹²⁷ Dixon notes that “the same essential techniques are now still being applied in numerous digital dance theater performances, whether using prerecorded footage or networked (telematic) links to other live dancers performing in synchronization elsewhere.”¹²⁸

Instead of creating their own film clips, some authors used found footage. Wolf Vostell was one such artist, and was actually one of the first to use video instead of film in digital performances.¹²⁹ While film was mainly used in performances before the 1960s because of its positive aesthetic impact or dramatic effects, video began to appear in the 1960s and 1970s in digital performances. It was typically used for the critique of television culture.¹³⁰

126 Ibid., p. 208.

127 Ibid., p. 89.

128 Ibid., p. 89-90.

129 Ibid., p. 90.

130 Ibid.

Nam June Paik is a video as well as performance artist, who was famous for manipulation of television images using powerful magnets. He played with the TV in many different ways. He for example stack a large number of them one over another to create installations or sculptures, or even attached them to a performer.¹³¹ He collaborated with many artists (e.g. Charlotte Moorman, Merce Cunningham), and is of great importance, since his work had in general a big influence on the performance and video art scene through the 1960s and after.

Another central figure of 1960s art and technology movement, who worked with an even larger number of artists, composers, theater and dance makers, was the Swedish electronic engineer Billy Klüver. He started his collaboration with artists in the early 1960s when he worked with such diverse figures as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, John Cage and Yvonne Rainer.¹³² An even larger group of artists was put together for the famous *Nine evenings: Theater and Engineering* event in 1966 (Figure 7). Ten artists worked with more then thirty engineers to put together ten different performances that were presented in nine evenings in the Sixty-Ninth Armory building in New York.¹³³ The event was visited by a great number of people (around 1500 per day)¹³⁴, and can be regarded as the most historic event that combined performance and technology.

In 1967, after the success of *Nine Evenings* Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer, together with artists Robert Rauschemberg and Robert Whitman founded *Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.)* - an organization which continued with the vision of uniting artists and engineers, who collaborated on different projects¹³⁵. *E.A.T.* made great efforts not only to recruit as many artists and engineers, interested in the idea and organized competitions, but also worked to preserve, archive and distribute texts and documentations of the *E.A.T.* Activities.¹³⁶ Klüver remained its president from the beginning till his death in 2004.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 93.

¹³² More on this collaboration in Billy Klüver, Julie Martin, *E.A.T. - The Story of Experiments in Art and Technology*, Tokyo, 2003, p. 21-29.

¹³³ The complete list of artists is the following: Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, David Tudor, Yvonne Rainer, Deborah Hay, Robert Whitman, Steve Paxton, Alex Hay, Lucinda Childs and Öyvind Fahlström. More details on this event and information on all the collaborators at: *E.A.T. - The story...*, op.cit., p. 30-43.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 44-45.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 44-52.

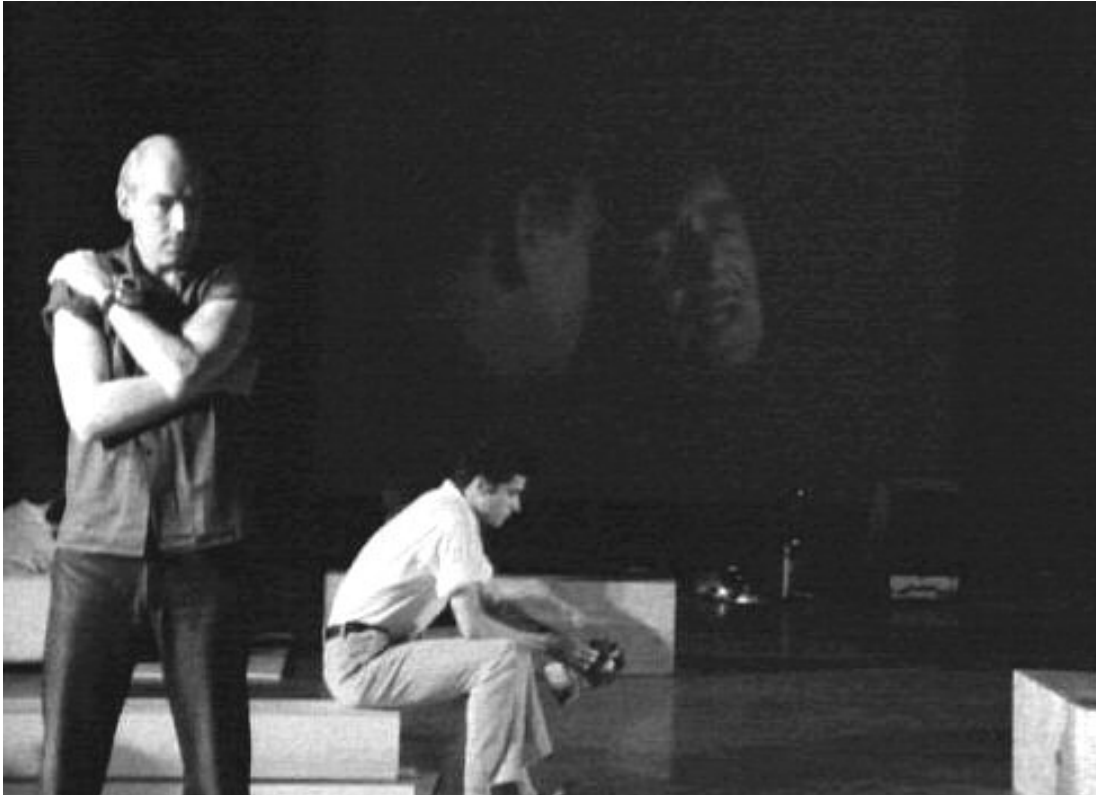


Figure 7: Choreographer Yvonne Rainer's performance *Carriage Discreteness* presented as part of *9 Evenings, The 69th Regiment Armory*, 1966.

Until now only activities of American artists, organizations and events were mentioned, and this is because the United States were at that time the dominant scene in this artistic practice. Steven Dixon mentions only one theater company from Europe that became visible for its multimedia theater in the 1960s and that is the British *Moving Being*.¹³⁷ Dixon explained that the theater brought together “actors, dancers, musicians, film and video to create intensely dramatic, complex, and at times sublimely beautiful stage works.”¹³⁸

The British art scene was, nevertheless, one that organized and hosted one of most important exhibitions that celebrated the joining of computer technologies with wider artistic practices. 1965 was the year “when plans were laid for a show that later came to be called *Cybernetic Serendipity*, and was presented at the ICA in London in 1968 (Figure 8). It was the first exhibition to attempt to demonstrate all aspects of computer-aided creative activity: art, music, poetry, dance, sculpture, animation. The principal idea was to examine the role of cybernetics in contemporary arts. The exhibition

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

¹³⁸ Dixon, *Digital Performance...*, op.cit, p.100.

included robots, poetry, music and painting machines, as well as all sorts of works where chance was an important ingredient.”¹³⁹ The exhibition later toured the United States.

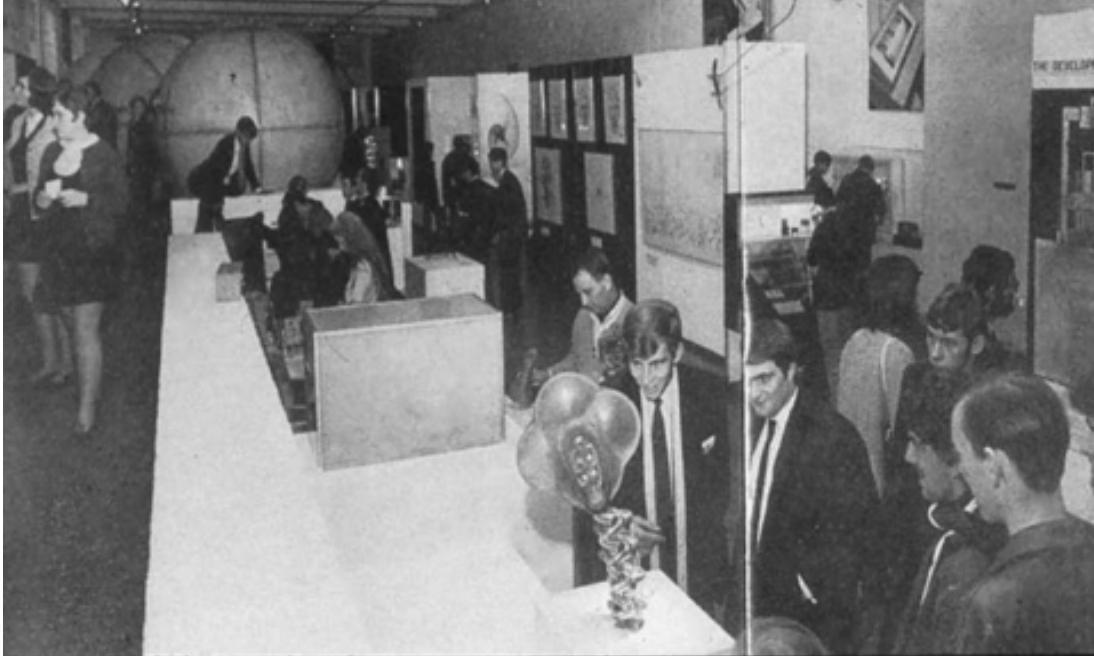


Figure 8: *Cybernetic Serendipity*, Exhibition view, 1968.

Both the 1966 *Nine Evenings* event as well as the 1968 *Cybernetic Serendipity* exhibition were visited by a large number of people and thus proved ample public interest for the crossover between art and science. Many such exhibitions and festivals followed, but I will now narrow down my focus to those with more direct relations to digital performance.

3.3.4. Performances Since the 1970s

Dixon points out that the last three decades of the 20th Century saw a proliferation of the use of media projections (screen or video) in theater, dance and performance art. These had a lot to do with the relatively more economical nature of video technology, as well as its ease of use, which encouraged many artists and groups to experiment with the technology in the theatrical space.¹⁴⁰ Moreover the dialogic nature of media projections versus theater is different from one multimedia performance to another. Phaedre Bell investigated this topic in her text *Dialogic Media productions*

¹³⁹ From the text of curator Jasja Reichardt, Available at: <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/exhibitions/serendipity/>, Accessed on: 4/1/2012.
¹⁴⁰ Dixon, *Digital Performance...*, op.cit, p.103-104.

and Inter-media Exchange. She divided the new theatrical aesthetics in three different categories: film also using theater performance, theater performance also using film and *dialogic media production*.¹⁴¹ The latter is where all media have equal position and where there exists an inter-media exchange - a direct dialog between media, since all have an impact on one another.¹⁴² Dixon further discusses that "This emphasis on the media's real agency upon and dialogic exchange with the live action on stage emerged strongly within multimedia theatrical performances during the 1970s and '80s, and would become a central, and defining feature of digital theater production in the 1990s."¹⁴³

One of the groups that succeeded in such attempts was The Wooster Group, with for example the play *Our Town (1981)*¹⁴⁴ or *LSD...Just The High Points (1984)*. The technology used might not have been hi-tech (especially in the latter it was not) but the factor that convinced many spectators and theoreticians was that it used the technology in a sensible way. And the dialogical interplay between the actors on the stage, and the images of actors on the television played an important part in a conceptual sense. The inclusion of technology was therefore pragmatic and content-driven.

Philip Auslander meditates upon this in the article *Postmodernism and Performance*:

"LSD, devised by the Wooster Group and its director, Elizabeth LeCompte, incorporated materials from a wide variety of cultural texts /.../ Some of these texts were factual, some fictional; some, like The Crucible, were fictional recreations of actual events. The members of the Wooster Group presented these multiple texts through a variety of types of performance that included conventional acting, reading with text in hand, re-creating their own behavior from videotape, and repeating words while listening to them on a sound recording. At times, the performers spoke words associated with fictional characters while, at other times, they were there 'as themselves,' but these various presentations were not sharply delineated and they blended into one another.

141 Phaedre Bell, *Digital Media Productions and Intermedia Exchange*, *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Spring 2000, p. 43-45.

142 Bell more in detail describes how "Inter-media exchange is the mutual acknowledgement of images produced by separate media and their accompanying interchange of dialogue, glance, attribute, equipment or other currency such that the images cohere and appear to coincide in the same time and space. I call productions that engage in inter-media exchange 'dialogic media productions'." *Ibid.*, p. 44.

143 Dixon, *Digital Performance...*, *op.cit.*, p.104.

144 Here Dixon claims Wooster Group even succeeded in presenting all three forms in one play. In Dixon, *Digital Performance...*, *op.cit.*, p.105, 106.

*These performance strategies themselves raised questions about the interplay of presentation and representation, fact and fiction, that seemed to reflect a postmodern world in which those kinds of distinctions are no longer clear-cut.*¹⁴⁵

Laura Farabough's solo performance *Bodily Concessions* (1987) is another of this type of performances, and one that Phaedre Bell took as an exemplary *dialogic media production*.¹⁴⁶ However this performance is to me interesting not only because of its playful and meaningful interplay of video and performance, and its 'inter-media exchange', but also for its theme - the questioning of different faces of the self, which is a theme related to my performance.

Bodily Concession was a solo performance staged in a small theater space. Beside the actual present actor, there were also two filmed images on the stage – one on a TV monitor downstage on the left side, and a projected image upstage center. On the monitor an image of the same actor present on the stage was playing. It was previously filmed, framing a static close-up of the head. On the projection upstage, the whole body of the actor was shown doing different actions.¹⁴⁷ The basic theme of the play was a story of a woman (the woman on stage) who discovers she is sleep-walking. The head of the actor on the monitor acted as the conscious self. In the performance, and worked also as a narrator or even interpreter of the story. On the projection the dream-image was represented, showing what the woman was dreaming about, and the present actor (always the same person) was presenting the actual sleep-walking body. Bell explains that “the tripartite apparatus creat[ed] an imaginary space of sleep and dreams, and the woman [was] the dream's divided subject”.¹⁴⁸ These three different faces of the self interacted with each other in different ways, sometimes affected one another, sometimes doing totally different things. In some parts the conscious self on the monitor spoke to the projection screen or the body, or even appeared on the projection, and at times the body on stage moved the same way as the body on the projection.¹⁴⁹ Bell also pointed out that the narrative, the head on the monitor tells, indicated that the live performance did not serve merely to “illustrate or decorate the video imagery either. She indicat[ed] that the

145 Philip Auslander, Postmodernism and performance, in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 111.

146 Bell, *Dialogic Media...*, op. cit., p. 45-53.

147 Ibid., p. 46-47.

148 Ibid., p. 47.

149 Ibid., p. 47-48.

body [was] in fact the sleepwalking portion of the woman that the monitor woman, the conscious portion of the woman, want[ed] to recuperate.”¹⁵⁰



Figure 9: Laurie Anderson, *Moby Dick*, 1999.

The videos, both on the monitor, and on the projection screen in this performance, presented a possibility of how to simultaneously represent different aspects of the self, and also the interactions between them. However, the content of the story, its idea, guided the interactions of the different media, and this in my opinion facilitated the subsequent melting of all three different media into a convincing aesthetic whole.

Another very important digital performance artist is Laurie Anderson. She expressed her ideas in a wide range of media. She was trained as a sculpture, and she is also a musician, a composer, a performance artist, and many other things. She is known for her technological innovations and early adoption of digital techniques used for her diverse multimedia and multidisciplinary projects. Anderson uses digital and non-digital, analog and non-analog, and organic and nonorganic tools.

In *Moby Dick* (1999) (Figure 9) she used a so-called 'Talking Stick' – a digital instrument and control center in the form of a stick built by Bob Bielecki, which she employed as a lance, harpoon, gun, violin etc. The Talking stick produced sounds and controlled lighting, sound and visual projections. On the other hand in *At the Shrinks* (1975) she used a much more 'low-tech' technology, 'a fake hologram', as she called it, where she projected images onto a 3D modeled figure. The theme of the piece was the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

relationship between patient and psychologist.¹⁵¹ Anderson used a diverse range of tools to express her statement in the best way possible. Because of this Dixon observes that “Anderson's use of digital technologies, and particularly her creation of new instruments, effects, and sounds, bears testimony more to her drive to find the most appropriate means of communicating what she wants to say, than to any formalist approach to technology, or desire to experiment with it for its own sake”.¹⁵² This statement is one that could be in some ways applied also to two earlier mentioned artists and art group which I would also mirror onto my own methodology of work. I would describe it as a content-driven use of the medium so that the formal experimentation with technology is not the one and only interest of the artist, nor the dominant guidance when conceptualizing, and later producing an artistic project. The Wooster Groups' *LSD* theatrical piece, Laura Farabough *Bodily Concessions* and Laurie Andersons' work is not convincing because of the new aesthetic forms based on the use of new technology, but because of its good concepts and well thought-out content and the intertwined inventive consideration of the use of digital technology (or non-digital technology/tools or 'old media'¹⁵³) *in relation* to the content/idea that intended to be communicated.

