

THE CREATION AND THE ERADICATION OF A PERFORMANCE

ANALYSIS OF THE EXHIBITION “HUMAN ANIMAL”

by

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in partial fulfillment of
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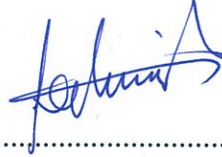
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ABSTRACT

THE CREATION AND THE ERADICATION OF A PERFORMANCE:
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MA Thesis, June 2017

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In this thesis, I've found the opportunity to observe the body oriented and ephemeral nature of my own art practices which adopt the interdisciplinary approach of two intertwined fields: performance and contemporary dance. The inevitable annihilation that follows creation made me contemplate about the relationship between life and art. I've recognized the fact that life, beginning with birth, slowly approaches death particularly observed in my works concerning food. The ephemeral, gradually rotting and perishing nature of food, just like that of a body and artwork has led me to elaborate on the the relationship between food and performance. While the interaction of the body with space constituted the basis of my creations, the creation of a potential performance space has emerged as the core element in my art practice. With the intent to create a potential performance space, I've pondered on the basis of body, benefited from fields such as video and photography and displayed these works in my exhibition titled *Human Animal*.

ÖZET

THE CREATION AND THE ERADICATION OF A PERFORMANCE:

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Dila Yumurtacı

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Performans Sanatı, Çağdaş Dans, Uçucu, Beden, Alan, Yemek

Performans ve çağdaş dansın disiplinlerarası yaklaşımını benimsediğim çalışmalarında, iç içe geçmiş olan bu iki alanın, beden merkezli ve uçucu doğaya sahip karakterlerini kendi sanat pratiğimde gözlemlene imkanı bu tez aracılığı ile buldum. Yaratım sürecinin ardından yokoluşa doğru bir eğilimin olması, sanatın hayat ile olan ilişkisi üzerine düşünmemi sağladı. Hayatın, doğum ile başladığı andan itibaren, ölüme yaklaşmasını, özellikle yiyecek kullandığım çalışmalarında gözlemledim. Yiyeceğin, tıpkı beden veya sanat eseri gibi kalıcı olmayan, çürümeye ve yok olmaya yakın doğası, performans ve yemek ilişkisi üzerinde durmama neden oldu. Bedenin alan ile olan ilişkisi, yaratımlarımın ana eksenini oluştururken, 'potansiyel performans alanı yaratımı' sanat pratiğimin ana unsuru olarak belirdi. Potansiyel performans alanı yaratmak üzere beden üzerinden düşünerek yerleştirme, video ve fotoğraf gibi alanlardan yararlanarak, *İnsan Hayvanı* adlı sergimde bu çalışmalara yer verdim.

Bana destek olmaktan vazgeçmeyen canım annem ve babama,

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

Performing arts, performance art and performance all have different contents. One of the defining features of performance art is its *liveness*. Although they all have this live feature, their scope may vary from entertainment to interrogation. Accordingly, performing arts may draw up from disciplines such as music, theater, dance aimed at entertainment while the intention of performance art is interrogation. Henceforth, performing arts generally focuses on a single discipline while performance art is a hybrid art form which can combine different disciplines including dance, theater, painting, sculpture etc. Since performance art is much more open-ended, it is hard to provide a clear-cut definition but it may be considered as an anti-formalistic way of art-making which challenges viewer's existing perception of art. Performance art experiments mostly in art spaces for art audiences and takes place off stage while performing arts are created for a wider audience and intended to be exhibited on stage. It may sometimes be hard to distinguish between these two disciplines, nevertheless, it could be argued that the difference between performing arts and performance art depends on the intention of the artist.

In this thesis, my aim is to explore myself through analyzing some of my works done during my master's study. In the first chapter, I will introduce some examples of performances to point out the defining characteristics of this discipline. Furthermore, I will mention the similarities between performance art, contemporary and post-modern dance. My aim is not to provide a detailed historical background but to set out my perspective concerning performance art. In the second chapter, I will draw up the components of performance art with the notions of body, time, space, experience and documentation by referencing some theories and giving examples. In the third chapter, I will go through my artworks in detail. This thesis is a supplementary text to my works which will be exhibited in the FASS Art Gallery. I presume the text will be sufficient to reflect my thoughts and feelings about my art-making.

1.1. Beginnings of a New Genre

Performance art has its own history which can be traced back to the early 20th century. The performative feature was initially observed in the works of dadaists and futurists. Dadaism is not rooted in any specific school or movement, it was totally a new approach to art which posed a big challenge for the perception of the art viewer since not only the production of the artwork but also the viewer's perspective of looking at art was altered.

Dadaist artists experimented with various methodologies, improvisation is one of these methods utilized to develop new ways to be more creative. The chance and risk factors were mentioned for the first time in the process of art making. These developments in the field of art influenced the basis of the performance art. *Cabaret Voltaire* was the place where artists gathered and shared their ideas with the public without any limitations. Their works were radical and shocking. They took into consideration neither the established art institutions, nor the rules of the art world. Some of their works consisted of non-object based art which was not very common at that period. Thus, the utilization of dance, music, poetry, masks and costumes were very dominant in dadaists works which were in direct relation with the audience. They criticize the norms of the society and the art world in a non-formal manner, using gibberish sounds and grotesque costumes to point out the absurdity of the world during the years of the First World War.

Performance art is a new art form compared to other art disciplines. It emerged in the middle of the 20th century when big political and social shifts had huge effects on the art world. In 1960s, sexual liberation movement brought about the rise of the feminist movement in art as a subject-matter. In 1964, Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* performance had the intention to point out the objectification of the female body through a live experience. During the performance, the artist sits passive and the audience cuts away her clothes. The whole performance had a potential to indicate the voyeurism towards the female body by transforming the audience to passive witnesses.



Figure 1, *Cut Piece*, Yoko Ono, 1964

1968 was a crucial year and The United States was the main country where many of these changes came about: The ongoing Vietnam war had major effects upon the young generation who wanted to break free from the old bourgeois mentality that persisted to operate within a set of old and strict rules. This new generation wanted freedom in every way, freedom of expression and freedom of gender being two of the major themes. It is therefore not so surprising that they also wanted freedom in art. Under those circumstances, the conventional was not accepted any longer since the young generation of the late 1960s and early 1970s felt that they had no limitations when it came to creative outlets. Valie Export's *Action Pants: Genital Panic* aimed to expose the male gaze on the female body provocatively by wearing crotchless trousers, the artist forced viewers to look at her genital area. These performances were the first examples to break down taboos in art-making.

1.2. On The Way to Define Performance Art

Rejecting the traditional approach that praises meaning, integrity and aesthetic beauty in artwork, the first name to come to mind is Allan Kaprow who is one of the early leaders of performance art. Kaprow aimed to create a way of dealing with the real world through a framed standpoint. “Kaprow sees most art as a convention – or a set of conventions – by which the meanings of experience are framed, intensified and interpreted, he attends as an artist to the meanings of experience instead of the meanings of art (or “art experience”) because the meaning of life interests him more than the meanings of art.”¹ Considering art as a participatory experience rather than an art object, he created interactive installations that he called *environments*. Kaprow was very influenced by John Dewey's book, *Art As Experience*. He later turned his early environments into performance events with his musician collaborator John Cage. These performances were called *happenings* and Kaprow is mainly known in relation to this term which he defines as “an artistic event of all-at-oneness in which there is no storyline.”²

John Cage, collaborator of Allan Kaprow, has a unique way of making music with aleatory methods. Dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham, a collaborator of both Cage and Kaprow, used this method which led Cunningham to *non representative dance* based on aleatory methods. *Chance* is one of these methods they've used to distinguish the artist's taste or his will on the artwork. Therefore, factors outside of artist's intention, shape the artwork.

John Cage was inspired to a great degree by eastern philosophy, particularly Zen Buddhism. That is why he focuses on coincidence and the indeterminable while composing music. In the meanwhile, the collaboration between Kaprow and Cage started in 1950s, at Black Mountain College and the movements of happening and fluxus became the foundation of performance art in respect of these artists. By various collaborations, they highlighted the interdisciplinary character of performance art. Audience participation, deformation of time and space and unconventional use of materials were commonly observed in their works. However, their works did not require

¹De Almedia. Cage, Cunningham, Kaprow. p. 10

² Ibid.

any aesthetic attitude. On the contrary, their works were much closer to the non-art actions that reveal the ordinary in everyday life.

1.3. Object Versus Performance Art

A work of art may exist in the form of ideas and actions. As Battcock notes, “In addition, performance artists were liberated from the art object and all it entailed. This liberation offered the possibility of moving toward an art in which the idea would dominate.”and continues to define performance art as “Performance, like Conceptual Art, would enable the artist to shun mere pictorial values in favor of true visual communication: art as a vehicle for ideas and action.”³ The acceptance of non-object based art was groundbreaking in terms of the perception of art because the history of art relied on object hood, in other words, concrete objects with a trade value. “All of this meant that art no longer had to conform to established formats, and it would never be quite the same again.”⁴ Performance art is based upon a non-object art form, it doesn’t have any intention to sell, that is the reason why performance art dares to criticize the art world, its values, limitations and definitions.

Kazakura Sho, in his work ‘The Real Thing’, was standing naked, all alone in the gallery space without any objects or actions indicating that merely being present also has a value as an artistic statement. As Fried said in his essay ‘Art and Objecthood’ (1967) “Artist is needed to be present, even at the absence of any art object.”⁵ Throughout the art history, artwork came before the artist in terms of importance. However, performance art has changed this hierarchical perspective. Without any object, artist is present as a work of art with his/her own body or only the idea itself behind an action.

