



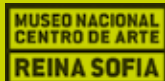
**PERFORMING
GENDER**

A EUROPEAN
DANCE PROJECT
ON GENDER
AND SEXUAL
ORIENTATION
DIFFERENCES

partners



museums



institutional partners



Comune di Bologna



Kingdom of the Netherlands

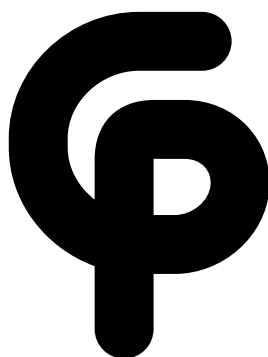


OFICINA CULTURAL
EMBAXADA DE ESPAÑA EN ITALIA



Cultura

Performing Gender is a cultural project
funded with support from the European
Union (Culture Programme 2007-2013).



**PERFORMING
GENDER**

BOLOGNA
MAASTRICHT
MADRID
ZAGREB

INDEX

<i>Partners</i>	5
<i>Museums</i>	10
<i>Institutional partners</i>	14
<i>About Performing Gender</i>	17

WORKSHOP WEEKS	21
Zagreb	23
Bologna	27
Madrid	31
Maastricht	35

CREATION WEEKS	39
Zagreb: Activism/The Sore Thumb	41
Madrid: Museum/The Booby Trap	47
Maastricht: Process/The Body Builders	53
Bologna: Identity/The Hairy Eyeball	59

WORKS	63
FACETS by Cecilia Moisio	64
CUERPO-TRAPO by Poliana Lima	68
DARWIN by Jan Martens	72
INNER LIGHT by Siniša Labrović	76
CELEBRATION by Giorgia Nardin	80
GENDER TRAVEL by Pablo Esbert Lilienfeld	84
ALBOOM!!! by Silvia Gribaudo	88
GUERNICA 2014 by Bruno Isakovic	92
I TRUST IN THIS LIFE WE WILL HAVE ANOTHER MOMENT ALONE by Connor Schumacher	96
FRANKENSTEIN by Alessandro Sciarroni	100
THE INTRUDER by Oscar Santillan	104
WHOWANTSMYBODY...? by Jordi Cortés	108
BLUR by Riccardo Buscarini	112
MARIA MAGDALENA. AUTORRETRATO by Cristina Henríquez	116
ESTRENO ABSOLUTO by Juanjo Arques	120
IO SONO / IO SONO UNA PERSONA / IO SONO UNA BUONA PERSONA by Vlasta Delimar	124
SIAMO DUE by Juanjo Arques and Cristina Henríquez	128

OUTCOMES	133
Disseminating, sharing, networking	135
Fingerprints	137
Credits	142
Amy Bell, Performing Gender writer	143



Our body, and the bodies of others, continuously make us question our identity, the differences that make us unique and where we can, or want to be, in the world.

Performing Gender tries to answer some of those questions, exploring the vast territory that surrounds our body, the perfect means of biographic expression, through the language of dance, an extraordinarily expressive instrument, where gender links the uniqueness of the individual to its social construction.

The way in which we spectators watch the performers bodies as they perform in the open spaces of the museums, helps us focalise our own position on the social stage, and tells us many things about how we perceive others and ourselves.

The durational dance performances, within the exhibition spaces, challenge the museums to critically integrate the ephemera of dance into a collection of works which are perceived as immutable pieces of art.

The performer's body doesn't lie; its naked evidence shows the power and fragility of its condition, defying clichés and asking everybody the necessary question as to what beauty is. But above all, it is a live tool that absolutely needs to relate, and invites the spectator to enter into dialogue with the performance.

We believe that Performing Gender's importance lies in having known how to create a project full of meaning, strongly shared between seemingly distant subjects: contemporary dance festivals, LGBT cultural centres, modern art museums, choreographers and visual artists, different audiences from different generations, coming from four very different European countries.

We have shared the experience of every single partner and created a dialogue between the local communities, the artists and the museums regarding differences in gender and sexual orientation, promoting the idea that they are a wealth for a more welcoming and participated European society. It was natural for us to use the language of dance and art, the only language which manages to represent the emotion of beauty, certain that what we were creating, thanks to the passion of many people involved, is a powerful and innovative model in order to take a real political and cultural action.

DANIELE DEL POZZO
Artistic and General Director
Gender Bender



I wonder if more than thirty years ago in Bologna, those activists who managed to obtain the first public venue for the gay community, would have ever imagined that less than years later it would become a link between four large European cities, brought together to share the fruit harvested from budding talents of contemporary creativity. In welcoming the artists who will animate the International Performing Gender Symposium, I can only demonstrate my gratitude and sincere enthusiasm for this stretch of road taken together through the streets of Bologna, Madrid, Zagreb and Maastricht, and that even with the most ambitious reasoning, just a few years ago, we could never have imagined. Our way of thinking is rooted in our body and identity, it is where the most profound sense of our activism lies: today that sense becomes a shared heritage, building new and original languages to represent itself. The result is something special, we have swiftly caught up with the present and spied a little on the future. And finally, now the curtain opens.

VINCENZO BRANÀ
President
Arcigay Cassero



If you were to ask me to summarise Performing Gender in one sentence, the answer would be simple: the arts professionals, artists, experts by experience and the audience, we were all invited to question our assumptions. Assumptions in respect of gender, sexual preference and identity, but also assumptions in respect of our professional roles. Performing Gender was a call for genuine connection, and asked us to abandon fixed definitions. From the institutionalised man-woman images, to the definitions of the artists, the audience, the LGBT activist and the festival director, which are just as institutionalised.

During the intensive research weeks, all of the participants – choreographers, visual artists, people with personal stories, observing writers and photographers, dramaturges and curators – departed from their own, familiar terrain. We embarked on encounters as a group. We gained experience together, and we were confronted with both shared and individual questions. We challenged each other. During the research week in Maastricht, there were the confrontational statements from trans woman Willemijn van Kempen. She reminded the assembled choreographers that for many people the investigation of a personal gender image is not a conceptual or fashionable ‘exercise’, it is not an artistic statement, but it is a fundamental need. With her own life story as an example, this powerful woman challenged us to really see our personal and professional position, and to consider a repositioning.

And even when just the dance sketches were being shown in the research week in the Jan van Eyck Academy, and definitely when the final pieces were presented in the Bonnefantenmuseum, it was clear that this applied to the audience as well. We, the assembled spectators, wandering through the museum, confronted by the performances, became very aware of our own perspective. We could observe from nearby, or at a distance, for a long time, of just briefly. We could become a participant, or not. We looked at works of art and each other. We became aware of our choices and of the possibility of changing our position and point of view. That is the power of Performing Gender. So simple. So fundamental. A distillation of this wonderful project lies before you. Read, and enjoy.

PEGGY OLISLAEGERS

Artistic and general director

Nederlandse Dansdagen/Dutch Dance Festival

Our participation in *Performing Gender* opened up spaces for asking different questions, and brought each of us into new contexts where the questions we ask ourselves daily in our work could be seen and shared from other perspectives.

Paso a 2 has a long history of supporting emerging dance artists and makers, and certainly questions about the body and identity are intrinsic to the work of choreographers and dancers whether they are intentional or not. Much of the time issues of freedom of expression center around creating and sustaining the conditions necessary to make work and share it with audiences. There are, however, deeper territories to explore that go beyond the stage and into a wider sphere. This is a place where dance has enormous potential for communication and empowerment.

Performing Gender, and our partnership with Arcigay Cassero and Domino/Queer Zagreb, not only put us in direct collaboration with organizations whose mandate is specifically concerned with issues of gender identity and equality, but also gave *Paso a 2* a great opportunity to find out how our own work could go much farther in participating in social change. The Netherlands Dance Dagen Festival is an inspiring partner in this respect. Certainly, on a personal level, my dialogue with all of our partners did much to direct my attention to the potential of our organization to work beyond the contexts we were familiar with and to be more adventurous in seeking out complicities. To say that our dialogue has been motivating for me and for all of our staff would be an understatement.

A very important part of this process was realizing how much we could offer each other, beyond all of the positive values outlined in the initial project. Even the knotty issues that sometimes arose were to be valued – they were great catalysts for raising challenging questions.

Working with the Reina Sofía Museum was a privilege as well as a lesson in the politics of power within an emblematic national institution. Questions of hierarchies, values and visibility, as well as the delicate process of negotiation necessary in order to go forward could be seen as mirror images of the same issues within a societal context.

The artists who participated in *Performing Gender* had a chance to stretch themselves. Several addressed issues in ways that might not have entered into their work directly or consciously in the past. For some of them the process has been transforming. I thank them for their commitment and willingness to take risks. New collaborations are already in the making and generating new dialogues.

Two years later, we are still asking questions.

Performing Gender gave us a place at this table. We are looking forward to raising even better questions with a wider sector of society, using dance and the body to reflect on answers that can work for us all.

LAURA KUMIN
President

Paso a 2 Plataforma Coreográfica Asociación Cultural

Performing Gender seems like one of those perfect projects, it has everything: numerous international artists, diverse partners across Europe, relevant topic and clear outcomes. To think about gender(s) from a perspective of non-traditional art organizations but within the prism of institutions (contemporary art museums) and to be able to do it with such a concentration of excellent thinkers and arts practitioners has been a revealing journey each artistic project should have. Through Queer Zagreb, a major endeavor of challenging the norms in today's society, we have been doing this for more than a decade. Partnering with Performing Gender has enabled us to do more, and to it better. We were fortunate enough to bring to this project creative and talented young and established artists: Nina Kurtela, Bruno Isaković, Siniša Labrović and Vlasta Delimar whose personal experiences have painted our own contribution to this project. We also had a privilege to host such incredibly courageous artists like Jan Martens, Cecilia Moisio, Siniša Labrović and Poliana Lima. The works they created in Croatia, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb have all been eye openers.

Jan Martens decided to collaborate with one of the most prolific Croatian choreographers, Bruno Isaković, to create a personally immersive performance Darwin, that dealt with (dis) connecting from and with the performing partner, audience, museum as a "sacred" place, exhibited works. By simple actions – being connected in a kiss (or was it a bite, or a mouth to mouth lifeline, or a grotesque clinging to the other, or actually all those things and more) with each other for several hours and then by gazing at each other's eyes they created what someone called a ballet of intimacy. I, not being a fan of ballet, would not have used those words, but why not. It was a beautifully choreographed ballet.

Siniša Labrović, as one of the most direct and politically engaged artist in Croatia, has approached his subject exactly in such a way. He challenged the notion of manhood in his performance Inner light, the phallus obsession, the numbers, the size, the measure of a man. He challenged the knowledge we all have about our own bodies and the audience was ready to share, to measure up and down their own stereotypes and their own expectations. Cecilia Moisio created Facets in which she played in a similar fashion with stereotypes and transformed herself in front of the audience into all notions of what is to be expected and what is not to be expected. It was one of the most rewarding experiences for the audience in Zagreb as they literally saw gender being performed. We often read about it, but it was nice to see it being real and fake at the same time.

Poliana Lima had the most conceptual work Cuerpo-trapo out of all that were created in Zagreb, and perhaps most poetic. She accepted the gender role, she chose to make the invisible visible, she put before us what we don't even see anymore because we are so used to it. She played with given roles, and transformed it into an acquired one, managed to turn it around "against" us and reverse the position of power.

All these works have a potential to be further developed and perhaps should be, all of them had an angle that went beyond the initial expectation and that makes them interesting. It changed a perspective of how we look at ourselves, our own relationships with our bodies, and with our lovers. They built something inside us as audience, but they also broke something. That constant construction and deconstruction as a concept is rather used and abused today in queer theory, but still is so important when it comes to gender and sexuality.

ZVONIMIR DOBROVIĆ
Artistic Director
Queer Zagreb Season

MAMbo's decision to participate with *Performing Gender* is not just a simple union on artists, but a harmony of intentions well demonstrated by at least two significant events, 35 years apart, in the history of the Museum.

The first was in 1977, almost at the origins of the then renovated Modern Art Gallery, the forerunner of MAMbo: the famous performance *Imponderabilia* by Marina Abramovic and Ulay, for the first International Performance Week. The second, more recently, was the exhibition in 2013 entitled *Autoritratti* (Self-portraits: Enrollment of women into Italian contemporary art), which was being held at the MAMbo during the first visits by the partners of *Performing Gender*. With these precedents, the relationship between the museum and *Performing Gender* cannot limit itself to a simple "performance" in midst of art works, nor be the usual backdrop for events in the museum.

The common aim is that of bringing forth the coercion that we are often unaware of, coercion which cultural constructions of gender use to influence the creation and reception of the aesthetical experience. One of the most unsettling effects of Abramovic and Ulay's performance is the fact that it reveals the sexual nature of the artist and the spectator/visitor, through the different reactions and approaches to the position and nudity of the artists. *Autoritratti* however, in the wake of the "culture of difference", researches the processes of the subjectification of women within the relationships that characterise current art.

This type of investigation goes further than the falsely neutral viewpoints in the interpretation of art, along with, with its deconstructive nature, the Institutional Critique that MAMbo's exhibition programs periodically offer.

The possibility to follow, regarding gender, every possible path representing the pre-existing or imaginable relationships between choreographers, exhibition visitors, buildings and museum collections, finds a genuine welcoming in a venue which continues to collaborate in a fruitful and repeated way with Cassero, coordinator of *Performing Gender*.

A heartfelt thank you goes to all the promoters and partners, the editors and curators; to artists and performers, to those who have contributed to the project and, not least, to the all the visitors who have attended and with whom we hope to renew an increasingly dynamic engagement and exchange on topics that concern everybody.

ULIANA ZANETTI
Curatorial Department and Collections Manager
MAMbo Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna



The Performing Gender project tested the Museum's structures in at least three different ways: ways of negotiating with an external organization whose dynamics and operators are quite different from our own; ways of articulating the logistics of an open research process within the programming of a museum like ours; and ways of integrating performance and performing arts in a system that was conceived primarily for the exhibition of visual arts, in terms of organizing spaces, timing and the relationship with the public.

From the beginning of the project those of us responsible for the public activities within the Museum were aware of the difficulties that responding to these three challenges presented and we explained to the organizers the necessity of keeping in mind our structures and dynamics as well as our willingness to make an effort to adapt and to participate in this learning process throughout the project. We are convinced that the future of institutions resides in their capacity to carry out a dialogue with external actors, open themselves to the uncertainty of processes and break from the compartmentalization of the arts. On the other hand, we shared with the project the need for critical reflection about gender politics through artistic practice and the institution.

We were also insistent, from the very beginning of our collaboration with Performing Gender, about our need to participate actively in the design of what would take place in the Museum. If not, there would not be an opportunity to forge the empathy necessary for smooth development of the project, the ability to generate this learning process and the desired transmission of knowledge. For that same reason we emphasized that the artists in residence should have direct knowledge of the Museum, to avoid stereotypical and simplified visions that would invariably lead to misunderstandings and disagreements.

In this way, the project's success depended on our capacity to budge from our conventional positions and on the capacity of the organizers and participants of Performing Gender to carry out a real dialogue with the institution.

In spite of the difficulties of synchronizing the rhythms and phases of the process, much territory was gained in both directions. The distance and dispersal of the participants on the one hand, and, on the other, the need to concentrate their time in the Museum during two very specific periods of time were substantial characteristics of the project that we should have taken into account when defining our working method. Intelligence and goodwill on both sides were able to compensate, to a great degree, this lack of foresight, as well as intensifying long-distance communication (Skype) during the final stages of preparation.

In the end, the development of these four residencies demonstrated not so much the limitations of which we were aware from the beginning, as the potentialities of introducing open processes of performative research in the museum space, in order to pose different kinds of questions to the public.

JESÚS CARRILLO
Head of Cultural Programs 2014
Museo Reina Sofía

Since finding its final home in 2009, Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb has been making efforts to change the well-established paradigm of museum institutions, through programmatic activities of its Experimental and Research Department. The Department fosters active collaborative practices, inspired by programs and projects originating from independent art scenes, both local and international. In our opinion, contemporary art is a convenient medium for establishing communication, exchange of experiences and creative knowledge, or transferring personal and social issues, and the Museum can become an excellent platform for creative processes.

Performance as a hybrid form, with its transgressive characteristics, ranging from visual art to performing art and vice versa, is ideally suited to mediate between the artist and the public. Also, performance is even more suited for widening the field of contemporary arts, which means that artists of different profiles easily move between their artistic domains, leaning on the sources of conceptualist practices from recent history of visual and performing arts, translated into gestures, text, image, behavior, or situation. The Performing Gender project is a continuation of fruitful collaboration with Domino/Queer Zagreb, as well as, indirectly, with their partners from Bologna, Maastricht and Madrid. It is conceived as a process, consisting of several steps. The first one, in June 2013, was a workshop during which selected artists acquainted themselves with the potential of our institution, including the collection we present under the Collection in Motion title, and they also learned about the logistic possibilities and technical equipment of the Museum. The second step was a long period spent outside the Museum context; using a specific form of artistic closure, accumulation and ripening of ideas, it guided the artists towards the final phase of realization, i.e. towards their individual performances in the Museum facilities in June, 2014. Questioning gender, and even sex, the performers situated their performances in the immediate vicinity of art works from the permanent collection to which they had been referring, or they used galleries and other public spaces in the Museum, thus changing the usual public perception of the institution itself, and motivating the public to alter the gender and sex stereotypes originating from canonized social, historical and cultural paradigms.

TIHOMIR MILOVAC
Chief Curator

MSU Zagreb - Museum of Contemporary Art



Comune di Bologna

Bologna is particularly proud to be one of the cities participating in the European project *Performing Gender*. On the one hand, the recognition of civil rights and support for the LGBT community has been part of the city's history and tradition, as well as representing a clear political commitment from the current Administration.

On the other hand, in the cultural sphere, enhancing the Contemporary outlines one of the main objectives tenaciously pursued in recent years by the City of Bologna, bringing out a greater range of more international events, unique in their kind, dedicated to different aspects of culture and Contemporary art in Bologna.

For the last 12 years, a prestigious and interdisciplinary festival such as *Gender Bender* has been able to expand its vision on a national and international level; with a project as ambitious as *Performing Gender*, it took the opportunity to share and understand more deeply an important path of research on the contemporary representation of sexual orientation and gender roles in a European context, giving the invited artists the opportunity to create new choreographies, which through dance and art tell of the many forms of identity, proposing new perspectives on sexuality and gender.

With the knowledge that these experiences are never the end of a journey, but the identification of new departures, towards undiscovered cultural horizons, facing unexpected challenges, it is with great pleasure that we welcome to the MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, the artists, scholars and cultural workers gathered together from various countries, including Spain, Croatia, the Netherlands and of course, Italy.

ALBERTO RONCHI

Councillor for Culture and Relations with the University
City of Bologna



Various anthropological studies have defined the concept of identity close to that of equality; perhaps for this reason 'diversity' has always had the power to destabilise the apparent peace and order of the social 'herd'. If we do not believe that the right to be different is essential, we cannot consider ourselves free people.

All human diversity is thanks to the results of an almost infinite combination of genes; each and every one of us is unique, and our uniqueness is not due to our social status, nor where we are born. Identity, which gives great power to the human race, owes its force to respect for every form of life and the individual's courage to be proud of who one is.

We are all potential 'healthy carriers' of culture, but totalitarian uniformity can cause blinkered visions and preconceptions, which are wrongly confused with a right harmony.

For this reason it is important that projects such as Performing Gender have the possibility to explore new territories, and it is always emotional to verify how these voyages of change find in the arts their most precious of allies.

MASSIMO MEZZETTI
Councillor for Culture
Emilia-Romagna Region



Kingdom of the Netherlands

A dance project that opens up a civil reflection on differences in gender and sexual orientation as sources of values and richness for the whole European society, this is the ambitious goal of Performing Gender. The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has happily accepted to join this project. Our participation in Performing Gender was a logical step. Not only due to the involvement of leading Dutch artists and important cultural institutions from Maastricht, but also because we see the project as an authentic process in which dominant codes and mainstream images are questioned in relation to gender and sexual preferences.