In the above text only a few selected artists, groups and their works were presented, because from the 1960s on the number of artists present in this field is too vast. For this reason I chose only a few of the most relevant artists/events for orientation purposes. Because my theme is feminism, I would like to add two more artists that are important for the digital performance historic lineage, and are at the same time artists that have in one way or another addressed feminist themes.

Joan Jonas, trained as a sculptor, but also participated in dance workshops with the Judson Church group, is now mostly known for her videos and performances.¹⁵⁴ Both included elements from many different disciplines. “What attracted me to performance was the possibility of mixing sound, movement, image, all the different elements to make a complex statement,” she explains.¹⁵⁵ In many of her works she played with the perception of her body, as for example in *Left Side, Right Side (1972)*, where by using mirrors, camera, and monitors she confused the perceptions of

151 Dixon, Digital Performance..., op.cit., p. 109.

152 Ibid., p.108.

153 Interestingly, while in many cases Dixon talks about experimentation with video or new technology, in Anderson's case he talks about her interest to experiment with words.

154 Michael Rush, *New Media in Art*, London, Thames & Hudson world of art, 2005, p. 41.

155 Ibid., p. 42.

spectator perspective.¹⁵⁶

Another female artist who proved herself in many different artistic practices that Dixon did not mention is VALIE EXPORT. Her *Expanded Cinema* series of works questioned the borders of film medium and showed its other unconventional forms. In the series of performances entitled *Adjunct Dislocations (I, II, III)*, she used the camera to question people's perceptual models. Given the intertwined relationship between her body and the video medium in her performances it would therefore seem quite appropriate to place her work in the historic lineage of digital performance. *Adjunct Dislocations I (1973)*, for example, is the exact opposite of Trisha Brown's work *Homeland*, Dixon did mention in his book.¹⁵⁷ In this performance EXPORT walked from the center of Vienna to its suburbs with a camera mounted on her chest and one on her back (Figure 10), while a third camera filmed her walking. This footage was then presented on three monitors. Mechtild Widrich meditates on the political connotation of one of the scenes:

*“In a key scene EXPORT encounters the statue of Karl Lueger, Vienna's mayor from 1897 to 1910 and a notorious anti-Semitic demagogue. She circles the statue, presenting it with her backside. By delegating this part of the performance to her mass media apparatus (the back camera confronts the statue, which she can not see), EXPORT distances herself from a naïve action-based view of performance as revolutionary, while pointing to ways in which technology can be politically mobilized.”*¹⁵⁸

Adjunct Dislocations III (1978/1996/2010) consisted of rotating cameras capturing three walls, painted with thick black stripes and two rows of monitors, showing the filmed images. Watching the monitors carefully the spectator could for a moment see herself/himself watching the work until the camera has passed by. Widrich observed that “we [the visitors] become the performers of the piece, but we are also quite aware that the installation itself with its sculptural bulk and preprogrammed rotating cameras, is the principal performer.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Dixon, *Digital performance...*, op. cit., p. 245

¹⁵⁷ Mechtild Widrich, *Location and Dislocation: The Media Performances of VALIE EXPORT*, PAJ, A Journal of Performance and Art, September 2011, Vol. 33, No. 3 (PAJ 99), p. 53-59.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 54-55.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 55.



Figure 10: VALIE EXPORT *Adjunct Dislocations*, 1973 © VBK, Wien, 2010, Archiv VALIE EXPORT, Foto: Hermann Hendrich.

EXPORT's work for the most part explicitly addresses feminist themes. Beside this she has also meditated upon this subject in her interviews and text, as for example in *Women's Art Manifest: A Manifesto* (1972).¹⁶⁰ This was written for the exhibition *MAGNA Feminism: Art and Creativity* (1975), “an overview of female sexuality, imagination, projection and problems, suggested by a table of objects, images, readings, discussions, films, videos and actions,”¹⁶¹ thought out and conceived by EXPORT. In an interview with Elisabeth Lebovici EXPORT explains that this exhibition showed works of Austrian female artists and in a side program also linked to international female artists and theoreticians, showing videos, films, or organizing lectures. EXPORT declares that “MAGNA focused on feminism in Austria for the first time, and was the first international exhibition of female artists in Europe.”¹⁶² I see here a relation to my performance, because of her interest to consolidate the historical importance of female artists which also led to their promotion and visibility.

160 VALIE EXPORT, *Women's Art 1972*, *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, Wiley-Blackwell; 2nd Edition, 2003, p. 927-928.

161 <http://e-gli.com/valie-export/>, 8/2/2012.

162 VALIE EXPORT, *Centre national de la photographie*, Editions de l'oeil, Montreuil, Paris, 2003, p. 152-153.

3.4. RELATED WORKS

In the previous chapter, I have mentioned many artworks which Dixon described either as digital performance, or as historic ancestors of digital performance. Their form, and in some cases, even their content (especially works with feminist theme, like VALE EXPORT's performances, or artworks that addressed different aspects of the self, like Laura Farabough's *Bodily Concessions*) will, in future chapters, be related to my practical work. In the current chapter, I will introduce a few additional related artworks and their extended interpretations, which will also be useful for the exposure of different levels of the content, found in my artworks.

3.4.1. Guerrilla Girls

I have already written about the different works of the Guerrilla Girls in previous chapters. They are probably one of the most known artist groups, that deal with both issues relevant to my work – feminism and art history. Beside the above mentioned posters and book edition, I would also like to mention the poster we can observe on Figure 11. The most interesting element in the poster is its usage of space. The blank space is a creative visualization of statistical differences caused by discriminative nature of art history narrative and the art world in general.



Figure 11: Guerrilla Girls poster figuratively representing the discrimination pattern of the art world.

3.4.2. Marina Abramović, *Freeing The Memory*

One of the works of the probably most known performance artist Marina Abramović is *Freeing the Memory* (1975).¹⁶³ In the performance, she, figuratively speaking, told every word she knew. A camera was placed directly in front of her face so that the audience could see the motion of her eyes and mouth when thinking and afterward pronouncing words. It was as if with this close-up of the camera (Figure 12) the spectator was nearer to Abramović's mind and thought about words alongside with the artist.



Figure 12: Marina Abramović, performance *Freeing the memory*, video still, 1975.

The title of the performance suggests that by speaking out words, the mind could become free. This freedom could be interpreted as freedom from the culturally defined vocabulary that allows communication between people, which is at the same time a culturally defined set of codes that also shape the subject¹⁶⁴ that uses them.

¹⁶³ Marina Abramović (chief curator: Klaus Biesenbach, edited by: Mary Christian), *Marina Abramović: the artist is present*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 2010, p. 68.

¹⁶⁴ The subject is here meant as the self as a culturally defined being.

As a quick example to consider the impact of the words onto the subject that uses them, we can consider the following: the words, which Marina Abramović was pronouncing, were in her mother language – Serbo-Croatian. Therefore, many connotations were already put to her persona. The nation, its history, its politics, and its cultural habits – all of these are inscribed to the body, which speaks Serbo-Croatian words.

Freeing the Memory was one in a set of three performances, with the same basic idea of 'freeing' the self. The other two performances were *Freeing the body*, where she danced naked with a black scarf wrapped around her head until she fell down from exhaustion, and *Freeing the Voice*, where she screamed until she got out of breath.

If *Freeing the Memory* drew the attention to the words we use to communicate, these two performances draw attention to a different way of communicating – a different language – the body language and the language of the voice. It is different in fact, if a sentence is accompanied by a certain body gesticulation and there is also a difference if it is, for example, spoken by a female or male voice, shouting or whispering etc. However, all of these are still culturally defined languages, from which it seems, in the 'Freeing' series, Abramović tried to escape. Therefore, the *freeing of the memory, the body and the voice* can be understood as an attempt to escape the social and cultural processes that shape our body, our gestures, and our mind. However, spelling out words cannot erase them from one's memory. Nevertheless, the way in which these words were spoken, the context in which they were used and the way how they were used, takes away their basic social function of communication through the use of sentences. The proper use of sentence structures needs the existence of cultural agreement. Words create different meaning depending on the context (e.g. on the surrounding words). However, Abramović used them in a way that the more definite meaning of a separate spoken word could not be derived. The words sequence appeared random to the public and therefore without recognizable meaning.

Another way to look at the order of how the words were spoken in the performance is examining them through the idea of association. The artist has probably followed some associative flow of the words, which means for her there was some conscious or subconscious reason why one word was followed by another. In both interpretations, however, the artist achieved some degree of liberation from the social and cultural constrains and gained some level of personal impact on the words she spoke. Firstly, because she managed to manipulate words in a way that did not make sense for others

anymore, and secondly, because the order of words spoken could only make sense to her, and could have been only spoken in this particular order by her. In this way, she exposed her selfhood, her subjectivity. She isolated the subject out of the social – plural sphere. To think of the subject outside of the social structure is impossible. However, it more as a realization of the deep impact society has on our bodies. Nevertheless, at the same time there is also the realization of the possibility to change the social reality through changing our own body – or in this case more specifically – our memory and mind.

3.4.3. Marina Abramović, *Lips of Thomas*

Marina Abramović made many performances and they sometimes seem more introverted. Nevertheless, some other times (expectedly or not) they actively involve the spectators. In her book, *The Aesthetics of Performance*¹⁶⁵ Erica Fischer-Lichte uses Abramović's work *Lips of Thomas* (1975) (Figure 13) as first example of the direct involvement of the audience, performance is capable of. In this work, Fischer-Lichte was not as interested in the content of the performance as she was interested in the involvement of the audience it provoked. A few of the people from the audience, in fact, stopped Abramović performance because of the suffering she was making to herself. In her book, Fischer-Lichte gives many examples of performances that were experimenting with these changes of roles of who the actor (subject) is and who the spectator (object) is.

There are different levels of involvement of audience into the progress of the performance possible. In the case of *Lips of Thomas*, the audience stopped the performance, in some other cases (for example some theater pieces from the seventies) the audience at some point became the actors and in some cases the directors let this happen but in others not.

¹⁶⁵ Erica Fischer, Lichte, *Estetika performativnega*, Ljubljana, Študentska založba, 2008.

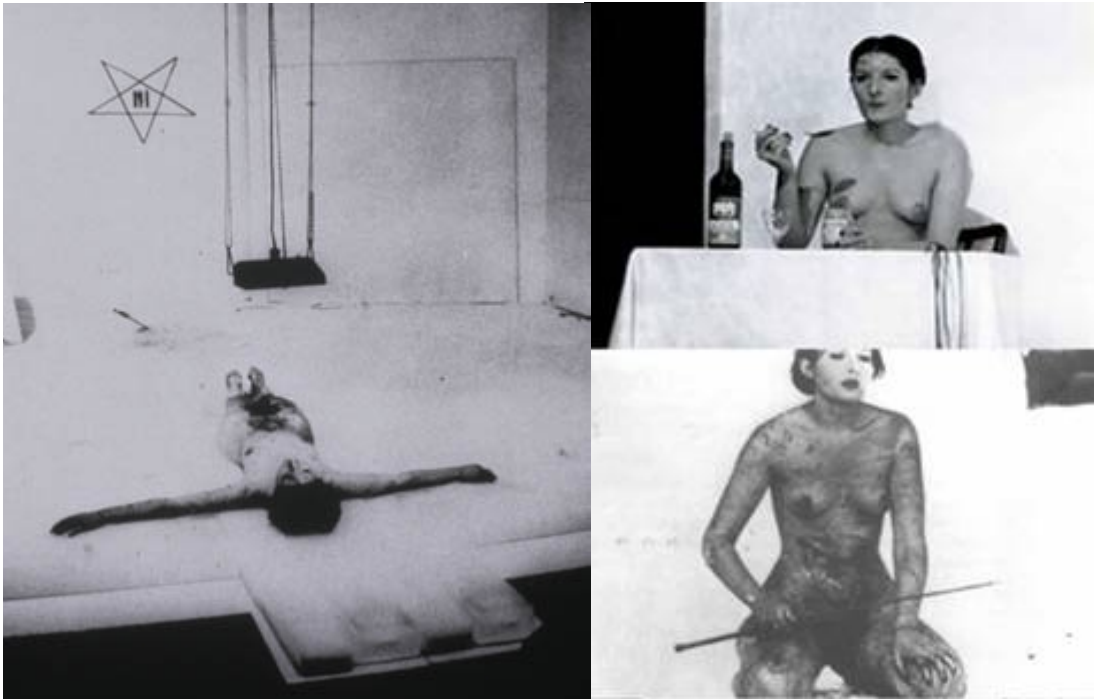


Figure 13: Marina Abramović, performance *Lips of Thoma*, 1975.

3.4.4. Alban Muja, *Free Your Mind*

Alban Muja is a young artist from Kosovo, who in 2004 filmed a video entitled *Free Your Mind* (Figure 14) where he listed all artists he could think of. In his statement about this work he explained:

“The video of Marina Abramović was my starting point and it gave me the idea for my work. However, /.../ I continually tried to find a way to differentiate my work from that of Marina. What should an artist do to respect the source of his inspiration, the work of a famous colleague who has made a name for herself, and at the same time, to distance himself from that work and that name, and to become himself? For a moment, I thought about how I could free myself, not from the influence, but from the torture of trying to find myself in the work of another artist, if I repeated out loud the famous name, until it lost its meaning. Then, I realized that this is a way to be freed from every name and influence. I started to spontaneously call the names of the artists that came to my mind and who have influenced me in one way or another. I felt that I was doing some kind of exorcism. In a way, I was respecting those names, but at the same time, I was freeing myself from a weight, from all that I had accumulated on my mind in the form of

preferences and influences, by taking them off of me and converting them into empty sounds, which one after another, were lost in time and space...¹⁶⁶



Figure 14: Still from the video performance *Free Your Mind*, Alban Muja, 2004.

As he explained speaking the names was a way for him to first show respect and secondly free himself from the influences. However, while I do agree that Marina Abramović in *Freeing the Memory* did manage to detach some significance from the words she spoke (an exception for example were the connotation of nationality, which I already mentioned), I do not agree entirely with Muja's interpretation of his own performance.

On one hand it is true that some meaning is lost, because of the high number of names being told. The quantity seems to have more importance than the choice of artists (although even this will be disputed). On the other hand, from a viewer's point of view the words certainly did not become empty sounds. The names and surnames were mostly followed by a short pause, which enabled distinctions between one artist and another. I myself

¹⁶⁶ albanmuja.blogspot.com, Accessed on: 10/2/2012.

always visualised either the artists work or her/his face. The combination of the name and surname of the respective artist are like brand names, to which meaning is attached. While words form meaning when put together in a sentence – usually within a linear reading, the names are more like dots, icons or logos. If we consider the artists names within the art market, we could designate different market value to each of the listed names. Considering this aspect, we can see how meaning in this case persists.

The artist also spoke of the influences he wants to get rid of. For me his work is much more interesting to examine from this point of view. A work of art always has its predecessors, its earlier references. And artists (especially young artists) tend to or need to have 'role-models' to which they look up to (or critique). However, at one point an artist wants to detach herself/himself from these influences and form a particular own style. Nevertheless, no artwork is ever without influences, and the idea of the nurturing of personal style is connected to the idea of the artist as a Genius – the concept I already meditated upon. At this point I will not engage in a deeper discussion of this idea (also because Muja, by naming all the influences, fights this idea), but will rather just examine the list of artists presented by Alban Muja. What is most interesting for me in this list is that firstly, it mostly consists of contemporary artists, and secondly, it mostly consist of artists from Western Europe and the United States. Both of these facts will be relevant in later chapters. For now I would just like to point out the last – the nationality of the artists in comparison to the nationality of the performer Alban Muja. Why is it that most artist he listed are from Western Europe or the United States even though he is from Kosovo? Could this be related to the question of referencing as posed by Mira Schor?