³ Battcock, G. and Nickas, R. The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology. p.6

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Fried, M. Art and Objecthood. <http://atc.berkeley.edu/201/readings/FriedObjcthd.pdf> (Retrieved from, 26.12.2016)



Figure 2, *Living Sculptures*, Piero Manzoni

Even more, artists started to realize their actions by using their bodies and this was sufficient for the realization of the performance. *Living Sculptures* was performed by Piero Manzoni, without any art objects but only the bodies of the performers. He also put the authenticity certificate on the bodies by his signature which transformed bodies into art objects. In further examples of non object based art such as Gilbert and George *Singing Sculptures* (1970), Carolee Schneemann *Eye Body* (1962), body obtains the possibility to unite the object with the subject. In other words the artist communicates with the audience through his own body without any need of an object.

“With performance, traditional approaches to interpretation are of little or no use because the value of the art is not to be found in its aesthetic characteristics but in the action of the artist: what is said and what is done.”⁶ Henceforth the material aspect of the artwork itself has no importance but rather the development of the artwork as a process, called *experience*, has the value of an artwork. Artist Bruce Naumann points out the process of art-making and what identifies as art “The fundamental question of what an artist does when left alone in the studio. My conclusion was that I was an artist and I was in the studio that whatever I was doing in the studio must be art. At this point art became more of an activity less of a product.”⁷

⁶ Battcock, p.10

The artist engaging with the audience is another main characteristic of performance art. Performer shares his/her ideas, not in an isolated space but rather with the public. The audience-performer relationship designates even the meaning of the work and it is very crucial concerning the ephemerality of this genre. The term 'Relational Aesthetic' put forward by Nicolas Bourriaud, points out the ephemeral nature of performance art with audience-performer relationship. Artist Riktrit Tirvanija's performance, *Untitled / Curry Soup*, is one of the most defining examples of this relationship. He transformed the space by installing kitchen equipment where he cooked a big bowl of curry soup and shared it with the audience. The artist created a social interaction between participants only by the act of sharing. Each social interaction is unique; even if the equipment, the place and the public are the same, the outcome will be different. The impossibility to recreate a spontaneous social interaction highlights the ephemeral nature of performance art.

1.4. Experiencing Life Through Art

High art was defeated by everyday life with Dada and Futurist movement in the early 20th century. "The boundaries between aesthetic and everyday reality were broken down. Everything became part of a dynamic field of action and interaction, an unlimited expansion of creative energies."⁸ The book *Art As Experience*, written by John Dewey, was a guide for artists to unite art and life through experience. Performance artists stated their interests in ordinary things and activities by observing and experiencing life. The gap between life and art no longer existed. New York based choreographers such as Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton draw together a group, called *The Judson Dance Theater*. They researched ordinary movements such as walking, standing, sitting and rolling. Their quest started during the dancer Anna Halprin's workshops. Halprin's approach to dance is out of stage, very close to life through ordinary activities, in alternative spaces, nature and public spaces. They were mostly anti-institutional performances and the interaction with the audience was very dominant.

⁷ Nauman, B. (1978) interview with Ian Wallace and Russell Keziere, published in Janet Kraynak's edited anthology of the artist's writings and statements, *Please Pay Attention Please*.

⁸ Berghaus, G. *The Futurists Conception of Gesamtkunstwerk and Marinetti's Total Theatre*, p. 287



Figure 3, Judson Dance Theater, 1962

Moreover, collaboration was the essence of their works and performance venues were sort of a laboratory for movement and also for visual and perceptual experiences. They broke the rules of modern dance giving it a more contemporary aspect, as later called *postmodern dance*.



Figure 4, *Play Stop*, Anna Halprin

1960s and 1970s were very crucial in terms of experimentation in art. At the same time with postmodern dancers, performance artists also experimented while searching participation with the audience throughout the physical body in real time and presence. They carried the performances not only out of the stage but also turned them into a real experience. Carolee Schneemann *Meat Joy* performance (1964) is an example of this physicality. The body is covered with raw meat and a group of men and women dance around each other. The performance was highly sensual because of the aspects of feeling, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching which made the performance erotic and disturbing at the same time. The way Schneemann formed the performance was ritualistic. It was reminiscent of a catharsis as a result this aggressive and shocking attitude.

The hybrid nature of performance art enables it to constantly redefine itself. The components of performance art are categorized as the notions of time, space and body. By these elements, artist embodies an idea into a performance. Sometimes artists does not even need a body to realize a performance, they may play only with space and time or maybe with the experiences of the audience. As Joan Jonas states: ‘I do not work with figures, but with ideas and forms. Together with the participants I transform a space and time.’⁹



Figure 5, *Meat Joy*, Carolee Schneemann, 1964

⁹ <http://www.theartkey.com/event/9911/MACBA+Collection+31> (Retrieved from, 14.03.2017)

CHAPTER 2 : Components of Performance Art with a Trans Disciplinary Approach

2.1.Thinking with The Body

Body is the key component in dance and performance art. “The body itself became the subject of the dance rather than serving as an instrument for expressive metaphors.”¹⁰ (Banes 1987: 46) Henceforth, the body transformed from object to subject-matter. Without any need for a storyline, the body can represent itself. De-Theatricalization¹¹ became apparent and consequently, artists started to discover the limits of the body and its functions.

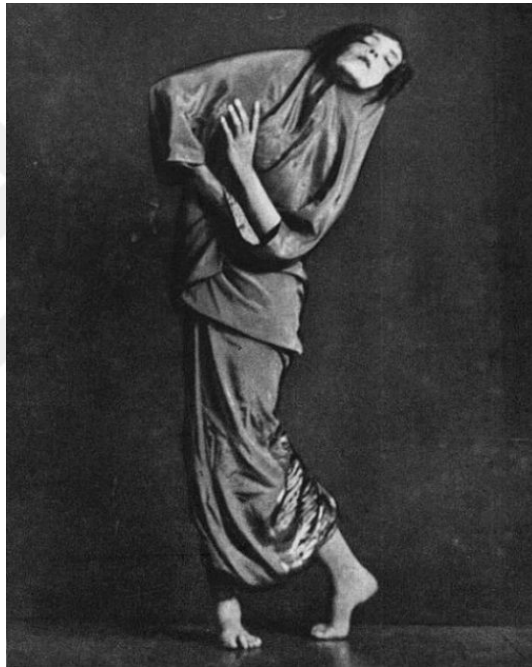


Figure 6, *Traumgestalt*, Mary Wigman, 1927

Dancing is very physical and at the same time volatile as it depends on movements. Spatial formation of kinesthetic, visual and emotional relationships are relevant not only with the body but also with the mind that's why it is hard to separate the body from the mind. Dancer and choreographer Mary Wigman, known as a student of Dalcroze,¹² expresses herself passionately through the unification of body and mind. Wigman used Dalcroze's method, *Eurhythmics* to help students find their own energy of expression. It

¹⁰ Banes, S. *Terpsichore in Sneakers*. Lepecki, A. *Documents of Contemporary Art: Dance* p. 46

¹¹ *De-Theatricalization* is the term which designated that there is no more story behind the performance.

¹² Jacques Dalcroze was developed the method *Eurhythmics* to teach music by using kinesthetic means to gain a physical and musical awareness.

was very crucial concerning dance history because it triggered a liberation in movement and a new dance form was created. Wigman was highly aware of space, dynamic form and fluid rhythms when she was in an ecstatic state during the performances. With this new dance form called, *Ausdrucktanz*, she rediscovered the space and the self-transformation in an expressive manner.

Pina Bausch is another figure of liberation in modern dance history. Bausch is commonly known as a dance theater pioneer and is not interested in how people move but what moves them. “The steps have always come from somewhere else - never from the legs. The movements are always worked in between times. And we gradually build up short dance sequences which we memorize.”¹³ The duality of body and mind is blurry in her works because she argues that movement originates from the mind. Bausch equally questions the scope of what can be qualified as dance. She answered in one of her interviews: “It does in fact have to do something with bodily consciousness by the way we form things.”¹⁴ There is an inner urge inside the body wanting to express feelings and thoughts via movements. Awareness also plays a key role in exploring this inner space to communicate with ourselves and body helps us to discover it.



Figure 7, Pina Bausch, *Cafe Müller*, 1970

¹³ Lepecki, p. 65

¹⁴ Birringer, J. *Media & Performance: Along The Border*, p. 90

In opposition to Bausch's argument, Yvonne Rainer talks about the pure movement which is all about forms and repetitions. Rainer uses gestures from everyday life such as bending, walking and other kinds of mundane activities which can be qualified as dance themselves. Through her *No Manifesto*¹⁵ Rainer positions herself against the aesthetic of classical dance. Consequently, post modern dancers create a totally new language that we are already familiar with from our daily lives but never acknowledge as a dance piece. The perception of dance has definitely changed with these artists.



Figure 8, *At My Body's House*, Yvonne Rainer, 1963

Another groundbreaking dancer and choreographer, Anna Halprin, a master of most famous postmodern dancers, uses everyday movements extensively but she is also interested in the emotional aspect of the performers. It is very rare for dancers or choreographers to work with their inner life, however, as Halprin indicates “Movement is related to feeling, and we had no system for looking at those feelings that were evoked through movement. Nor did we have any idea of how the mind was really functioning in relation to movement or feeling.”¹⁶ It is true that most choreographers work with body,

¹⁵ “No to spectacle. No to virtuosity. No to transformations and magic and make-believe. No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image. No to the heroic. No to the anti-heroic. No to trash imagery. No to involvement of performer or spectator. No to style. No to camp. No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer. No to eccentricity. No to moving or being moved.” <http://www.1000manifestos.com/yvonne-rainer-no-manifesto/> (Retrieved from, 20.05.2017)

¹⁶ Halprin, Anna. *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance*, p. 55

space and time but some of them, some such as Halprin and Bausch, started from this inner world by asking questions to involve the mind into this bodily practice.