We strongly believe that the arts can contribute to positive changes in society for instance regarding discussions on equal rights. The Netherlands was among the first countries to adopt policies which guaranteed more equal rights for the LGBT community. We introduced the right to registered partnership in 1997 and in 2001 The Netherlands was the first to allow same-sex marriage. According to European statistics, the majority of the Dutch population has positive opinions about the recognition of gay rights. But at the same time, society does not consider homosexuality as 'just normal'. It has become increasingly more accepted, but a supportive role of the government is still required, especially regarding young people and immigrant populations.

Key words in Dutch policy are equality, independence, freedom of choice and responsibility. The Netherlands aims to create a society in which citizens feel safe in their private sphere and on the streets. Active involvement of the state is still needed to reduce violence and discrimination, especially when motivated by ideological beliefs.

In addition, we regard an active international role as necessary. The Netherlands has always been a frontrunner on gay rights and we continue to see this role as relevant today. We are very aware that our values may raise questions elsewhere in Europe. As we believe in the importance of dialogue, we welcome other opinions and traditions and therefore the Embassy has supported various initiatives in Italy over the years. The arts are an appropriate field for questioning issues related to gender and sexuality. One of Italy's most innovative art festivals has put this at its core: Gender Bender. Throughout the years, a strong collaboration has been built between this festival in Bologna and my Embassy.

This catalogue provides an insight in the process that has been followed and how a wider community in Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Croatia has connected through the universal language of the arts, to develop new images and to collect new and collective insights..

MICHEL DEN HOND

Ambassador

Embassy of the Netherlands in Rome



In 2014 Centro per la Scena Contemporanea – Comune di Bassano del Grappa invited the four Italian dance artists participating in Performing Gender for a residency. Artists were offered to research and create in the environment of Bassano, to meet and share with the local community, to lead a workshop (focusing on the Performing Gender themes) for young dancers based in territory, to find inspiration and exchange visions and insights, to participate in community dance projects for people with Parkinson's at the Museo Civico of the city, to open and share their process inviting the local audience to participate and be an active public at their final presentation. It was the first time that a residency was dedicated to a dance project making use of artistic and cultural tools to open up a civil reflection on gender and sexual orientation differences, seen as sources of values and richness for the whole European society. Dance brings often implicit references to gender, identity, sexual orientations, but considerations and reflections are rarely shared or spoken in public contexts. The project contributed to arise questions and bring the attention to the shared need to be open to new and different images in relation to the dominant codes and mainstream stereotypes related to gender and sexual preferences. It had a positive and enriching impact on the local dance ecology and on the local community. Dance has proven to be a very special and universal form of expression to facilitate and invite the dialogues and to touch cultural, social and political subjects. Dance has two implicit peculiar components: movement and senses. A dancer moves and feels at the same time, therefore can communicate in an extraordinary way. As an "alive piece of art" a dance artist can build a whole universe of opportunities to invite the spectators in the artistic proposal, to make people feel confident to enter in a dialogue, to offer the experience of a journey where there is not right or wrong and where each individual can find a way to connect, relate, associate, evoke and most of all question.

ROBERTO CASAROTTO
Coordinator International Dance Projects
CSC – Centro per la Scena Contemporanea

About Performing Gender

Performing Gender is a European dance project making use of artistic and cultural tools to open up a civil reflection on gender and sexual orientation differences, seen as sources of values and richness for the whole European society.

Gender identities and sexual orientations are constitutive elements of our self-perception and keys to understand others, fundamental pillars to build our sense of citizenship and, hence, our belonging to society. At the same time, in an European society which defines itself as always more complex and diverse, it became necessary to strengthen a constructive dialogue on gender and sexual orientation differences, bringing to light their value and creativity to reinforce social inclusion and fight against discrimination and prejudices.

The main aim of *Performing Gender* was to create a European laboratory, in which dominant codes and mainstream images in relation to gender and sexual preference could be questioned and reflected upon, bringing this into the wider community through the universal language of the arts, to develop new images and to collect new insights together. The starting point of this journey was the body of the artist, seen as the ideal cultural medium to research and portray new identities.

An international group of 17 choreographers, dancers and visual artists has been involved for two years in an artistic research based in four different European cities: workshops, residencies and performances have investigated the representations of sexuality and gender, challenging the artists' identities and calling into question stereotypes and bias. At the end of this journey, the artists have been asked to produce new works to be staged in established and renowned European museums. These museums opened their institutions and integrated these new works of art and identities as part of their collections.

- **Arcigay Cassero
Gender Bender
Bologna, Italy**

www.cassero.it
www.genderbender.it

Cassero is the Gay and Lesbian Center of Bologna, one of the most important institutions for the Italian LGBT movement and history. Founded in 1982 and counting now more than 17.000 associated members, this organisation has continuously worked towards improving the quality of life of the LGBT community by sensitising the society on the need of social and political rights, as well as tackling discrimination on both national and international levels. It is part of Arcigay, the national network of LGBT associations, and of ILGA, the International Lesbian & Gay Association.

- Gender Bender Festival is the international arts festival produced by *Cassero* and directed by Daniele Del Pozzo. Since 2003, it introduces the Italian public to the contemporary imaginary related to gender identity, sexual orientation and body representation. The aim of the festival is to be able, upon these specific issues, to engage a real dialogue with the whole civil society, at local, national, and international level. In order to reach this goal, the festival selects a series of theatrical and dance productions, visual arts exhibitions, film showings, live concerts, conferences and conversations, providing concrete examples on how culture, in its diverse artistic expressions, can become an occasion to recognize the differences and overcome prejudices.

- **Dutch Dance Festival
Maastricht, The Netherlands**

www.nederlandsedansdagen.nl

The most surprising, controversial and impressive Dutch choreographies in the midst of an exciting festival atmosphere in Maastricht: Nederlandse Dansdagen. Programmed by Peggy Ollislaegers and her editorial team the Dutch Dance Festival will present the latest developments in the Dutch dance world with work from young choreographers to world-renowned dance companies, like the Nederlands Dans Theater.

- **Paso a 2
Madrid, Spain**

www.paso2.es

Paso a 2 is a creative catalyst that supports the work of emerging contemporary dance artists. Through prizes, programming, residencies, networking, workshops, showcases and mentoring, it is committed to investing in creative potential in Spain, Europe and abroad. Paso a 2 organizes the Certamen Coreográfico de Madrid, an annual platform for new work in contemporary dance. It also organizes another platform for emerging work, two yearly sessions of dance and journalism program, choreographic projects and training opportunities. It devotes time, energy and resources to connecting and nurturing creative people to help them realize their full potential.

- **Domino Association
Queer Zagreb – Zagreb, Croatia**

www.thisisadominoproject.org
www.queerzagreb.org

Since 2003 Queer Zagreb is an international multimedia festival, which examines the social norms in the transitional society through art, theory and activism. As part of its newly established program Queer Zagreb Season, it covers queer identity through the prism of art, dance, music and film, presenting work by artists who question norms, challenge traditional lines of thinking, widen the notions of identity.

Queer Zagreb Season is performed under the platform of This is a Domino project. Domino is a non-profit, non-governmental, non-political association that organizes cultural, theoretical and activist projects.

THE ASSOCIATE PARTNERS

- **MAMbo
Bologna, Italy**

www.mambo-bologna.org

MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna is the venue of Istituzione Bologna Musei dedicated to contemporary art. The museum offers a dynamic perspective: it travels through the history of Italian art from the second post-war period until today; it explores the present thanks to an exhibition

centred on research and it contributes to outline the routes of contemporary art following the most innovative and pulsating experimental practices. Located in the heart of the Manifattura delle Arti cultural district, the museum is the focus of various research- and innovation-based activities.

- **Bonnefanten Museum
Maastricht, The Netherlands**

www.bonnefantenmuseum.nl

Bonnefanten Museum Maastricht combines, in a building by Aldo Rossi, private and public collections with both old master painting and sculpture as cutting edge contemporary art. Its aim is not to deny the extremes in its collection, but to present them in their own right. Accepting the differences. Keeping them in the air, just as the juggler does with his skittles. Does the essence of magic not lie in the handling of abnormality and difference (risk), instead of normality and equal standards?

- **Jan van Eyck Academie
Maastricht, The Netherlands**

www.janvaneck.nl

The Jan van Eyck Academie is an innovative and outward-looking post-academic institution. It is international and interdisciplinary, and activates talent in open relationships with the world. The artists are encouraged to further develop their research in a critical and reciprocal relationship with each other and the world – and so make a contribution to the development of art and its significance for society.

- **Museo Reina Sofía
Madrid, Spain**

www.museoreinasofia.es

The Museo Reina Sofía program is based on a redefinition of the function of museums, on an alternative to the institution's historical models. Conceived to be a place that generates opportunities for sociability and discussion in the public sphere, the Museum proposes models of resistance in a society in which production has become fragmented, thus resulting in a geopolitical map hitherto unknown, and also in new social classes, relations and subjectivities.

- **MSU Museum of Contemporary Art
Zagreb, Croatia**

www.msu.hr

The Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb houses over 12.000 art objects of which about 600 are on permanent display. The Museum is dedicated to international cooperation and hosts numerous projects and collaborates with partners from all over Croatia, the Balkan region and a wider international pool of organizations. It also has a special focus in developing its new audience and connecting to the area of town in which the new building has been built.

THE ARTISTS

- Juanjo Arques (Netherlands)
- Riccardo Buscarini (Italy)
- Jordi Cortés (Spain)
- Vlasta Delimar (Croatia)
- Pablo Esbert (Spain)
- Silvia Gribaudi (Italy)
- Cristina Henríquez (Spain)
- Bruno Isakovic (Croatia)
- Nina Kurtela (Croatia)
- Siniša Labrović (Croatia)
- Poliana Lima (Spain)
- Jan Martens (Netherlands)
- Cecilia Moisio (Netherlands)
- Giorgia Nardin (Italy)
- Oscar Santillan (Netherlands)
- Connor Schumacher (Netherlands)
- Alessandro Sciarroni (Italy)

WORKSHOP WEEKS

YEAR 1

Zagreb, Croatia: 14-21 June 2013

Bologna, Italy: 22-29 October 2013

Madrid, Spain: 17-24 November 2013

Maastricht, Netherlands: 24 February-03 March 2014



ZAGREB

14-21 June 2013

14

FRIDAY

The first leg of Performing Gender kicked off with the arrival of project partners and participants in Zagreb. Over the week the commissioned artists **Siniša Labrović, Poliana Lima, Jan Martens** and **Cecilia Moisio** immersed themselves in the collection, spaces and wider context of the city's **Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU)**, all the while developing and exchanging their ideas and ruminations on discourses of gender and sexuality in performance. The week was geared around research ahead of next year's creation and performance of new work at the museum.

We began with an evening introduction to MSU the led by Chief Curator **Tihomir Milovac**. He walked the group through the highlights of the collection, explaining something of the museum's three year history and drawing attention to works by Marina Abramović, Vlasta Delimar and Katarzyna Kozra amongst many others. Later over dinner, discussion bubbled with cultural differences in attitudes towards visibility, mainstreaming and prejudice (around the table were those from or living in Croatia, Brazil, Spain, Finland, Belgium, The Netherlands, UK, USA). Our contrasting thoughts and experiences were crystallised by talk of Pride, which was due to take place in Zagreb the next day.

15

SATURDAY

A trip was organised to attend **Moja Zemlja Štaglinec** (My Land Štaglinec), a one day festival of international performance art organised by iconic Croatian performance artist **Vlasta Delimar** and held in a village to the North East of Zagreb. The group saw a photographic exhibition of Asian performance at the nearby Koprivnica Gallery and enjoyed a long and friendly traditional country meal with the artists and audience of the festival. The afternoon and evening was spent watching a programme of Asian performance artists invited by Irish guest-curator Sinéad O'Donnell. A series of intimate performances unfolded in and around Delimar's house and gardens; mostly solo work, often slow, ritualistic, informal, absurd.

Zagreb Pride also took place and some of the group stayed in the city to walk in the parade or joined later to party into the night. This year the parade was peaceful and well attended (15,000 participants and some celebrities lending their support) and showed the growing popularity of the event. This is in sharp contrast to previous Prides in Croatia and in the Balkan region which, since the first ever Gay Pride march in Zagreb in 2002, have often been marred by opposition and violence.

16

SUNDAY

Back at MSU, workshop leader **Jasna Žmak** led an introductory round for the artists and partners to present themselves and their interest around gender, sexuality and performance. Quite quickly a clutch of common themes emerged across the diversity of the group concerning the gendered or sexualised gaze, the forces of nature/nurture in generating our identities, visibility, marginality, the draw of the urban metropolis, problematics of language and labels, the need for self expression and personal freedom, the intersection of gender and sexual identities with nationality and much more besides. After lunch each of us took time to study the collection, take in the space, research, plan, reflect.

17

MONDAY

With MSU closed we each enjoyed more individual research time. Performing Gender partners **Zvonimir Dobrović**, **Daniele Del Pozzo** and **Tihomir Mikovc** gave a press conference about the project, which we later learned met with a positive reaction in the press but mixed views in online comments forums. We began to understand that a project such as this one might be more provocative in a Croatian context than in the other countries involved in Performing Gender. In the afternoon dance artist and writer **Iva Nerina Sibila** gave us an overview of the Croatian contemporary dance scene. She explained some of the innovations going on and the struggles for lack of funding and infrastructure experienced by local artists. Later in the evening Poliana and I met Croatian artist **Sanya Iveković** at her flat to discuss her feminist art and activism. Poliana had been particularly inspired by Iveković's ongoing work *Women's House* displayed at MSU in which casts of the faces of abused women are exhibited alongside their stark, affecting stories.

18

TUESDAY

As a means of sharing and developing ideas, Jasna led a catch up round for the Performing Gender artists. Plans, images, urges were beginning to surface and many questions arose. How would they deal with the durational aspect of the performances? Where in the museum would the works take place? How might their works relate to each other in the space? How would performers and museum visitors interact? Could documentation of the performances become works in themselves? What kind of statements, if any, did each artist want to make? How important is the explicit expression or reading of gender and sexual politics in these commissions? How might one engage with such discourses in an artwork anyway?

Later we were joined by **Gordan Bosanac**, Chief Analyst at the Centre for Peace Studies in Zagreb and programme collaborator and co-founder of **Queer Zagreb** which provides research and advocacy on LGBTQ policies. Gordan spoke to us about the processes of instigating and developing Zagreb's first formalised LGBTQ organisation, which he did alongside Performing Gender Croatian partner **Zvonimir Dobrović**. We learned of their very clear aim to protect the rights and freedoms of LGBTQ people by improving visibility and by attempting to mainstream the community's concerns and modes of expression. This led to debate around the relative power or value of 'the outsider' in society. We each questioned where we stood as artists and as people in terms of integration, protest, activism and accessibility. Discussion about the increasing popularity of a new right wing in Croatia, the power of the Church and the legacy of war in the region helped us to contextualise still further.

In the evening we watched the confronting multi-media performance *transSfera 1,5* from Polish collective **Suka Off** as part of the Queer Zagreb festival programme. The work took us through a cycle of ritualised self-alteration as two bleakly futuristic figures exchanged identities, gender and bodily fluids.

19

WEDNESDAY

After more independent research time, the participating artists came together to further discuss their ideas and to digest some of the information garnered over the last few days. **Davra Mišković**, president of **Drugo more** (Other sea) a Croatian non-profit cultural association, presented his experience as a producer, fundraiser, researcher and cultural advocate. One of the most striking ideas he emphasised was the need, now more than ever, for the creation of new models of distribution in the artistic field, and suggested this as an artistic practice in itself.

20

THURSDAY

Montenegrin visual artist **Bojana Radulović** joined us to offer her take on representations of gender and sexuality in cinema. From the gender bending Armenian art house classic *The Colour of Pomegranates*, to the noir-ish world of car fetishes in John Carpenter's *Christine*, we delved into the disruptive power of the camera's gaze. Over lunch we met people from local LGBTQ initiatives **Domino**, **Participacija**, **ŽivŽarŽur** and **Le Zbor**, the lesbian choir who sing wonderfully subversive versions of traditional Croatian songs. There was lively conversation around the intersections of 'hard' direct activism, and 'soft' activism through cultural inclusion.

The week was rounded off by a public presentation of research at MSU. Through sharing their ideas, each artist consolidated and formalised their initial research and pointed to their visions and aspirations for the ongoing project. This also provided us a first chance to consider what a sharing at this first stage of the project might consist of, and how it might be of most interest and value to both artist and public. This proved to be an excellently stimulating week, the fruits of which will be seen next year!



BOLOGNA

22-29 October 2013

22

TUESDAY

The Italian leg of Performing Gender kicked off, setting the tone of the week with a warm welcome to the participants **Juanjo Arquez**, **Riccardo Buscarini**, **Vlasta Delimar** and **Cristina Henriquez**. These artists were paired up for the week with local illustrators **Luca Di Sciuolo**, **Viola Niccolai**, **Lisa Passaniti**, **Cristina Portolano**. These four would act as accomplices and witnesses, tracing thoughts and movements on paper as a counterpoint to the physical research of their PG partners. The group met and mingled with the energetic staff of **Cassero LGBT Centre** historic home of Italy's first LGBT organisation. The centre offers community, information, advice, a library, events, and is also the base of the **Gender Bender Festival** of which PG was to be a part. The yearly festival is a vibrant season of film screenings, theatre and dance performances, exhibitions, gigs, discussions and parties each of which in some way confound traditional readings of sex, gender and sexuality. Over an *aperitivo* at **MAMbo Museo d'Arte Moderne di Bologna**, and later at dinner the group chewed over the theme of this year's Gender Bender Festival 'Il pelo nell'uovo', an invitation to literally 'look for the hair in the egg' which means to pick holes or split hairs. Festival Director and PG partner **Daniele Del Pozzo** explained that for him the beauty of any

given sense of queerness is always to be found by a close examination the tiny details, that it is worth picking holes in order to reveal a special uniqueness lying beneath.

23

WEDNESDAY

Workshop leader, PG partner and director of **Nederlandse Dansdagen**, **Peggy Ollislaegers** arrived. A tour of MAMbo with curator **Uliana Zanetti** gave us a feel for the gallery spaces, an indication of works of interest and also something of the strong tradition of Left Wing activism and art in Bologna. A first task from Peggy: each artist was to choose one or two artworks as a source of inspiration, and to make connections with their own gender and sexual identity. Reflecting on our instinctual choices made us question, what is it we are each drawn to in art and how much of that derives from our own quests for self-knowledge? How do we each think about and embody our identities in any given context?

Later a slice of the inspiring story of Cassero was served up by **Vincenzo Branà**, its president. He showed us the Cassero di Porta Saragozza, the organisation's former HQ which was, in 1982, the first building to be ever given over to an LGBT organisation by a local municipality in Italy. He told of the protests, violence and discrimina-

tion they at first faced from the conservative, religious community and the strength, warmth, clever tactics and legendary parties that saw the organisation develop into one of the cultural mainstays of the city. This was a reminder of how powerful and important it is to share oral histories, to physically speak the stories of people who were silenced, ostracized and who struggled on the margins.

Next was an encounter with **MIT** (Transsexual Identities Organisation) and **AGeDO** (Parents of Gays and Lesbians). MIT president **Porpora Marcasciano** and AGeDO representatives **Christian Cristalli** and **Flavia Madaschi** shared how vital their work is, informing, advising and protecting LGBT people, especially young LGBT people, and of lobbying and bringing awareness to wider society. The individual stories of those present were powerfully moving, Juanjo remarked that this was the moment that stayed with him most from the entire week.

The evening was topped off by visit to American photographer **Alice O'Malley's** photographic exhibition *Community of Elsewheres* at **Ono Arte Contemporanea** gallery. Strikingly yet nonchalantly subversive, the series of portraits, largely of O'Malley's queer friends, reeked of gritty New York cool. The artist herself was, however, disarmingly humble, speaking warmly about her inspirations and the importance of community, not least for a generation ravaged by AIDS. The value of collectively appreciating individual humanity shone through each shot.