3.4.5. Eclipse, *Venus' Test*

Eclipse is a Slovene women tandem, who also operated with a list of artists names in one of their performances. This performance was *Venus' Test* (1999), which was presented in Kapelica Gallery. In this performance three people were involved – the two artists and a nude man lying on a bed in a pose reminiscent of Manet's Olympia. The tandem Eclipse tried to stimulate an erection by hand and by simultaneously speaking names of various Slovene women artists (Figure 15).¹⁶⁷ As they explained, the performance sought to:

¹⁶⁷ The curator of the gallery said, they have remembered the names by hart.

"[I]nvestigate the social status of the Slovene women art scene"¹⁶⁸ and questioned: "Which women's names are creating projects with such a value /.../ that are able to resist the force of gravity?"¹⁶⁹

The main idea of the performance was to

"[c]learly and humorously show how and to what extent culturally unexciting and uninteresting women-artists and their creations are in the actual phallogentric society".¹⁷⁰

Their interest was the invisibility and unimportance of women artists, but their statement was provocative both for male and female viewers.



Figure 15: *Eclipse*, performance Venus' Test, Kapellica Gallery, 1999.

There are important formal as well as conceptual relations that can be drawn between my earlier practical works and the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*. Connections more related to the formal nature of the

168 <http://www.scca-ljubljana.si/zenske-prihajajo.htm> , Accessed on: 10/2/2012.

169 <http://www.metelkova.org/rdece/arhiv/biografije.php> , Accessed on: 10/2/2012.

170 <http://www.scca-ljubljana.si/zenske-prihajajo.htm> , Accessed on: 10/2/2012.

performance can be found within earlier video *One More Kick* and video installation *Perspective*, as well as within the collaborative project *Artificial Stupidity*. Most strong thematic and ideological connotations can be drawn with two works I have already mentioned at the beginning of these thesis, the diverse media series *Let Me Fly* and the conceptual work *Translations1*.

3.4.6. *One More Kick and Perspective*

The common ground of the video *One More Kick* and video installation *Perspective* is a performance for camera. *One More Kick* was the first work, where I used performance as a medium of my artistic expression (Figure 16). The video installation *Perspective* (Figure 17) is a kind of continuation of the concept I started to explore in *One More Kick*. The topic was subjectivity, or in other words the exploration of the self. While in *One More Kick* I have explored this in a funny or rather ironic manner in *Perspective* I addressed the idea of the self in confrontation to another, which was thought as a confrontation of the idea of the subject in relation to the society. In *Dear Ladies, Thank You*, I also address the idea of the self, but I explore it in more concrete social and political context.

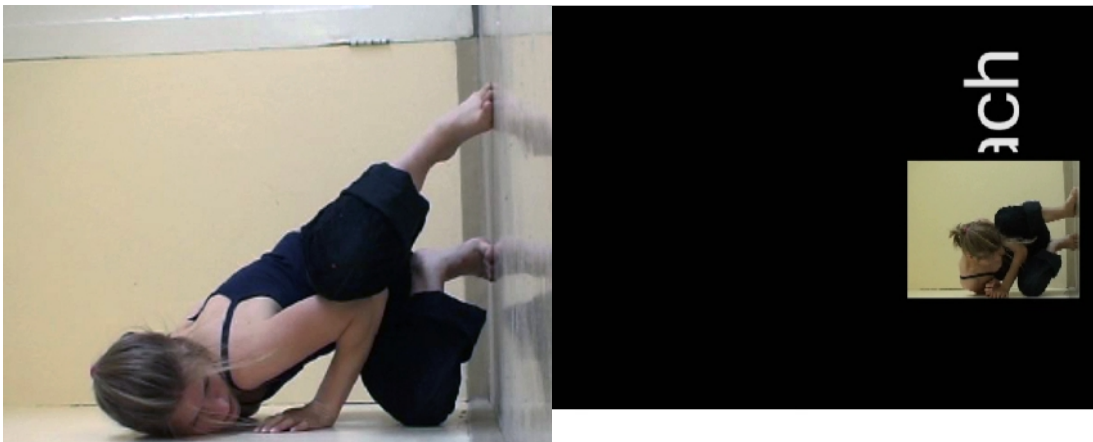


Figure 16: Stills from the video *One More Kick*, 2009-2010.

The comparison of the works *One More Kick*, *Perspective*, and *Dear Ladies, Thank You* seem to create a lineage of linear development and transformation from the use of video to the use of video installation to a video performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*. This can be juxtaposed with the developments in the historic lineage of digital performance presented in the earlier chapters (see 3.3. Digital Performance). The development did not evolve in such a linear way (first performance of *Dear Ladies, Thank You*, was before the video installation). The the historic lineage also did not

develop in such a neatly way, that is usually presented in art history books. It is, however, important to notice that there has definitely been a mutual affection between the usage of different technologies and performances, that led to always new experiments. An interesting observation is also that all the performances are similar in the posture of the body – the folded body, which only moves on the knees.



Figure 17: Installation Perspective: view from the front, and view from the back, gallery Alkatraz, 2010.

3.4.7. Collaborative Project *Artificial Stupidity*

Authors: Bager Akbay, Vasja Progar, Ana Čigon

Main Collaborators: Vesela Mihaylova, Myrssini Antoniou, Markos Vogiatzoglou

One of the most recent projects beside the performances of *Dear Ladies, Thank You* is the collaborative work *Artificial stupidity*. In this work, we have made different experiments with which we confused the perceptual models of the people. At the same time, the project was also a work that tried to involve the audience in many different ways. However, not only they participated within the predefined experiments, they were also encouraged to give suggestions of their own and even become collaborators. During the presentation, we have uploaded videos and photos on our website, and also updated our findings and experiments. One of most important elements of this project for me was the way technology was used. It was used to (re)direct people's focus onto their perception, the human body. The experiments made for *Artificial stupidity* used technology to learn about the human perceptual models, to question the intertwined connections between the body and the mind, the processes inside the body.

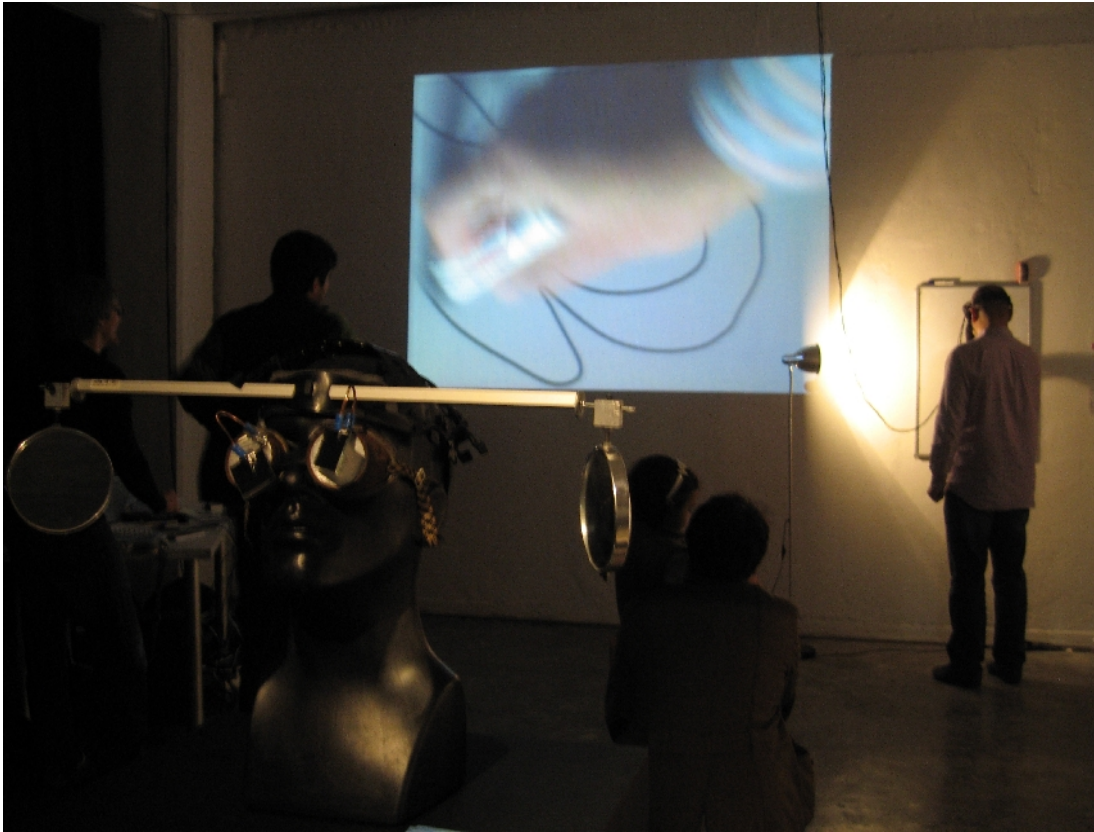


Figure 18: *Project Artificial Stupidity*, Amber Festival, Istanbul, 2010.

Another important finding that *Artificial Stupidity* enabled was the realization that a very important aspect of the work was the way it was presented. Firstly, in the sense of personal invitations to the viewers, and secondly, the organization of the space that was specifically designed so that it invited people to join, and that it was, to some extent, visually pleasant but not so spectacular that the aesthetics of it would be all there is to experience. The design of the space had its scenographic logic (Figure 18) – it was open and it also left a space dedicated for visitors. The result was that many people tried out the experiments and many also contributed suggestions about how else to do the experiments, and which of the items from the *Artificial Stupidity* series could be useful for them. In terms of engagement of the audience (and the exchange of the role), I therefore see the most important part of our *Artificial Stupidity* experiments exactly in the point of exchanging ideas and interactions between the initiators that organized the space (who also created the tools to experiment with) and the visitors. This experience was one that brought most interactions, the highest level of involvement between the audience and visitors.

In all three of the mentioned practical works until now, technology was used in combination with bodily experience. Technology was always used to direct the attention to the human body and the subject it presented. In *Artificial Stupidity* the attention is diverted also to the interconnectivity between the body and the mind processes.

The next two practical works, *Let Me Fly* and *Translations₁*, are related to *Dear Ladies, Thank You* by its theme – feminism.

3.4.8. *Let Me Fly*

Let Me Fly (2009-2010) is a series of paintings, drawings on post-it papers, and a sculpture with a small animated video. It was conceived especially for Račka Gallery in Celje – Slovenia. This gallery used to be a peep show, and since it became a gallery, it has been showing art pieces with erotic themes.

The presented works were 12 paintings and many post-it paper drawings with imagery showing active lovers of different sexual orientations as well as individuals who seemed confident with their naked bodies. The post-it papers drawings were located on the doors that used to be intended for the peep show, blocking in this way the view to the voyeurs.

In short, the intention of the work was to direct the attention to diverse kinds of sexuality, dismiss the idea of the passive/active relations in heterosexual relationship and dismiss the heterosexual relationship and other traditional views on sexuality as the only acceptable or the only 'normal' ones.



Figure 19: Painting 'Hello Sexy' (left) and Post-it drawings (right) from the series *Let Me Fly*, 2010.

3.4.9. *Translations1*

Translations1 (2010) consisted of two editions of popular women's and men's magazines that I designed and printed to create the illusion of original copies of the two magazines (Figure 20). The format and style of the design was similar to most mass media magazines, the only difference was that the pictures, and texts were modified so that the texts from the women's magazine were put to the men's magazine and vice versa. The pictures were also changed. Since we usually mostly find photos of naked women in men's magazines, now there were naked men in women's magazines. And reverse, since we usually find ads with womens clothes, and adds that promote beauty creams, shaving creams, diet recipes etc. in women's magazines, adds with men's clothes, beauty creams, shaving creams and diet recipes were put in the men's magazine.

The aim of the project was to warn about the stereotypes about women and men that are constantly being reinforced in the mass media and their conscious but even more subconscious effects on women and men. In this context, the problem of this project I understand now is that it was presented in a gallery. Instead, it should have been put somewhere where we usually find magazines.



Figure 20: Photos of the women's (left) and the men's (right) printed magazine from the conceptual work *Translations1*.

Barbara Sterle Vurnik, curator of the exhibition *Translations1* commented on the work as follows:

“Čigon has decided to address the viewer directly using only the manipulative power of a form of the mass media, namely, magazines. /.../ She selected a few of the most notorious, and most influential, publications found in Slovenia, which through their inane advice impose unrealistic norms and unattainable ideals of

beauty, misleading and dulling the minds of the "believing" masses. To achieve a new balance of comparisons, she conceived and "published" new variations of one women's and one men's magazine both consisting of 40 pages of text, pictures and also few advertising pages . Her purpose was to make visible a great amount of stereotypes hidden in text an pictures that are found in this kind of magazines.

The method she used to show this is "translation". She took the articles that she found in women's magazines and put them into the new men's magazine and vice versa. She also replaced all the female names with male names and corrected the text where it was necessary. Similarly she proceeded whit pictures - where there was a picture of a man in the magazine, she replaced it with a woman etc. Both of the new developed magazines work in two phases: the initially predictable look of the official magazines (or rather Čigon's copies) retroactively triggers the viewer's recognition of the "truth" and the trick."¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Barbara Sterle Vurnik, Text for the solo exhibition Translations1 (15/10–5/ 11/2010) at Gallery P74, Ljubljana, Available at: <http://www.zavod-parasite.si/slo/archives/287> , Accessed on: 10/2/2012.

4. PRACTICAL ARTWORK - *DEAR LADIES, THANK YOU*

In the theoretical part of the thesis, I have explained my motivation for getting interested in feminism and the ideology hidden behind art history lineage. I have explained the issues of the discriminations art history is making, exposed problems of non presence of female artists in different art institutions (museums, galleries, academies etc.), the problems of referencing, and also gave some examples of the unequal position of women in general. The idea for the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*, especially the last two versions, was developed as a result after careful consideration of all these issues. The performance should therefore be understood as an attempt to give an answer to the mentioned problems. At the same time, the performance should be especially considered in the context of the area where I work and where I have presented the performance – Slovenia. Nevertheless, I do believe that some problems related to the topic exist also out of the Slovenian context, and have unfortunately still not been considered properly.

The performance had three different forms. The first one was presented at the *Academy for Theater, Film, Radio and Television (AGRFT)* in Ljubljana. The second time it was presented at *Kapelica Gallery*, also in Ljubljana, and the third time outdoors in *Zagreb*. All the performances had the same title, but they were actually all quite different from each other in their form and to some degree also in their concepts. However, the main idea of the performances that always remained present was the concept of a tribute to female artists. Yet, this tribute changed from performance to performance, which will be explained within the descriptions of the three particular versions. Because of their variations, the three performances can be perceived as a developing project, which kept changing after reconsidering its effects, and also friends and audiences comments on the lastly performed version. The second and third performance, presented at *Kapelica Gallery* and in *Zagreb*, will be discussed in larger amount especially because they were presented to a larger public, and because they consisted of more complex elements and greater conceptual consideration.

4.1. PERFORMANCE AT AGRFT

As explained above, the first performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You* was presented in 2009 at the *Academy for Theater, Radio, Film and Television (AGRFT)* in Ljubljana. This first variation of the performance was dedicated to Slovene female artists, with a special focus on three selected artists. The performance was an homage (or rather femage) to the writer Zofka Kveder, the painter Ivana Kobilca and the world traveler, polyglot and writer Alma Karlin. The intension of the performance was a kind of monumental dance to express gratitude for these women's strength of will, and their extraordinary life stories, and an occasion to remember how different the circumstances for women (artists) used to be in the past. The focal technique for expression was dance and video.



Figure 21: Still from a video documentation of the first performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*, AGRFT, Ljubljana, 2009.

The dance choreography was 10 minutes long and was developed during classes of Art of Movement at AGRFT, taught by Professor Tanja Zgonc. The movement and figures were in one way or another connected to the three women's appearances, or to their work. The dance took place on a stage floor covered by simulated names (Figure 21) of various Slovene artists from different disciplines (visual art, literature, theater). It was accompanied by two videos; on one TV screen on the left, and on one monitor on the right side of the stage (Figure 22). Before the beginning of the performance, I covered the stage with names of Slovene female artists.¹⁷² One video output

¹⁷² The names were taken from the collection of Slovene visible women entitled *Pozabljena polovica. Portreti žensk 19. in 20. stoletja na Slovenskem (Forgotten Half. Portraits of Women of*

was showing inserts from one of the women's life and work, while the other video was connected to a camera. With the help of a special headset, the camera was positioned in front of my face¹⁷³, and was connected to the TV screen by cables.