Figure 9, *Still dance With Anna Halprin*, Anna Halprin, 1998-2002

After all, Anna Halprin, the avant-garde of this body-mind reunion into dance practices in 1960s, continues to explain, “During that period in the sixties there were all these conferences of body-mind-spirit, as if they were separate. But in terms of what we were exploring, we said there is no separation. They are in a single impulse. There is the mind working in means of images which thinks faster than the linear verbal thinking process. But images are like dreams. They go instantaneously with movements, with the impulse to move and the feelings.”¹⁷ Steve Paxton, student of Halprin and pioneer of contact improvisation¹⁸, points out the necessity of on-the spot-decisions. Again, the relation of body and mind is very instrumental concerning letting dance flow out of oneself. “There are hazards. One of them is thinking ahead. What the body can do to survive is much faster than the thought.”¹⁹ The relationship between body and mind resembles the patterns in nature, as Bonnie Clainbridge Kohen says “The mind is like the wind and the body is like the sand; if you want to know how the wind is blowing, you can look at the sand.”²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Contact improvisation* is a partner dance form based on the physical principles of touch, momentum, shared weight, and most quintessentially- following a shared point of contact. The form was founded in 1972 by Steve Paxton. Integrating his background as modern dancer and his studies in martial art form Aikido, Steve developed Contact improv through explorations with his students and colleagues at the same time. This dance practice explores the skills of falling, rolling, counterbalance, lifting using minimal effort, how to make ourselves light when being lifted, centering and breathing techniques and responsiveness to our partners and surroundings.

¹⁹ Wittmann, G. http://www.tqw.at/sites/default/files/Scores_No3_Webansicht.pdf (Retrieved from 17.05.2017)

²⁰ <http://www.bodymindcentering.com/introduction-body-mind-centeringr> (Retrieved from 20.05.2017)

2.2.Space as a Potential of Performance

“Space is not a passive receptacle
In which objects and forms are posited...
SPACE itself is an OBJECT [of creation}.
And the main one!
SPACE is charged with ENERGY.
Space shrinks and expands.
And these motions mould forms and objects.
It is space that GIVES BIRTH to forms!
It is space that conditions the network of relations and tensions
between objects.
TENSION is the principal actor of space.” (Kantor, 1997)²¹

Tadeusz Kantor’s description of space displays various characteristics of space and their capacity to create content. Space is no longer a passive quantity, on the contrary, it is the most active element in the process of creation. Kantor indicates in his words that the space can provide the structure. He declares that every space has its own particular energy so the relation between objects and this energy affects and defines movements along with forms.

However, defining the notion of space is challenging because it’s an elusive subject. Its properties and volume are invisible. One illustrates a space in his/her mind generally by physical boundaries but its properties in fact are not material. The mathematics within space can be a good example to show this invisibility. The interaction between geometry and energy assures another aspect of space, which influences the body to produce a movement.

²¹ Levin, Ruth. Embracing Space, p.10

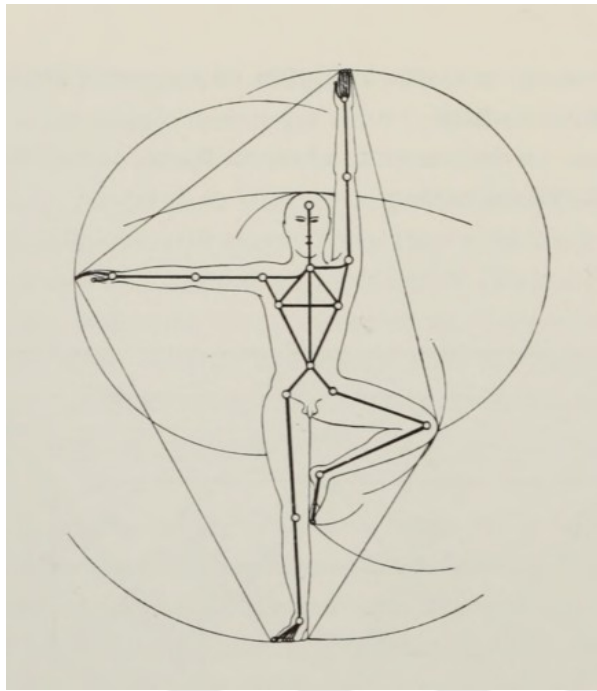


Figure 10, *Man As Dancer*, The Theater of The Bauhaus, 1961

In Bauhaus school, the relationship between body and space is developed by Oskar Schlemmer and his investigation of the human figure and its location in a naturalistic space balanced by the geometrical abstraction. Schlemmer argued the relationship between body and space through his notion of *feltvolume*. According to Schlemmer, when the human figure (*Tanzermenchen*) moves, it forms the space. One can imagine the space as a concrete volume (*feltvolume*) rather than an emptiness, and when the human figure (*Tanzermenschen*) moves inside, it carves the space. Space may seem silent but it is the equal and active partner of the body. They negotiate continuously during action or non-action, which produces movement. The motion is the core of both body and space nexus and it is the reaction to the negotiation between body and space. Rudolf Laban²² defines “Space is a hidden feature of movement and movement is a visible aspect of space.”²³ (Laban 1966: 4) So, space and motion reflect and reveal each other.

²² Rudolf Laban, known by his notation system in modern dance, *Labanotation*. (LMA)

²³ Ibid, p. 13

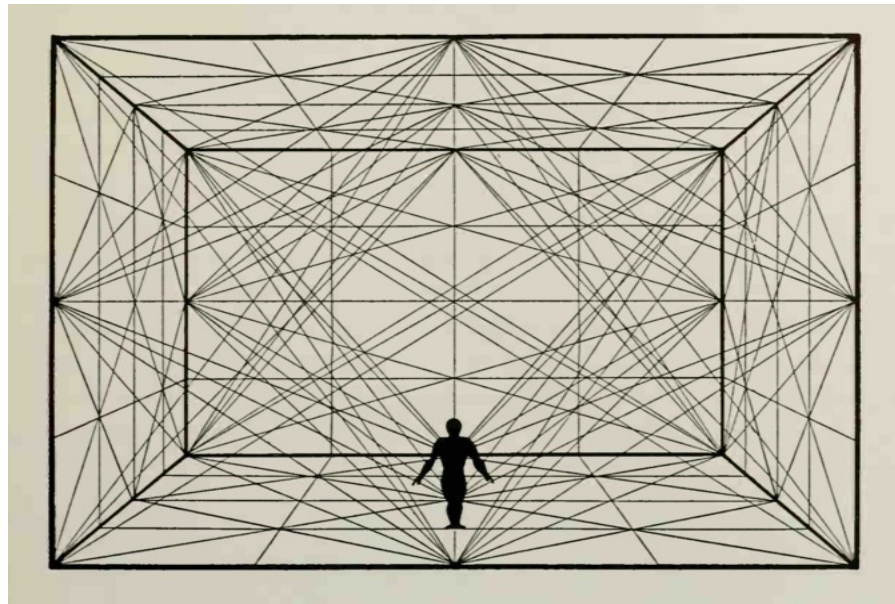


Figure 11, *Spatial Delineation with The Figure*

Henri Lefebvre also suggests that space changes according to what occupies it, that is why he explains body-space nexus in terms of energy: “This is a truly remarkable relationship: the body with the energies at its disposal, the living body, creates or produces its own space; conversely, the laws of space... also govern the living body and the deployment of its energies.”²⁴ In addition, the body excludes cultural or national boundaries because it can be represented as geometrical forms and easily be considered superior to language.

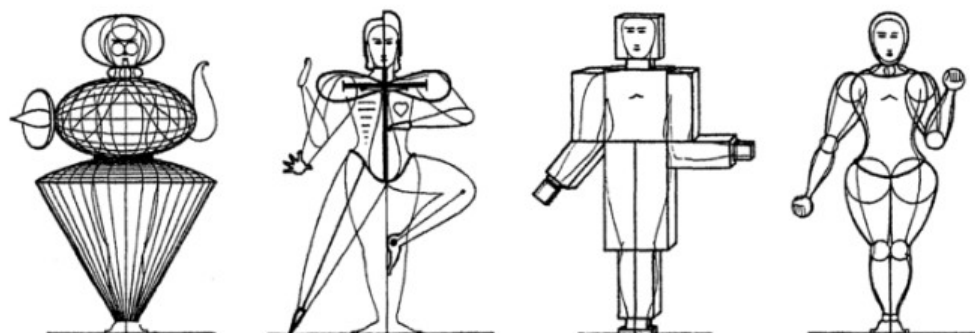


Figure 12, *The Transformation of The Human Body*, Oskar Schlemmer

²⁴ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, p.170

The Social Production of Space, written by Lefebvre, is one of the most referential source to the notion of space. According to Lefebvre, space is not defined as a subject or an object. The notion of space is more complex, it is formed and defined by social realities. He adds also that representational and representations of space and their interrelation has a huge impact on defining it. Lefebvre credits the Bauhaus School by developing a whole new conception of space and declares that they did more than “locate space in its real context or supply a new perspective on it.”²⁵ Bauhaus artists and architects developed this new perspective of space by rendering the objects visible in the space.

Withal, spatiality is another term, which is more elaborate and refers to all possible categories in relation with space. Space can be divided into different variations: ‘internal personal landscape’ including psychological, emotional, genetic and physiological factors and ‘external landscape’ including its functional, material, elemental and historic realities. In a work of dance, theatre or performance, space is referred as a site or an external space. There is also a third division: the spatiality between people. Merly De Certeau describes this as “A middle place, composed of interactions and interviews, ... a narrative symbol of exchanges and encounters.”²⁶ (De Certeau; 1984,127) This middle place is the active category in terms of spatiality compared to the internal and external landscape.

De Certeau also stresses on the distinction between place and space. Place refers to a spatial area that has a particular architectural signifier and constructed for this precise reason and function. The relationships are created in a located area. It is stable. On the other hand, space is known by its fluid characteristic. Changing activities and interactions define the notion of space. “Space is like the word when it is spoken... it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization.”²⁷ (De Certeau; 1984, 117) For Merleau-Ponty, space is existential in its origin because it is created according to individual’s perception. When a new input enters in the space, one can perceive the space from a different perspective. So, space, in this sense, is temporal and subjective.