24

THURSDAY

At Centro Costa the artists began creation and presentation of movement sketches stemming from the works they had selected from the museum and the initial reflections on their identities. Peggy posed the question which continued to chime throughout the week, how far are we defined by others? She suggested that, of course, who we are is influenced by those around us, but moreover that we can only really come to know who we might be in any given moment because we are seen, sensed, touched by another. She proposed we practise a sharpness of observation, a keenness for detail in each other, perhaps the 'pelo nell'uovo' which Daniele had spoken

about. Later Daniele presented film clips of dance and performance works which confront or problematize traditional conceptions of gender and sexuality. Hairs were split, but in the most creative sense.

25

FRIDAY

After a morning of continued physical research, transsexual director **Simone Cangelosi** spoke about his documentary film, *A Noble Revolution* which charted the remarkable story of LGBT icon **Marcella di Folco**. As an actor she was a muse of film director Federico Fellini, then after changing sex became the first transsexual person in the world to be elected to public office. A charismatic leader with an immense joie de vivre and commitment to her community, di Folco with her demons and triumphs is seen through the lens of the friendship shared with Cangelosi. For us, learning of such a strength of spirit was truly inspirational and, fittingly, rather than sombre reflection the discussion was followed by dancing the night away, but in a very particular way... The group learned the **Liscio**, a folk dance of Bologna traditionally danced by two men who spin around, gripping onto each other in an intimate arm hold and moving knee to knee to counter the centrifugal force. With live music and plenty of *gusto* the group tried every combination of partner, whirling around and literally turning accepted assumptions about leaders, followers, men and woman on their heads.

26

SATURDAY

Another morning of physical practice saw the artists sharing a group improvisation, sensing, following and guiding each other whilst wearing blindfolds. Here again traditional notions of power and control were upended. The borders of one's body and self were defined through personal interaction, each artist finding movement material and ideas in relation to one another. Later came a visit to the **Museo della Bambola** (Doll Museum). Here the often eerie examples of the histori-

cal objectification of women and girls gave pause for thought and a stark contrast to the focus of the morning's physical practice. The evening saw the official opening of Gender Bender 2013 with a dance performance of Emilio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten

27

SUNDAY

The morning gave an opportunity to observe a Rainbow Families workshop organised by campaigner Ilaria Trivallato. We wondered at what age children become aware of difference and what effects that might have upon them, if any. In the afternoon there was discussion with two artists whose work featured in the Gender Bender programme; Argentine film maker **Marco Berger** whose film *Hawaii* was shown, and with Italian choreographer **Giulio D'Anna** whose touching *Parkinson* centres on his relationship with his father.

28

MONDAY

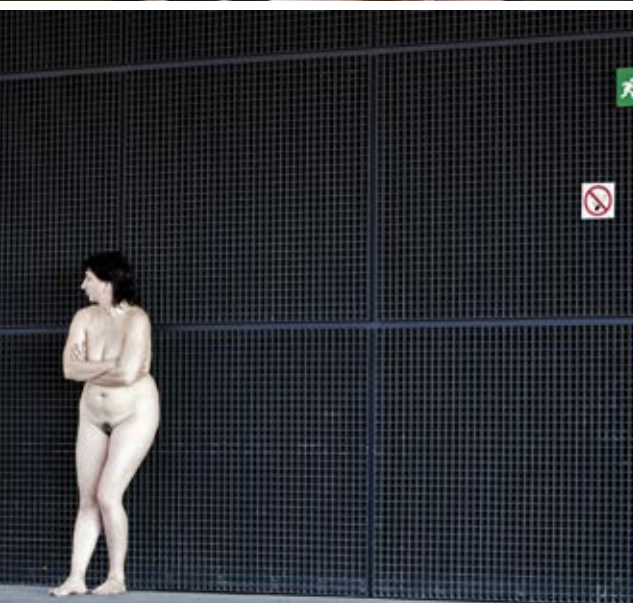
Final rehearsals at MAMbo took place gearing up to the informal sharing of research as part of the Gender Bender programme. Cutting a bizarre figure, a bewigged Vlasta drifted amongst the large crowd to open the performance by playfully confronting individuals with a mirror. She positioned, repositioned, questioned them, made them nervous, her accepting yet quiet and steely focus encouraging them to see themselves differently. She then left the audience to be led around the gallery in rotating groups to witness the other sketches in situ. Riccardo was found in an absurd yet intensely intimate slow dance for an invisible, missing 'other' on the stairs. He gently taunted, tried to please, began to strip a sock and place it, bunny-like on his ear, all with an off-kilter vulnerability and guarded sense of frustration. Cristina upended the trope of a woman in a peep-show, throwing a beguiling and dominating gaze around the circle of viewers in a delicate power play of seer and seen. Juanjo, bare chested, sat waist deep in the ruffles of a tutu as if stuck in

quicksand. He was inhabiting the space beneath Gilberto Zorio's sculptural expression of alchemy and transformation, his intricate and delicate movements filled with a sense of such stillness and other worldliness that the air quivered with ambiguity and tension. Afterwards the audience stayed for animated discussions with the artists and later the team enjoyed a gig of Australian singer-songwriter **Scott Matthew**, dancing and releasing the energy of the week.

29

TUESDAY

The group came together for the last time until the next year, observing a feeling of being overwhelmed by the richness and sheer volume of input, questions, doubts, ideas and possibilities generated by the week. We looked forward excitedly to the months ahead of digesting, reading, thinking and planning for what would be, we all felt sure, a brilliant creation week.



MADRID

18-23 November 2013

18

MONDAY

The first morning and the four Performing Gender choreographers **Pablo Esbert Lilienfeld**, **Silvia Gribaudo**, **Bruno Isakovic** and **Giorgia Nardin** met with **Claudia Faci**, dancer, theatre practitioner and workshop leader and **Laura Kumin**, director of Madrid's dance organisation and PG partner, **Paso a 2**. The group chewed over ideas, hopes and plans for the project before breaking off to spend time finding our bearings in the enormous **Museo Reina Sofia**. Spread over two buildings and many floors, the scale and variety of the collection and spaces was dizzying. During the afternoon, author **Lawrence Schimel** spoke about reconciling the dual aspects of his professional identity as a children's writer and a writer of gay adult fiction. We reflected on sexual taboos, education and prejudice. Lawrence proposed a 'pyramid of power' at play in art and culture as much as in wider society, where the privileged few aim to preserve the mechanisms which ensure their position and ability to dominate discourse. We considered the ramifications of this in terms of our own experiences of sex, gender, sexuality and also in relation to hierarchies amongst different art forms and institutions.

19

TUESDAY

The group began to investigate a shared physical practice and took time to discuss their reactions to the collection and to the museum environment. We then plunged into the world of popular partner dances with tango expert **Lourdes Más**. She introduced us to the basics of the 'male' and 'female' roles in tango and rock and roll, which translate to 'leader' and 'follower' in very specific ways. We begin to understand the subtle skills necessary for sensitive communication of push and pull, prompts, signals, weight changes and shifts of rhythm within these codes. We experimented with swapping roles and partners and wondered which ones suit us best, which ones we are accustomed to or conditioned to accept and why that might be. Madrid local Pablo then led a visit to alternative arts spaces the **La Tabacalera** and the **La Casa Encendida**. Here we considered the stark contrasts between these spaces and the physical and ideological controls so conspicuous at the Reina Sofia.

The day was rounded off by a comprehensive discussion of the cultural and scientific constructions of the notions of sex, gender and sexuality by anthropologist **David Berná**. Going back to the turn of the century sexologists he argued that social and scientific categories of identity, even if they now appear based in biological fact,

are actually constructs produced by the power dynamics at work society which aim to naturalize domination and exclusion. These categories are internalized by people who then identify with a given position or identity. While agreeing with much of this, we wondered where the space for individual expression and subversion might be found within such a perspective. At night we inadvertently explored aspects of this question in Madrid's drag bars, enjoying the particularly Spanish variety of soap opera fabulousness several of the performers exuded. David's ideas buzzed in our heads...

20

WEDNESDAY

After a period of individual research Bruno posed the group a question; can you identify a particular moment of transition in your life that really contributed to your sense of self? Some of us could, some of us couldn't, some of us felt in the very thick of transition at that very moment and perhaps at every moment and wouldn't necessarily subscribe to a notion of a discrete or stable self that forms, passes through transition only to reform again. We each thought about what factors of selfhood could be at play in our own creative processes.

Later we followed drag artist **Regina Fiz** on a performance-tour throughout the Reina Sofia, *Dar Una Vuelta*. In Spanish the title can mean both 'to take a walk' and also 'to turn things around' both of which Regina encouraged us to do with bold and charismatic simplicity. She created a journey that moved us between tableaux, pointedly framing her tall, masked and subversively dragged-up figure with her various carefully chosen locations. Space and time were left for us to reflect on the intersection of politics in the works of the collection, the museum itself and her own hyper-real presence. We had been wondering if it was really possible to make a subversive statement from within such a powerful institution but as Regina wove her way silently and elegantly through the Reina Sofia, I thought of Judith Butler's assertion that 'to operate within the matrix of power is not the same as to replicate uncritically relations of domination'.

21

THURSDAY

The majority of the day was taken up with individual research, punctuated by another session with Lourdes. This which gave us the chance to deepen our physical engagement with some of the ideas of role play and power we had been discussing over the previous days. The group later led a workshop with a group of teenagers, opening up a space for reflecting on the artists' current questions. We proposed a practical task of working through modes of looking, being seen and interrogating how we make observations and assumptions about ourselves and others. Such questions might easily be dismissed as being particularly pertinent in our teenage years but we started to consider how they persist and transform as we get older.

22

FRIDAY

The group touched base with each other and with Claudia, trying to identify questions and points of frustration, cross connection and curiosity. Silvia had been filming some sketches, exploiting the somewhat ludicrous seeming regulations regarding nudity in performance at the museum. Others had been cogitating, reading and taking in the vast collection. We began to plan the flexible format for the final sharing. Giorgia later led a movement and discussion workshop with a diverse group of tattooed people. She wanted to investigate ideas of exposure, vulnerability and the fixing of expressions of identity on the very boundaries of the physical self, the skin. In the evening we attended a performance night hosted by Regina involving a variety of sound art, poetry, film and performance.

The artists prepared and presented their research to an engaged audience in an informal sharing. Giorgia took time to discuss her experiences of the workshops she had undertaken with tattooed people. Pablo created a trail of transformation shifting abruptly and unexpectedly through various spaces of the museum, rolling a suitcase out of which he conjured different items of clothes and with them different modes of performance, embodiment and possible readings of his identity. He suggested a chaotic, mercurial sense of self constantly in a state of translation and becoming, always on the move, creating a ripple of excitement and bemusement amongst the viewers. Bruno charted an intense journey around the conference room which had been our base for the week. He walked naked, painted as if shadows crept from the folding limbs of his body, and projected upon with images of darkness jutting from corners of the museum and from within some of the works of the collection. He seemed to question whether our darkness will always reveal itself, breaking through or leaking out of our daily constructions of self. Silvia, with trademark humour and warmth took the audience on another trail confounding them with shifts of focus and a warm but seemingly evasive presence. Who was she? Was she for real? Can we ever really know someone or does it depend where you stand? After the sharing a fruitful and warm feedback session was facilitated by Laura Kumin which gave both artists and audience the chance to openly share perspectives. After parting drinks, we each looked forward to letting the intensity of the week's questions seep leisurely into our physicalities and to coming together again for the next creative installment of PG.



MAASTRICHT

24 February-2 March 2014

24

MONDAY

The team arrived and gathered for a first dinner, with the Performing Gender team from **Nederlandse Dansdagen**, providing a warm welcome. The five makers **Jordi Cortés**, **Nina Kurtela**, **Oscar Santillan**, **Connor Schumacher** and **Alessandro Sciarroni** shared thoughts and points of departure for the week.

25

TUESDAY

Workshop leader, PG partner and director of Nederlandse Dansdagen, **Peggy Ollislaegers** kick-started work at the **Jan Van Eyck Academie**, our base for the week. As in Bologna PG Workshop Week, she proposed the artists make a short movement sketch which should somehow touch an essential aspect of their gender or sexual identity. The group's diverse working practices are captured on GoPro cameras as they broke off to experiment, plan and then re-joined each other to share their sketches and offer feedback.

After lunch was an encounter with writer, performer and producer **Selm Wenselaers**. A beguiling presence, Selm encouraged us to

observe her and her belongings before silently issuing the group a challenge, 'Define me' typed and held up on her iPad. How could we? And how could we without also implicitly defining ourselves and our own assumptions? These were especially potent questions because Selm is consciously 'lost in transition' between genders. She rejects the conventional, linear narrative that sees a trans person moving butterfly-like from one known, discrete category of identity to another and passing through a transition/cocoon phase only momentarily. Instead Selm embodies and lives in gender fluidity as a present reality. She is not on the way to becoming someone or something else, but is rather content to be constantly becoming. We realised this is a potential we all have and to some, probably lesser, extent we all live. The question is whether we can realise this and embrace notions of ourselves as constantly becoming in a Deleuzian sense of ongoing assembly or as constantly bringing our identities into being through performing them (as Judith Butler has it). Are we instead trying to reify a fixed identity for ourselves and if so, why? Later we shared discussion with members of the local LGBT community, learning of their experiences of exploring opinions about categorisation of identity further. We wondered to what extent the LGBT label serves anybody, in what ways does it legitimise and protect people and in what ways feed into oppressive dominant discourses.

26

WEDNESDAY

After a morning of research and practice with Peggy, we enjoyed a comprehensive tour of the **Bonnefanten Museum** with curator **Celeste Koopman**. She identified and introduced many of the key works of the collection and, although Aldo Rossi's beautiful central staircase was under construction, she also highlighted the museum's striking architecture. We each took time to drift and let our minds wander, reflections prompted by the works around us.

Later we shared a meeting with performer **Remco Slop** who spoke frankly about his experiences as a gay, disabled man often suffering discrimination, isolation and prejudice not only from society at large but also, cruelly, from the gay community too. As a vibrant breaker of taboo, Remco affected us sharply with his strength and vulnerability.

27

THURSDAY

This was the day of the public sharing of research at the museum, necessarily midway through the week due to the town shutting down for the Carnival period. A highly engaged audience were guided in rotating groups to the location of each artist's sketch. In her sketch Nina confounded expectations of seeing performance embodied by an 'other' and instead provided a moment of darkened ambiguity for the audience to experience by unexpectedly switching off the lights in a room of Renaissance paintings. Here the audience, plunged into disorientating darkness, were forced to interact, to observe themselves in a gallery space anew, to draw their own conclusions. Jordi's finely tuned yet softly receptive physical presence was the focus of his sketch as he transfixed audiences by translating associations he gleaned from their own gazes towards him into a series of gradually transforming tableaux. He suggested by turns mother, child, Christ, beggar, rascal, lover, forming a loop of readings between himself and his viewers. Alessandro had been thinking about the often painful gap between subjective

and objective experiences of ourselves in society, the clash between how we feel and how we are perceived from the outside. With orchestral swells filling the gallery space, he danced delicately, gangly-legged and shock-headed in a clown's outfit, leaving us quieted by a sense of melancholy. Connor's sketch saw him connect to live web-chat site GayRuleta, creating a tense exploration of contemporary desire and loneliness. Stripped down to his underwear with his face and voice absent in his webcam, he interacted with various randomly selected online partners, speaking aloud his internal monologue for the museum audience as he went. What would his online partners want to see? What would he be prepared to do? What were we comfortable to watch? Lastly, Oscar made use of the intimacy afforded by the museum's lift, with audience members squeezing in a handful at a time. Once on the move, one audience member's mobile phone would be called and they were asked to repeat verbatim the personal stories of love, loss and life's curiosities they heard on their handset. In this neat shift we read onto them desires, identities and histories they may or may not have shared but which passed through them as they channelled the voice of an absent author.

28

FRIDAY

Time for independent reflection was followed by a workshop with puppeteer, performer and Mexican wrestler **Marijs Boulogne**. We wondered how might we imbue inanimate objects with a gender through movement. I was struck by the linguistic divisions amongst the group and how difficult is for me as a native English speaker to imagine a sock, for instance, as having a gender rather than being 'it'.

1/2

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

We offered further feedback about the week with Peggy and the PG team and then plunged into the Carnival celebrations. The streets spilled over with beery, good-natured revellers who came from all

over to enjoy days of street parties, parades and costumed silliness. Each year the major literally hands over the key to the city to the carnival 'Prince', thereby officially signalling a suspension of traditional rules and codes of behaviour and giving sanction to turning notions of identity, respectability and responsibility topsy-turvy. We enjoyed the mash-up of trashy garishness and the underlying thread something genuinely subversive going on, perhaps unnoticed by many. We took a rich and stimulating week of experiences with us as we returned to our home contexts and looking forward to returning later in the year for Creation Week.

After the Workshop Week in Maastricht, the Croatian artist Nina Kurtela communicated to the project partners her intention not to be involved in the activities of Performing Gender for the second year.

CREATION WEEKS

YEAR 2

Zagreb, Croatia: 11-18 May 2014

Madrid, Spain: 13-20 July 2014

Maastricht, Netherlands: 28 September-05 October 2014

Bologna, Italy: 26 October-02 November 2014



Activism/The Sore Thumb

ZAGREB, 11-18 MAY 2014

Finding yourself sticking out like a sore thumb is an experience some of us would rather forget. We can probably all think of scenarios where who we are, what we look like or what we stand for has been deemed awkwardly or unacceptably different, leaving us feeling exposed, open to ridicule or even attack. The regulatory, often deeply conservative forces of society can inflict anything from a light ego-pummelling to a crushing hammer blow to the very essence of our being. We can end up feeling bruised and sadly, disastrously even, thinking twice about the conspicuousness and indeed even the legitimacy of our perceived peculiarity.

Or not. We can probably all also conjure up memories of flipping a flagrantly angry bird in the face of conformity or throwing a gloriously impervious shrug at convention. We can surely relate to the deep sense of empowerment and freedom that follows. Cultivating the self-awareness and the cojones or ovaries of steel to behave authentically and to express yourself openly is, however, not only a source of personal fulfilment but to some extent also a social responsibility. Of course one's ability to take up that responsibility and actively reject an oppressive mainstream is culturally contingent; even more so the ability to nonchalantly disregard it. Such abilities might even be better seen as privileges more accessible to those living in relatively liberal contexts. I therefore certainly do not then suggest that keeping one's sexual or gender light under a bushel is necessarily cow-

ardly or irresponsible. Indeed, quite the reverse, it can sometimes be a sensible act of self-preservation, depending on one's cultural and political environment.

Croatian artist Siniša Labrović absolutely encapsulated this problematic in his work for *Performing Gender*, *Inner Light* which was performed alongside work by Cecilia Moisio, Jan Martens and Poliana Lima in Zagreb's Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU). In the second part of his performance Siniša, dressed in women's clothes and standing astride a mirror, allowed gallery visitors to catch glimpses of reflected light shining from a torch hanging between his legs, a luminous appendage hiding beneath his dress. With not a little absurdity, a neat upending of religious imagery and a surprising degree of delicacy in the tenderness of his physical presence, Siniša suggested that perhaps we can never fully hide the radiance of our desires and individuality anyway; that the energy, if not the 'truth' (always a suspicious notion best given a wide berth) of our sexuality and gender will always shine through.

The question is then, how can we share or express our desires and identities within the shaping context of our social and cultural environments? Siniša's action was intended as universal but yet in his home context carried risk since he does not identify as LGBTQ and therefore felt keenly the possibility of his participation in the project being seen either as jumping on the queer bandwagon or as a genuine proclamation of queerness by a

home crowd not necessarily very accommodating to the perceived wafting of a rainbow flag. He was, ironically for a straight, white male, placing himself in a precarious, liminal position both physically and politically: on the stairs, between levels of the museum, and for a prolonged duration, swaying slightly with fatigue causing the torchlight, and perhaps his resolve, to quiver. But he nevertheless made a stand for himself, for the recognition that straight, white men may also have something to bring to a discussion of sexual and gender issues and for the celebration of *all* the varieties of orientation and identity intended by the PG project, even those that have traditionally part of the patriarchy.