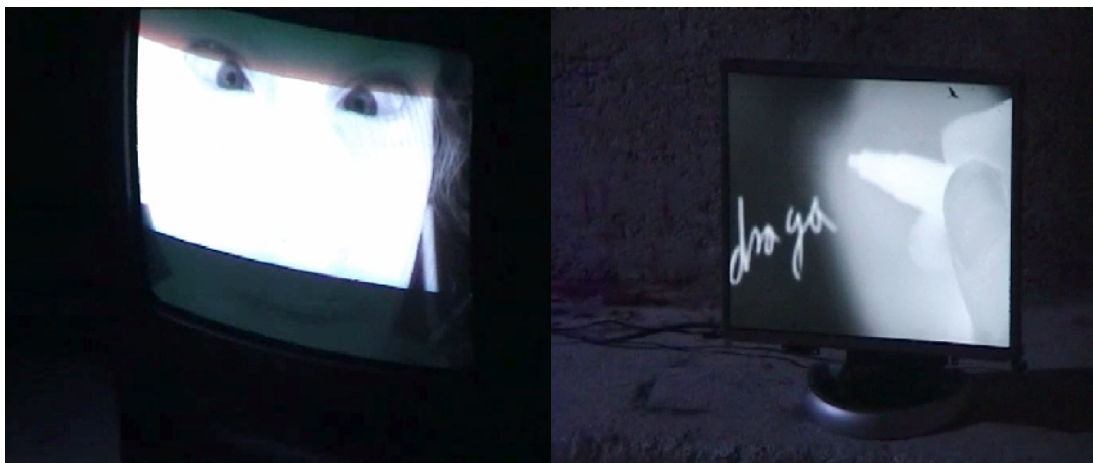


Figure 22: Left, video of my face on a TV screen; right, video of inserts from Zofka Kveder's, Ivana Kobilca's, and Alma Karlin's work and life in *Dear Ladies, Thank You* scenography, AGRFT, Ljubljana, 2009.

During my dance, the spectators were always watching a real-time footage of my face. By juxtaposing it to the inserts showing images about the three women's works and life, I tried to show a connection between my work and life with their work and their lives. The dance on the written (simulated) signatures of the female artists was a metaphoric expression of women solidarity, and acknowledgment of the great impact our social positions have on our work and life.

This performance was in a way satisfying for me, however, not entirely. Firstly, I wanted to show it to a wider audience, and secondly, it opened some problems, such as which artists to thank, or why express gratitude to exactly these three, and why only three artists. When I was later asked why I had chosen these three and not other three artists, I realized the performance should have addressed some wider issues.

In the next variation, many changes have been made, but quite a few elements remained. For the purpose of the next performance, I have tried to question again the concept of the first performance, and tried to redefine its goals. The version in *Gallery Kapelica* was consequently longer, it was

the 19th and 20th Century from Slovenia).

¹⁷³ The camera on cables used for the occasion was lent to me by artists Nika Autor and Miha Ciglar who designed it and used it in their earlier performances.

technically as well as content-wise more conceptually accomplished. This way it has solved many of the issues that turned out to be questionable in the first version.

4.2. PERFORMANCE AT KAPELICA GALLERY

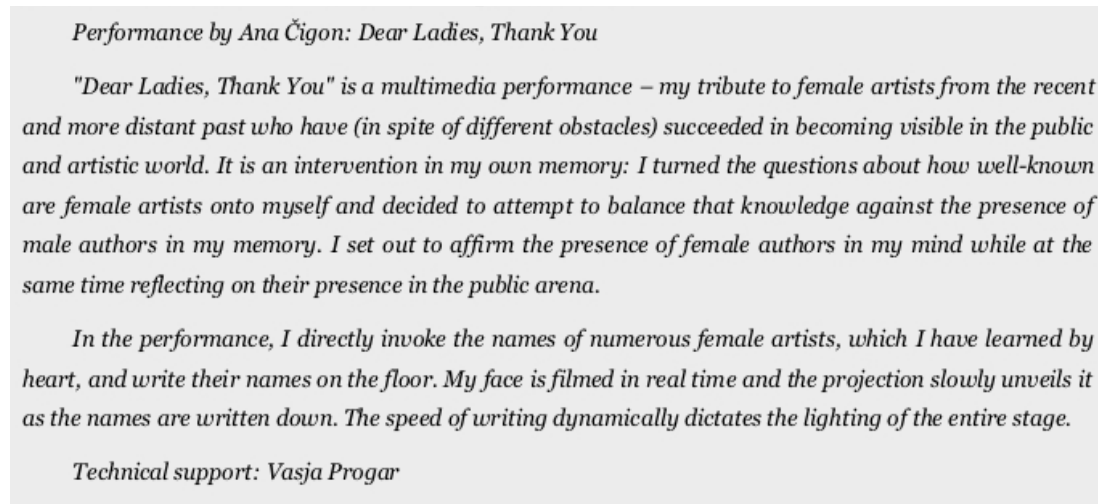


Figure 23: Text written on the invitation leaflet for the performance.

As mentioned, the idea for my performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You* has risen from the acknowledgement of all in previous chapters mentioned (and probably even other unmentioned, but related) thoughts about my position in the world, the art world, the art history, and my position in different institution as a female artist. The idea came from knowing that I was one of female students in a predominantly female class of students in an institution where, on the other hand, the number of female teachers is suspiciously low, and where historic female artists were very rarely mentioned. It came from knowing that I was/am visiting galleries and museums, where the number of female names written on the walls is also extremely low. I was/am also disturbed by many different representations of women in mass media, culture, society, and politics which preserve and spread stereotypes that construct a set of ideologies about how a woman should act and be in my local and also in some wider social contexts.

Instead of addressing my critique directly to the public sphere I have taken myself - my memory/knowledge as a criteria and object of analysis. The beginning of the second performance started long before the actual event, when I wrote down on a paper as many artists' names as I could think of. My memory was used as a criterion, since I am also a female artist. In a

few of my previous projects, I was concerned with the theme of feminism, yet, 160 names came up, from which only one fifth of them were women.

After learning such a small percent of the artists I remembered were women, I decided to make a statement about this problem by learning the same amount of female artist by heart (as I knew of male artist) and make a representation of this act in a performance. I chose to act on the imbalanced situation by first shaping my own memory.



Figure 24: Photo of the performance Dear Ladies, Thank You, Kapelica Gallery, Ljubljana, 2011. Photo by Miha Fras.

4.2.1. List of Female Artists

When looking for new female artists to learn I did not just learn their names, but I also learned about their work and biography.¹⁷⁴ Most of them were found in the book *Women artists in the 20th and 21st century*,¹⁷⁵ and others (mostly from earlier time) were found on the Internet. Wikipedia was the first source of the exploration, then more information was found through other links. I checked pages showing reproductions of their artworks, I also found videos of interviews with the artists or went through some of the pages with information about exhibitions of female artists. I also checked for the right pronunciation of the artists names etc, and tried to look for artists who once were known or should now be known because of their achievements. The chosen artists were from similar artistic fields as the 126 male artists that I managed to remember. The places where the artists exhibited their works were checked, as well as information about their education, and (mostly when it came to artists from earlier than the 20th century) I also tried to check what the circumstances in which they worked were, what obstacles they found in their way because of the fact that they were women etc. I must say I had not even heard about a great number of these artists prior to this performance, neither I had known so much about the circumstances and conditions of their professional practice.

I have presented some of the reasons why women are being erased from art history and art theory, so I should also mention who these forgotten women are. The names of the women I chose for the first performance can be seen on the photos of the projection and the complete list can be found in the appendix. I will now introduce a short and quick overview of some of these artists. Some were chosen because they, despite all the problems, somehow still managed to be visible and some are included because they would really deserve to be visible. My interests and personal preferences have also contributed to the selection. Of course it would be great to describe all of the achievements of the women listed here, but the reader should bear in mind that this would mean I would be writing yet another comprehensive book about the forgotten artists. My aim was and is different, it is rather that the reader understands why knowing about these forgotten artists is important. I hope I have given enough reasons for the reader to be aware of the issue of the forgotten and erased artists in general and will also be encouraged to

¹⁷⁴ The complete list of all the female and male artists is attached in the appendix.

¹⁷⁵ *Women artists : in the 20th and 21st century*, ed. Uta Grosenick, Taschen, Hong Kong, 2005.

make an effort to look for them and learn about them. Ultimately this was the aim of my performance – to not only inform myself, but also encourage the viewers (and in this case also the readers) to actively continue her/his own research.

As written, there were various parameters by which I decided upon which artist to include in my first selection for the performance in Kapelica Gallery. Below I present a rough guideline that I used for my research. The artists I chose fit one or more of the following criteria:

- She achieved a considerably high recognition in her time. This was examined with the awareness of the obstacles then present in the art world.

- She created visual artworks. I concentrated on the artists that worked mostly in the following areas: photography, painting, video, performance, new media art, and installation art. Some were also conceptual artists or sculptors. The choice of the disciplines coincides with the artistic disciplines I have engaged in as well, and could be also related to the disciplines of the artists from the male artists list.

- She has been presented in important exhibitions, festivals, galleries or museums.

- She could be perceived as a counterpoint to some male artists that I mentioned in my 'memory test'.

- She has not been considered and has not received the recognition she should have.

A couple of more personal criteria were added as well:

- For various reasons I admire the artist's work and/or achievements.

- I did not include artist groups or tandems, except maybe if they were both female and always presented themselves with their own names. This decision was arbitrary.

Bellow all the names of female and male artists are listed, as they were listed on the projection at the back of the stage:

DAMIEN HIRST, DOROTHEA TANNING, WILLEM DE KOONING, ANNETTE MESSENGER, GUSTAV KLIMT, TAMARA DE LEMPICKA, EGON SCHIELE, MARIE-JO LAFONTAINE, PAUL KLEE, CHRISTINE & IRENE HOHENBÜCHLER, FRANZ MARC, SOPHIE CALLE, WASSILY KANDINSKY, NATALIA GONCHAROVA, MARC CHAGALL, ASTA GRÖTING, PABLO PICASSO, LYGIA CLARK, GEORGES BRAQUE, ISA GENZKEN, PAUL CÉZANNE, CADY NOLAND, LUCIAN FREUD, PAE WHITE, NAM JUNE PAIK, RACHEL WHITEREAD, EDGAR DEGAS, LORNA SIMPSON, MARCEL DUCHAMP, NATAŠA PROSENC, JOSEPH BEUYS, MARTHA ROSLER, RENÉ MAGRITTE, ADRIANA VAREJAO, SALVADOR DALI, SYLVIE FLEURY, LEONARDO DA VINCI, JULIA SCHER, MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI, ROSEMARIE TROCKEL, SANDRO BOTTICELLI, KATHARINA SIEVERDING, GIOTTO, KATHARINA FRITSCH, FRANCESCO CLEMENTE, SARAH MORRIS, BASQUIAT, LAURA OWENS, LIAM GILLICK, COSIMA VON BONIN, EMERIK BERNARD, ANGELA BULLOCH, SERGEJ KAPUS, DANICA DAKIĆ, HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, TOBA KHEDOORI, DAVID HOCKNEY, MARIKO MORI, BOGOSLAV KALAŠ, TRACEY MOFFATT, BARNETT NEWMAN, SHERRIE LEVINE, MARK ROTHKO, JENNY HOLZER, PETER GREENAWAY, KAREN KILIMNIK, HIERONYMUS BOSCH, LOUISE LAWLER, VINCENT VAN GOGH, LEE KRASNER, FRANS HALS, SHARON LOCKHART, EL GRECO, MAGDALENA JETELOVA, LUCAS CRANACH, GILLIAN WEARING, REMBRANDT VAN RIJN, LAVINIA FONTANA, DANIEL RICHTER, SOFONISBA ANGUISSOLA, GERHARD RICHTER, MAJA BAJEVIĆ, BILL VIOLA, NADEŽDA PETROVIĆ, MLADEN STILINOVIĆ, ZORA PETROVIĆ, PETER DOIG, METKA KRAŠOVEC, ANSELM KIEFER, MARJETICA POTRČ, BOB FLANAGAN, RENEE GREEN, BRUCE NAUMAN, NANCY HOLT, ULAY, NANCY SPERO, MAURICE DENIS, YOKO ONO, PIERRE BONNARD, YAYOI KUSAMA, MATTHEW BARNEY, FEDE GALIZIA, ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, ELISABETTA SIRANI, STELARC, ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI, PETER WEIBEL, JUDITH LEYSTER, TURNER, CATERINA VAN HEMESSEN, TINTORETTO, MARY CASSATT, JAN VAN EYCK, BERTHE MORISOT, MATEJ STERNEN, ROSA BONHEUR, MASACCIO, ROSALBA CARRIERA, MARIJ PREGELJ, ELISABETH VIGEE-LE BRUN, GABRIJEL STUPICA, SONIA DELAUNAY, JACKSON POLLOCK, ELAINE STURTEVANT, JASPER JOHNS, REBECCA HORN, TONY OURSLER, MARIA EICHHORN, ANTHONY CARO, LYNN HERSHMAN, PAUL MCCARTHY, ZOFIA KULIK, ANDY WARHOL, MILICA TOMIČ, LUCIO FONTANA, SANJA IVEKOVIĆ, PIET MONDRIAN, TANJA OSTOJIĆ, CARAVAGGIO, ŠEJLA KAMERIĆ, CORREGGIO, IVANA KOBILCA, IVAN GROHAR, ALENKA GERLOVIČ, CLAUDE MONET, MARINA GRŽINIĆ & AINA ŠMID, GEORGES SEURAT, MOJCA OBLAK, EDGAR MANET, EMA KUGLER, GUSTAVE COURBET, VANESSA BEECROFT, VITO ACCONCI, BARBARA KRUGER, CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH, ELLEN GALLAGHER, RIHARD JAKOPIČ, ANA MENDIETA, GILBERT & GEORGE, KIKI SMITH, SIGMAR POLKE, LOUISE BOURGEOIS, SEAN SCULLY, MERET OPPENHEIM, YVES KLEIN, AGNES MARTIN, GIORGIO DE CHIRICO, GEORGIA O'KEEFFE, ANTON AŽBE, JOAN JONAS, JOSEF ALBERS, SUSAN ROTHENBERG, KAZIMIR MALEVIČ, RINEKE DIJKSTRA, LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY, ZOE LEONARD, MIHA VIPOTNIK, KATE GILMORE, VUK ČOSIĆ, NATHALIE DJURBERG, VADIM FIŠKIN, ANNA DOROTHEA THERBUSCH, MARKO PELJHAN, ANGELICA KAUFFMANN, DRAGAN ŽIVADINOV, ALEKSANDRA EKSTER, HERMANN NITSCH, SUZANNE VALADON, OLEG KULIK, HANNAH HÖCH, DOMENICO VENEZIANO, FAITH WILDING, PETER PAUL RUBENS, MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ, JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID, LAURIE ANDERSON, DELACROIX, JANINE ANTONI, PIERO MANZONI, MARLENE DUMAS, GOYA, HELEN FRANKENTHALER, DAVID SALLE, HANNE DARBOVEN, JEFF KOONS, FRIDA KAHLO, DALIBOR MARTINIS, BRIDGET RILEY, NEBOJŠA ŠERIĆ-SHOPA, JUDY CHICAGO, GARY HILL, TRACEY EMIN, DIEGO RIVERA, NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE, GOJMIR ANTON KOS, SHIRIN NESHAT, TINO SEHGAL, MONA HATOUM, ANISH KAPOOR, NAN GOLDIN, JOAN MIRÓ, CLAUDE CAHUN, HONORÉ DAUMIER, CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN, ARSHILE GORKY, ADRIAN PIPER, MARK TOBEY, GINA PANE, PAUL GAUGUIN, HANNAH WILKE, HENRI MATISSE, CINDY SHERMAN, JOSEPH KOSUTH, ORLAN, VELÁZQUEZ, PIPILOTTI RIST, ALBRECHT DÜRER, REGINA JOSE GALINDO, JAN ŠVANKMAJER, VALIE EXPORT, ZORAN MUŠIČ, ELKE KRISTUFEK, LOJZE SPACAL, EIJA-LIISA AHTILA, BRACO DIMITRIJEVIĆ, SAM TAYLOR-WOOD, FERNAND LÉGER, SARAH LUCAS, JEAN DUBUFFET, GHADA AMER, EL LISSITZKY, KARA WALKER

Some of the characteristics from this five points may have been contradictory: sometimes I chose an artist even though she has not been presented in important exhibitions or institutions. Sometimes I chose an artist even though I did not admire her work, but she was too important for the history narrative or was just a great counterpart to one of the 126 male artists.