²⁵ Ran, Faye History of Installation Art and the Development of New Art Forms : Technology and the Hermeneutics of Time and Space in Modern and Postmodern Art from Cubism to Installation. p. 80

²⁶ Levin, p. 10

²⁷ Ibid, p. 11

“Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument; and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object. We transport it without instruments as if by magic, since it is ours and because through it we have direct access to space. For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions. Even our most secret affective movements, those most deeply tied to the humoral infrastructure, help to shape our perception of things.” (Maurice Merleau-Ponty)²⁸

Maurice Merleau Ponty points out the relationship between body and space. It is different from comparing objects that occupy space indirectly. Our bodies are beyond a mean or an instrument to interplay with the space. How we move is the reflection of what we think. Dance can express sentiments, thoughts or stories without a need for any other medium, by only its methods. Modernist theories in dance history are based upon more or less aesthetic purposes however dance is an autonomous art form.

“Movement is a production of space, and our kinesthetic sense, based our proprioceptive system²⁹, permits a range of different awareness of movement in space and time. The experience of quality or force of a particular movement is not only the basis through which we communicate but also the ground of associations, of our concrete connections and imaginary relations with the kind of *social space* in which movement takes place.”³⁰ Movement also has an ability to create social interactions where we meet other bodies in spaces. When one moves, it is easy to grasp space and time.

Postmodern dance and performance art shifted the perspective from scenic spaces to public and private spaces. The proscenium theatre stage were abandoned in favor of art galleries, churches, loft venues. Consequently, the space between audience and performers diminished. The elevation difference between the proscenium theatre stage and the audience caused a disconnection. When performance went out off the stage, the places such as public or even private, helped to open up a space where audience and performers met in order to creating a continuous dialogue.

²⁸ Battcock, p. 5

²⁹ *Proprioception*, also often referred to as the sixth sense, was developed by the nervous system as a means to keep track of and control the different parts of the body. <http://www.spdaustralia.com.au/the-proprioceptive-system/>

³⁰ Birringer, p. 29

Spaces have different connotations and associations that is the reason why when one chooses a particular space for a performance, he/she also decides how this space will effect the content of the performance. The works of Simon Forti, *Rollers* (1960) and *See-Saw* (1960) were performed in art galleries and it changed the activity of the choreographer and gained more serious meaning. The choreographer entered the art world. At the same time, visual artist went beyond making physical objects. They both entered into their fields of work where their capabilities emerged and artistic differences were getting blurry. Besides, performers constructed the space by their movements and energies. As Lefebvre said 'It is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived and produced.'(Lefebvre 1974:169)



Simone Forti and Steve Paxton performing Simone Forti's See Saw (1960)
part of "Danza Volo Musica Dinamite," L'Attico, Rome, 1969

Figure 13, *See Saw with Steve Paxton*, Dance Constructions, Simone Forti, 1969



Figure 14, *Steve Paxton's Rollers*, Dance Constructions, Simone Forti, 1969

2.3. Time: The Eradication of the Artwork

The notion of *liveness* is the common denominator in performance art, dance and theater. Liveness is related with time which became a very controversial subject after the digital revolution of the 1990's. The period of computers in 1990's was very crucial to construct performances which are based not only in content but also the medium. As also stated by Berger, the medium defines the content. "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance can not be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy offer production, it betrays and lessens its ontology of the presence."³¹

Video and film have a particular rhythm that was controlled during the post-production process. Performance is dependent on only how performers move. However, in digital space, editing techniques give the possibility to change and interfere with the performance. The interventions such as close-ups, freeze frames, split screens influence the content, too. It makes the performance more effective and sometimes dramatic by using the technological devices. In fact, they all play with the duration of the performance which is the basic component of the work itself. It is not a lie, nor a reality but it gives a possibility to change the choreography and adds one more creative layer on the work itself.

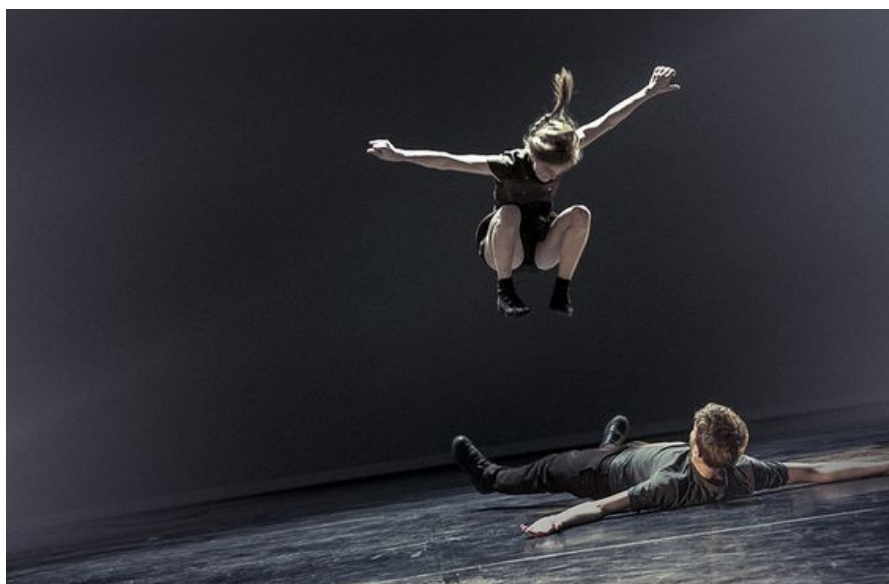


Figure 15, What Body Does Not Remember, Ultima Vez, 2013

³¹ Dixon, S. Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theatre, Dance, Performance Art and Installation, p. 123

The hyper dance of *Ultima Vez* is an example of this dance-editing with high kinetic speed as Birringer said in his book *Media and Performance* ‘making the moving dancers almost jump out of the frame and into your eyes, taking your breath away.’³² The stage makes us experience the ‘intensity of moment.’ When somebody has fallen, the audience can feel the pain he/she goes through, they can hear that the sound of the body as it hits the ground. The stage is real however on the screen it is timelessness. That is why the images on the screen are manipulative and affective.

One may benefit from movement to locate himself/herself not just in space but also in time. Maria Hassabi, New York based performance artist and choreographer, created a performance piece dealing with the notion of temporality called *The Ladies*. Performers move in slow motion, Hassabi calls these movements appearances. The work has an endurance corporeality³³ without any relation with endurance art. The work's endurance is engaged with qualities of speed, duration and rhythm.



Figure 16, *Plastic*, Maria Hassabi, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2015

³² Birringer, p. 79

³³ *Corporeality* appears thus as a limit-concept both attached and detached from the body, a zone of indeterminate potencies linked nevertheless to the very material conditions of living, laboring and dying. It is by activating this zone and its elements that performance acts its provisional suspensions of what some still call the "human." Andre Lepicki <http://artmuseum.pl/en/doc/video-performans-i-cielesnosc> (Retrieved from, 21.05.2017)

Another artist, Tino Sehgal interrogates also the conflict between object and ephemera. *Slower Ontology* used by Andre Lepicki explained “kinetic of the slow, the still that works against the (re)productive speed of modernity's kinetic-representational machine. (2006, 57-8)³⁴ Slowness activates human mind to create things and it is definitely a strategy to temporality. As for, time of experiencing and time of memory is different from each other. Each audience member can memorize what he/she saw. The traces of performances may be reconstructed from texts, photographs and videos. One may benefit from movement to locate himself/herself not just in space but also in time.

Does performance art expand this temporality or contract it? Sasha Waltz realized a large scale presentation which she called 'Sasha Waltz. Installations. Objects. Performances.' during an exhibition of ZKM (Center for Art and Media Technology) A performance program took place every week in the museum space. “In dance theater, we work with time that we fill with several intense moments, all of which it is not possible to capture. In Karlsruhe it is possible for me to present several moments, to direct my gaze to those images resembling icons of my pieces by simply cutting out the before and after from the timeline. Dance is an ephemeral art. In the museum we can arrest time. This, I find, is a great opportunity.”³⁵ (Sasha Waltz)



Figure 17, *Cloud*, Sasha Waltz, ZKM, 2013

³⁴ Biba Bell. *Slow Work: Dance's Temporal Effort in Visual Sphere*, p. 133

³⁵ <http://artdaily.com/news/65290/ZKM-opens-large-scale--comprehensive-presentation-of-choreographer-Sasha-Waltz--work#.WRzEgVLBJE4> (Retrieved from 17.05.2017)

2.4. Art into Life

John Dewey, in his book 'Art As Experience' refused art as an intellectual activity, but rather defined it as a cognitive one. He placed experience at the center of his philosophy of aesthetics which made a shift in the understanding and characteristics of the artistic process, arguing that in life, one is always subjected to sensory information, internal sensation and emotional moods. A lot is goes on without us noticing them, but at some point, an experience may captivate at our attention and this turns it into a discreet experience which he calls 'the consummatory experience' He gives a mundane but a precise example, "That was AN excellent dinner." In our everyday life we use the expression 'having AN experience' and Dewey points out that art has also this very common consumption.



Figure 18, *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square*, Bruce Nauman, 1967-1968

Bruce Nauman questions the scope of everyday activity and what makes an act qualify as art through these sentences, "My conclusion was that I was an artist and I was in the studio, then whatever it was I was doing in the studio must be art. And what I was in

and preferred eating with the hands. The point was to touch the food with the fingers and the mouth, to feel the food; and to smell it, pass it around or just use your eyes to see what a good meal can do to you.”³⁷ As a result, meals become inedible spectacles and one may experience the structure, color or the sound of a meal. In 1993, Alicia Rios made a performance called *Organoleptic Deconstruction in Three Movements*, in which she mixed pink and white colored food with her hands such as strawberries, marshmallows, meringue and cream. She also added the sound of chewing and swallowing to the images. According to Barbara Kirshenblatt- Gimblett, the Futurists did something similar using their hands to chew their food for what they called 'prelabial tactile pleasure.'³⁸ So the artist spread the act of chewing to the whole body which in return arose the sensational and the tactical.