In this way, the context and the spirit of standing out like a sore thumb is, of course, everything. In some situations even the notion of standing out can itself be the stuff of cliché and in others, truly life threatening. For instance being “the only gay in the village” in TV show *Little Britain* can justifiably become a self-satirising sketch on a gay man’s comical need to cling to a sense of lonely, self-righteous martyrdom since in the UK such an attitude is so outmoded it is almost ridiculous. The joke rests on the idea that rather than exclusion and victimisation, the protagonist not only finds respect and understanding but shocking levels of sexual frankness and political engagement in the cosy rural grannies and guileless country bumpkins around him. Such a scenario is absolutely no joke somewhere like Uganda where being “the only gay in the village” can be a death sentence. Living without threat of persecution is a basic human right that many of us take for granted but others are denied due to the fear and ignorance surrounding unconventional sexual and gender identities, practices and expressions. Yet still, the violence, discrimination and exclusion many women and LGBTQ people meet with on a daily basis can never be challenged unless *somebody* takes a stand, doing so physically, visibly, palpably.

The necessity of embodying one’s principles, struggles and questions in order to engender understanding in others strikes me strongly as a keystone of the Performing Gender project. Uniquely, the project brings together culturally and politically driven organisations from several European countries, occupying a dynamic space between activism and artistic practice not only

within the scope of each work made for the project, but also within the architecture of the project as whole. This was particularly evident in Zagreb where Domino and Queer Zagreb focus their energies on the intersection of culture and politics in what can be seen as the most conservative of the PG countries. It made me think about how confronting negative stereotyping both imaginatively through art and directly through protest, education, lobbying or demonstrating, means literally physically standing up and, crucially, *standing out* for who you are and what you believe in. Sex, gender and sexuality can only exist in so far as we embody them and so by putting your peculiar physicality “out there” whether in protest or performance, risking feeling exposed in your uniqueness, making your bodily presence felt and visible with all its experiences of love and desire, all its complexities of masculine and feminine incorporated into every gesture and move, has in itself the potential to disrupt and reorganise accepted norms. Despite obvious and important differences between acts of political activism and politically engaged artistic endeavours, I saw through the PG project how the two can be momentarily and powerfully be drawn parallel by the fundamental state of physical vulnerability required by both.

But then how exactly does standing out like a sore thumb actually engage those around us? How might it trigger questions or shifts of attitude? Aside from the aims of the project overall, what spaces and strategies are available to each artist to engage people in their own terms within the framework of a project with such an explicit agenda? A first premise of PG’s is to debunk stereotypes and open constructive, imaginative debate around gender and sexuality, and it aims to do that through its unabashedly mainstream focus. It aims to encompass and make visible the fullest diversity of concerns, experiences and expressions around gender and sexuality with a view to normalising and destigmatising queer and feminist issues in particular. Some of the largest and most prestigious art galleries in the participating countries were chosen as performance locations, social media is geared to attain the largest reach, much needed EU funding ensures the highest production values are aspired to. Simply put, the project’s attempts at standing out aren’t about opting out of the mainstream but instead standing up for the cultivation of the widest possible sense of common respect even when,

perhaps especially when, diverse experiences and beliefs are not shared by everyone.

These are vital and admirable sentiments of course but yet there is also something of a tension implicit in a project that on the one hand claims for itself a queer agenda and on the other aims to mainstream that agenda. By its very definition “queerness” is a word which encapsulates strangeness and otherness, so the notion of a queered mainstream or a mainstream queer is not only difficult but, for some, results in the relinquishing of the truly subversive heart of queerness. Furthermore, moving towards a mainstream for any reason is often given short shrift in the experimental art and performance scenes. Why would one want to move towards acceptance or, worse still, tolerance by those who reject one’s values and whose values you likewise reject? There are then frictions between movements that seek to mainstream the marginal and to transform or subvert norms by incorporating oppositional voices; and those that seek to maintain and even cultivate their marginalisation as a way to keep a vital critical distance from those norms. However being in Zagreb particularly, I was again reminded of the importance of context. Since all of the Performing Gender cities have a Catholic tradition, several of them with dictatorships in the recent past, all of them prey to an increasingly popular and conservative right-wing, the urgency to advocate respect for diversity in the mainstream makes sense and is of even greater importance. Queer Zagreb itself is set up on the idea that “mainstreaming is activism”. It rests on the idea that radical militancy, separatism and self-ghettoisation have huge power at certain times and places, but at others can in fact serve to maintain exclusion and foster alienation. The perverse enjoyment of these states and rejection of mainstreaming by the cutting edge in cities like London seems result of a more comfortable liberalism afforded in part by the struggles of the mainstreaming activists of the 60s and 70s.

Visibility then, the standing out I have been talking about, is itself a powerful force for change. However PG presents a unique and highly stimulating context for the participating artists because it asks them to reconcile their own politics and strategies for visibility with those of the project as a whole. If PG is itself announcing its agenda so strongly in its title, making its focus

and implied political aims so obvious, what space is left for each artist to make his or her own individual stand on his own terms? Is making a work exploring gender and sexuality within such a plainly declared framework over-egging the pudding? If, on the other hand, one then engages with the themes in a more veiled way, is that only sidestepping the issues? How can one deal with the expectations implicit in the project’s title but yet invite a very personal response?

These were the tensions PG artist Jan Martens explored in the process of creating *Darwin*. Through Jan’s works runs a thread of what he calls “soft activism”. For Jan it is important to confront and subvert taboos, but in a way that might creep up softly on a viewer. Like many of the PG artists, he had no interest in making a blunt, dogmatic statement, but was rather much more interested in the nuances with which we feel and perceive gender and sexuality. Here, like many of the artists, Jan possibly came up against the fear that labelling his work as ‘gay’, ‘queer’, ‘political’ could have a reductive effect. He was not afraid of the stigma of those terms, for him indeed they signal positive connotations, but rather he questioned the need to declare the issues at the heart of the project so directly, wondering if subtly and ambiguity could be lost as a result. The concern that the title would give the game away was played out in process.

Jan initially intended his work for PG as a duet for two men which would engage the viewer firstly on a more abstract, aesthetic level. He imagined the two men naked, travelling through the gallery locked in a series of weight exchanges and physical connections that might suggest an athleticism or an alien quality not immediately connected to sexuality. Over time he imagined the movement becoming subtly more animal, more sexual so that it might only dawn on the viewer slowly that s/he could be watching an expression of love-making. In this way Jan hoped to draw in viewers and then only through an almost imperceptible process, lead them to a point of having to question their own attitudes towards such a raw physicality. Yet held within the frame of the declared themes of the project and under its banner title, he soon wondered, how far can we ever see two naked men touching without finding it homoerotic? The project’s agenda seemed at once to inspire him but also to queer his pitch.

Eventually the presented work perhaps did not employ the soft activism Jan had initially imagined but rather attained an immense amount of ambiguity and nuance by engaging directly with the topic. There was an intricate layering of touch, look, trust, power, proximity and intimacy between the two men at first clothed and clasped in a travelling, seemingly never ending kiss and then later naked and locked in a constantly fluctuating but unbroken gaze as they slowly tussled, clambered on each other and held each other sweating, straining, surrendering, slumping into each other. The idea of representing an increasingly sexualised movement vocabulary slipped away in favour of simply completing the two tasks, a kiss and a gaze and the performers' slow sensitivity and easy humanity while exploring these tasks was hugely beguiling. It seemed once Jan let *Performing Gender's* title do some of the work in carrying the weight of its implications for him, he let go the control of the audience's slow discovery of a sexuality and let it just be present, undeniable from the start. As a result, somehow the shades of sensuality and sexuality actually became lighter, less laboured and part of a dynamic, shifting interpretation of the performers' flow of energy and touch. Rather than reducing the readings of his work, releasing himself into the cradle of the project's bounds, Jan was possibly freer to delve into the richness of textures and particularities of his ideas and leaving gallery visitors similarly free to do the same.

Perhaps less concerned with the potentially prohibitive weight of the PG title and more motivated by the possibilities of visibility it offered as a subject matter, were fellow Zagreb makers Cecilia Moisio and Poliana Lima. With strikingly contrasting physicalities but with comparable boldness the two women personally embodied typically unseen, overlooked or oppressed aspects of female identity. Here particularly, the standing up and standing out became more than an innate strategy of the project but a manifest content of the work. This took on a particularly political tone in Poliana's *Cuerpo-Trapo* (literally, "body-rag"). Poliana was inspired by the invisible thread she perceived between iconic Croatian feminist artist Sanja Ivanović's *Women's House* which deals with survivors of domestic abuse and *Amerika* by Kristina Leko which charts the stories of immigrants, both shown at MSU. In her own work Poliana made manifest the often hidden plight of immigrant women, not uncommonly leaving their homes and families due to domestic abuse (that most hidden of crimes) which is compounded by the disbelief and ostracisation that can follow and then further discrimination upon arrival in a new country. Such a chain of insidious societal oppression and indifference can leave a woman voiceless, invisible and also prey to a process of internalisation where she physically incorporates such forces, her body holding the potential but often unable to make herself truly seen or heard.

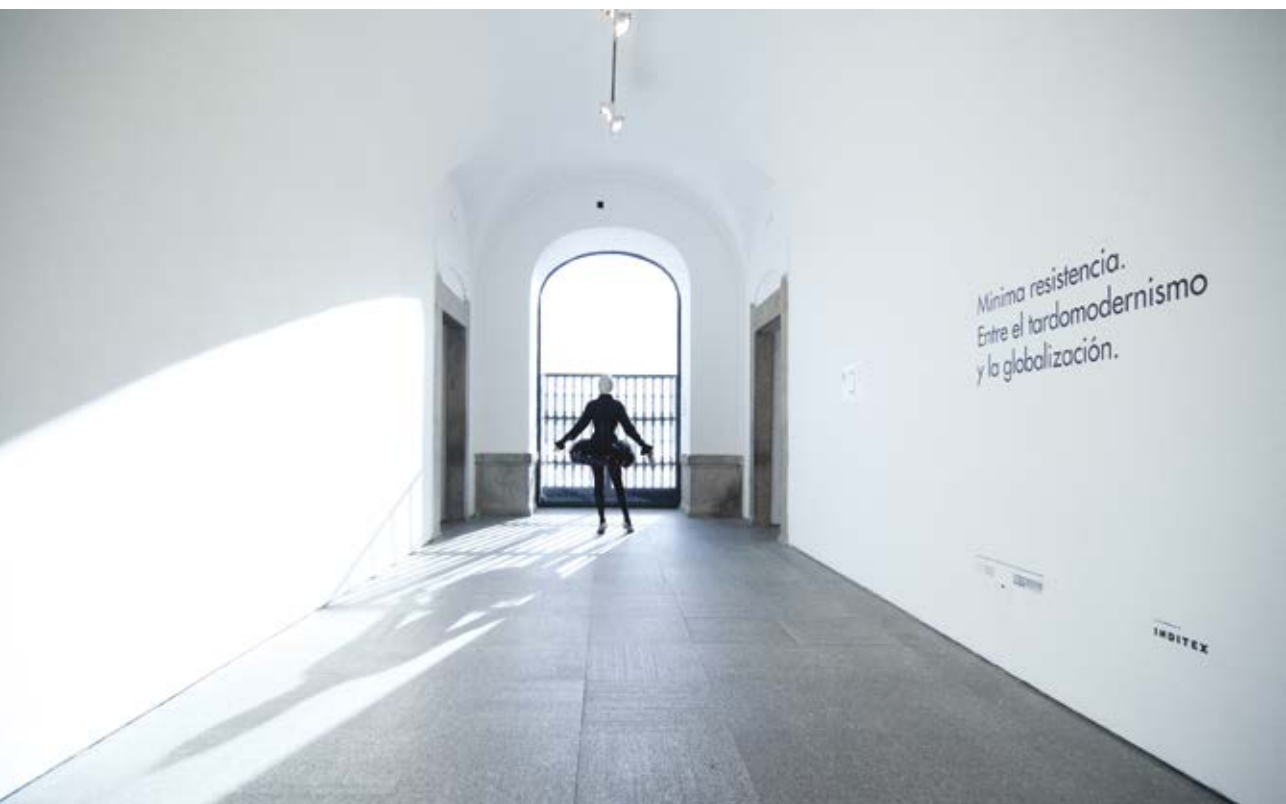


Inspired by the story of one female immigrant who found employment as a cleaner in her new country, Poliana also noted, with piercing irony, that for a cleaner the sign of a job well done is absolute invisibility. Dressed in a uniform and moving around the museum with a cleaning machine, Poliana disappeared in plain sight, ignored by the visitors and creating vanishing trails of water like the vanishing trails of an immigrant's travel, lines of a narrative written with the disappearing ink of the disenfranchised. Then later, parking the machine, she peeled off her uniform, exposing the soft vulnerability of her flesh and unravelling layers of bandages which clothed her. Suddenly her humanity, her individuality became visible and as movement began to compel her floorwards, so too the fierce violence at her core. Shockingly and powerfully thrown, thrust and flung by unseen forces acting through her, across her and from within her, viewers witnessed a woman's refusal to allow a violently oppressive patriarchy to wipe the floor with her. Here too then was the gesture of really standing out like a sore thumb; exposing a deep vulnerability alone through a physical show of conflict and humility in order to make seen and felt and to therefore to weaken the mechanisms of power whose violence relies so heavily on remaining unnoticed.

Paradoxically however, while such a gesture necessitates the risk of painful isolation, something in its pure humanity in fact generates empathy and even solidarity amongst others. It was while

walking in the Pride march during the PG Research week in Zagreb that this wonderful paradox of the sore thumb first became apparent. As I put my body in the throng of people, facing a greater conservatism than I currently experience in my home city and so feeling its power more keenly, I realised that by risking setting oneself apart through a genuinely felt expression, an act of physically showing vulnerability, one finds the greatest sense of strength and connection with other people. This is perhaps the essence of solidarity. It calls to mind Italian thinker and activist Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's call to 'reactivate the social body'. Berardi is primarily looking at acts of social protest as a means of developing a deeper physical empathy to remedy the somato-political ill effects of neo-liberal economic regimes. However watching the diversity of the performances of the PG project I have, in a myriad of ways, witnessed the potential of performance to 'reactivate the social body'. It aims to move beyond the protective façade of cynicism, the self-defeating apathy and the timorous lack of belief in direct political potential assumed all too easily in dance. In so doing, Performing Gender has, for me, generated an energy and body of work which is truly creative.





Museum/The Booby Trap

MADRID, 13-20 JULY 2014

Y our body is a battleground, according to Barbara Kruger. It is marked and bloodied, fought over, claimed, lost and won by the marauding hordes of the patriarchal forces at large in society. (As a gay feminist I might be more tempted to say my body is a no man's land, but that's another story...) Nowhere in *Performing Gender* did I feel Kruger's point more keenly than in Madrid's Museo Reina Sofía. A colossal institution, boasting one of the world's greatest collections of modern art and fiercely protecting its take on the canon, it has some of the most stringent bodily controls I have encountered in a museum. The visitor's physical experience is highly yet quite subtly regulated. The artist's even more so. My body may be a battleground on the street, but the Reina Sofía is in sole, sovereign control as soon as I pass through the thorough security checks, don my name badge and follow the course of her cool, clean corridors.

A skinny man wrapped a strikingly gaudy loin-loth and turban combo sits cross-legged in a corner of an open passageway. He rocks to and fro as he sings, hums and clicks into a microphone, recording and looping homespun mantras like a kitschy post-modern holy man. Against the glitches and bassy booms of his itchy-funky soundtrack his voice emerges with warm humanity, 'My body, my territory. Your body, my territory. My body, her territory...' People begin to gather and listen. As he stands we see his peculiar get up is, in fact, made of flags. Face open but deadpan, he peri-

odically draws random flags from a box and adds them to his outfit, fashioning now a billowing pair of shorts, now a skimpy crop-top, now a bandit's face scarf. He begins to dance his song, carving clean angles then loping with mini-collapses through the space. He drapes himself, gestures and signals, his body becoming a vibrant rolling banderol of possible genders, desires and nationalities. Later he draws up chairs and speaks with people about about what they just saw and felt. These discussions generate the material for the next song, the song generating material for the next dance, the dance for the next discussion as the work unpacks itself matryoshka-style. This is PG artist Pablo Esbert Lilienfeld's *Gender Travel*. The title is an obvious nod to Judith Butler, but it seems he has Kruger on the mind too. As a point of departure he asks, what if my gender was a country? Ideas of nationhood, border control, constitution, patriotism, xenophobia, nomadism, exile, tourism, trade and (inevitably) war suddenly provide fertile metaphors for understanding and problematizing our identities as men, women, trans, queers... And it is through, across and on the body that the tensions implicit in these discourses are felt. Your body, bound to enter the somato-political fray, bears the ravages. Skirmishes break out on the skin, the battle of the waist-bulge rages, booby traps lie in wait in the underhanded guerrilla tactics of love.

Likewise, these corpo-territorial hostilities are also manifested in the codes of movement and behavioural controls set out by the museum.

During the weeks of research and performance at the Reina Sofia, PG artists found themselves appealing for and often refused permission to enter workspaces on a daily basis, not because any rules had been broken, but because the mechanisms of control were so unwieldy and so accustomed to accommodating performers working in situ. Photographs were not permitted, even for the purposes of research. Identity had to be proved and displayed in the form of a name badges. Sitting on the floor of gallery spaces was prohibited. Dancing forbidden. Performances could not occur near or in physical relation to artworks in the existing collection since, for the curatorial team, this would need the permission of the artist concerned or their estate. Picasso was absolutely out of the question. Corridors, stairwells, function rooms and lecture theatres were in reality the remaining fair game. Nudity was tolerated only in closed spaces with written warning for so visitors could choose whether to expose themselves to it or not. This was apparently to protect the sensibilities of children (never mind that they might stumble on any number of nude paintings, photographs and sculptures elsewhere in the collection). The PG artists were invited to be inspired by the truly amazing collection but were effectively surveyed, restricted, ghettoised even by regulations that seemed not only draconian but based on some extremely problematic assumptions.

However, this is not to say that there weren't positive attitudes towards the PG project from within the museum. Indeed, quite the reverse. Laura Kumin, Madrid's PG partner was justifiably proud when she pointed out that the museum had indeed taken a significant leap of faith in taking on the project in the first place since it was highly unusual for them to agree to show works by unknown artists before they had been finished, seen and approved. Individual staff members were very excited to support the project for this reason as well as for the potency of its overall premise and theme. It was also not assumed that because they were using the body, any of the PG artists would necessarily produce anything particularly more provocative than any of the other works in the museum's collection. The stringency of the controls over movement and behaviour, it was explained, were simply standard security protocol. It just happened that this protocol implicitly hampered the free movement of bodies in the space, revealing a seemingly unassail-

able hierarchy when it came to visual art versus performance art. We suspected that exceptions might have been made for performance artists with household names but for now we were told clearly, rules are rules and apparently not even for a queer project could those rules be bent.

This was in stark contrast to other museums in the project. In none of the other museums did nudity raise an eyebrow let alone a problem. Indeed some of the artists were concerned that nudity was so unproblematic, wearily expected even, that it risked being cliché. Instead, the Reina Sofia's restrictions on nudity actually gave it greater significance as it (amazingly) still represented the struggle for liberation of the body, a factor PG artists Silvia Gribaldi, Giorgia Nardin and Bruno Isaković all hoped to exploit in their use of nudity.