Some of the artists that are in this list were already presented in this thesis either in the chapter dedicated to Digital Performance (3.3.) or in the chapter entitled Related Works (3.4.). I have already mentioned works by, Marina Abramović, Laurie Anderson, Joan Jonas and VALIE EXPORT. I also mentioned Adrian Piper when writing about feminist theory and Ivana Kobilca when explaining some details on artistic education in the late 19th century.

As mentioned I have mostly chosen artists from six different disciplines: photography, painting, video, performance, new media art and installation art. Even here some exceptions can be found, for example Louise Bourgeois, who is a sculptor. I have chosen her because I have seen some of her phallic sculptures in real world in an exhibition and were so intriguing I had to include her in the list. Nevertheless, mostly I have not included any other artist from disciplines other than the six above, since the restriction seems to be wide enough.

In the list we can find some artists from earlier historic periods. There are quite a few from Renaissance, such as Elisabetta Sirani, Lavinia Fontana, Fede Galizia, Sofonisba Anguissola, and Artemisia Gentileschi. Surely the most known is the latter with her unique interpretation of the story Susanna and the Elders, represented as a traumatic event. Probably even more famous is her masterpiece Judith Slaying Holofernes, a popular motive, since it was also depicted by Lavinia Fontana and Elisabetta Sirani.

The next relatively wider group of artists is from the late 18th century, and includes artists such as Rococo painters Anna Dorothea Therbusch and probably the most famous artist from this period French artist Louise Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun. Neoclassical painter Angelica Kauffman won international acclaim as a painter, printmaker and decorative artist and was founding member of London's Royal Academy of Arts. Linda Nochlin mentioned her in her text when analyzing art education for women.

There are two photographers that I would like to point out: Claude Cahun and Nan Goldin. The first is from the early 18th century and was fascinating for me because of her sexually ambiguous self portraits. Her name is also an ambiguous one which she chose for herself. Nan Goldin was

also chosen because of her self-portrait. *Nan one month after being battered* and other her photos are shocking and realistic, or even shockingly realistic.

Some examples of artists that I chose because of their video work are: Eija-Liisa Ahtila and Pipilotti Rist. Many of other video artists also perform in their videos.

The performance artists that can be found in my list are many and diverse. Most of them appeared on the scene in the 1960s. Beside the already mentioned Abramović there are also Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke, Faith Wilding, Gina Pane, Regina Jose Galindo and others.

Hannah Wilke mostly posed for her photographs, which challenged the representative models of a female nude. Later in her life she was diagnosed with breast cancer and undertook chemotherapy. During this time she continued making nude pictures, which revealed her then ill and weak body. The nude pictures she made of her own body are alternative interpretations to the ones usually found in mass media imagery, and should be understood as a critique of the norms that are being imposed on women's bodies.

Faith Wilding is a feminist artist I discovered by chance. The work I saw was a video of a performance entitled *Waiting*. In the video she was sitting on a chair rocking her body and, as in trance, spoke a 15 minute monologue about all the things she was waiting for. How she was waiting for her life to begin while she was serving and nurturing others. The performance was a reflection of the position women are supposed to undertake in the ideology that promotes binary and 'oppositional' understanding of the role of the sexes, namely male/female, active/passive.

The performance and body artist Regina Jose Galindo's political critical art is much more aggressive, and this aggression is mostly consumed by her own body. With her performances she often warns about the issues of violence against women. Another artist that is known for her aggressive performances sometimes directed onto the viewers is Ana Hoffner. In her performances she deals with issues of migration and gender.

In relation to artists famous for their painting, interesting work was done by authors such as Marlene Dumas, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Kara Walker. The latter is known for her grotesque black silhouette figures and imagery that explores race, gender, and sexuality.

The last category I would like to mention is new media. Beside the artists already mentioned in the chapter 3.3. Digital Performance, other artist that have worked in this field are also present on the list, for example Lynn Hershman, and Julia Scher.

Lynn Herschmann presented one of the first interactive laser artdisk entitled *Lorna*, and has otherwise also presented works that deal with privacy versus surveillance (e.g. *Tillie - The Telerobotic Doll*). The theme of surveillance and control is also addressed by the artist Julia Scher.

Most of the listed artists do not work exclusively in the categories I listed them in, but are active in diverse practices. Here I have also not mentioned many of the artists from the ex-Yugoslavian region since these will be written in the chapter dedicated to the *Performance in Zagreb*.

4.2.2. Performance Space and Lighting

The performance space was designed so that it was equipped with a canvas for a projection and with paper stuck to the floor (Figure 24). At the beginning of the performance, the names of the male artists I came up with during the above mentioned test were already written on the paper (Figure 25).



Figure 25: The pictures are placed chronologically. In the upper right picture, the floor is filled only with names of male artists. During the performance the empty spaces between these names were filled with names of female artists.

During the performance, I spoke out the names of female artists that I have learned by heart. At the same time, I wrote their names down on the floor. A glove with an accelerometer was checking how much movement was done while writing. This information was used to control a reflector light, so that more light was on the stage if there was movement. The light was also getting more and more powerful (in total) with every new name that I wrote on the floor (Figure 26).



Figure 26: On these pictures we can see how the light was getting stronger with the accumulation of the number of names written.

At the end of the performance, when all the 126 female names had been written down, the light was the brightest and the viewers could see all the names (female as well as male) in all their clarity. The manipulation of lighting of the stage was used as a metaphor for a kind of 'enlightenment' regarding the issue, which was being exposed in the performance – the visibility of female artists.

Simultaneously with the changing of the lighting of the scenography space other alterations were happening on the video projection at the back of the scene.

4.2.3. Video at the Back of the Performance Space

At the beginning of the performance, the projection was covered with 160 names of all the artists that came up when I first 'examined' my memory. This included the one fifth of female artists. The letters on the projection were used as a mask. Where there was a name, the real time captured video of my face was revealed (Figure 27). Then in the performance, when I wrote down a name, the same name appeared on the projection at the backstage.



Figure 27: The picture of the performance with the video projection at the back of the stage. Nearly all the names of women artists were written at this moment. The remaining gaps between the names can be seen at the bottom of the projection. At the beginning, there were 160 names of female and male artists written on the projection. During the performance, female names appeared one by one in a predefined order. I had learned this order by heart.

While writing the female artists names on the paper their names also appeared on the projection at the back of Kapelica Gallery. The conceptual purpose of the video projection was similar to the dynamic lighting of the performance space. It was a metaphor for the gained knowledge and the importance of this knowledge for me – for an individual that is also a (female) artist. The partial visibility of my face suggested the questioning of supposedly thorough and objectively constructed knowledge about artists in history. The form of the projection suggested the questioning of the selections art history is making. As I have shown in my theoretical discussion, many artists are left out of the most popular art history books, art theory, educational systems etc. I wanted to reflect this in my digital performance. This is why at the beginning of the performance only a part of my face could be seen through the 160 names that were already written on the video. With each new name though there were more and more perforations through the black mask and so, more of my face could be seen.

In the chapter about the *Position of women in art history*, I have shown

women encountered and still encounter many obstacles in the art world. To come to acknowledge these obstacles and how art history chooses its protagonists, enlightens the understanding of the whole art system and with it our position as artists in this system. This is why the correlation between myself and female names was made through the use of the headset with camera and the mask covering the face.

4.2.4. **Performance, Movement**

Another important conceptual element in the performance was the movement and its main posture. It was limited to movements on the knees. This was of great importance since the names were on the floor and walking on them might imply disrespect. With the moving on the knees, I avoided this implication. My body was in this way closer to the names. 'Being on one's knees' is also a way of showing respect to someone. This movement at the same time created a feeling of a closed zone. The combination of a specially designed and marked stage floor and the movement being done as near to the floor as possible created an intimately charged territory which was again directing the attention to the moving body, what is inside the body or rather behind the skin, where the memory is also integrated.

Our memory and our cognitive processes are linked to our body, which is the medium through which we discover and know the world. My body with my memory – this inner processes were symbolically repeated, represented again through the happening on the stage and my movement. Another meaningful bodily expression was the direction of my gaze, which was locked to the floor. I actually did not see the public except for a few moments when some feet of nearby viewers came into my field of vision.

However, this does not mean that the public was totally excluded. Firstly, because of the public space the performance was showed in, and secondly, the public was also contemplatively invited to the participation by the projection at the back (which was directed towards them) and the big space with names that was in front of them, with the gaps that needed to be filled. The level of the engagement of the public, however, could have been higher which I will discuss in connection to the performance made in Zagreb.

4.2.5. **Technical Description**

The special hardware used for this performance was a headset with a wireless camera, a dimmer, a glove with an accelerometer and microcontrollers. The software used was *Pure Data* and *Arduino*. The programming was done with a help of Vasja Progar.

The headset was designed so that it was always filming my face. Few led lights were added (Figure 28) to make the face more visible especially during the beginning of the performance, when very little light was on the stage. The video captured with the wireless camera was altered in *PD* where the image was masked with the names. The masked image was projected at the back of the stage.

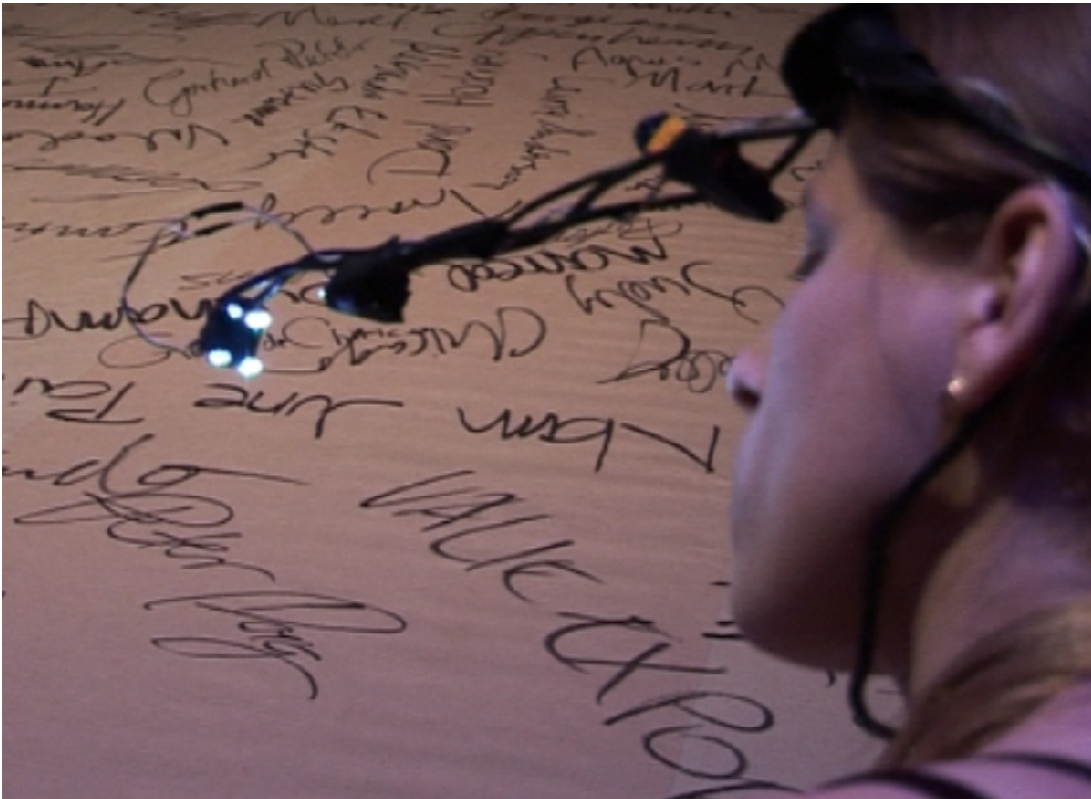


Figure 28: Head set with the wireless camera and led lights for lighting the face.

Two commercially available open-source microcontroller boards of Arduino¹⁷⁶ family were used in the project – Arduino Duemilanove¹⁷⁷ (later: Arduino) and LilyPad Arduino¹⁷⁸ (later: LilyPad).

Both boards are compatible with Arduino programming language, which is based on Wiring¹⁷⁹, a simplified C++ -like language specifically designed for use with microcontrollers. Furthermore, both Arduino and LilyPad use a similar type of microcontroller by Atmel – ATmega328 (Arduino) and ATmega328V (LilyPad).

176 As stated on the Arduino website, “Arduino is an open-source electronics prototyping platform based on flexible, easy-to-use hardware and software.”

177 From <http://www.arduino.cc/en/Main/ArduinoBoardDuemilanove> , Accessed on: 30/1/2011.

178 From <http://arduino.cc/en/Main/ArduinoBoardLilyPad> , Accessed on: 30/1/2011.

179 From <http://arduino.cc/en/> , Accessed on: 30/1/2011.

The main difference between the two boards is in their physical characteristics – Arduino has dimensions of 69x53 mm and 12 mm thick rectangular circuit board, while LilyPad is circularly shaped with diameter of 50 mm and with maximum thickness of 3 mm (Figure: 29, left, and center). LilyPad was used on the glove (Figure 32) since it is specifically designed to be sewed on clothes to form 'soft circuit' (explained later in the text).

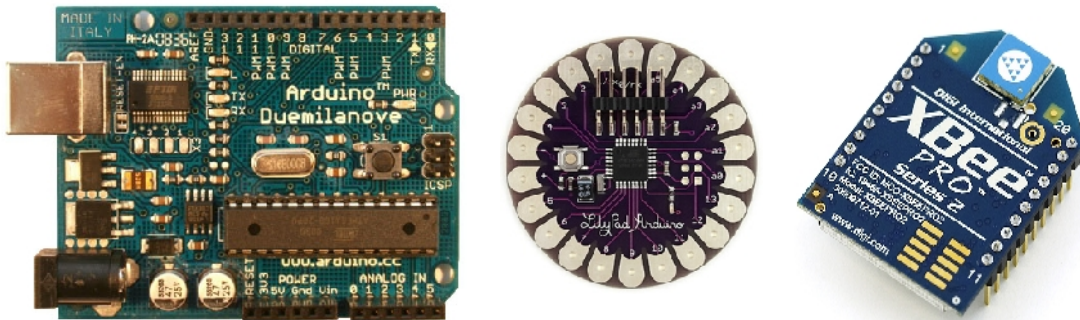


Figure 29: Arduino Duemila, LilyPad Arduino and XBee-Pro Series 2 RF module.

For wireless transmission of data, two XBee-PRO Series 2 radio-frequency modules by Digi¹⁸⁰ were used (Figure 29, right). After being properly configured, they are considerably easy to use (configuration details are described later in the text).

For controlling the stage light, DC controlled dimmer by Velleman (K8064)¹⁸¹ was used. Since the dimmer comes in a kit form, it had to be assembled first. For safety reasons it has to be put in a box. This was designed by using recycling material (common plastic packaging for 50 items of CDs or DVDs) (Figure 30, right).



Figure 30: Velleman K8064 DC controlled dimmer.

¹⁸⁰ www.digi.com , Accessed on: 30/1/2011.

¹⁸¹ www.velleman.eu , Accessed on: 30/1/2011.