The everyday life and activities entered into art because artists wanted to discover reality and connect art and life by artworks. “Sometimes the artists aim simply to capture the roles and ritual of our daily lives; at other times, they create situations and scenarios that invite us to behave in certain ways.”³⁹ Susan Sontag in his essay book ' Against Interpretation' used the term *transparent art* to define an art is liberated by means however constituted by direct experience. 'What is important now is to recover our senses.'⁴⁰(Sontag 1966: 14)

The viewer started to participate by means of experience and became more active in terms of perception. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty mentions, “I am not the spectator, I am involved, and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception.”⁴¹ Experience has a big impact on the perception by fulfilling the senses so that one can perceive how he/she feels to a wider extent.

³⁷ Dolphijn, R. An Aesthetics of the Mouth, p. 182

³⁸ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium, p. 7

³⁹ Ibid. p. 19

⁴⁰ Lepicki, p. 45

⁴¹ Demere, Claire. The Viewing Self: A Reflection of Mirrors as Medium from 1960s to Present. p. 72

2.5. Documenting The Ephemeral

"A performance has this obvious condition: when the show's over it's gone. The remaining evidence—articles and reviews, photographs, notes, and scripts—can only suggest the event."⁴² (John Howell)

Movement is beyond the linguistic. Movement can not be reduced to the semiotic. One can not explain dance through words. Dance theorists and critics may not agree to this argument but after the performance, there is always a lost moment. Documentation is about recovering or reconstructing the performance. All recording methods are unsatisfactory, because they can not reflect the idea or aesthetics of the artwork. Documentation always remains as a sort of reproduction of the original work. If that is so, why do we need to document?



Figure 20, *Leap*, Yves Klein, 1960

⁴² Battcock, p. 10

Documentation is a very crucial aspect of performance art concerning its ephemeral character. “The ephemerality of movement in dance described as the body's self-erasure in the fading forms of movement and moreover is featured as a paradigm of the fundamental condition of performance.”⁴³ The ontology of disappearance has been mentioned in dance philosophy and performance studies to express movement and its elusive nature. Bodily movement has been analyzed by various researchers through its disappearance, loss and absence. According to Peggy Phelan, 'Performance is considered an event of elusive presence condemned to loss and repetitions of memory.'⁴⁴ (Phelan 1993, 148–152)

Performance is unique and derived from individual interpretation, execution of the artist and his/her relationship with the audience. “Even the repetition of the movement is never the same movement because the momentarily present movement vanishes the movement it is enacted and perceived.”⁴⁵ The registration of the performance marks its place in history. Performance can be registered in form of photography, video or writing. Each one has its own strengths in reflecting the performance; historical, descriptive or content based. A live performance and a registered one will not be the same, documentation becomes a reproduction of the performance. Yves Klein's ‘Leap’ performance was first done by the artist himself, without any audience, nor any registration. Klein decided to restage the performance only for the sake of documentation. Thanks to this, we can talk about this artwork which is groundbreaking for performance art.

“Dance, I wish to argue, moves through media and moves media of representation, and since it cannot ever be fixed, saved or recovered, it creates a particularly striking and paradoxical challenge to historians, critics, and theorists who seek to map it onto language and textuality.”⁴⁶ Birringer points out that dance is interdependent to media because of its nature. Without a mediator, dance can not be registered, it can only exist for a short period and then disappear. The uniqueness of a dance work or a performance is relevant with their liveness. *Live* signifies the present time so the act of moving in the present time is very unique.

⁴³ Cvecic, From Odd Encounters to Prospective Confluence, p. 11

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Birringer, p. 29

⁴⁶ Ibid.

According to Auslander, there are two types of performance documentation: the documentary and the theatrical. Documentary means to record the performance as “evidence that it actually occurred.” (Auslander 2006: 1)⁴⁸ First generation performers used cameras in a very simple way, by putting the camera in front of themselves to record the performance directly. In 1960's video editing was not as advanced as it is now, so preferred to direct the camera at themselves. The second type is the theatrical includes works that were “staged solely to be photographed or filmed and had no meaningful existence as autonomous events presented to audiences.” (Auslander 2006: 2)⁴⁹

Therefore, the video became a mirror image with the real-time of the performance and the closed circuit space such as a studio or a gallery. Time-space-movement-image relationship in the documentation process is important for the performer since its has a particular efficiency through the double process of viewing and being viewed. The comparison of movement with projected movement is discussed by Susan Sontag “The projection of LeWitt’s film is a true setting and literal transfiguration of the dance. The synchronized ongoing on film and dance creates a double space: flat (the scrim/screen) and three dimensional (the stage); provides a double reality both dance and its shadow (documentation, projection), both intimacy and distance.”⁵⁰ Performer may experience difficulties analyzing the work with an omniscient point of view, particularly if he/she was a part of the performance. Mostly, by virtue of the camera, performer records the actions in order to watch it himself/herself beforehand and when the work is done, the documentation of the work can be viewed publicly.

However, there are certain situations in which the performer may not want to document the work. Allan Kaprow is known to refuse recording the activity for the sake of maintaining their real-life performance quality. He kept scripts and photographs of these Activities which are not actual documents, but serve as a how-to-do manual. The impossibility to capture the real quality of the performance shows that documentation has another function which transforms the live performance into something different. “The film both documents and dematerializes (spiritualizes) the reality of dancing. It is a

⁴⁸ Auslander, *The Performativity of Performance Documentation*, p. 1

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Birringer, p. 72

friendly, intermittent ghost that makes the dancers, seen behind the scrim, seem disembodied, too; each seems the ghost of the other. The spectacle becomes authentically polyvalent.”⁵¹



Figure 22, *Woman Licking The Jam off a Car*, 1964. Sol Goldberg's Photography of Participants, Allan Kaprow, Household of Happening

Each discipline may need specific technologies to materialize the idea and the research followed by this necessity to document. Performances enter the gallery and museum spaces and transform into exhibitions through objects and installations. As I mentioned in the previous section, Sasha Waltz's performances were exhibited in ZKM through eight large scale installations: *Vitrine* (video installation from “Körper”, 2000), *Wolke* (performance/ object from “noBody”, 2002), *Pigments* (performance/object from “Impromptus”, 2004), *Gezeiten* (installation from “Gezeiten”, 2005), *Mediterranean Sea* (video installation from “Dido und Aeneas”, 2005), *Fries* (video installation from “Medea”, 2007), *Hängende* (performative installation from “Dialoge 09/MAXXI”, 2009), *Stab* (object from “Sacre”, 2013) The performances transformed into potential spaces through installations whether they are image based or object-based hence the ephemerality of dance is embodied through fine arts.

⁵¹ Ibid.

“In the current avant-garde scene there are two converging tendencies: in their conception and practices, fine artists strive from spatial to temporal forms, transform exhibition spaces into stages. In the conception and practice of temporary and spatial forms, performing artists, by contrast, strive away from performance to exhibition. Moving pictures transform themselves into sculptural groups “tableaux vivants”, in installations and back. Sasha Waltz articulates most clearly, and in the most artistically complex of ways, the new phase in the performative turn.” (Peter Wiebel)⁵² Documentation of performances is challenging in terms of exhibiting however recording is not the only way to document the ephemeral aspect of this art.



⁵² <http://artdaily.com/news/65290/ZKM-opens-large-scale--comprehensive-presentation-of-choreographer-Sasha-Waltz--work#.WSCg81LBJE4> (Retrieved from, 19.05.2017)

CHAPTER 3 : WORKS FROM THE EXHIBITION

My works are based on performances that I created to open up a space for movement whether by virtue of an installation or an action. The term *aesthetic of absence*, used by Henry Sayre, reflects my approach to art-making. Whereas, absence symbolized by experience has a big impact on my works and my intention to activate the space. Performance installation may differ from sculptural installation in terms of this absence. Spectator's body and temporality are key elements for the experience which activates the space.

Food is a common denominator in my works. I prefer to use food not only as a material but I also derive benefit from it as a medium. Food is performative in its nature and fits in directly with performance art. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in her essay 'Playing to the Senses: Food As a Performance Medium' postulates a crossroads at which food and performance meet: to do, to behave and to show. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explains, 'Food, and all that is associated with it, is already larger than life. It is already highly charged with meaning and affect. It is already performative and theatrical. An art of the concrete, food, like performance, is alive, fugitive, and sensory.'⁵³ Aliveness and sensory characteristics are also common in my works.

I like to use the term *food practices which is* contextualized by Jenny Lawson, "I use it to encompass a combination of my lived experiences with food, the commercial, popular cultural representations of food and my artistic explorations with food."⁵⁴ I share the same intention with Lawson while making new works, I discover new possibilities of thinking by experimenting with food.

Michel Delville pointed out the exclusion of food aesthetic as Kant and Hegel also did "...the body itself is apprehended and represented as an unfinished, indigestible figure which hesitates between identification and rejection and ultimately, between pleasure and disgust... Because it constantly takes us to body's direct confrontation with material

⁵³ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 1

⁵⁴ Lawson, J. Food Legacies :Playing The Feminin, p. 342

reality gastroaesthetics defeats all attempts at a purely discursive, analytical elucidation of the subject/object relationship.”⁵⁵

The relationship that I have with food made me think of myself as an animal. After all, humankind has similar building blocks with animals biologically and psychologically. My interest in animal nature is rooted in non verbal communication. In our modern society, we have forgotten about our origin of existence and accepted ourselves as the superior species comparing to animals. In many ways, animals are good examples for me to think, to move and to act in different manners. To accept yourself as an animal is a valuable self discovery. 'Performance for Pets'⁵⁶ is a performance for pets and their owners by two performers who intend to amuse people and their pets by pretending to be animals. The idea behind the performance is getting to know the personality of the animal, having an interaction with them and displaying this process to their owners. The non human perspective is appealing as a research subject in my works because the senses of animals are more sensitive to outside stimuli.