The attitude towards interaction with the collection was also at odds with the other participating museums. Curators at the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht, for instance, not only enabled but encouraged such interaction. As a result Jordi Cortés was able to make beautiful use of Laura Lima's modern design classic wheelchairs, opening up the possibility for a confounding, impromptu mid-stair wheelchair duet with PG guest, Remco Slop. Also at the Bonnefanten Alessandro Sciarroni was able to place his laughing teenagers in the aptly warped surreality suggested by Sol LeWitt's mind-bending *Spiral – Walldrawing #801*. This collaborative attitude was also very much alive in Bologna where MAMbo curator Uliana Zanetti felt that the direct dialogue with works in the collection achieved by Juanjo Arques and Cristina Henríquez were amongst the strongest features of the entire project. In even greater contrast, Zagreb's MSU let PG artists and visitors so much freedom to roam that there was in fact a sense of disorientation, with spatial coherence difficult to grab and protection of the performers against intrusive visitors wanting. Back at the Reina Sofia I wondered if we weren't suffering from a slight Goldilocks syndrome in relation to the conditioning powers of control, complaining one museum was 'too much', another was 'too little' and searching frustrated, for the elusive 'just right'.

But perhaps by working in museums we were looking in the wrong places altogether. In a



project aiming to challenge dominant discourses, why chose some of the most established and conventional art institutions in Europe? Why would one want to perform in a place where boobs (and other naked body parts) were trapped and limited to modes of representation while their presence in the actual flesh is still seemingly taboo or deemed offensive? It felt absurd that so many rooms were peopled with such a variety of (mainly female) nudes but yet a real person, in natural splendour, was not welcome. This spoke volumes of the invisibility of dance and performance, and the fear of real bodies and sexualities in mainstream culture. I was drawn to

the irony that Jeff Wall's *Giant*, was displayed in the museum. This photograph, for me, sums up the absurdity of the very collection of which it is a part. The enormous figure of a middle aged woman stands with beautiful simplicity buck naked in the middle of a library. She goes totally unnoticed as readers studiously avoid her. Wall shows that even when totally blatant, a woman's corporeality is still institutionally invisible, shunned in favour of her objectivity. Her actual presence is restricted or, if in plain sight, she is ignored; either way she is negated. Heaped onto the irony mountain is the fact that the Guerilla Girls' famous poster which asked, in 1989 no less, with still relevant exasper-

ation, 'Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?'. Drawing from John Berger's differentiation between nude (representational, objectified, acceptable) and naked (raw, subjective, taboo) I would ask 'Do women have to be nude to get into the Reina Sofia?'. Real nakedness, it seems, is still too much.

So why would we go where we are not wanted? Why too, Pablo seemed to be questioning, would we perform under the flag and in the name of the actual Reina Sofía, a fixture of the Spanish royal family outspoken in her anti-abortion, ant-gay, ultra conservative viewpoints. Why perform in a place policed by security guards with guns, armed to protect not simply the works, staff and visitors from, say, a terrorist attack but also, it sometimes appeared to us, to symbolically preserve the dominant cultural discourses at the same time. Is the museum then itself a giant artistic booby trap? In the war for bodily sovereignty and freedom to critique patriarchal controls over the gaze, the body, sex, gender and sexuality, does the bait of prestige such an institution offers draw in the PG artists only to spring on them a surprise attack of establishment values? Will the imaginative space suddenly snap shut around their ankles, leaving their works maimed and restricted as a result? The ever-increasing occurrence of dance in museums which attained a kind of apogee of trendiness with the opening of The Tanks in London's Tate Modern in 2012, a dedicated performance space in another behemoth of contemporary art suggests perhaps not. Choreographers seem to be understandably champing at the bit to explore the refreshing visual codes and attitudes towards proximity, duration and performativity offered by gallery spaces. Performance artists might be rightly perplexed at what perhaps seems to be a rather tardy jumping on of their band wagon without awareness of the necessary politics. So should dance and movement practitioners be weary of the trend? Is it best to avoid the bastions of artistic establishment?

Not necessarily. As I consider in my article on activism and the Zagreb Creation Week, there is certainly a case that infiltration of the mainstream is a valuable way to subvert it, rather than stamping one's little feet from the side-lines. However, seeing the physical and spatial control and alienation of the PG artists I was reminded of a speech from Lois Kiddens of London's Live

Art Development Agency (LADA) given during PG Zagreb. She spoke about how a principle of LADA is that truly experimental, radical work necessarily needs to remain marginal to make its point. She explained she avoids working with mainstream institutions because it 'blunts the edge' of the work. She wouldn't want the work contained, compromised or, worse still, approved by the institution. I wonder then what she would have made of the Guerilla Girls' work having been subsumed by the Reina Sofia. Had even that been blunted? On the one hand including radical feminism into the museum's canon goes some way to redefining it. Yet on the other, their rhetoric falls a little flat as the work assumes the reifying status of 'iconic' and gains well-meant but possibly misplaced institutional approval. Does this extinguish the fire of dissent? Guerilla tactics involve playing dirty to change the modes viewing and thinking about art so, as Banksy has noted, being hung alongside conventional masters where one is asked to *Exit Through the Giftshop* perhaps smacks of the patriarchy steamrolling dissenters by absorbing them into preexisting conservative and increasingly commercialized specular regimes.

The PG partners I'm sure gave this long, hard consideration when planning the project. They argue that, to some extent, challenges to dominant discourses can be achieved with a pincer action: infiltration of the mainstream is important for gaining visibility and accessing resources and it can be complemented by rather than at odds with critiques of the mainstream from the margins. Laura Kumin even pointed out that since the Reina Sofia was so large and the mechanisms of communication and power so unwieldy, that one of the reasons the museum's Live Art Department were so keen to accept a project like PG in the first place might have been its fleetness of foot, the physical and conceptual nimbleness that characterizes performance over some other more conventional art forms. Once inside we were able to some extent to "fly under the radar" and slip past at least some of the usual regulatory conventions, thereby testing them and introducing a freshness, tension and uncertainty necessary to keep discourses of body, art and institution alive. Italian PG partner Roberto Casarotto is also a firm believer in this, having seen for himself huge art institutions such as the Louvre in Paris and the National Gallery in London develop new strategies for audience engagement as a result of

his Bosch Project which had similarly introduced choreographers unknown to the wider public into their midst.

One idea kept coming back to me as I looked at the work of the PG artists in the peculiarly rich and complex context of the Reina Sofía. An elegant approach to any creative problematic or ambivalence is perhaps suggested by writer and theatre maker Tim Etchells whose strategy is often 'to raise the problem to the level of subject'. In this way any performance *in* a museum setting is perhaps fruitfully thought of as being to some extent *about* the museum setting. This was certainly the case with Pablo's *Gender Travel* which periodically uprooted audiences and transported them between the museum's old Sabatini building and its newer Nouvel part by way of a bridge, where Pablo noted that visitors were effectively floating in a spatial, temporal, performative limbo. Bruno Isaković and Silvia Gribaudi also made use of the way the Reina Sofia had curtailed that their original ideas concerning nudity and proximity with the collection. Bruno chose to rail against these controls in the aptly named 'Sala de Protocolo'. His voice, reading subversive texts, and his naked body, covered in ink-like paint of those words struggled against marginalisation and obscurity, in a room so far from the beaten visitor track that he appeared to be in perverse self-imposed exile. For part of her work Silvia made a short film that likewise made material from her conflicts. Exploiting the only time of day open nakedness was possible, she filmed a series of gloriously free dawn rampages around the museum, celebrating the everyday beauty and gleefulness of being in the buff. She neatly and humorously highlighted the absurdity of being able to show the film of herself openly naked without the possibility of actually being naked herself. She was stuck starkers in catch-22, a literal booby trap. But she wriggled free to tip toe stealthily around the patriarchy and spring an ambush in her own inimitable style, something I think each artist achieved with impressive personal sensitivity.





Process/The Body Builders

MAASTRICHT, 28 SEPTEMBER-5 OCTOBER 2014

I'm pretty sure it's not a co-incidence that when speaking of an artist's output we speak of a 'body of work'. For me this rightly anchors creative enterprise in messy, mutable fleshiness. This connection between pieces of work and the physicalities that produce them is perhaps at its most obvious in dance and performance where the two are inextricably linked. But even when artistic practice results in an object, event or experience outside of the artist's own body, the work's very materiality and affective power is still a manifestation, an off-spring of the artist's subjective corporeality. This is perhaps why on encountering a work we don't just think about it, we in turn experience it physically; we are moved, shaken, touched or struck, our responses are embodied because the work is itself a body of sorts, an extension of the artist's.

The phrase a 'body of work' also lets us imagine works as living art-subjects, vulnerable to change, decay and embroiled, like us, in processes of continual becoming, rather than discrete art-objects. We might consider the *Mona Lisa* a pretty discrete art-object but, seen in this way, even this work's status and physical reality is continuously brought into being by the repetition of behaviours such as exhibiting, viewing, reproducing or selling, behaviours that are dictated by societal forces and environmental factors, changing over time. So like us, a work may breathe, age and wrinkle, it may be perceived as traditional or radical or any number of things depending on the context and

it will be physically affected by those perceptions too. Like us, a body of work may therefore be thought of as subject to a process of continually becoming something, perhaps never to arrive and never to lay claim to an essential, stable self.

It was looking at the works of performance artist Heather Cassils in San Francisco that these thoughts and their connection to Performing Gender became more palpable for me. Cassils' works not only reveal but actually *consist of* the very physical processes of becoming one's sex, gender or sexuality. In *Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture* (2011) she uses time-lapse to chart the crafting of a super muscular physique, gaining 23 pounds of muscle in 23 weeks by following an extreme body building regime. By tracing the process of literally building or constructing her body, she points to the way that societal forces create and shape our body-minds and our feelings of selfhood in the most visceral sense. Specifically, she dramatically transforms her body into a conventionally hyper-male form but yet she remains a woman. Cassils in effect runs with de Beauvoir's assertion that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman', and queers this idea by radically remodelling what could be meant or recognised by the category 'woman' or indeed, 'man'.

In this way Cassils encourages us to consider an artistic work as a form of corporeality and our corporeality as a form of creative process. Re-reading the word 'body' as both an individual's physical being and their artistic corpus, I can see

a favourite quote by Judith Butler in a new light:

I wanted to work out how a norm actually materialises a body, how we might understand the materiality of the body to be not only invested with a norm, but in some sense animated by a norm, or contoured by a norm.

Cassils and Butler remind me that identities are not simply a set of abstract labels or ideas we can slap on like make-up. Nor is the notion of 'performing' an identity about 'putting on' or 'playing' certain roles willy-nilly. Transgender writer Julia Serrano angrily criticises the glib assumption that performing a gender might be as simple as slipping on a wig and a pair of heels, effectively reducing the trans experience to creating a fictional persona with no physical anchor. Instead she asserts 'my gender is a work of non-fiction', meaning that each performative act undertaken is in fact a contribution to a tangible physical reality, the body. Performance is then not pretending *as if* one is somebody else, but creating some-body; fashioning the embodied self as a fabrication but not a falsehood.

PG artist Alessandro Sciarroni tapped into this tension with not a little pathos in *Frankenstein*, his work for PG Maastricht. Recalling Mary Shelley's novel, Alessandro thought of identity as being akin to Frankenstein's Monster, fabricated 'unnaturally' but still formed in living, breathing, sentient flesh. To underline the physical rawness of this and the cruelty that can come with the perceptions of others, Alessandro worked with teenage performers. At a most poignant moment in the process of becoming they struggle, as we all continue to do, to reconcile their rapidly changing bodies with their often fragile sense of identity and self-confidence. Alessandro made this all too physical fragility the material, the stuff and body of his work. The teenagers were given a score of laughing and not laughing, switching between the two seemingly arbitrarily. Individuals were periodically left isolated, unable to get the ever-evasive 'joke' and wondering if they themselves were the butt. Between rolling belly laughs and shaking sniggers, moments of genuine toe-curling awkwardness emerged which generated a deeply affecting choreography of self-consciousness and vulnerability in both au-

dience and performers, speaking volumes about the painful regulating forces of society, our deep seated fear of exclusion and ridicule and our capacity for empathy.

All this is not to say that drag and playing with iconography and image in the realm of performance don't also have, perversely, an authenticity. Perhaps Julia Serrano not is objecting to drag *per se*, but the overlooking of the body-building possibilities of performative acts and dominant discourses, particularly by those in positions of privilege. Flippant appropriation of aspects of marginalised identities by those who have rejected them can be infuriatingly offensive (e.g. a straight, white male appropriating drag aesthetics has the potential to be offensive, while a trans performer appropriating hegemonic masculinity might be legitimately criticising norms). For me however, the slippage of surfaces and meanings, usurping of traditional models of power, the beguiling, serious silliness of 'playing' at gender do all have profound physical effects precisely because of the clash between physical reality and imaginative fantasy. This does not make light of the painfulness and profundity of coming to terms with the paradoxes of embodied identity but rather expresses and enlivens them. One only had to see Jordi Cortés' intensely focused and playful *Whowantsmybody...?* for PG Maastricht to see how seriously he took the absurdity of the clashes and convergences of body and image. Wedging his sturdy, middle-aged frame into heels, figure hugging dress and eventually revealing an itchy-bitsy sequinned thong, he used his extraordinarily cat-like physical articulacy, and more importantly, an intensely subtle engagement of presence to shift through startlingly different forms, genders, sexes, ages, abilities and sexual orientations, taking inspiration from audience members around him. Far from making light of moving between different identities, Jordi gave this process weight, poetry and warmth. Sweating, shaking, crumbling, falling, seducing, searching for connection he shared his very real vulnerability by dint of his sheer physical and performative heft. He perhaps suggests that one is most 'authentic' when being 'fake', that a truth (if such a thing is possible) is best revealed in the clothes of a lie.

Watching Jordi however, I couldn't escape the knowledge that his body, unconventional as



it may be by traditional dance standards, still sings loudly of his years of dance training and practice. The finesse of his gesture, the stamina and profundity of his physical awareness and his earth-rootedness have all been created through repetition and gradual incorporation of various techniques and, yes, the dreaded norms they imply. I think again of Cassils and wonder about my own practice. Perhaps dancing is not as far away from body building as I might like to think. I'm not about to get a spray-on tan, gulp raw eggs for breakfast or pump dumbbells in a bid for bodily perfection any day soon, but I realise that as a dancer with a fairly conventional training, my body, inseparable from my identity, is just as contoured and even distorted by regulatory forces as Cassils'. Where she subverts the norms, I realise I have, to some extent and especially as a child, been passively incorporating them. The dance techniques I've embodied (more or less successfully) re-enforce (more or less convincingly) the norms of aesthetic taste, good practice and acceptable gender and sexual identities. These norms create my body; they create my

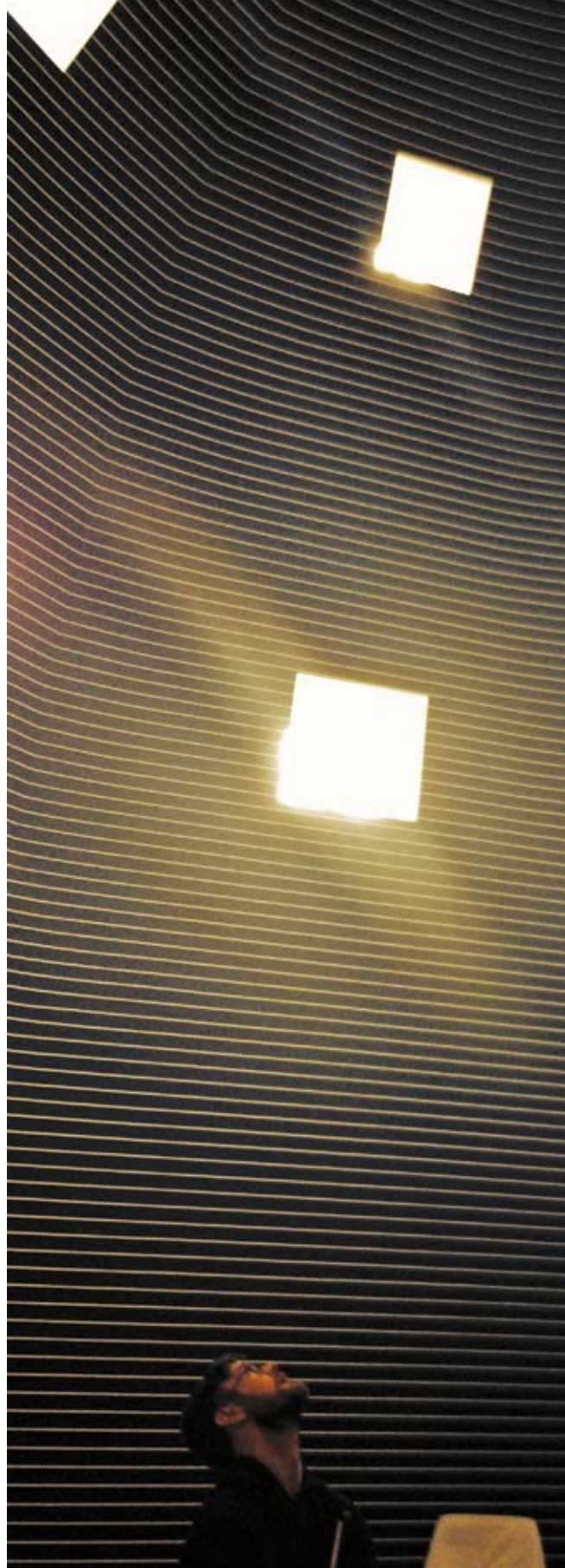
movement. These norms chart the routes of co-ordination through my nerves, shape my fascia, they move me. I love them as I love myself, somewhat ambivalently. These norms for women in dance training are often intrinsically conservative, feminising, desexualising. These norms that move me also make me ill at ease, as if they sit uncomfortably beneath my skin, at odds with the beliefs and desires that pulse through me. I began to suspect that the very training that defines me, also prohibits me from finding a way to physicalise fundamental aspects of my identity. I wondered, can I ever escape this and move differently? Can I re-craft myself? Can I expose the forces that form my body through my body, the very means by which they exist?

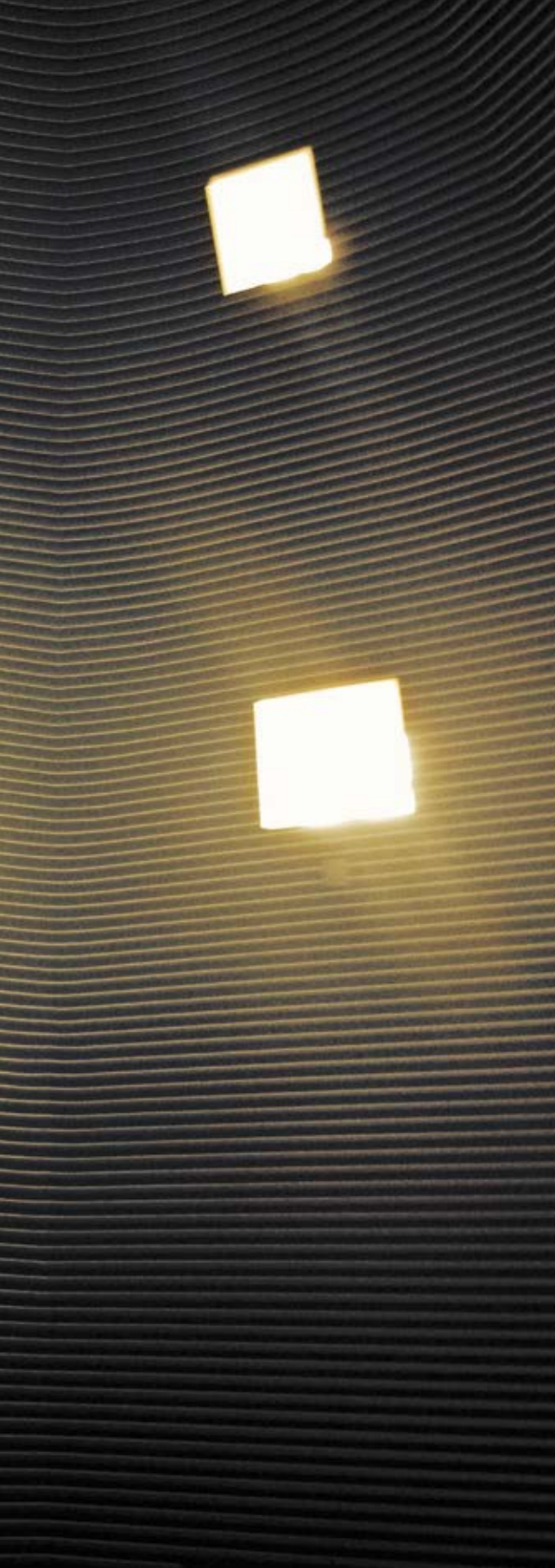
A key aspect of PG offers a fascinating way into these questions: the cross-pollination between visual art and dance. Both participants and partner organisations come from a mixture of visual art and dance backgrounds, with choreographers finding themselves creating for art galleries and visual artists encouraged to be physical. PG then

suggests that by taking the perspective of another discipline, one may find strategies to challenge the norms of one's own practice so entrenched they may seem invisible or 'second nature'. In Maastricht particularly, this approach also meant that the values implicit in the project itself became subject to the same process of scrutiny. Perhaps due to the weighting of participants and partners overall, a more dance-orientated perspective seemed to dominate. But perhaps because we were resident at the Jan Van Eyck Academie (a visual arts rather than a dance institution) and because most of the artists working on the project in this city had a non-dance background, the accepted norms of creative processes in dance were healthily scrutinised.