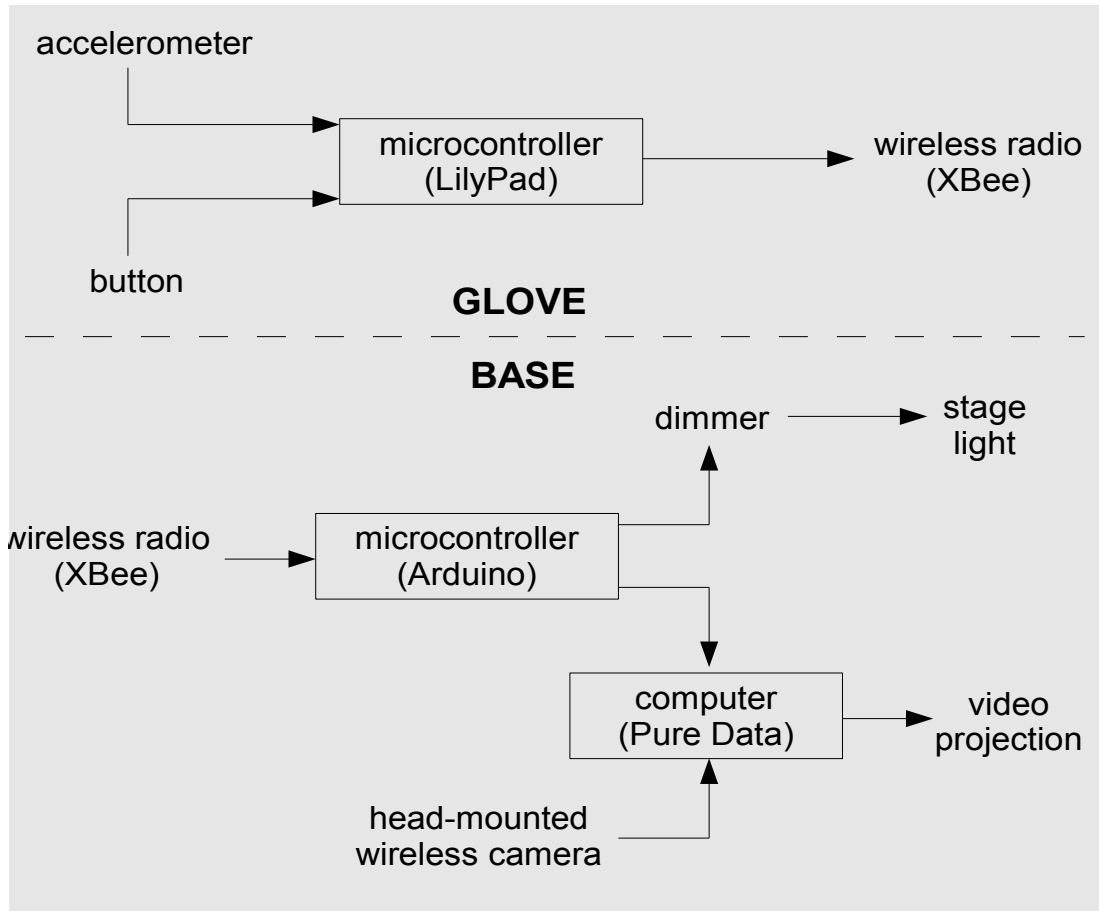


Figure 31: A diagram of connections.

It is a triac-based dimmer with adjustable input DC voltage range from 0 to 5-12V and is able to carry loads up to 750W at 220-240V AC¹⁸². It was therefore appropriate for the purpose of controlling the stage light via microcontroller. Though, an intermediate circuit was added to increase the resolution (number of steps of light intensity; described in more detail later in the text).

A glove was also design for the detection of movement. On the glove, there was the accelerometer, the *Arduino Lilypad*, the *XBee* (Figure 32) for wireless communication with *Arduino Duemila* which was connected to the dimmer and a switch to trigger the new name on the projection. These connections are also shown on the figure 31.

¹⁸² DC controlled dimmer K8064. Illustrated assembly manual. Velleman Components NV. From: http://www.velleman.eu/downloads/0/illustrated/illustrated_assembly_manual_k8064.pdf, Accessed on: 30/1/2011.



Figure 32: Glove with accelerometer, Arduino LilyPad, xBee and a switch for triggering the new name on the projection.

The connections on the glove were done using soft circuit. Some problems had to be solved during the making of the glove. Resistance issues with the conductive thread had to be solved as well as problems with short circuits. The conductive threads had to be tripled to create better conductivity¹⁸³.

Another problem was the battery. Experiments with 3 V battery as well 12 V batteries were made. Both had stopped working soon after connection. Finally, a 9 V battery was used. For this purpose, a *voltage regulator* was made (Figure 33).

Last but not least was the switch. This was done by a simple method. Two conductive threads have been put close to each other on the part where the thumb of the glove is. The switch was ON when these two threads were connected by a small piece of conductive fabric located on the pen for writing.

¹⁸³ Another possibility to solve these issues is to use conductive fabric, but this could not be done at the time of the production of the glove. Most information on how to solve this and other soft circuit issues were found on <http://www.kobakant.at/DIY/>, Accessed on: 30/1/2011.



Figure 33: On the left, the glove with LilyPad and xBee, middle, close up of the voltage regulator, and right, close up of the switch.

4.2.6. Programming

Pure Data / GEM was used to implement the visual projection part of the performance. Since the desired behavior of the system was to gradually disclose my face (recorded live by the wireless camera) with each pronounced name of a woman artist, the central object used was [pix_mask]. What [pix_mask] does is masking a source image/video with another image (the mask). In other words, it enables to display a video only at the pixels, which are 'transparent' in the mask image. In my case, I was using [pix_video] to grab the live video signal from the camera and fed its output to [pix_mask] as a source video. Then, as a mask, I was using [pix_film], which was used to provide the individual frames of a video with names. This video was prepared beforehand in Processing and consisted of a series of frames where on each consecutive frame a new name of a woman artist appeared.

To be able to trigger the mentioned 'mask video' frame by frame during the performance, an external object [comport] was used, which listened for messages of the button being pressed, sent by Arduino via serial port.

The bigger part of the program was implemented in Arduino. Initially, two Arduino units were used. LilyPad was used on the sensor part (it was sewn on the glove which I was wearing during the performance) and its main objective was to acquire the data from the accelerometer and the button and send it to the other (stationary) Arduino via serial protocol (Xbee was used as a wireless serial link between the two).

To simplify the data transfer over the serial protocol, there was some processing done on the LilyPad as well. The three axis accelerometer data was packed with help of a short custom function into a single value, which was computed as follows: at each program loop, the difference between the new and the old value was computed for each axis separately and then

squared. These squared differences were then summed together and the sum was square-rooted. There was some small processing for the press of the button as well to eliminate the unintentional triggers. The button only registered a trigger if it was continuously held for more than half a second. The button and the accelerometer data were then sent as single-byte values, each preceded by its unique 'tag byte' defined in the header, which had to match the tag byte definitions on the receiving side in order to interpret the data correctly.

The main function of the other Arduino (the stationary one) was to control the light dimmer according to the data received from the accelerometer and to forward the button data to the computer. The button message was sent to computer only when the button state was changed from non-pressed to pressed. The light dimmer control was as follows: every time the button state was changed from non-pressed to pressed, the 'zero value' of dimmer was increased by one step (i.e. with each button press the light leveling no-movement state was increased); then, while the button remained to be pressed, the accelerometer value was directly translated into the amount of light. When the button was released, the light amount started to rapidly decrease towards the 'zero value'.

4.2.7. Further Interpretation and Comparison to Other Artworks

There are different ways by which we come to learn about new artists. One, of course, is our interest – we are interested in artists we like, artists which have done works similar to ours etc. Nevertheless, an even stronger method that has more impact on our memory is being thought about them at schools, seeing which names mostly come up in museums, in media like television or the Internet etc. Therefore, the names that come to our memory depend not solely on our interest but also on which names are mostly being mentioned in different institutions (academies, museums, galleries), in texts (art history books, theoretical texts, other artworks etc.), in media, and in general public sphere.

When discussing about Marina Abramović's work, *Freeing the Memory*, I warned about her attempt to detach herself from the social impact by altering the social reality through examining her memory and detaching the spoken words meanings. I see here a relation with the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*, even though I did the opposite of what Marina Abramović did – instead of freeing the memory I filled it to achieve a balance that does not exist in real life. I realized that my own interest is not the (only) one constructing my memory, but it is the social

surrounding, institutions, and the mainstream art history that does it for me. I, therefore, understand my performance as well as Abramović's as an attempt to escape this great impacts on a person's memory (and consequently also the modes of thinking about the world) and I try – by learning – to reoccupy the space of my memory with my own interest. The systematic, almost mechanical way of learning this large number of new names that I had chosen to take, had the intention to present how hard it is to deal with issues that we realize are so deeply rooted in our bodies, memory, and minds.

There is a great amount of personal involvement that is present in both performances *Dear Ladies, Thank You* as well as in Abramović's performance. One of the elements that visually support this idea is the mentioned close-up of the camera (Figure 34). In *Dear Ladies*, the same shooting principle is present as in Abramović's work, because of the use of the specially designed headset with the mounted camera. The large size of the projection even intensified this feeling.

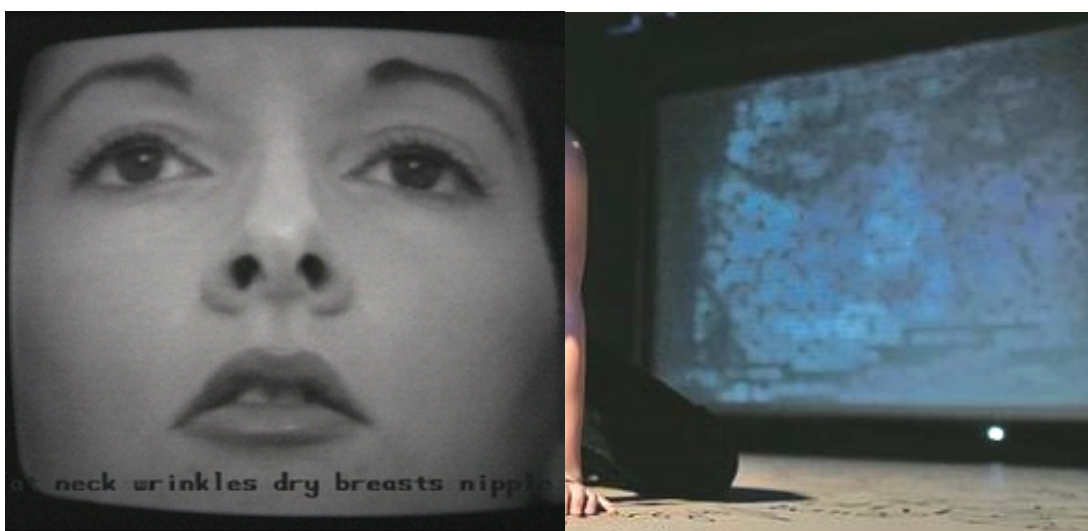


Figure 34: Right, Marina close-up from Abramović's video of performance *Freeing the Memory*. Left, close-up of the face on the large projection upstage in performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*.

Another important characteristic of the projection was the multiplication of the perforations formed by newly spoken names and the consequential clearer visibility of my face on the projection. I already wrote about the metaphor of the projection. The partial visibility of my face and the holes between the male names on the projection at the beginning of the performance, represented the selective and partial nature of the narrative usually presented in supposedly universal art history books. The empty space seen between the names on the projection can be related to the empty space

Guerrilla Girls used in one of their posters (Figure 35). The names of the artists were written in lines one after another so that a name of a female artist was followed by a name of a male artist. I have also considered writing the female names on one side of the projection and the male names on the other. However, I decided against this idea in order to avoid any essentialist connotation. It seems to me that in such kind of linear formation the longing for equality would be addressed more clearly.



Figure 35: Right, photo of the projection in *Dear Ladies, Thank You*. Some blank space can be seen on the right lower corner of the picture. Later in the performance this space was filled by a female artist name. Right, Guerrilla Girls poster with empty space representing the missing artists.

A clearer reading of the projection is also enabled whenever my face moved a bit in the projection. The motion is therefore crucial and the main idea present here, as in some other elements of the performance (the writing on the floor and the interactive light change), is the idea of the action. The space where the performance was happening was changing because of my actions and my engagement. Visibility was made possible on many levels especially because of my actions on stage. The moving around, the writing, the speaking, but most of all the action and personal engagement that presided the performance (my interest and my will to learn) are the ideas that are in this way put into foreground. With all this, I show the importance of the personal engagement if we want to, at some point, really achieve equality. I direct the attention to the necessity of action – of exploration of broadening our own knowledge and regarding the issues of our interest and the need to always actively continue the exploration of the present situation.

At the end of the performance, after my bow to all the artists I had written on the floor, I left the scenery and the light, which had, during the performance, accumulated its lightness till the maximum, at that moment shut down leaving the stage in almost no light. This was the same state in

which the stage was at the beginning of the performance. This effect was used to question the power and durability of my actions in connection to the visitors that had seen it. The fact that I had learned so many new names did not mean the spectators did the same, so the performance should be continued by the spectators. At the same time, the performance is not finished even for me. On one hand, some names have already faded from my memory and the balancing of the number of names I have learned for that performance cannot be and should not be the end of my own engagements. In addition, the performance opened new questions regarding this topic that should be kept in mind and reconsidered. For example, the question at this point arises: 'Who are the artists that were chosen and put into my list?' 'Why not others?', and 'What were the criteria, and what criteria should there be?'

As mentioned in the Theoretical background chapter, feminist artists make art that reflects the political consciousness about what it means to be a woman in a patriarchal culture. Lucy Lippard “declares the feminist art as a political position with a multitude of ideas about the future of the world, which at the same time also contains information about the history of women and the recognition of the women category.”¹⁸⁴ This last explanation seems appropriate for the performance *Dear Ladies*.

This is why I stress the importance of the personal engagement and why I took as a criterion my own personal knowledge as an example of socially and culturally shaped container of information. Learning the 'forgotten' names and why there are not so many exposes the ideological background of the artists that are present.

4.3. PERFORMANCE IN ZAGREB

The third time the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You* was enacted was in October 2011 on the opening of the feminist conference *REDActing TransYugoslav Feminisms: Women's Heritage Revisited*, organized by the Center for Women's Studies Zagreb. The performance was presented outdoors in the street *Prolaz sestra Baković*, which was named after two sisters who fought against fascism. The location was chosen in accordance

¹⁸⁴ Alenka Spacal refers to Lucy Lippard in Alenka Spacal, O ženskih likovnih umetnicah in njihovem spolu v kontekstu spolne razlike, Likovne besede, Revija za likovno umetnost, year 69/70, winter 2004, p. 25, referencing to Lucy P. Lippard, *The Pink Glass Swan* (Selected essays on feminist art), The New Press, 1995, p. 172.

4.3.1. Names of Women Artists

I have included some of the artists from the ex-Yugoslavian region already in the performance in Kapellica Gallery, however, the invitation to perform the work in Zagreb, a place with specific history, and in the context of the conference on TransYugoslavian feminism,¹⁸⁵ encouraged me to think about a modification of the performance. I knew something should be done regarding the women artists from this region, since by then I already noticed the number of them, mentioned in the first performance, was significantly low. When searching for new names, the strategies I used in the first performance, were not useful any longer. In fact, very few information on artists from this region could be found on *Wikipedia*, even less of course in the book *Women artists in the 20th and 21st century*¹⁸⁶. For this reason I asked the organizers of the *Bring In Take Out – Living Archive* event¹⁸⁷, Red Min(e)d collective to provide some suggestions and information. Two of the REDminded collective Dunja Kukvec and Jelena Petrović also helped me examine the possibilities of the form and place of the performance. Additional information was sought for in the catalog from the exhibition *Gender check*¹⁸⁸ in Vienna, among the information collected by the Irwin group in their Internet project *EastArtMap.org*,¹⁸⁹ and in other Internet sites.

Bellow the names of the added artists are listed:

185 REDaktura...,op.cit.

186 Women artists..., op.cit.

187 Red Min(e)d, Bring In Take Out – Living archive, Available at: <http://bringintakeout.wordpress.com/>, Accessed on: 15/2/2012.

188 Gender check, Femininity and masculinity in the art of Eastern Europe, catalog of exhibition in Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (November 13, 2009-February 14, 2010 and Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, March 19-June 13, 2010), ed. Bojana Pejić, and Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien ; Cologne : Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, Vienna, 2009.

189 As mentioned, women artists are not the only artists that are not being included in art history books. Irwin group opposed to this historic forgetfulness by creating the informative Internet site *EastArtMapr* as well as publishing a book with the same title. As the site explains it is a project with the aim of „(re)constructing the history of art in Eastern Europe between 1945 and the present beyond ex-Socialist official chronicles, national legend formation and fragmented information present in the West. /.../ History is not given. It has to be constructed.“ The first information was gathered with help of curators, theoreticians, and artists from „different ex-socialist Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern countries“, while the following contributions could be also given by the sites users and were discussed upon. The site is a useful, easy to access tool for information otherwise hard to be found on the Internet. All of the written and further information available at: www.eastartmap.org, Accessed on, 20/2/2012. For a critique on some aspects of the work see: Miklavž Komelj, lecture Vloga označevalca „totalitarizem“ za konstitucijo polja „vzhodne umetnosti“ (The Role of the Signifier „Totalitarianism“ for the Constitution of the Term „Eastern Art“), presented at DPU (Delovsko-pankerska univerza), Available at: dpu.mirovni-institut.si/11letnik/komeljo8.php, Accessed on: 1/20/2012.