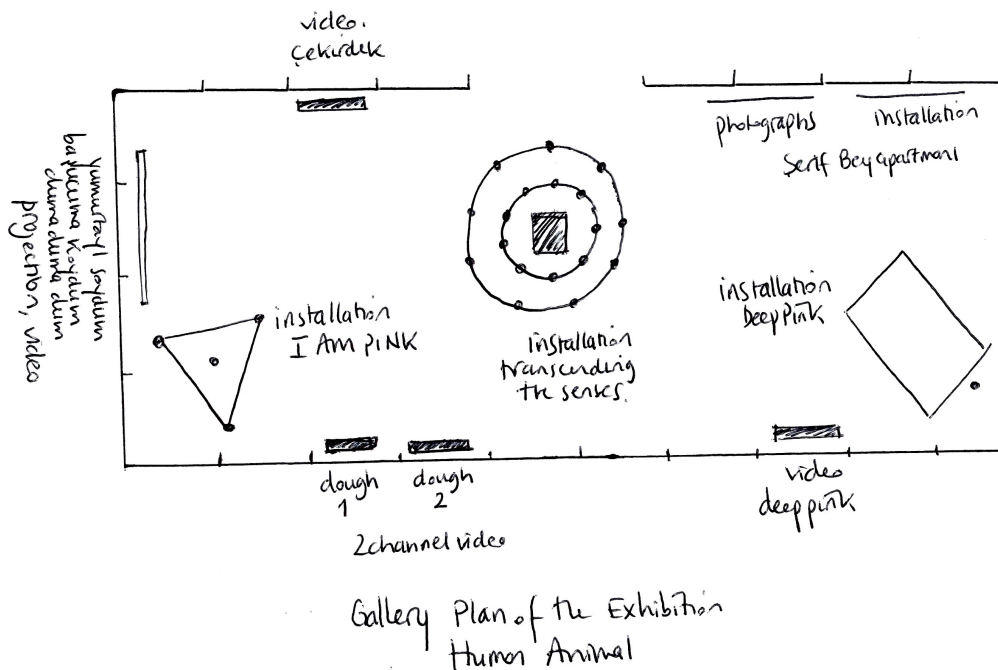


Figure 23, Sketch of The Exhibition Plan of *Human Animal*, 2017

⁵⁵ Javanalidikorn, p. 6

⁵⁶ <http://www.performancesforpets.net> (Retrieved from, 11.05.2017)

separation in society. Since in Turkish culture, particularly in Anatolia, it's almost a ritual for women to get together and prepare pastry dishes for their family thus the labour of women is relative with dough. Most of these women are not allowed any decision on their paths in life, nor are they aware of their lack of autonomy. So they accept and continue to work in the kitchen. They don't go out to work in manly jobs. Although this may seem like an over generalization, it's evident that the image of a woman is associated with the domestic. I believe women have the right to choose what is suitable for them. Through an emphatic perspective, I put myself in the shoes of Anatolian women and felt anger against this mentality. Along with this, the Turkish government made patriarchal remarks which made me feel desperate at the same time. One of the ministers argued that a women's place is home and the best career for her is motherhood. *Elimin Hamuru ile* is my voice for the liberty and equality of women in the society against Turkish government. Even though motherhood is considered to be sacred, I believe fathers should also take care of their children, in other words, the duties and jobs in the society must not depend on prescribed gender roles.



Figure 25, *Semiotics of The Kitchen*, Martha Rosler, Video Still, 1972

Martha Rosler's 'Semiotics of the Kitchen' comes to mind as a reference to this performance. I have a similar intention with her work in which she presents the kitchen tools to the audience as if they were tools of violence. Rosler's work is the second wave of video performance and about the role of 'feminist in the kitchen'.⁵⁷ The artist adopts

⁵⁷ Lawson, J. The term *feminist in the kitchen* is used by Charlotte Brundson, p. 342

After the first experimentation, I decided to perform for an audience because my investigation is to observe the transformation of the audience into the participants. My performance is reconstructed as a play in which I start to knead the dough and share each piece with the audience. I throw these little pieces of dough to them and maybe they throw them back to me or other people. The act of throwing creates an atmosphere of community by playing which has the power to form relations with strangers. Interactivity is observed between the performer and audience or audience to audience. People are connected by this act of throwing and catching. The sense of touch is also very dominant in my performance because one can touch the material, play with it, give it a form, put it somewhere or take it with them. The performance is open ended, there is no backstory, no leap or end. I've put in lots of effort into the process of kneading, however I did not want to point out any accomplishment or praise concerning women labor. It is sufficient for me to make the audience witness the act of kneading and at the end, to create an atmosphere of interaction through playing with dough.

3.2. Dough Project

Dough Project is a performance video with two channels. I want to investigate the performance and its documentation from the perspectives of two camerawomen. They become a part of the work as performers. I arrange the studio space ready for the performance and basically design a stage to perform. The performance is by and large improvised. I am familiar with the material by means of my previous performance *Elimin Hamuru ile* in which I've used dough extensively. This time I am more focused on the documentation and have set some rules. First, the camerawomen have two different and unique points of view. This uniqueness provides them the opportunity to improvise while shooting. At the end of the performance, the video as a final product will be screened on two separate channels. The perspectives of camerawomen were particularly important because the performance was live, however, the video later transformed into a documentation which had its own authenticity. Even though I've set some rules beforehand to realize the performance video, the camerawomen had a considerable impact on the final outcome too.

During the process of kneading, breathing is the key element of the performance by virtue of breathing, I express the struggle between my body and the dough. Breathing is an internal movement which underlines the connection with the movement of the body in relation with the external space. In my works, internal and external are interlocked in every sense; as I move my body in the space or as I imagine the interior of my body while moving. When my movement changes, it directly affects the rhythm of my breathing. Emotional stimuli also affect the breathing patterns. The struggle liberates my anger through my breathing which was fast and irregular. Breathing is automatic. Generally, it is hard to think of breathing because it is reflexive however one can breath consciously and be aware of its power to librate his/her feelings. I want to point out this dichotomy between the external and the internal by their mutual dependance and the way they influence each other.

3.3. Yumurtayı Soydum Başucuma Koydum

Yumurtayı Soydum Başucuma Koydum Duma Duma Dum is a performance video of an eating process. The body is not exactly in a normal eating position on a table. It is in a squat position, which turns the eating into a savage action. “From mastication and swallowing to heartburn to beyond, the corporeality of eating daily reminds us humans of our status as animals and our subjection to the imperative dictates of the body.”⁵⁹ The body of the performer looks almost like an animal through the position of the body and the continuous act of mastication with an appetite. In spite of all these visual elements, the sound of eating is also augmented to reinforce the sensation of the savageness. I want to reveal the relationship between mother and child through an eating process. I use my body and eggs as my mediums. During my performance, my body is stable in a squat position. After giving birth to an egg, I replace the new egg with the previous one on my head and start to eat the previous one with appetite. Throughout this eating process, the egg on my head keeps falling down, and I persistently put it back up on my head.

My choice of egg as a material derives from personal reasons. My last name Yumurtacı means egg seller and was generally a subject of mockery since my early ages. I really want to find out if this last name had a relation with my ancestors lives. However,

⁵⁹ Ferguson, P. *The Senses of Taste*. p. 374

Intellectual knowledge is accepted to arise from the mind and the senses of sight and hearing are considered superior to other senses, however, Rabelais turned these arguments upside down by centralizing on the functions of lower body parts and the superiority of touch, smell and taste. I endeavor the body-mind duality by manifesting the animalistic nature of bodily functions with the use of food. “Food provokes an internal pleasure; inside the body, enclosed in it, not just beneath the skin, but in that deep central zone, all the more primordial because it is soft, tangled, permeable, and called, in a very general sense, the intestines.”⁶¹ (Barthes 62)

3.4. Çekirdek (Sunflower Seeds)

Çekirdek is a performance done in the opening of an exhibition during Open Studio Days. In Neslihan Koyuncu's studio, me and my friends from our performance collective *dadans*⁶², Melek Nur Dudu and Merve Uzunosman were eating sunflower seeds while walking in the exhibition. We were observing other works and sharing seeds with the participants which created an open space to discuss about life and art. I believe the act of sharing is revolutionary and it may change the traditional approach to art.

In his book *Relational Aesthetic*, art critic Nicolas Bourriaud attempts to draw a line and distinguish a certain type of participatory art that has emerged in the 1990s and 'focused upon the sphere of inter-human relations ... and the invention of models of sociability.'⁶³ The spectator participation, theorized by Fluxus happenings and performances, transformed into a key element of contemporary art practices. The receiver's field of activity is defined through a couple of terms such as interactivity and transitivity. This notion of transitivity denies the existence of the place of art. The artwork has to be received by the spectator - if not, it will be nothing other than a dead

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 181

⁶² Dadans is a performance collective was founded by Dila Yumurtacı in 2008. The members of the collective Dila Yumurtacı, Melek Nur Dudu and Merve Uzunosman have all classical dance background however they aim to create contemporary works by collaborating with different artists.

“*dadans* is a collective, which aims for artistic creation regarding different disciplines. For us, the “dada” of *dadans* is not related to a movement that we follow, but to the “dadadadaa” sound. Creating unique works outside of any definition, model or rule excites us.”
www.dadans.com

⁶³ Lima, Nario Critic of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetic and Altermodernism*, p. 1

The building was constructed by my grandfather however he also demolished the old family villa in the 1980s when another gentrification period was taking place in Turkey. It was a period of migration from villages to big cities. After 30 years, migration still continues and big cities are getting even more populated. The sociological background of this process interests me, even by reflecting on my family life, I can investigate these changes. I decided to turn this heartbreaking situation into a good memory by inviting my friends to make art inside the building. I asked five people who are currently active in different art disciplines; Neslihan Koyuncu, Didem Erbaş, Melisa King, Derya Yılmaz ve Eren Sulamacı, they all accepted my invitation and for couple of days working together, we did an exhibition in the apartment.