It was in PG Maastricht then that I could particularly see how dance and visual arts can make explosive but sometimes uneasy bedfellows, tussling and fumbling together under the blanket term 'performance'. For instance, the need for dance studios, physical rehearsal, working with outside eyes, gaining feedback, even the need for the presence of a performer in the work and, crucially for the bodies of and at work, the nature of artistic guidance offered by a workshop leader were all questioned. Here I really noticed that artists with a dance background are generally much more accepting of hierarchies, a notion perhaps not surprising for a discipline which often rests on a regime of diligent bodily imitation as its primary learning model. This means that on one hand dancers are often more willing and able to surrender themselves, physically, to new ways of thinking and doing. However I wondered if it might also mean that, on the other hand, they are too ready to compromise, to accept a place within the existing pecking order of power than to step back and challenge it as visual artists seem more able, if not conditioned to do. It seemed we had much more to learn from each other than I had imagined.

In Maastricht the physical effects of the project's wider organisational politics also came into focus. During a Dutch Dance Dialogues lecture, theorist Mikki Stelder noted that the majority of the participants were white, able-bodied, gay men. She questioned the efficacy of a project seeking to destabilise the dominant discourses when, in her eyes, it perpetuated the prevailing power dynamics in dance, the existing work-body-building re-





gime, if you will. How could this create movement and change? In response, PG partner Daniele Del Pozzo highlighted the dangers of selecting artists for creative enterprises such as this according to dogma. For him, the first concern of the project had to be the quality of the artists not the fulfilment of a tokenistic quota of diversity since such an approach almost always undermines the credibility of the marginalised groups they hope to promote. Despite the genuine complexity and beautiful quality of the work I saw throughout the project, it was true that I did miss experiencing a fuller variety of voices and in particular trans and lesbian physicalities in the project, a pattern frustratingly familiar to me, and of course a product of the dominant discourses in dance.

Having said this however, I can't ignore and fully appreciate that it was Performing Gender itself that posed these questions in my mind and the minds of the participating artists in the first place. Even if such questions remain unresolved, raising them does itself create movement. By participating, the PG artists all explicitly confronted the soma-political regimes at play in the on-going creation and re-creation of their identities and bodies. What norms have moulded them or have they kicked against to become the people they are continuing to become? How are their bodies and identities built over time? What approach to duration, continuity and change might this generate in their work? Alongside such lines of enquiry PG also offers an implicit investigation of the norms affecting modes of artistic practice, programming, performance and the cultural infrastructures that hold and enable them. The project models this itself, creating the working conditions of the artists that form the actual body of work itself. PG is therefore a kind of body builder itself, generating a rich corpus of diverse works. Through it I came to see body-as-work and work-as-body as intimately related ideas, if not two sides of the same coin. Simply summing this up in an echo of de Beauvoir, and claiming the synergy of work, body and identity as the definition of artistic practice, Ecuadorian PG artist Oscar Santillan observed, "You become an artist (they are not born) when you are finally able to connect who you are with what you do", a sentiment at the very heart of the project.



Identity/The Hairy Eyeball

BOLOGNA, 26 OCTOBER-2 NOVEMBER 2014

I'm in an art gallery and someone is checking me out. This is not the kind of thing that usually happens to me. At first I'm incredulous but it's unmistakable, the charming smirk, the slow swagger, the enquiring, furtive glances flashed from under long Mediterranean lashes... at me. Flattered but uneasy, I fumble with my belongings, eyes darting about in search for my own fast disappearing composure. To be honest I'm not sure if I like being looked at this way. There's something a little seedy, a little hard about the scrutiny. But yet the gaze also draws me in, radiating a warmth and charisma that make my surroundings drop away. Maybe I do like it. This thought surprises me, and I'm beginning to feel at something of a loss. I remind myself that this is a performance, that she's probably only playing and so could I, but I'm genuinely confused. I'm self-conscious, I fidget. Unruffled, emboldened even, she draws closer. She is scanning me shamelessly, taking her time, savouring her power. I start to feel a touch invaded. She's definitely giving me the hairy eyeball. It's almost getting embarrassing. Actually, it *is* getting embarrassing, people are staring. I look about me for signs of amused solidarity in the smattering of fellow visitors, but really I'm annoyed at the thought my unease might be visible, might be seeping out of me despite my best efforts.

But why is all this getting under my skin? Drag? Great. Audience interaction? Fine. What then is making me so edgy? I realise here there's some-

thing that doesn't quite fit. The figure approaching me is slick-haired and sharp-suited as a smooth-tongued lothario, but yet there is no attempt to actually pass as a man. She's macho but yet reads as womanly, skin-pricklingly pervy but yet soft and decidedly feminine. This is a drag that obviously points to its own incompleteness; the illusion is half done, half undone and then paradoxically seems to touch on something very real. My desire-o-meter and gay-dar, wayward at the best of times, flicker and fail me. I can't tell what is 'real' and what is being 'played', I can't point to a stable reading of her gender or her desire. And, alarmingly, I no longer seem able to pin down my own. She makes me feel oddly girlish, a sensation I'm not used to. Surely this can't be caused by something as superficial as assuming the stereotypical codes of machismo? Would I really fall for such a cheap trick? I'm aware that she is still more feminine than me anyway. Or is she? I'm not sure. The codes are only half employed, obscured, teased at. With no small amount of surprise and resistance, I share this ambivalence, even begin to wonder if I'm not slightly enjoying being accosted, something that usually makes me unspeakably furious. Under her gaze I am gently losing grasp of my own gender bearings, she is sexually *dis-orientating* me.

"Ciao" she nods, confidently snaking her way over. She begins looking at me closer, making a little whispered conversation. When she calls me "bella" a mildly mortifying, too-loud gaffaw escapes me. She is joking, surely, pulling my leg. But just

as I think I understand the game and relax, she wrong foots me. "How much?" she asks. I squirm. I wonder what she wants to buy, although I think I know. She is propositioning me. Just like that. She wants to buy *me*. And, for a millisecond, I actually consider what price I would put on myself. I flush with... what, shame? excitement? rage? I evade and dodge her question, I try to keep my cool and play along. But she can see I am actually thinking about it, I imagine myself a prostitute. I am insulted, amused. "It is absurd! It is ironic!", I tell myself, but is it? For a moment, as she caresses me, I am forced to rub up against my own prejudices and I recoil slightly. Am I so judgmental? Am I really so up tight? Seeing I reached some kind of limit and perceiving me interactive small-fry, she begins to unhook me and slip me back into the pool of gallery visitors. But before casting her eyes about for a bigger fish, perhaps one willing to risk a little more, she *pays* me for our interaction. With slow relish and evident pride, she slides an elegant hand down inside the front of her trousers and produces from the bulge waiting for me there, a plastic wrapped, warm and slightly squashed Magdalena cake.

This is Cristina Henríquez' *Maria Magdalena. Autorretrato* which was performed over a duration of several hours at Bologna's Museo d'Arte Moderna (MAMbo) alongside the works of Juanjo Arques, Riccardo Buscarini and Vlasta Delimar for Performing Gender. As I gingerly nibble on my prize I ruminate on the supposed repentant prostitute Mary Magdalene and remembrances of the writings of gender theorist Judith Butler. Butler's ideas positively ripple out from the two words of this project's title. *Performing Gender*. Impossible to hear without thinking of Butler's game changing debunking of the oft-perceived naturalness and connectedness of sex, gender and sexuality. Butler reframes these aspects of identity as continuously created, recreated and embodied by repeated stylised performative acts regulated by societal norms. She writes famously in *Gender Trouble*, 'Gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself.'

On reading Butler, we see how when 'doing' or creating our sex, gender and sexual orientations through repeated, everyday enactments of our identities, it is through the mesh of norms, ste-

reotypes, taboos and practices of the dominant discourses. Moving through MAMbo I come across the figure of Riccardo Buscarini in his work for PG Bologna, *Blur*. His subversively delicate, subtly camp and seductive male dancing body tugs at, languishes and rages beneath just such a net of patriarchal, hetero-normative prejudice and control. Caught cruelly in a giant fishing net spread across the gallery space he is, as we all are, unable to slip though the warp and weft of societal mores because of his own frail and animalistic corporeality.

It is tempting to become preoccupied with these monumental societal forces and with how they form, create or 'do' our identities. However it is equally important to think about how our identities are also 'undone', and here I return to the power of the hairy eyeball. Like Cristina, Riccardo commands the entire space with his look. Free of theatre convention and within touching distance, he too gives me the hairy eyeball; he looks at me, we look at each other. It is a gaze shot though downcast lashes, flashed sideways or held with a seething squint. I am scrutinised, serenaded, seduced or rejected, appealed to, made doubtful, uneasy, I see and feel myself, my maleness my femaleness and my desire differently through his eyes and vice versa. In this way we might more easily grasp the seemingly overpowering, invisible societal mechanisms that create our sense of selfhood. Instead of focusing on vast and intangible forces when we think about identity, we can think about the simple power of eye contact between two people. It is through this mirrored gaze that our sense of self is disrupted, unravelled and we see how relative and how precarious our identities really are.

This basic interpersonal focus is an approach to sex, gender and sexuality proposed by workshop leader and PG partner Peggy Olislaegers. During the initial research week in Bologna she asked the PG artists to question whether their identities could ever exist in a vacuum and to consider how they were formed and re-formed under the reciprocal gaze of an 'other'. I am reminded again of Butler, who writes in *Undoing Gender*:

*Let's face it. We're undone by each other.
And if we're not, we're
missing something. If this seems so clearly
the case with grief, it is only because it was*

already the case with desire. One does not always stay intact. It may be that one wants to, or does, but it may also be that despite one's best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel. And so when we speak about my sexuality or my gender, as we do (and as we must), we mean something complicated by it. Neither of these is precisely a possession, but both are to be understood as modes of being dispossessed, ways of being for another, or, indeed, by virtue of another.

This is precisely what occurred to me in a playful way in Cristina's presence but what I know to be gloriously and disastrously true of my 'real' life. Any hard-won sense of a recognisable self botched together soon unravels, wobbles or even collapses entirely through the desire and grief we feel for and with others. Clearly Cristina is also making a smart comment on power dynamics between spectators and performers, men and women, sex workers and their clients, consumers and products. She shoots an objectifying male gaze from a woman's eyes and surveys the resulting havoc she wreaks on the museum visitors. (It was amusingly satisfying to see her ballsily swaggering up to a suave, middle aged man, look him up and down and ask him "how much?") But more fundamentally however, it was moving to see her tapping into what I think Butler might be talking about, the undoing of our partial, teetering and mutable self-knowledge through seeing and being seen by another.

This is perhaps a view of identity that Croatian PG artist Vlasta Delimar might well argue with. Her recent retrospective in Zagreb's Museum of Modern Art, *This is I* at first seems a defiant stance against a decentralised, relative self. Likewise, her work for PG Bologna was a text installed in the pool of water between Cassero and MAMbo proclaiming *lo sono/lo sono una persona/lo sono una buona persona* (I am/I am a person/I am a good person). Vlasta is an outspoken individual who, resisting feminist and theory-driven interpretations of her work, maintains with a shrug and quietly steely gaze that one is simply oneself. However despite this, Vlasta's work also charts how a sense of groundedness and personal coherence is not necessarily at odds with how we are shaped

and affected by other people over time. The impact of creative and personal relationships feature strongly in her work and self-portraits are a mainstay that map continuity and change across her body and especially her face over her 35 years of making art. Interestingly too, part of *lo sono...* is the invitation to speak with Vlasta eyeball to eyeball. During the performance she lingered on the bridge above her installation discussing ideas or simply shooting the breeze with whoever came along, as if her titular proclamation of selfhood is in fact subject to dialogue and questioning after all.

I move around MAMbo, looking at the visitors and being looked at in return. I drift between one work and the other and I am struck not only by the way in which the gaze of the other holds, defines and essentially destroys the self we think we are, but also how this happens differently with each person we encounter. The hairy eyeball then recalls the 'pelo nell'uovo', literally 'the hair in the egg' which means to 'split hairs' or to 'pick holes' in something. The phrase was the theme of the Gender Bender festival during PG Research Week and so became a focus, metaphor and a possible methodology for the project. We picked at, questioned and zoomed in on the cracks and discontinuities in each of us, on our peculiarities and endlessly curious 'suchness'. Striking for me however is to take this attention to the reciprocal 'undoing' of sex, gender and sexuality occurring through the exchanges of glances around the museum. I tune into the quality and texture of each performer's gaze, to each unique invitation to be seen. I become a different me as each performer looks at me differently, relates to me differently, moves and behaves differently depending on the feel of my presence and the decisions I make. I see people around me differently too, I wonder if they are affected, whether the hours at the museum have loosened the fetters and binds of identity and allowed, even if just for a moment, a greater sense of playfulness, uncertainty and dynamism in who we feel we are. I wonder too if this is perhaps why I have always loved performance in the first place, as a welcome raft upon which to ride the waves of the sometimes perilous waves of human inter-subjectivity.

WORKS



FACETS

BY CECILIA MOISIO

FIRST PERFORMED ON 17 MAY 2014 IN MSU ZAGREB
MADE POSSIBLE BY DOMINO AND QUEER ZAGREB

A woman delves into different characters of her persona in one contained space. She shows us images of who she would like to be and the sides she keeps hidden. A magnified look into the associative thought process of a woman and the stereotypes she lives by.

Cecilia Moisio (Finland 1978), dancer and choreographer living in the Netherlands, graduated from the Theatreschool of Amsterdam in 2001 and performed as one of the main dancers at Dansgroep Krisztina de Châtel (NL) and WArD/waRD - Ann van den Broek (BE). In her own works she investigates the psychology of humans and puts this into perspective of different phenomenon within our society. She was nominated in 2007 and 2008 for her roles in works by Ann van den Broek for the VSCD-prize for the most outstanding dance achievement of the season. In 2014 she is the winner of the Prize of the Dutch Dance Festival in Maastricht as an upcoming choreographer.

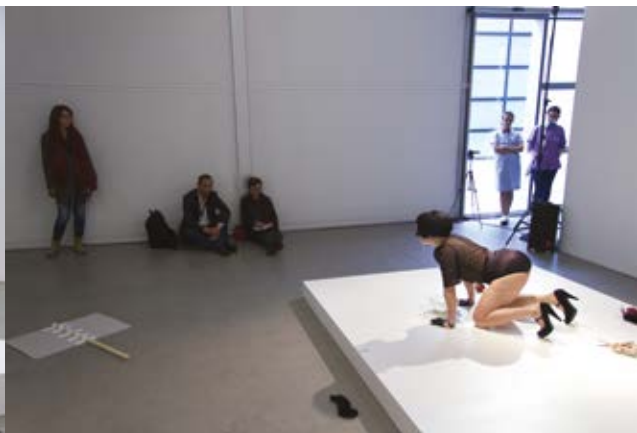
ceciliamoisio.com

It's very confusing sometimes. There are so many different types of women and as a person I feel so physically different at different moments. I totally feel like a man sometimes and a totally chi-chi female sometimes, but mostly growing up I felt like I was more masculine. I don't know, people will probably say, 'Oh, you don't look masculine', but I feel more masculine than other women around me and I feel even more powerful than some men around me. So for me it's interesting to search into that, into the physicality also. What does that mean? Can you be masculine and feminine at the same time? Why can't you just be yourself? Of course, people are put into boxes so easily and of course with gender it's a huge box.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, JUNE 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









CUERPO-TRAPO

BY POLIANA LIMA

FIRST PERFORMED ON 17 MAY 2014 IN MSU ZAGREB
MADE POSSIBLE BY DOMINO AND QUEER ZAGREB

A discussion of (in)visibility and its relation to gender, social class and immigration, brought into the museum. On the surface everything seems homogenous, but what happens when we get closer and deeper? What's behind a uniform society? Where can we find intimacy?

Poliana Lima is graduated in Sociology at the University of Campinas (Brasil) and trained as a dancer in several dance companies of San Paulo. In Madrid she took part in the project Rizoma of the company Projects in Movement de Sharon Fridman and carried out her own creations: the solo Mujer-experimento#1 and the solo Palo en la rueda. With Ugne Dievaityte created Es como ver nubes, winner of the audience prize, a residency and the Tutoring Project Prize in the XXVI Certamen Coreográfico de Madrid. Atavico, her last piece, won the first Prize in the XVIII Certamen Coreográfico de Madrid, beside the audience prize and critics prize.

When I think about domestic maids it is not conceived as work, it's like the home space is her body. The house is her body, she is the house. Of course now there are less women who are staying at home but what we have is a double day of work where they go to work and then come home to do housework. But this private sphere that we don't see, for me is important and also to play with it as a performance.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, JUNE 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









DARWIN

BY JAN MARTENS

IN COLLABORATION WITH BRUNO ISAKOVIC
FIRST PERFORMED ON 17 MAY 2014 IN MSU ZAGREB
MADE POSSIBLE BY DOMINO AND QUEER ZAGREB

A five hour evolution of acrobatic and slow executed movements that consists of two parts, each with a simple task. In *Mouth To Mouth* the two keep their mouths connected throughout their travel through the museum. In *Eye To Eye* the outside world is disappearing as two naked bodies are locked in each other's gaze.

*Jan Martens studied at the Fontys dance academy in Tilburg and graduated at the Artesis Conservatory for Dance in Antwerp in 2006. He performed in the work of amongst others: Koen De Preter, United-C, Mor Shani and Ann Van den Broek. In 2009 he started to develop his own choreographic work. In a short time his work received critical and popular acclaim which resulted in a growing number of shows performed mainly in the Netherlands and Belgium. In 2012-2013 he created the solos *Bis* for Truus Bronkhorst, *La Bete* for Joke Emmers and Victor, a duet for a boy and a man together with Peter Seynaeve. In 2013-2014 he is artist in residence at the International Choreographic Arts Centre ICK Amsterdam and supported by DansBrabant and Frascati.*
www.janmartens.com

What is queer art? Or what is gender? What is gender art? It's very wide. So yes, I think people could miss out the gender link and I think that's fine as well but I think more richness comes if you can see it too... For example one idea I had for a solo, that I don't know which form it will take yet, will be something very tense based on the work by Petr Štembera who did Exercises of the Will and Body (part of the MSU collection) which were ten normal yoga poses that he kept as long as he could. Like there is this one – Jan tips his head back – to clear the throat, but to sit there for hours and hours it does something to you. And it has nothing to do with gender for him but for me I link it to that idea of the tension that you feel as a not-out person, the pressure that you feel. I find it a very beautiful link somehow.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, JUNE 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









INNER LIGHT

BY SINIŠA LABROVIĆ

FIRST PERFORMED ON 17 MAY 2014 IN MSU ZAGREB
MADE POSSIBLE BY DOMINO AND QUEER ZAGREB

First part: a man stands in front of the audience, unzip his pants and starts to take out a meter, periodically announcing the time and length of the meter. On top of a white sheet of the paper, a writing: *History of my cock*. Second part: a man dressed and painted as a woman. On the floor, between his legs, on heels, a mirror. Under his dress, a flashlight. The audience who look in the mirror, see the light. Sometimes reality is not simple and visible: it blinds, instead of revealing.