VLASTA DELIMAR, ANDREJA KULUNČIČ, JELENA RADIĆ, RENATA POLJAK, TANJA RISTOVSKI, ANA HOFFNER, MARGARETA KERN, TANJA ŠPENKO, DUBA SAMBOLEC, MARIJA MOJCA PUNGERČAR, ALMA SULJEVIĆ, SLAVICA JANEŠLIEVA, ANETA SVETIEVA, APRILIA LUŽAR, SANDRA STERLE, VERA FISCHER, MERITA HARXHI-KOCI, ANA TEMKOVA, KATARINA ZDJELAR, MILJANA BABIĆ, BILJANA GARVANLIEVA, ŽANETA VANGELI

The first artist I would like to mention is Sanja Iveković. An artist who lives and works in Zagreb. She is one of the most known artists from exYugoslavian region. In contrast to Marina Abramović, who avoided feminist connotation in her work, Iveković does declare herself as a feminist artist. I have chosen to include Iveković because of her achievements and important political critical body of work. Here I would like to mention more details on a few of her works, because some relations can be drawn to my own works. While *Translations1* could be compared to *Dvostruki život (Double life, 1975)*,¹⁹⁰ the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You* incorporates formal or conceptual aspects that can be related to at least two works of Iveković. In relation to the digital masking used in my performance, I would like to emphasize the video *Osobni rezovi (Personal cuts, 1982)*. It was presented on Yugoslavian national television, on TV Zagreb's *3, 2, 1 – Action!* A close-up is showing her head covered with a mask (black transparent stocking) (Figure 37). During the performance she cuts out parts of the stocking thus slowly revealing parts of her face. After each cut a short sequence of archival TV footage from the history of Yugoslavia is displayed.

In *Gen XX (1998)*, she dealt with the issue of collective amnesia. Advertisements with faces of famous women models were modified so that the commercial ad was replaced by information on women, who fought against fascism. In the nineties these women were being erased from collective memory. One of the advertisements bared information on sisters Baković, the antifascist fighters who were already mentioned in the text above in regard to the street the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You* took place in. The street ceased to be named after the sisters in the nineties, and regained the name in 2009.

¹⁹⁰ *Dvostruki život (Double life, 1982)* is a series of 66 pairs of photographs where snapshots from her personal album are placed side by side with images of women from women's magazines, paired according to the similarity in their appearances, figures, accessories and situations. The emphasis on the parallelism between the mass media and the private photographs blurs the distinction between original and copy, between model and representation, and invites us to think about the nature and origin of the stereotypes of femininity. /.../ Iveković suggests the influence of the mass media in the shaping of feminine stereotypes and turns them into elements of identity.

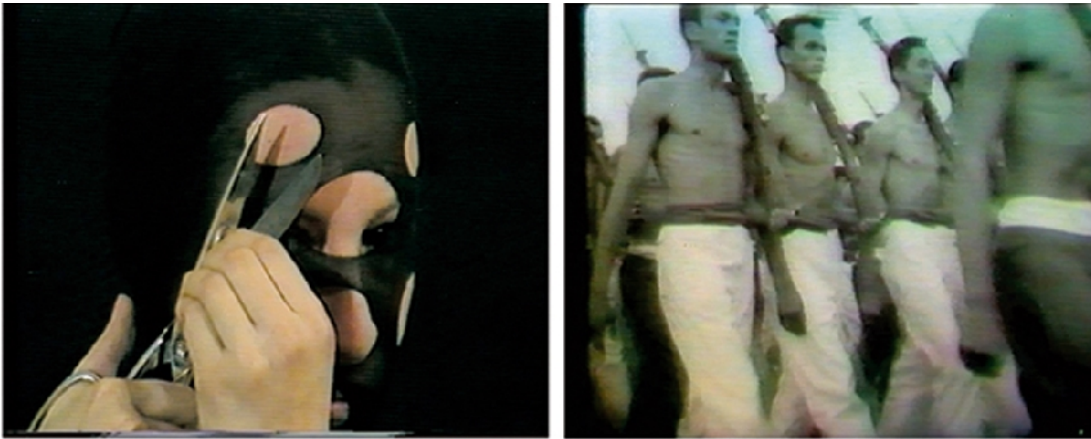


Figure 37: Sanja Iveković, *Dvostruki život (Double Life)*, presented on Croatian national TV channel, TV Zagreb's 3, 2, 1 – Action!, 1982, video, 3 min. 40 s. © Sanja Iveković, 2007.

Another artist, Tanja Ostojić, is most known for her online project *Looking for a husband with a EU passport (200-2005)*. The project is a critique of the EU policies of migration and to the criteria for visa acquirement. With the aim to get an EU visa Ostojić shaved her whole body, posed for a nude picture, and published as an ad with the attached message that she is looking for a husband with a EU passport (Figure 38, left). She got many emails and finally married and later divorced a man from Germany. The European Union's vain attitude toward Southeastern Europe is one of her constant themes. In 2005 she became known because of her poster *o.T./Untitled (2004)* (Figure 38, right). In it a photo reminiscent of Courbet's painting *The Origin of the World*, a close-up of a woman's pubic region is covered by blue underwear with yellow stars in circle - the flag of European Union. The poster was presented in Vienna in context of *EuroPart* project, but was later removed.

Video artist tandem Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid among other topics dealt also with the divided European space, the rereading of this space, namely 'Eastern' and/vs. 'Western' Europe.¹⁹¹ An example of a video addressing this issue is *O muhah s tržnice (On the Flies of the Market Place, 1999)*. Its imagery is composed by references to Bergman's film *The Seventh Seal*. An even more interesting fact for me was that “[t]he theoretical matrix developed in the video is a twisted subversion of *Masculin-féminine* film by Godard done in 1966.”¹⁹² A Godard movie, that really needed some critical response.

¹⁹¹ <http://grzinic-smid.si/flies.html>, Accessed on, 15/2/2012.

¹⁹² Ibid.



Figure 38: Two works by Tanja Ostojić. Left, *Looking for a Husband with a EU Passport*, 2000 – 2005. Right, *o. T. / Untitled*, 2004.

Alma Suljević is a radical activist; her work is marked by Bosnian war and its consequences. *Entity 4* (1996-) is one of her ongoing works, which warns about and tries to solve the issue of the removal of landmines in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this project she collects the soil found under the mine, exhibits it as reminder or warning, and sells it in handmade bags. She then uses the money collected this way for further de-minings.¹⁹³

Many other brilliant artists from ex-Yugoslavia and elsewhere were mentioned in my list. But as stated earlier, my aim is not to simply write an overview of female artists and consider my job as well as the reader's job done. I have forgotten many details about the artists' works and probably also certain names. I surely do not remember the predefined order of the artists on the list anymore. However, I did learn new facts about some other female artists and other neglected groups of artists and more about the overall problematic regarding their (in)visibility. My knowledge about the artists is therefore constantly changing and evolving. However, even though I might forget many details I have learned about specific women artists. And there is also a different kind of knowledge, that cannot be lost that easily. From the beginning of my research on I can no longer look at art history as a neutral narration of facts and I will continue to question aspects of its

¹⁹³ Article on the work of Alma Suljević in *Piece Women Across the Globe*, Available at: http://www.100peacewomen.org/eng/friedensfrauen_biographien_gefunden.php?WomenID=614, Accessed on, 15/2/2012.

narration and interpretation. I will use the newly gained memory of artists names as orientation maps for future exploration.

Books are great carriers of collective memory, in a way much better than the forgetful human memory. In addition to this, new technology, electronic books and most of the Internet, are media with incredible storage capacity. Nevertheless, the human mind remains an important barer of history, because it is imprinted in the body, and is therefore unremovable until the body is present. In Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*,¹⁹⁴ the protagonist Montag lived in a society that burned books. At the end of the novel Montag discovered a group of people who, to conserve the books, „became the books.“ They found ways to memorize the knowledge from the books, declaring:

“We're book-burners, too. We read the books and burnt them, afraid they'd be found. Micro-filming didn't pay off; we were always traveling, we didn't want to bury the film and come back later. Always the chance of discovery. Better to keep it in the old heads, where no one can see it or suspect it. We are all bits and pieces of history and literature and international law /.../”¹⁹⁵

4.3.2. Technical Description and Programming

The technology I used in this situation was just the technology connected to the dynamic lightening of the wall of names. For this occasion, I replaced the glove with a marker (Figure 39) – which had the same purpose as the glove at Kapelica Gallery. My observation of this change is that the new solution is better and would work more effectively even in the context of Kapelica Gallery. The glove in that case in fact attracted too much attention in comparison to the reason why it was used. In the case of the marker, no connotation of cyborg ideology could be seen, which was a problematic issue when examining the effect of the glove in the earlier performance.

The dynamic lightening of the wall of names had an effect of glorification of the event. Every new name, which was written also in this case, brought more light and with it visibility on the wall. The projection and the headset with the camera were not used for this occasion since the purpose of the performance was to create a group celebration.

¹⁹⁴ Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (Slovene translation), Delo, Ljubljana, 2004.

¹⁹⁵ Bradbury..., op.cit., p. 116-117.



Figure 39: The marker with the switch and accelerometer and xBee inside.

For the performance in Zagreb, LilyPad was not used as the A/D conversion to acquire the sensor data was implemented on XBee module itself, so there was no need for an additional microcontroller.

The functionality of both Arduinos previously used in the performance in Ljubljana was basically joined into a single Arduino. A slightly more complex function to interpret the data was added which was now sent by Xbee and the decrease of light (when button was released) was slowed down, while the transmission to the computer was eliminated as there was no projection; apart from that, all of the functionality was preserved.

4.3.3. Further Interpretation and Comparison to Other Artworks

While at Kapelica Gallery all the different elements of the digital performance helped to create an 'introverted' atmosphere which talked about the personal engagement and in a contemplative way encouraged the audience in this personal engagement too, in Zagreb the performance had another effect. The scenery consisted of a specifically chosen outdoor space – the Street of sisters Baković. The technical equipment there was reduced to the use of the dynamic lightening of the wall on which I wrote the names. The space was therefore organized in a more extroverted way and the event (while still remaining a tribute to female artists) had more an effect of a group celebration. A celebration of the possibility to fight the amnesia of art history by acting as a group with the same interest to change this reality.

When considering Abramović's work *Lips of Thomas*, I have mentioned there are different levels of involvement of the audience possible. In the

three enactments of the performance *Dear Ladies, Thank You*, different levels of cooperation of the audience and the performer could be noticed. In the cases of the performance at Kapelica Gallery, the level of the participation of the audience was not very high and it stayed on a contemplative level. An example of this contemplative involvement is the acknowledgement of one of the art critics that saw the performance who wrote that the event made her think of how many female artist she could list.¹⁹⁶

The performance in Zagreb encountered a different reaction, very likely also because of the different design of space and because of the context of Feminist conference *REDacting* during which it was presented. In Zagreb, the audience started shouting names of artists they could think of, applauded when the name of the artist I mentioned was from the ex-Yugoslavian region, and after the end of my performance they also added names they could think off on the wall of glass.

The level of participation here was therefore higher and the possibilities to give even more *space* to the audience of course are broad. However, we must keep in mind that because of these changes – the concept of the work also changed.

Beside this idea of collaboration between the artist and the viewers and the idea of collective celebration, another interesting topic has emerged due to this performance. I have already mentioned that women are not the only artists that are forgotten. There are other groups of artists that tend to be excluded from mainstream art world. Guerrilla Girls, Mira Schor and Adrian Piper are just a couple of examples of the authors that warned about other artists being forgotten. They have mostly mentioned black female and male artists, but other invisible groups like “the entire Third World”¹⁹⁷ was mentioned too.

In this context I would like to return to questions I have posed earlier in the text, when discussing about Alban Muja's work *Free Your Mind*. The questions were:

Why is it that most artists he listed are from Western Europe or the United States even though he is from Kosovo? Could this be related to the question of referencing as posed by Mira Schor?¹⁹⁸

On the round table entitled *Feminism/s for beginners*, held in the

196 Zora Žbontar, Ana's Ladies, radio Študent, 20/01/2011, Available at: <http://www.radiostudent.si/article.php?sid=26339>, Accessed on: 10/3/2011.

197 An expression used by Mira Schor in Schore, *Patrilineage...*, op. cit., p. 254.

198 See page 53.

context of the festival *City of Women* in Ljubljana in 1999, a group of theoreticians¹⁹⁹ meditated upon feminism, its role in today's society, its importance, its different (sometimes contradictory) discourses etc. Most of the authors being from the ex-Yugoslavian region, one of the issues they emphasized was discursive colonization and the idea of the Western feminism only affecting the Eastern societies, but not vice versa. The issue is complex and deals with different discourses of feminism found on East and West, and the problem of the dominance of Western feminism. What this issue made me think of is the situation of 'Eastern' and 'Western' artists. Artists from the countries of 'Eastern' Europe are in fact another category that tends to be overlooked. And that even by the artists from this region.

In my performance, as well as in the performance of Muja, the number of artists from countries from the United States and western Europe was much higher than the number of artists from elsewhere. Interestingly Muja also listed much more contemporary artists than me.

The presence of this imbalance is an issue that Mira Schor warned about. On one hand the quoting of already renowned artists enables the continuance of discrimination. On the other hand the world of art is so intensively populated by this 'Western names', that it is hard to avoid its influence, especially if the historic position of your country is not one with the 'global (cultural) dominance'.

The performance in Zagreb was for me a great experience, that opened new questions about invisibility and a new interest for even more accurate research. As Judith Butler explained:

“If one “is” a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered 'person' transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.”²⁰⁰

199 Theoreticians speaking at the round table: Eva D. Bahovec, Rosi Braidotti, Marina Gržinić, Vlasta Jalušič, Biljana Kašić, Žarana Papić, and Svetlana Slapšak.

200 Judith Butler, *Težave s spolom: feminizem in subverzija identitete (Gender Trouble. Feminism and the subversion of identity)*, Ljubljana, ŠKUC, 2001, p. 15.

As an artist from a specific part of the world I ask myself, what is the new knowledge about the world that can be acquired from examining this specific position inside the (art) world? What other invisible identities there exist? Wouldn't it be most informative to explore exactly the position these marginal groups are experiencing? Moreover, there are also other borderlines to consider. Tea Hvala speaks of Sexual Outlaws:

*“Sexual Outlaws, who don't fit the ideal of 'the femininity of the woman' or 'the masculinity of the man' see ourselves in the mirror each time differently, while the others place either to the female or male side at random. This exclusion gives us insight into the tyranny of heteronormativity (binary gender order) and our marginalization is an advantage, since in the reversed gaze of queer writing each edge is a center.”*²⁰¹

Whether we think about the identities that are set aside, on the edge, as non-central position (like all the groups of people I mentioned that are not found in mainstream art history narrative) or the edge as the borders between culturally defined identities, all positions are relevant as they widen our perception on the deeper structures of society. Or put differently and simply:

*“There is a good view from the edge”*²⁰²

As Tea Hvala says: there is a great view from the edge, so whatever edge – the neglected group you chose to explore, I bet it will bring deeper understanding of the situation in the field in general, then if you chose to explore it from the perspective of the conservative already million times walked path.

²⁰¹Tea Hvala, Z roba je dober razgled (*There is a good view from the edge*), Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo, year 34, n. 223, 2006, p. 56.

²⁰²Title of the article of Tea Hvala. Hvala, Z roba..., op.cit.

5. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER GOALS

For future goals I cannot assure a permanent commitment to digital performance. So the next Dear Ladies performance might be hi-tech, low-tech or even no-tech. Like Laurie Anderson, VALIE EXPORT, Joan Jonas, Sanja Iveković, and Tanja Ostojić, I have and will be switching between and joining different media. The choice will mostly depend on the content I will be researching, but also on the budget, that I will have at my disposal.

For my performances I was mostly using open source programs and fairly cheap technology. The same was true for the collective project Artificial stupidity described in the chapter 3.4. Related Works. The choice for such technology was both a matter of affordability as well as a matter of ideology, which such software and technology promote.

Steven Dixon mentioned quite a few problematic factors when it comes to the usage of new media technology, especially when it is hi-tech and high priced.²⁰³ He warned about the issue of fetishization of technology, and he also mentioned the non-global aspect of the technology – the fact that most of the world population does not have access to it and that, in case of the Internet, its content is not available to everyone since most of the texts there are written only in English. A question that comes to my mind while thinking about this aspect of the possibilities of production of digital performances is: “What would we discover if we overlapped the map of countries that produce most spectacular, hi-tech digital performances with the map of countries from which the artists who are mostly present in art history books originate?”