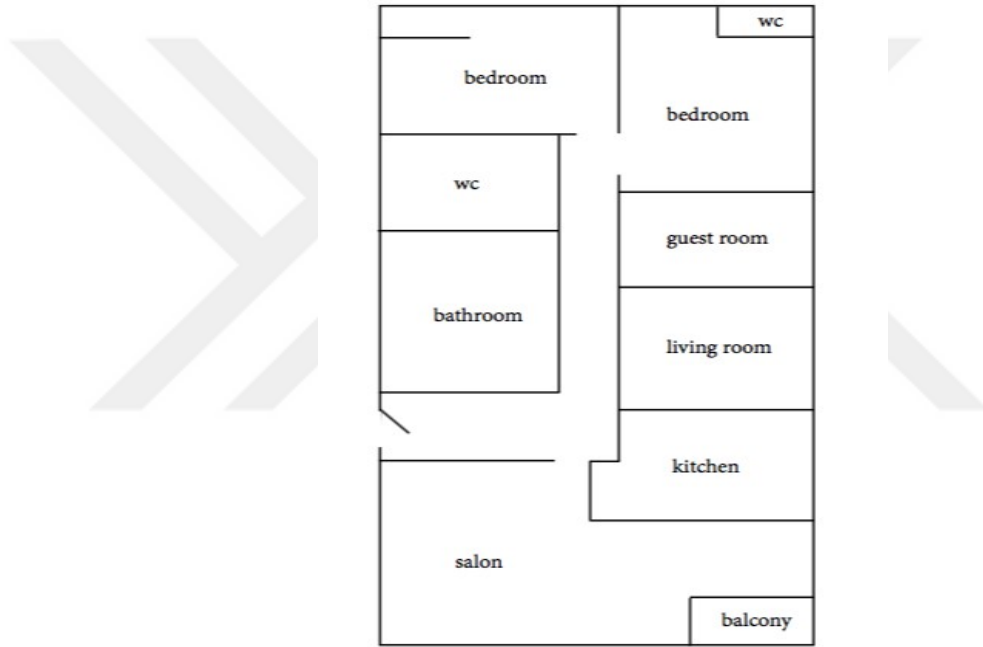


Figure 39, *Şerif Bey Apartmanı*, Yıkım Exhibition, Apartment's Plan, 2015

For me the process was really precious, first days were spent by searching and collecting left-overs of past neighbors. Each of us shared the leftovers and decided what we were going to do with them. This process was reminiscent of a child's play, we improvised and did brain storming. We created solo works as well as collaborative works and helped each other for each installation. I installed my works in three different places: my room, our bathroom and the entrance. I covered the wall of my room with old x-rays of my dad, uncle and aunt. My grandmother collected them for more than 30 years and while moving, left them in the empty apartment. I remember the moment I

Culturally, colors have specific connotations and I wanted to investigate the meaning behind the pink color concerning woman, child and the visceral. For this performance, I transformed my studio into pink, first I painted one of my walls, later the ground and the last I painted large sized canvas tissues and hung them onto the ceiling, as a part of the third dimension of the space. At the end, like a child, I wanted to enter physically into this atmosphere as I was playing inside the curtains. My body remembered the feeling of confidence inside this color which reminds me the womb of my mother. The relationship between the mother and child seems very interesting to me biologically and psychologically. Biologically, they depend on each other, however it is hard to recognize the child as an independent individual.

The process of this work was a struggle, I painted a big canvas on the ground for hours, I felt sweaty and at the end I wanted to keep the canvas clean so I covered it with a transparent plastic floorcloth which became a part of the artwork itself. The prehistory of installation art is marked by these words of Foucault: “accidents, ruptures and details that characterize every beginning,” I started to watch the space then I found myself imagining the floorcloth as the skin.

Since the production of space always intrigued me in my art practice, I entered inside the space which reminded me of the visceral body. Henceforth, I want to focus on the embodiment of space through movement. However, there was one thing missing, the space was too stable for me to move inside so I placed a mini ventilator to move the floorcloth and the installation started to speak to me. I took a step back while the installation turned into a sea where I imagined myself watching the waves of the sea. When I entered inside, it turned into a desert and the feeling of emptiness and confidence amazed me.

3.7. Transcending The Senses

We are all manifestations of a mystic force; a force that shapes all life and us in our mother womb. There exists a certain wisdom inherent in all of us which represents the magnificence of this force. However this is transcendental form of energy. It is beyond the limits of our cognitive capabilities.

The text above is the artist statement of the work and influenced by Joseph Campbell's writings. I made minor adjustments concerning the title of the performance, *Transcending The Senses*. Transcendent is a word that contains various connotations in philosophy, mathematics and religion. It could also be defined as 'something so excellent that is beyond the human understanding.'⁷⁰

The work is a performance about the sensory experiences that I designed for twenty people: ten performers and ten participants. There won't be any spectators which was a very strict rule at the beginning of the creation process because the idea is to increase our awareness of the senses through the experience. First, I decided to diminish the sense of vision which is very dominant in our life and overpowers other senses. The eyes of the participants are covered with headbands to enable them discover other senses.

French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's term *double sensation* privileged touch and sensation over the visual. The relationship of this term with body-mind centering seems very relevant. According to Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, "Touch and movement are the first of the senses to develop. They establish the baseline for future perception through taste, smell, hearing, and vision. The mouth is the first extremity to grasp, release, measure, reach, and withdraw. It sets the foundation for the movement of the other extremities (hands, feet, and tail) and develops in close association with the nose. Movement of the head initiated from the mouth and nose underlie movement of the head initiated from the ears and eyes. Auditory tone, body postural tone, vibration, and movement are registered in the inner ear and are intimately related. Vision is dependent upon all the previous senses and, in turn, helps to integrate them into more complex patterns."⁷¹

⁷⁰ <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/transcendent>

⁷¹ <http://www.bodymindcentering.com/introduction-body-mind-centeringr> (Retrieved from 03.04.2017)

Transcending The Senses

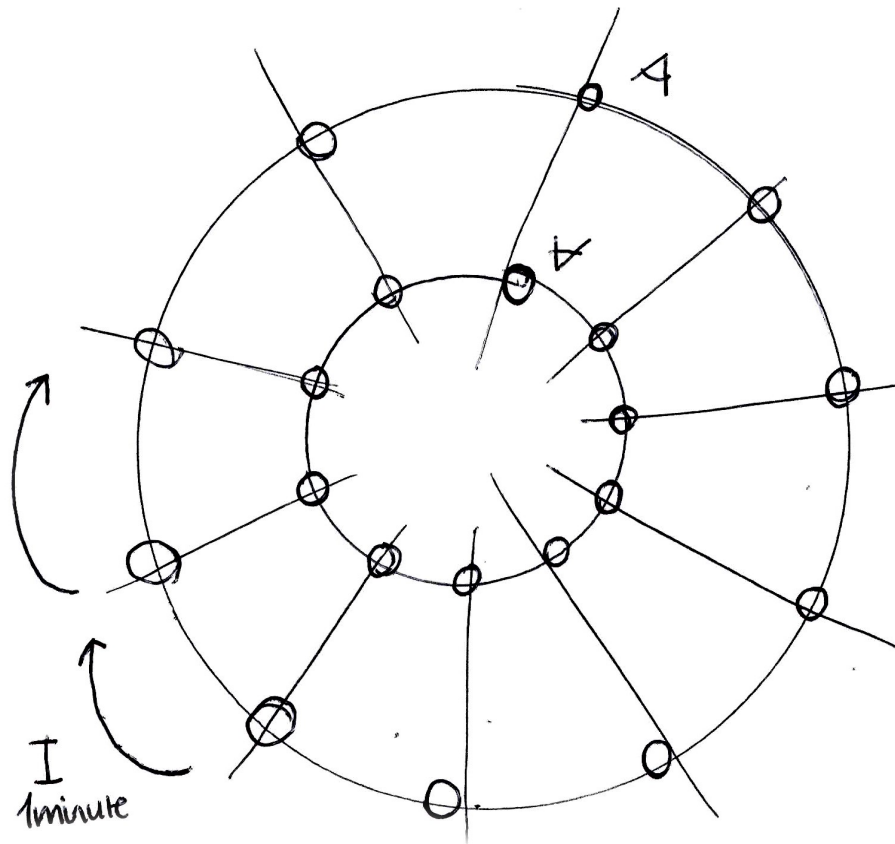


Figure 49, *Transcending The Senses* by Dila Yumurtacı, Performance Sketch, 2017

The perception of the performance contains two different perspectives: one of performers and one of participants. I was interested in both of them in terms of senses and the experience they witnessed. The whole performance took two hours, seven or eight rounds were done in total. After all, it is two hours of dynamic meditation for the performers. In every round, they meet with different bodies and continue to do the same action. The difficulty for them is to focus inside and outside of themselves at the same time. They need to be careful of other bodies while interacting with them, however they need to continue their meditation as well.

The perspective of the participant is different from that of the performer in terms of stability. First, by entering to the circular space and sitting in front of the performers, they accept to be a part of this experience. The feeling of resignation is very dominant

The ephemerality of this work came from its experience based nature which changed from person to person. The one to one connection created an intimate atmosphere, moreover the communal connection also had an effect on the participants perceptions. “Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated. It can be performed again but this repetition itself marks it as different.”⁷² Each round of the performance with every different person, in every minute, the performance is unique. I wanted to place an upper camera, a gopro, to record the geometrical shapes and the continuous movements created by the performers and participants. However, the final result of the camera was far off from what I've imagined. There were some things that I could not manage to control. Allan Kaprow's documentation process reminded me of this distance between the reality and imagination of the artist. At several points his tape recorder stopped working or someone has run out of breath. In fact, “there will always be a gap between the artist’s concept, what he asks of the participants (...) and the realization of the piece. But since the realization should not be confused with any final result, this mismatch is not really a problem.”⁷³ I decided to give myself another opportunity to realize the upper camera documentation in following performances.