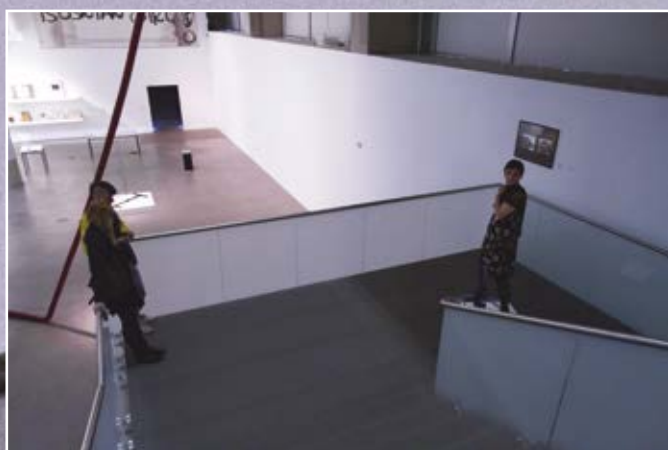
Siniša Labrović was born in 1965. In 1997 he graduated Croatian literature and language in Zagreb. He started to be involved in visual arts in 2000. He has exhibited all over Croatia and abroad. In 2005 he attracted the attention of world media with his work Flock.org in which sheep were the contestants in a reality show. In 2012 he represented Croatia on 13th Venice Architecture Biennale, titled Common Ground, together with Pula Group, Hrvošlava Brkušić, Igor Bezinović and Boris Cvjetanović. Siniša Labrović is a freelance artist who lives in Zagreb.

www.labrovic.com

Even if I am heterosexual, I believe every human being is always himself and even something more. So what is that something more? You know, what lies down there? This project allows me to confront this kind of combination of fears, fantasies, not... desires but maybe just questions: What is in that cloud of differences? How should I be if I perform like someone else? Who am I becoming? And I like exploring new things, to face my fears, my expectations and to reject a final definition of me. I mean everybody has this kind of 'spine' psychologically which goes along day by day and then sometimes it's nice to move, to dance with that spine, to not be just straight and rigid. It's also nice to be like a wave, to dance like a wave.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, JUNE 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









CELEBRATION

BY GIORGIA NARDIN

IN COLLABORATION WITH OLIVIA JACQUET
FIRST PERFORMED ON 18 AND 19 JULY 2014
IN MUSEO REINA SOFIA, MADRID
MADE POSSIBLE BY PASO A 2

A reflection on the first impressions about Olivia, a 30-year-old woman with tattoos all over her body. What information do we register the first time we see someone? What are the connotations, associations, opinions and judgements based on what we see? A celebration of "different" bodies and the stories they tell.

Born in Venice in 1988, Giorgia Nardin began her ballet training at a very young age, before studying for three years at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds (UK). Her first solo Dolly was finalist at the GD 'A Prize 2012 and was selected to be performed as part of the DNA/RomaEuropa Festival 2012. DOLLY was also selected to be performed as part of the Italian Showcase in the Dance Base Fringe Festival – Edinburgh 2013. All dressed up with nowhere to go, her first piece for two performers, is the winner of Premio Prospettiva Danza 2013, is selected to be presented in the NID Platform 2014 and in Aerowaves 2015. It is currently presented in national and international festivals.
www.giorgianardin.com

I've been used for a long time to work on my own body, which I find interesting and just as valuable, but I think to work on other people allows me to really see the work from outside, to really see it from a different perspective whereas when I work on my own body it's more about the feeling that I have and my internal process. So to see it on other people, on other bodies allows me to take some distance from my own feeling and my own practice and somehow to translate it somewhere else.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, JUNE 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









GENDER TRAVEL

BY PABLO ESBERT LILIENFELD

FIRST PERFORMED ON 18 AND 19 JULY 2014
IN MUSEO REINA SOFIA, MADRID
MADE POSSIBLE BY PASO A 2

A simple premise: identity as a transitory place. Identity as territory (its borders, sovereignty and administration of power) and identity as transition (the border-likeness and the unstable). Within this framework, gender identity and sexual orientation are the material for a debate involving the body and action as a reference point. A “theatrical” presence of movement, sound actions, and conversations.

Pablo Esbert was born in Madrid. His work from 2011, EDIT, was the only spanish work selected in 2012 by Aerowaves, a cross-border dance performance network offering opportunities to younger artists working in Europe. His 2013 piece, Eject, was made with the support from PACT Zollverein (Essen), La Caldera (Barcelona) and Espacio en Blanco (Madrid). Pablo develops his musical creativity composing almost all the music for his pieces and videos and working as a musician. As an interpreter he has worked for the companies Alias (Geneva), Philippe Saire (Lausanne) and Christoph Winkler (Berlin).

www.pabloesbertlilienfeld.com

I believe, and I use the word believe, that in the body there is the possibility for being. Not being for, or being according to, or being in relation to. Of course this happens before language and so it's very difficult to talk about.

So then when I say I'm interested in objectivity in the body I mean spirituality, I mean a common thing, a very strong sense of collectivity and I'm interested in that because I think that working with or through the body doesn't necessarily mean that we cannot think about it. All these separations we create when we talk, because we need to create separation by logic, diminish and shrink this sense of collectivity. And that's what I'm searching for.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, NOVEMBER 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









ALBOOM!!!

BY SILVIA GRIBAUDI

FIRST PERFORMED ON 18 AND 19 JULY 2014
IN MUSEO REINA SOFIA, MADRID
MADE POSSIBLE BY PASO A 2

From the natural state of a girl or boy's body, relatively free from gender references, and in a white space, the artist creates a place using different dolls and toys to invite to play, at the same time putting forward a dialogue on gender and its patterns. An installation presented as a space of open play for children visiting the museum.

Choreographer and performer from Turin, Italy. Winner of both the Audience Award and the Jury Award at the GD'A Veneto 2009, shortlisted in 2010 for Aerowaves Dance Across Europe, finalist of the Premio Equilibrio 2013, Silvia Gribaudi participated in national and international festivals, among which the Biennale di Venezia Ground 0 in 2009 and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2012. In 2012 she collaborated with Israeli choreographer Sharon Fridman and she started projects of Art in Action on human rights with Anna Piratti. She is the leader of several workshops in Italy and abroad. In 2010, with Compagnia Aldes, she is a performer with Compagnia Aldes in the Italian TV programme VIENI VIA CON ME (Rai 3) with Roberto Saviano and Fabio Fazio
www.silviagribaudi.com

I am a clown I think, that's it. I think my spirit like this anyway, and also I believe that this is part of dance, to be a clown. Clowning is not only with the red nose but it's really to transform something. The clown wants to transform a bad situation into something that is possible. The clown tries always to stay in a bad situation well. And people start to laugh but actually it's a big drama because inside there are difficulties but to play with the difficulties is very interesting as a training and a training for making a dance. I love to put my presence, or the presence of the performer in a situation which creates empathy, where you don't know anything, where really you are lost.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, NOVEMBER 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









GUERNICA 2014

BY BRUNO ISAKOVIC

FIRST PERFORMED ON 18 AND 19 JULY 2014
IN MUSEO REINA SOFIA, MADRID
MADE POSSIBLE BY PASO A 2

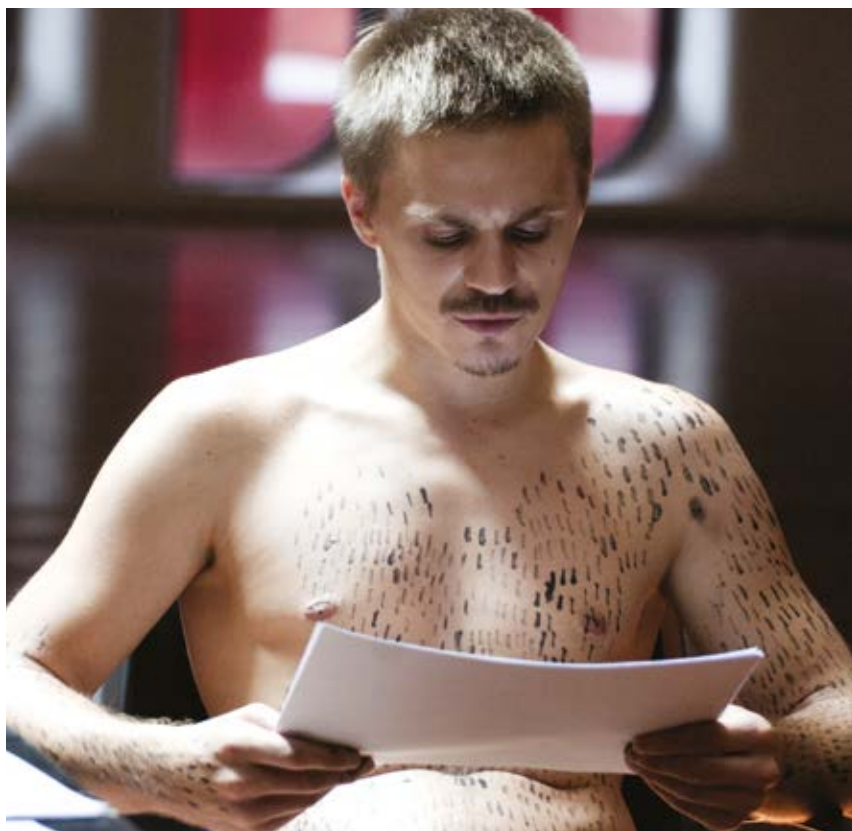
The focus is on the potent factors that make up our lives and the paths we take – gender, sexuality, love, desires – and the translation of this process of transformation that continues throughout life, via the naked body and its multiple meanings. How have we come to formulate our desires? What has been our starting point and what have we picked up along the way?

Bruno Isaković graduated with a degree in contemporary dance from Amsterdam School of the Arts in 2009. In 2010, he returned to Croatia to continue his intense activities in the field of dance art, and in September 2011 became a member of Contemporary Dance Studio. He works with different choreographers, creates his own performances, and holds dance workshops. Isaković has received various prestigious scholarships, as well as the following awards: Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Deinst – Stipendienurkunde (2010) and Jury Award and Best Solo Dance at Solo Dance International Festival in Budapest.

These traces of blackness, they're like the traces of subconsciousness that come out of you, like they're already on your body actually, you don't need to dig so much here, they already exists somehow. I was now going around the Reina taking photos, searching for this blackness coming out of the corners of things that nobody pays attention to around the building. I was trying to find shadows, there's one hole full of some kind of wires... things we put aside. It says something of what is important for us, how much attention we give to something.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, NOVEMBER 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









**I TRUST IN THIS LIFE WE WILL HAVE
ANOTHER MOMENT ALONE**
BY CONNOR SCHUMACHER

FIRST PERFORMED ON 3 AND 4 OCTOBER 2014 IN BON-
NEFANTEN MUSEUM, MAASTRICHT
MADE POSSIBLE BY THE DUTCH DANCE FESTIVAL

Stepping back to look at diversity platforms, the work attempts to question the ways we approach an other's identity. Will analyzing our identities divide us in the same way as the instinctive fear of the unknown has?

Connor Schumacher is currently an artist in development at Dansateliers in Rotterdam. He comes from a conservative, religious, homeschool America and grew up as a gymnast. He first started dancing at Purchase College Conservatory of Dance in New York where he studied composition and performance. In 2012 he began making his own performances and with the support of Dansateliers, he has begun to develop his own sense of theatrical language through an approach of formlessness in the process.

www.connorschumacher.com

Coming from a kind of a passive aggressive upbringing where you don't really want to hurt anybody's feelings but you want to have strong beliefs, and being a gay kid in this conservative, religious setting, I learned to be aware of the things that were being said and how to balance them in my actions or comments or how I interact with other people. I think that that built a strong emotional sensor [...] I think that leads to being able to balance works in a very vulnerable place for audiences: I am going to be polite to them, but I am going to talk about something that might make them uncomfortable. Also for them to know that I'm just as nervous as they are, because, for the life of me, I cannot abandon the opinions of everybody sitting around me. I wish I could.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, MARCH 2014
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









FRANKENSTEIN

BY ALESSANDRO SCIARRONI

FIRST PERFORMED ON 3 AND 4 OCTOBER 2014
IN BONNEFANTEN MUSEUM, MAASTRICHT
MADE POSSIBLE BY THE DUTCH DANCE FESTIVAL

A monster is only a monster if he is defined by others as a monster. It is only then that he realises that he is different. An inspiration coming from Mary Shelley and her book *Frankenstein*.

Alessandro Sciarroni is a performer, choreographer and director with a background in visual arts and many years of theatre practice. His works have been presented in 21 European countries, as part of dance and contemporary theatre festivals. From 2012 he started creating long-running shows that merge languages from contemporary dance and performance art. From 2013, shows from the trilogy Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow? have been invited to acclaimed European Festivals as Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels and Festival d'Automne in Paris. He has been chosen as the first Italian artist supported by Modul-Dance, a multi-annual cooperation project set by 19 European dance houses.
www.alessandrosciarroni.it

My work is always about this, about the idea of the monster. There always must be something that is nearly weird that I point the focus on. It can be a person, it can be something strange you have in your body, it can be just a strange practice that you have in your body, like the fact that you don't only do the practice once a day but you do it thousands and thousands of times and you just do it because you cannot avoid doing it. I think it's very beautiful, I find it very... aristocratic and not because there is elegance, it's not about this. It's about the fact that somewhere in your brain, in your heart, in your body you already digested that there is something strange and painful and you didn't die from it. So then if you don't die you're an aristocrat, see what I mean? You already suffered.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, MARCH 2014
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









THE INTRUDER

BY OSCAR SANTILLAN

FIRST PERFORMED ON 3 AND 4 OCTOBER 2014
IN BONNEFANTEN MUSEUM, MAASTRICHT
MADE POSSIBLE BY THE DUTCH DANCE FESTIVAL

The artist confronts the historic enterprises of European explorers by travelling to the highest point in Holland, stealing its very tip, and bringing it to the museum. The performance explores the disparities between European and Latin American histories, and investigates the traditional male role and the epic claims that proliferated in the accounts of those travellers.

Oscar Santillan (Ecuador, 1980) insinuates in his work the existence of a territory where fact and fiction are exchangeable. Unexpected events occur there, the beat of drums synchronizes to the sweat of a person, the unrealized desire of a dead person is fulfilled, a cloud is physically captured in a marble container. Santillan received a Sculpture MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University - VCU (US), and attended residencies at the Delfina Foundation (UK), Jan van Eyck (NL), Fondazione Ratti (IT), and Seven Below (US). His work has been displayed at Museo de Arte 'Carrillo Gil' (MX), Nest (NL), STUK (BE), Havana Biennial (CU), The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art - SECCA (US), Copperfield (UK), among other venues.

www.oscarsantillan.com

For me the question of efficiency is a very ethical question. For example the time that you ask someone to look at something you've done, or something that you're doing, a performance or any kind of artwork for me that's an ethical question. I want to make sure I'm asking only for the right amount. I don't want to take one more minute, I don't want to take thirty more seconds than it needs. I try to be as consistent as possible, as poetically efficient as possible. In a way I feel guilty. Maybe in a way I wouldn't ever be a good performer like my peers here because I feel guilty about asking for too much time. I'm always unsure about if something is taking just too long. I'm always worried in a way and maybe a good performer does the opposite, doesn't worry much about it.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, MARCH 2014
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









WHOWANTSMYBODY...?

BY JORDI CORTÉS

FIRST PERFORMED ON 3 AND 4 OCTOBER 2014
IN BONNEFANTEN MUSEUM, MAASTRICHT
MADE POSSIBLE BY THE DUTCH DANCE FESTIVAL

Like all of us, the artist carries around a multitude of experiences and fragments of stories that show hundreds of different sides to him. Meanwhile, amidst all the diversity, he tries to keep going and be himself.

Trained as a dancer at the Institut del Teatre de Barcelona, Jordi Cortés has been hired as performer and choreographer all over Europe, Asia, America and Oceania. He has been charter member of the companies Lanónima Imperial and Heightened Reality London. He has taken part in different laboratory projects and has collaborated in several workshop and residences for dancers & choreographers in the US, Great Britain, Holland, Sweden, New Zealand, Brazil, Italy, Slovenia, Germany. His task as a teacher has been developed in schools and dance centres all over the world. In the last years he has directed or created several pieces, also working with artists with different disabilities-habilities, and he has been involved more and more in film making.

I try to feed my curiosity all the time and to experience things like babies do. I've been working the last few months with babies and children and before they start having all these rules and restrictions from parents or school, they are curious by nature. I love that. I combine working with disabled people and kids and it's fantastic because the kids go straight to play by asking the disabled people, 'Where is your leg? Why are your legs so thin? Why are you in this funny chair? Can I go in it with you?' It's very refreshing and honest and everybody learns in that situation. They are not afraid, but later they probably will be and I wonder very deeply, why on earth we have cultivated for thousands of years this fear and ignorance in people.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, MARCH 2014
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









BLUR

BY RICCARDO BUSCARINI

FIRST PERFORMED ON 30, 31 OCTOBER AND 1
NOVEMBER 2014 IN MAMBO – MUSEO D'ARTE MODERNA
DI BOLOGNA

MADE POSSIBLE BY GENDER BENDER FESTIVAL AND
CASSERO LGBT CENTER

A sense of uncertainty and ambiguity, transmitted by an artist who had never reflected on his gender identity or sexual orientation through his work. The result is a meditative space, undefined, where gender is the echo of a chimera which fluctuates in the shadows.

An Italian dancer and choreographer based in London, Riccardo Buscarini trained at Accademia Domenichino da Piacenza and graduated at the London Contemporary Dance School in 2009. He has won The Place Prize for Dance 2013, sponsored by Bloomberg with the piece Athletes. From December 2011, he has been a Choreography and Performance lecturer at Birkbeck University of London. He has founded the contemporary dance/rock band The Plusies with Runa Kaiser. He has presented his own works in theatres, urban spaces and art galleries in Belgium, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and UK. He is also a improvisation and composition workshop leader and he has taught masterclasses in Italy, UK, Russia.

www.riccardobuscarini.com

Just because I was sure, it doesn't mean that I will be sure in the future and I kind of like this ambiguity. I think I can know, I can explore only what I am now. And also there is something very interesting in not knowing really what your gender or sexuality is and not having any issue and not questioning. It's very interesting, the absence of questioning. It's like, 'I don't want to have a category. It's just me.' It's very beautiful. It's very fascinating for me. I think it can get close to ambiguity as well, in not knowing, not being a fixed thing. It's a very stimulating state.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, OCTOBER 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









MARIA MAGDALENA. AUTORRETRATO
BY CRISTINA HENRÍQUEZ

FIRST PERFORMED ON 30, 31 OCTOBER AND 1
NOVEMBER 2014 IN MAMBO – MUSEO D'ARTE MODERNA
DI BOLOGNA

MADE POSSIBLE BY GENDER BENDER FESTIVAL AND
CASSERO LGBT CENTER

The ancestral prostitute, the biblical prostitute, the anonymous prostitute and the prostitute who lives within her. What the artist suggests, is a meeting with all of them. Having absorbed the imaginary of the commercial sexual messages in her neighbourhood, the artist offers the public her first approach to sexual commerce.