In the Digital performance book Dixon not only talks about the technological aspects of the various performances, but he also considers wider theoretical, cultural, and political aspects of the work or the production of the works. My proposition therefore is not to avoid digital performance at all costs. It is rather a warning to be aware of the above, to be aware of the problematic aspects of technology. One should always use it in careful consideration of the content and the visually transmitted knowledge the performance is supposed to transfer.

Regarding the content I am observing that although it is of great importance to have learned the new artists, a question of exclusion remains. Some artists had to be omitted, and are, therefore, the new forgotten ones.

²⁰³See chapter 3.3 Digital Performance.

This is, however, also true for many otherwise discriminated artists. How to address this issue? Which might be another solutions to this problem? Is a gallery space the right arena for such a political question? What are the possibilities of more radical approaches? These are the questions that remain open for the next variation of Dear Ladies, Thank You.

Foucault gave one solution for a fight against the knowledge that defines us, stating that the awareness of the situation gives the subject a possibility to react. Nick Mansfield summarizes his thought explaining that:

“If power/knowledge works at the level of the subject, then it is at the level of the subject that it will most effectively be resisted. /.../ [Foucault] suggests that if subjects are ready to deal with their situation in the modern world, they need to make themselves aware of the sorts of selfhood that are being constructed for them, all with the aim of contriving some alternative, albeit fanciful or ephemeral. /.../ Armed with this self-awareness, we can construct a fictional or hypothetical selfhood outside of, or in pure hostility to, the conventions modern life seeks to normalise.”²⁰⁴

I understand the performance Dear Ladies, Thank You with its systematic engagement to learn about female artists and thus balance the number of known artists at least in my own mind, as an attempt to construct such fanciful subjectivity.

²⁰⁴Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity, Theories of the self from Freud to Haraway*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, N.S.W., 2000, p. 63.

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7. APPENDIX

7.3. VIEWERS AND MEDIA REACTIONS

Viewers' reactions and comments from art critics

The event was well attended and there were good reactions to the performance and concept. Viewers liked the fact that both the male and female artists were put side by side without excluding any of the genders. Mostly the people at the beginning did not understand right away what was going on. However, this was actually positive because then they slowly realized the connections between the writing, projection, and the lighting of the stage. In this way, a kind of tension was being built up during the performance. In general, it seems like the performance made an expected effect.

After the performance, many people came to ask me some additional questions about the concept of the work and how it was performed. Questions were asked about how I came up with this idea, why I decided to learn so many names, and how I decided about the number of artists and which artists to mention. In addition, questions were asked about how much I had learned about these female artists – whether it was only the names or also some more information.

Different opinions were said about the text I put in the invitation leaflet. Some said that it told too much (see the article *Ana's Ladies* by Zora Žbontar) and therefore, it 'ruined the surprise' a bit. On the other hand, people also came to ask me whether I knew these names by heart or I had a microphone on me (see article "The performance ..." by Mojca Kumerdej) etc.

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ANA ČIGON MED PERFORMANOM V KAPELICI FOTO MIHA FRAS

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Kulturaža

Vpisane v umetničin spomin

performans *Drage dame, hvala*
avtorica Ana Čigon
Galerija Kapelica
18. 1. 2011

Ana Čigon, po izobrazbi slikarka, ki intermedijska znanja in izkušnje pridobiva na rezidencah in univerzah v Evropi in ZDA, se je svojim predhodnicam poklonila s polurnim performansom *Drage dame, hvala*, v katerem je imena in priimke umetnic vpisovala v mrežo, prvenstveno stvano iz imen moških kolegov.

Gre za *homage* kolegicam, ki so se v bližnji in še toliko bojeviteje v daljni preteklosti v nekdanj izrazito moškem fevdu uveljavile kljub preprekam; into ne le zunanjim, ampak tudi lastnim, z vzgojo in s kulturo vsajenim notranjim preprekam, od dvomov v moč svoje ustvarjalnosti in strahu pred vstopom v javnost do poguma brani svoj življenjski slog.

V tem smislu polurni performans *Drage dame, hvala* brez poznavanja ključne prvine tega dogodka, ki na prvi pogled ni opazna, deluje preverjeno korektno.

Umetnično izgovarjanje in zapisovanje imen na Kapeličina tla je bilo prek sistema vmesnikov povezano s projekcijo na platno v apsidi: performerka je imela na glavi pritrjeno brezžično kamero, ki je med akcijo snemala njen obraz, na platno projiciran tako, da se je postopoma in sorazmerno osvetljeval na mestih, kjer se je osvetlilo izgovorjeno ime. Podatke o premikih pišoče umetničine roke je prenašal senzor gibanja, nameščen v posebni rokavici (*soft circuit*) in povezan z mikrokontrolerjem, ta pa je podatke brezžično posredoval svetlobnemu regulatorju, ki je sorazmerno z gibanjem roke in s številom izpisanih imen povečeval količino svetlobe.

Sicer domiselno uporabljanim odprtokodnim sistemom in z njegovo programsko nadgradnjo

(programiranje sistema in tehnološka podpora je delo Vasje Progarja) avtorica na izvedbeni ravni ni ustvarila kakega vsebinskega presežka. V performansu je namreč bolj kot brezžična tehnika zanimiva avtoričina mnemo tehnika, ki na prvi pogled, brez dodatne informacije, ni opazna, saj opazovalec lahko napačno domneva, da na glavo pritrjeni nastavek s kamero vsebuje drobne slušalke, prek katerih performerka imena posluša in jih nato zgolj ponavlja. To ne drži, Ana Čigon si je namreč 126 imen in priimkov ustvarjalk – in to ne le govorno, ampak tudi njihov pravilni zapis – zapomnila po določenem sistemu, ne da bi katero od njih pomotoma ponovila. In prav ta raven vpisa imen umetnic v avtoričin spomin, ki se je med akcijo manifestirala na tleh in v projekciji, je najbolj subtilen in avtorski del zahvale »dragim damam«.

MOJCA KUMERDEJ

Inscribed in the Artist's Memory

The performance by Ana Čigon: Dear Ladies, Thank You

NEWSPAPER DELO, 28/01/2011:

Ana Čigon, a painter by training, who obtained intermedia knowledge and experiences in the residences in USA and universities in Europe, paid her respects to her predecessors with half-hour performance: Dear Ladies, Thank You, in which she wrote the names and surnames of female artists into a network, primarily woven from names of their male colleagues.

Mojca Kumerdej, culture

The performance was an homage to the female colleagues who, despite the many barriers, managed to achieve recognition in the near and, yet so much more pugnaciously, in the distant past in once highly male feudal system. She was referring to not only external obstacles but also one's own, with education and culturally implanted internal barrier – from doubt in the strength of one's creativity and the fear of entering the public domain, to the courage to defend one's lifestyle. In this context, a half-hour performance "Dear Ladies, Thank You", without knowing the key element of this event, which at first sight is not visible, works verifiably correct.

The artist's (Ana Čigon) act of speaking and writing the names on the Kapelica floor was linked with the projection onto the canvas in the apse through an interface: the performer had a head mounted wireless camera that was filming her face during her performance. The image captured with this camera was projected on a screen at the back of the Kapelica Gallery in such a way that, gradually and relatively with the spoken names, her face was being revealed. Data of the artist's writings were being captured by a motion sensor that was mounted in a special glove (soft circuit) and was linked to a microcontroller, which in turn transmitted the data wirelessly to a light controller (dimmer). This increased the amount of lighting on the stage proportionally to the movement of arms and the number of names.

By otherwise cleverly used open source system and its software upgrade (programming of the system and technological support was the work of the author and Vasja Progar) at the operational level, the author did not create any substantial surplus. More interesting than the wireless technology in the performance is the author's mnemonic technique, which, at first sight and without additional information, is not visible, because the viewer may incorrectly assume that the earlier mentioned head mount with camera contained tiny earphones, through which the performer was listening to the names and was then

merely repeating them. This is not true. Ana Čigon has actually learned **126** names and surnames of artists by heart – including the correct spelling – according to a certain system without having accidentally repeated any of them. And exactly this level of registration of the names of female artists in the author's memory, which was during the action manifested on the ground and in the projection, is the most subtle and authentic part of the gratitude to the "dear ladies".



Anine Dame (1634 bralcev)

Četrtek, 20. 1. 2011

Zora Žbontar



V galeriji Kapelica smo se v torek poklonili ženskim umetnicam skozi oči Ane Čigon. V intermedijskem performansu avtorica z intervencijo v svoj spomin zastavi širše vprašanje kolektivnega spomina, katerega razrešuje na osebnem nivoju. Izobraževalna institucija nas interpelira zlasti v kanon moških umetnikov. Performans „Drage dame, hvala“ je v prvi vrsti njeno intimno soočenje s tem dejstvom in osebno zapolnjevanje praznih mest.

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Performans je bil leta 2009 v malce drugačni obliki že uprizorjen na AGRFT-ju, takrat se je poklonila trem izbranim slovenskim umetnicam. Ideja za performans „Drage dame, hvala“ pa je nastala iz spontanega zapisovanja imen umetnikov. Avtorica je ugotovila, da je število moških imen, ki se jih je lahko spomnila, z veliko večino prednjačilo število ženskih umetnic. Slednjih je poznala zelo malo, zato se je odločila svoje pojmovanje umetnosti uravnovežiti.

Performans se je odvijal na tleh polepljenih s papirjem, na katerih so bila zapisana imena moških umetnikov, ki jih je poznala. Sama pa je tekom performansa izgovarjala in na papir živčno dopisovala imena več kot 120 ženskih umetnic, s čimer jih je postavila ob bok moški umetniški produkciji.

Ana Čigon poudari relativnost kanona umetnikov, ki vselej obstaja znotraj prevladujoče ideologije. Ta pa je bila in pravzaprav še vedno je patriarhalna. S samozavestno gesto se je avtorica na koncu priključila preoblikovanemu poenotenemu kanonu. Uprizoritev je bila namreč preko brezžične kamere pritrjena na glavi podprta s snemanjem njenega obraza, ki se nam je postopoma razkrival na projekciji.

Izgovorjena in zapisana imena ženskih umetnic so se sinhrono izpisovala na že omenjeni projekciji, kamor se je projiciral njen obraz. Vrstni red umetnic si je zato morala zapomniti na pamet, sicer bi prišlo do neujemanja z računalniškim zapisom. Njena rokavica je bila preko senzorja gibanja povezana z mikrokontrolerjem Arduino Lilypad, ki je zaznaval premike roke. Podatki o premikih so bili nato preko brezžičnega vmesnika posredovani drugemu mikrokontrolerju Arduinu. Ta pa je preko regulatorja svetlobe uravnaval osvetlitev prizorišča. Programiranje opisanega sistema je bilo delo Vasje Progarja.

Med performansom je s svojo zatopljenostjo in predanostjo v svoje početje vsakega izmed nas potisnila k sodelovanju. V mislih smo si ponavljali imena umetnic, ki jih sami poznamo. Žal pa je opis uprizoritve, zapisan v obvestilih za medije, preveč podrobno zarisal potek performansa, s čimer je bilo gledalcu puščeno premalo prostora za doživetje slednjega v živo.

Performans izhaja iz podobnega problema iz katerega je izhajala Linda Nochlin, ki je vpeljala feministični pogled na področje umetnostne zgodovine prav z vprašanjem: „Zakaj ni bilo ženskih umetnic?“ Vzroke je iskala v družbenih strukturah, ki so spodbujali žensko podrejenost skozi zgodovino. Ana Čigon se to družbeno dejstvo loti razreševati na enako legitimen način skozi intimno in osebno izpoved.

Veliko bolj radikalno je podoben problem razreševal tandem Eclipse v svojem performansu „Venerin test“ iz leta 1999, prav tako uprizorjen v galeriji Kapelica. Avtorici sta raziskovali stanje slovenske ženske umetniške scene s pomočjo draženja in vzburjanja golega moškega soudeleženca med naštevanjem imen domačih umetnic. Slednji se ni odzival, s čimer sta jasno pokazali, kako so ženske umetnice in njihove stvaritve v patriarhalni družbi nezanimive.

Pomemben preobrat v uprizoritvi Ane Čigon je prinesel zaključek. Avtorica se je namreč poklonila vsem, tako ženskam kot moškim, s čimer je nastala fuzija, ki je zbrisala vsakršne spolne razlike. S tem je avtorica preseгла vprašanje, ki ga je njen performans zastavil na samem začetku.

Ta nepričakovan preobrat Ana Čigon osvobodi iz primeža feministične teorije, s čimer lahko vsaj za hip misli enakopravno sobivanje moškega in ženskega principa, tako v umetnosti kot v vsakdanjosti. Vprašanje je le, če je to v patriarhalni družbi sploh mogoče. Avtorica to izpusti iz svojega miselnega polja in z vsemi zaslugami pogumno uprizori performans na drugem nivoju, brez jedke agresije.

O damah je razmišljala Zora.

Ana's Ladies

RADIO ŠTUDENT, 20/01/2011:

Zora Žbontar

On Tuesday, we paid tribute to women artists through the eyes of Ana Čigon at the Gallery Kapelica. In an intermedia performance, the artist raised, with the intervention in her own memory, wider questions of collective memory by resolving it on a personal level. Educational institution interpellates us especially in the canon of male artists. Performance "Dear Ladies, Thank You" is the first and foremost her intimate confrontation with this fact and a personal effort to fill these empty spaces.

The performance was, in a slightly different form, already staged at the *Academy for Theater, Radio, Film and Television* in 2009. Then it was a tribute to three selected Slovenian artists. The idea for the performance "Dear Ladies, Thank You" was the result of spontaneous writing of names of artists. The author found that the number of male names that she could recollect by a large majority preceded the number of female artists. She knew very few of the latter, so she decided to balance her knowledge.

The performance took place on the floor, which was covered by paper on which the names of male artists that she knew were written. During the performance, she uttered and nervously wrote on the paper names of more than 120 women artists, with which she set them side by side with male artistic production.

Ana Čigon emphasized the relativity of the canon of male artists that always exists within the dominant ideology. This was and indeed still is patriarchal. With a gesture of confidence, the author in the end joined the modified uniformed canon. The performance was, through a wireless camera, which was mounted on the author's head, supported by a recording of her face, which was gradually being revealed to us on a projection.

Spoken and written names of women artists were synchronously shown on the above-mentioned projection, which was projecting the image of her face. She had to memorize the order of the names of female artists by heart to avoid discrepancies with the computer record. Her glove was connected to a microcontroller Arduino Lilypad by a motion sensor, which was sensitive to movements of her hand. Data on movements were then transmitted over a wireless interface to another microcontroller Arduino. This then regulated the illumination of the scene through a dimmer. The programming of the mentioned system was the work of Vasja Progar.

During the performance, she, by her self-absorption and dedication to her

actions, pushed to participate every one of us. In our minds, we have repeated the names of the female artists who we knew ourselves. Unfortunately, the description of the performance, which was written in the press release, was too detailed, so the viewer had too little room left to experience the course of performance uninfluenced in person.

This performance arose from a similar problem, which came to mind to *Linda Nochlin*, who introduced a feminist view of the field of art history by asking the question: "*Why have there been no great female artists?*" She sought for the reason in the social structures that have supported the subordination of women through history. Ana Čigon tackles to resolve this social fact in the same legitimate way, through the intimate and personal declaration.

A similar problem was being questioned in a much more radical way in the performance "*Venus test*" of 1999, by the *tandem Eclipse*, also staged at the Gallery Kapelica. The authors have studied the state of Slovenian female art scene through the stimulation and arousal of a naked male actor, during the listing of names of local artists. The latter did not respond, which clearly showed how uninteresting women artists and their creations in a patriarchal society are.

An important turning point in the staging of Ana Čigon was declared in the ending. The author actually thanked both the women and the men, creating a fusion that erased any gender differences. With this, the author went beyond the question that her performance questioned at the beginning. This unexpected twist frees Ana Čigon from the grip of feminist theory, and can, at least for a moment, think about an equal co-existence of male and female principle, both in art as in everyday life, is plausible. The question remains, if this is at all possible in a patriarchal society. The author releases this out of her mental box and with every merit courageously re-enacts the performance at another level, without any corrosive aggressions.

Thoughts about the ladies were written by Zora.