Cristina Henríquez is a spanish choreographer, performer and teacher, based in Madrid. Trained as a dancer in classical and contemporary dance, holds a degree in Art History and studies Dance Education. She has performed for diverse creators like Simone Forti, Antonia Baehr and Alias Cie and from 2003 she centers her personal work in SOMOSDANZA company, where she creates focusing in identity, culture as a legacy and creation of contexts.
somosdanza.com

Sometimes I think that what I'm really doing is looking for people to love me. Once I read this about a clown, that a clown always wants the other to love him or her. Maybe sometimes this could be a critique for me because one of my challenges would be to swim into the deepness. Well, maybe depth is not opposed to humour, but it's something that I have to be aware of because for me it's easy to break and smile and find a situation that is... brillante, shiny, funny. I think it's part of my character [...] I think when you are close to death for instance, suddenly a happy thing can appear. Well, maybe death is a bit extreme but always in extreme situations you can find another that is stupid. I think it happens to everyone. But humour for me is to reveal something that is there but maybe the average person doesn't see. I just underline it.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, OCTOBER 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









ESTRENO ABSOLUTO

BY JUANJO ARQUES

FIRST PERFORMED ON 30, 31 OCTOBER AND 1
NOVEMBER IN MAMBO – MUSEO D'ARTE MODERNA DI
BOLOGNA

MADE POSSIBLE BY GENDER BENDER FESTIVAL AND
CASSERO LGBT CENTER

The research process of a new identity, an ambiguous vision between masculine and feminine. A choreographic experiment on the limitations of movement from the point of view of a disabled person. A window on transsexualism and disability in the context of the museum: Arte Povera as a metaphor for transformation.

Juanjo Arques has trained as a dancer in his hometown of Murcia, before moving to Madrid, London and finally settling in Amsterdam at the Dutch National Ballet as a second soloist. His extensive career enabled him to work closely with such choreographers as Van Manen, Van Dantzig, Forsythe, Makarova, Wheeldon, Pastor, Morris, Deane, Corder, Ratmanský, and Dawson. Alongside his dancing career, Arques is a gifted choreographer working with modern language fueled by a desire to communicate thought-provoking material.

www.juanjoarques.com

I am really surprised about everything that I'm learning here, especially with the transgender people. I was, I don't like to say congratulating people, but I told one guy, 'I feel bad if I am congratulating you for your transition, I don't know how you feel about it, but for me you wanted to become a man and you are a man now, for me I didn't doubt it, I didn't even think about you being a woman before.' I was like, 'Wow!' and that's why I like to be involved with this project because I learn and I get a lot of information and I can adapt and I can take some back... Perhaps for my new commission in Seattle I will work with gender because I have a small group, a small company and it seems that I have more time to have a real process.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, OCTOBER 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)









**IO SONO / IO SONO UNA PERSONA /
IO SONO UNA BUONA PERSONA**
BY VLASTA DELIMAR

FIRST PERFORMED ON 30, 31 OCTOBER AND 1
NOVEMBER IN MAMBO - MUSEO D'ARTE MODERNA DI
BOLOGNA

MADE POSSIBLE BY GENDER BENDER FESTIVAL AND
CASSERO LGBT CENTER

A work made up of elementary words, to underline the importance of individuality and the rejection of all identification, whether it be from ideology, the state, politics or religion that tries to define our identity. An elementary thought immersed in water: water as an element of re-birth, self-responsibility and responsibility for the community.

Vlasta Delimar was born in Zagreb and graduated from The School of Applied Arts. Studied history of art and ethnology. Membership at Croatian Association of Artists and Croatian Freelance Artists Association. She is an Art Manager of the Art organization My Land, Štaglinec. She does not support identification or belonging to any ideology, political way or religion. She supports human rights, freedom of individuality, respect difference and ecology.

Yesterday one guy at MIT [Transsexual Identity Movement] said something very good. It's a very good Italian word 'casino' or we have in Croatian 'kazino': a mess. You know at one moment you don't know who is who. [...] I always said, 'I am Vlasta. I was born a woman, I have a vagina, boobies, I love men, I have two marriages and I have one daughter, but I am a person and what's important for me is to be a good person.' It's very simple!

IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, OCTOBER 2013
(COMPLETE DIALOGUE ON PERFORMINGGENDER.EU)

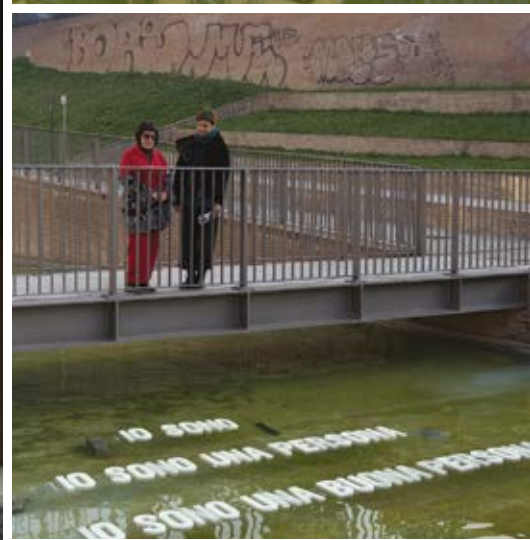


IO SONO UNA BUONA PERSONA

IO SONO UNA PERSONA

IO SONO







SIAMO DUE
BY JUANJO ARQUES AND CRISTINA
HENRÍQUEZ

FIRST PERFORMED ON 30, 31 OCTOBER AND 1
NOVEMBER IN MAMBO - MUSEO D'ARTE MODERNA DI
BOLOGNA

MADE POSSIBLE BY GENDER BENDER FESTIVAL AND
CASSERO LGBT CENTER

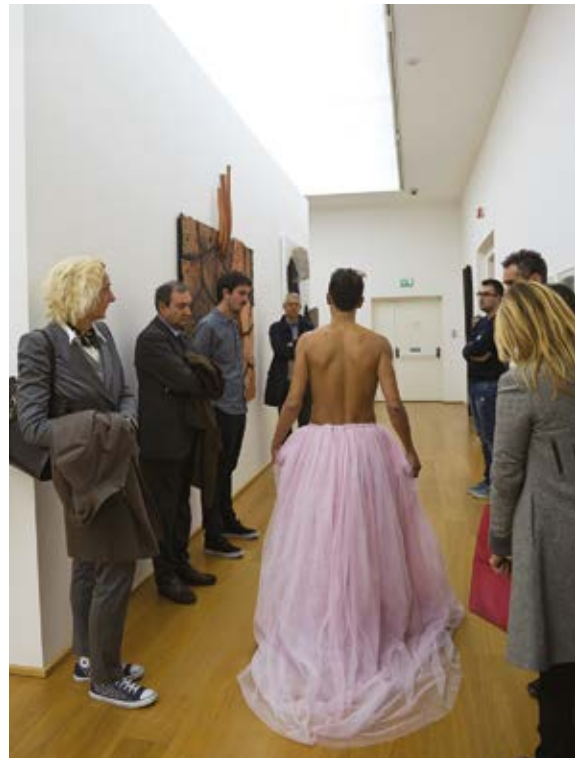
Ci guardiamo e esistiamo nello sguardo dell'altro
/ Alterarsi / Sono un altro quando mi relazio-
no con te / Scopro la mia identità nell'incontro / Da
lontano, vicino a me, vicino / Siamo gli altri, così
normali, così rari / Alterati / Realmente siamo
due?

We look at each other and exist in the other's
gaze / Changing / I am another when I inter-
act with you / I discover my identity within the
meeting / From afar, near me, close / We are the
others, so normal, so rare / Changed / Are there
really two of us?

So then the question is: how can I transmit what I know and how can other people feel the same involvement as me, because it depends also on personal friendships. It's important in a way, this makes artworks in themselves very physical for me. They are part of the body already, of the artist. They are not just things; they are not just materiality. They are extensions of the body for me and that's why they can generate new forms of life in bodies. I think that's the way we can explode this discourse and make it useful for us, in these institutions for the public.

ULIANA ZANETTI, CURATOR AND COLLECTIONS MANAGER AT MAMBO
IN CONVERSATION WITH AMY BELL, NOVEMBER 2014







OUTCOMES

Performing Gender stated a clear objective from the beginning: opening up its research and creation process as much as possible, outside the restricted peer groups of contemporary dance specialists or LGBT communities. A wide range of tools and activities have been put in place during these two years to disseminate and share the themes and the activities of the project. The result was the building of a strong network of committed partners, followers and supporters: a real and heterogenous community of people and institutions who is now engaged in the Performing Gender mission, and ready to take this experience further.

IN TWO YEARS OF ACTIVITIES

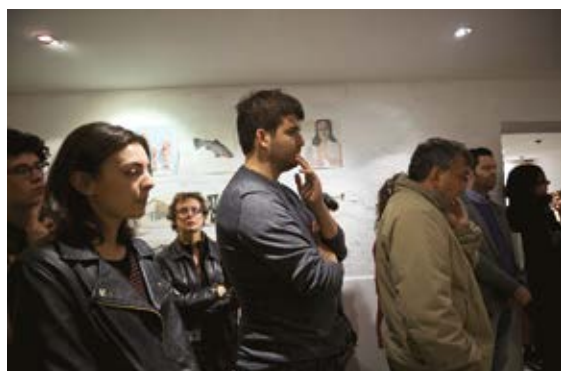
- 70 experts and witnesses met, as writers, film directors, politicians, singers, mothers, performers, scholars, dancers, human rights activists, philosophers, photographers, curators, dramaturgs, feminists, drag queens, disabled people, mexican wrestlers, anthropologists
- 30 shows, events, conferences, parties attended by the artists
- 15 different communities involved, as transsexual people, teenagers, rainbow families, elder people, illustrators, lesbian choirs, people with parkinson disease, visual arts scholars
- 12 partners meeting around Europe to develop the strategy and the implementation of the project
- 10 workshops to explore role models and gender in dance and performance, as liscio dance, belly dance, pole dance, contemporary dance, macho dance, tango, bondage
- 1 collective residency of the 4 Italian artists in Bassano del Grappa

DISSEMINATION AND OUTCOMES

- 350.000 people reached by our communication on Facebook
- 50.000 views on Vimeo of the 6 videos produced by the project
- 1.000 people reached on Facebook each day during the activity weeks
- 600 European professionals specifically informed about the project in two years
- 30 travels by the partners in Europe and

beyond to disseminate the values and the activities of the project; among them: IETM Spring meeting in Montpellier, Aerowaves in Cyprus and Umea, Swiss dance days in Zurich, British dance edition in Edinburgh, Nordic performing arts days in Copenhagen, Ice Hot Nordic performing platform in Oslo, Maison de la danse Lyon, New italian dance platform in Pisa, Swiss dance days in Basel, International dance exposure in Tel Aviv

- 30 requests received from artists all over Europe and beyond to take part into the project
- 15 presentations of the project in the partner countries and beyond
- 15 potential new partners interested in the project
- 10 artistic collaborations started among the artists during the project
- 8 exhibitions of photos and videos documenting the project in the other partner countries
- 5 prizes and awards won by the selected artists during the project
- 1 special exhibition of illustrations, photo and videos about the project weeks in Bologna (see Fingerprints)
- 1 international symposium in Bologna from 26-28 march 2015, made by 8 performances, 1 conference, 1 talk show, 1 party, 15 international guests, more than 300 professionals invited from Italy and Europe.



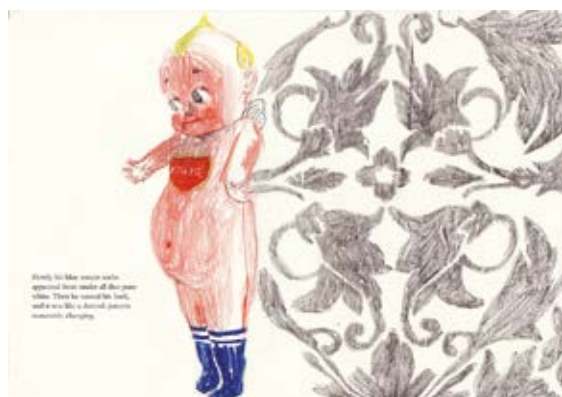
In October 2013, Gender Bender Festival hosted the second Workshop Week of Performing Gender, welcoming for the first time in Bologna a team of four artists: Juanjo Arques, Riccardo Buscarini, Vlasta Delimar and Cristina Henriquez. It was an intense week of artistic research, guided by Dutch Dance Festival director Peggy Ollislaegers: meetings with artists and protagonists of the Bolognese cultural scene, a swim in the history of the Italian LGBT movement and a constant dialogue with the works and the collection of MAMbo, Bologna Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna.

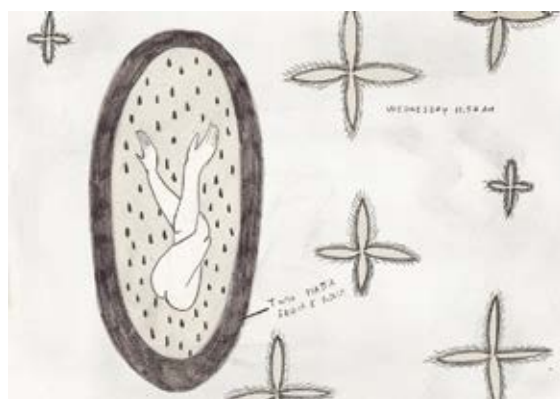
On this occasion, Luca Di Sciullo, Viola Niccolai, Lisa Passaniti and Cristina Portolano, four young illustrators chosen by Performing Gender in collaboration with Hamelin Associazione Culturale,

documented the activities of the week, following the performers closely. The result was a wonderful gift for the project: four albums of sketches and designs that together make up a collective diary, filled with many portraits and small tales.

One year later, as the four performers came back to Bologna to stage their final creations into the Museum, Gender Bender dedicated a special exhibition to these diaries. As well as the original designs from 2013, some new sketches were created especially for the exhibition. The beautiful photos by Elisa D'Errico and the video-story created by Enrico Galli and Fabio Fiandrini, also shown on this occasion, completed a panoramic view on this truly extraordinary human and artistic experience.







LUCA DI SCIULLO
cargocollective.com/lucadisciullo

Lisa Passaniti
Inside the Mirror

Performing Gender Bologna Workshop

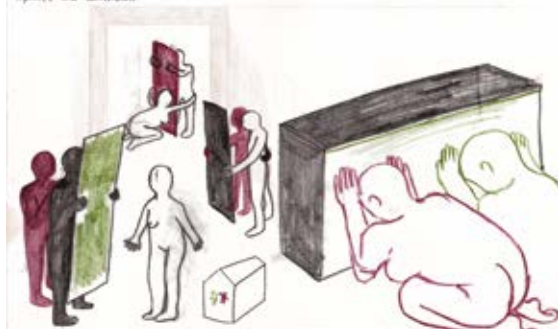
In the beginning I couldn't see anything at all. I was hanging onto the space and the subjects that surrounded me



Step by step I discovered myself, a little bit more every day. I was finding new parts of myself I was looking for a definition, looking to strengthen myself.



I started to desire and to transform every instant. The people I can count inside myself are infinite and unknown.



I let myself be seen.



How marked is your body? How much can I stretch your skin if I press it with my fingers? How deep can I push my hand inside you?



How much can I explore you without you pulling back? How many of your muscles can I feel? How much stronger than you am I?

LISA PASSANITI

CREDITS

PERFORMING GENDER STAFF

- Bologna: Daniele Del Pozzo, Roberto Casarotto, Valentina Lanzetti, Andrea Berna, Federico Borreani, Marcella Loconte, Sandra Murer, Michela Malisardi, Ilaria Trivellato, Paolo Salerno, PepitapuntoCom, Mariagrazia Canu, Mauro Meneghelli, Michele Giarratano, Maurizio Cecconi, Matteo Cavalieri, Emanuela Ria
- Maastricht: Peggy Ollislaegers, Jantien Plooi, Hiskia Linnenkamp, Vincent Wijlhuizen, Linda Tolk, Anne Marleen de Jong
- Madrid: Laura Kumin, Carmen Fernández, María Rogel, Chelo Sánchez, Kemal Akdas
- Zagreb: Zvonimir Dobrović, Adriana Dobrović, Karla Horvat-Crnogaj, Dina Jokanović, Blanka Duduković, Rea Rančić

DOCUMENTATION

- Bologna: Elisa D'Errico (photos), Enrico Galli (video shooting), Fabio Fiandrini (video editing), Luca Di Sciuillo, Viola Niccolai, Lisa Passaniti and Cristina Portolano (drawings and illustrations)
- Maastricht: Jasmijn Slegh (photos), Video Power and Antonis Antopoulos (video shooting and editing)
- Madrid: Barbara Velasco Ghisleri (photos), Yara Paz/Nistagmo (video shooting and editing year one), Jacopo Mandelli/Nistagmo (video shooting and editing year two)
- Zagreb: Darko Vaupotić (photos)

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Kitchen, Bologna
www.kitchencoop.it

WEBSITE

Craq Design Studio, Bologna
www.craq.it

SOCIAL MEDIA

BAM! Strategie Culturali, Bologna / www.bamstrategieculturali.com

PERFORMING GENDER CATALOGUE

- Editorial staff: Federico Borreani, Andrea Berna, Valentina Lanzetti
- Translations: David White
- Graphic design: Kitchen
- Texts: Amy Bell, Federico Borreani, Andrea Berna
- Photo credits:
Elisa D'Errico for Bologna activities
Jasmijn Slegh for Maastricht activities
Barbara Velasco Ghisleri for Madrid activities
Darko Vaupotić for Zagreb activities
Additional photos by Amy Bell, Daniele Del Pozzo, Cecilia Moisis, Jan Martens



Performing Gender is a cultural project funded with support from the European Union (Culture Programme 2007-2013). This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



In 2013 Amy Bell was chosen by Performing Gender to follow each step of the project activities, in order to document the research and creation process and provide an external and special point of view.

Amy is a London based performer, choreographer, teacher and writer. After reading English Literature at Cambridge University, Amy trained at London Contemporary Dance School. She performed and rehearsal directed for Maresa von Stockert's Tilted Productions 2007-12, and has performed for Tino Sehgal, Alessandro Sciarroni, Conor Doyle (Punchdrunk), Rick Nodine, Marco D'Agostin, Giorgia Nardin and Charlotte Spencer. With Valentina Golfieri she choreographed a series of critically acclaimed duets performed in the UK, Italy and Russia, including *I Just Close My Eyes: Here Are The Devils* and *Crossing the Sea*, a chamber opera by Deidre Gribbin at Wilton's Music Hall. Amy was a Sadler's Wells Summer University Artist 2010-14, a research initiative led by Jonathan Burrows. She participated in ChoreoRoam 2012 and is a member of The Hunting Lodge European choreographic research collective. In 2014 Amy received a Lisa Ullmann Traveling Scholarship Fund to explore queer culture and performance in San Francisco and to develop a solo *Small Pleasures (For Her)* and a movement and text installation, both of which are in creation. Amy has been movement advisor for visual artist Oscar Santillan and jury panelist for the Certamen Coreográfico de Madrid. She is currently dancing in new productions by Chiara Frigo and by Damien Jalet and fashion designer Hussein Chalayan. Amy is a lecturer in Choreography at London Contemporary Dance School and in Critical Studies at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance.

Performing Gender is a European dance project making use of artistic and cultural tools to open up a civil reflection on gender and sexual orientation differences, seen as sources of values and richness for the whole European society.

Gender identities and sexual orientations are constitutive elements of our self-perception and keys to understand others, fundamental pillars to build our sense of citizenship and, hence, our belonging to society.

At the same time, in an European society which defines itself as always more complex and diverse, it became necessary to strengthen a constructive dialogue on gender and sexual orientation differences, bringing to light their value and creativity to reinforce social inclusion and fight against discrimination and prejudices.

The main aim of *Performing Gender* was to create a European laboratory, in which dominant codes and mainstream images in relation to gender and sexual preference could be questioned and reflected upon, bringing this into the wider community through the universal language of the arts, to develop new images and to collect new insights together.

The starting point of this journey was the body of the artist, seen as the ideal cultural medium to research and portray new identities.

An international group of 17 choreographers, dancers and visual artists has been involved for two years in an artistic research based in four different European cities: workshops, residencies and performances have investigated the representations of sexuality and gender, challenging the artists' identities and calling into question stereotypes and bias.

At the end of this journey, the artists have been asked to produce new works to be staged in established and renowned European museums. These museums opened their institutions and integrated these new works of art and identities as part of their collections.