3.8. I AM PINK

There was water in the midst of silence. The water stirred up and on the corner of a triangle a sunflower seed cracked. Time moved forward. Woman gazed at the flow of life. Until an egg had appeared! Everything had changed with that egg... Some of them did not eat the egg, some did not cook the egg, some wanted to make a dough... One put water inside the dough and started to knead it. Woman was the creator. And this set her apart. Another creation was possible beyond the continuing of one's lineage. As the cracking sound of sunflower seeds continued, as the eggs spread all over the place, as someone kept on kneading the dough, life took a new form.

⁷² Phelan, Peggy. *The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction*. p. 146

⁷³Almeida, p. 12

The text above is the artist statement of the work, *I AM PINK*, a performance and installation in which I've used three different materials which I've already utilized in my previous performances; sunflower seeds, eggs and dough. Therefore, the investigation of the meaning of these materials and my intention in using them will be my motivation to start this project and observe how these three materials will communicate with each other in the space in relation with the bodies. As I mentioned the body-mind-spirit relationship in the section 'Thinking With The Body', Pina Bausch's words came to my mind concerning the feeling and urge to move 'I am not interested how people move, but what moves them.' The connection between Bausch's argument and *I AM PINK* resulted in the experimentation on the texture of the food. For Acconci, whose main preoccupation is the body's physical space, the body action tends to modify the individual physically and psychically, as well as to transform it thanks to the practice of a mental tension. (Pluchart 1984: 72)

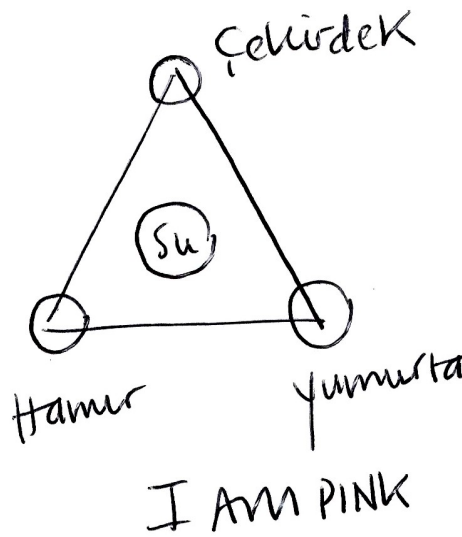


Figure 51, *I AM PINK* by Dila Yumurtacı, Performance Sketch, 2017

The project is realized in a triangular form by three food products. In the middle of this structure the presence of water marks the source of life found in every food. I imagine this triangle as a potential of performance space in which I've performed before and left traces of my performance. The triangular shape was formed of led lights. Art critic Willoughby Sharp wrote that only luminous and kinetic art could adequately reflect the new electric age which has "created an environment that has reconfigured our senses."⁷⁴ The space was painted by the light as Dan Flavin's did on his installations, I

⁷⁴ Ran, p. 317

The name of the project depicts the eternal truth or the awareness of being, I AM, it comes before and goes beyond an idea or thought and is the most basic form of being. I AM is not depending on our subjectivity or personal identity, rather, it relates with an impersonal consciousness. It is the building block of the universe before which nothing had existed. The essence of the consciousness can be traced in both animate and inanimate entities. I use the color pink to point out the visceral aspect of the animate body. Generally the color pink has connotations for little girls that signify cheerfulness, naivety, childless and other types of positive sentiments. For me, the color pink symbolizes the visceral which is not pretty and vulnerable to sustain damage or may invoke disgust. So, I decided to depict the inside of the body with the color pink. The female has been chosen by the creator to be the portal between the spiritual and the physical realm. By saying I AM PINK, I want to imagine the impersonal consciousness as pink which alludes the power of the body to sustain the consciousness inside.

Dough symbolizes the creation process, it may be a creation of an artwork, an idea or a baby. The action of kneading is a metaphor of the struggle during the process of creation. I am planning to use performers bodies in grotesque postures to point out the animalistic features within us. For Bakhtin, “the lower bodily stratum also symbolizes regenerative power since it is where birth takes place and its lowness renders it near to the earth.”⁷⁷ The earth is a source of renewal and of rebirth which exposes the animal instinct within the human species and helps to discover the relationship between woman's existence and her own body. Bakhtin explained the lower body parts and their relationship with birth which I took as a reference while choreographing the performance “Emphasis on the lower bodily stratum and movement near the ground is evident in Dog town where dancers frequently 'mount' each other, sniff each other's behinds and gesture to their own behinds. Much of the time the performers are on the floor. They crawl on all fours, roll over each other, lie curled up on the ground and lie down with their legs open. They also throw themselves and others to the ground.”⁷⁸ I am interested in intertwining the lower and the higher parts of the body, the genital with the mouth or the head. The dualism of mind and body can be observed through this hierarchical binary system in our body separated as high and low.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 232

⁷⁸ Ibid, 234

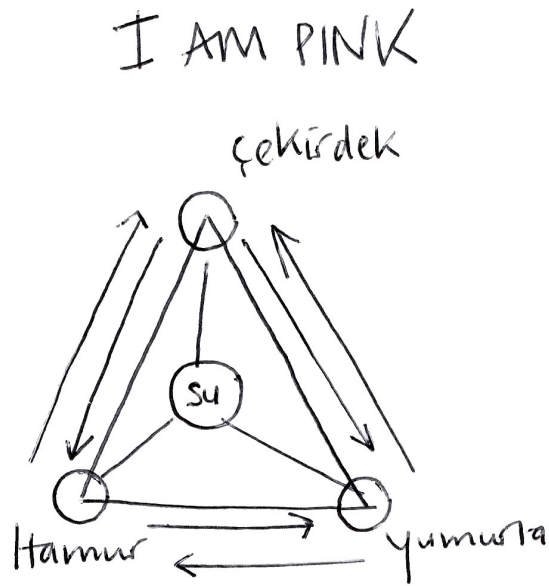


Figure 53, *I AM PINK* by Dila Yumurtacı, Performance Sketch for Choreography, 2017

The project is a work in progress that will also materialize into a performance by three performers. The act of cracking, eating and kneading are the main actions. There is no beginning nor an end, performers start cracking the sunflower seeds, they go to every corner of the triangle to experience other food and still continue cracking. The action of cracking is a metaphor for the notions of time and life. It is a vicious cycle. As Bakhtin notes: 'This unfinished subject in process because of its openness has the facility for connection with others and with the world in a liberatory and renewing manner.'⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Ibid, 226

CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSION

This thesis helped me establish a more substantial relationship between my works and performance art. I've realized that the bond between performance art and current issues is due to its affinity with everyday life. It could be argued that as art approaches life, a new perception of art independent of objects and sales-oriented approach emerges and performance art serves as an initiator of this perception. "Performance artists have acted against the overriding belief that art is limited to the production of art objects, insisting instead that art is primarily a matter of ideas and actions."⁸⁰ "In traditional art, market and exhibition mechanisms had separated the artist from the people; performance art aimed at bringing them back together."⁸¹ Performance art as a new and independent field where experience gains importance, audience members are not mere spectators but active participants and the artist is not at the forefront, rendered many subject matters ordinary or extraordinary to a wider audience.

In the introduction, I've provided examples of certain performances that I consider to be comparable to my works while investigating the defining characteristics of this art form through these examples. In the first section of the second chapter I've emphasized the notions of body and thinking with the body being the common grounds of dance and performance art by drawing on examples from the field of contemporary dance. I've put forward examples of how artists such as Anna Halprin and Pina Bausch approached the body by shattering the body-mind duality and presenting a deeper analysis beyond form and movement. My introduction to contemporary dance following my classical ballet education has shifted my emphasis concerning the body from form to content. This change has become more apparent over the course of this thesis.

The infinite content of the body never ceases to amaze me however, I get even more excited when I think about the movement of the body in space, not limited to a stage. The realization of space and place having different characteristics inspired me to create works that underline this distinction. The distinct history, texture, smell, story inherent to each place had a great impact on the content of performances. The

⁸⁰ Battcock, p. 26

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 7

installations and performances in Şerif Bey Apartmanı and Açık Stüdyo Günleri/ Open Studio Days are examples of my site-specific works. In some instances, I prefer to transform and construct the space for my own purposes. *Dough*, *Deep Pink* and *I AM PINK* are works that represent a potential performance space regardless of the place. In these places which are shaped in relation with the performance, the body has the opportunity to move freely and audience participation is encouraged.

The ephemeral nature of performance led me to contemplate on the notion of time. Similar to dance and theatre, performance art thrives when performed live and may take on another form when recorded. The recording process has the ability to intervene in the content and the live aspect of a performance may enhance or diminish with the technologies utilized. *Elimin Hamuru ile* and *Dough* projects constitute good examples for this comparison. *Elimin Hamuru ile* was performed live, when I compare this performance in which I've kneaded dough and shared it with the audience to *Dough* videos, the results are significantly different. While the shared mutual experience with an audience is unique and irreplaceable, by virtue of camera angles, movements, two screens viewed simultaneously, *Dough* is a sensual project which highlights the body and movement by creating an environment isolated from time and space.

Documentation is basically an attempt at preserving the ephemeral, however the uniqueness of a live performance cannot be fully captured, even when its reperformed. I would argue that coming into terms with the processes of both creation and eradication is essential to grasp the ephemeral nature of performance art.

In the third chapter, I've provided detailed information on works from my exhibition titled *Human Animal* which allowed me to detect details that I overlooked during the creation process. Looking back at my works throughout my post graduate study in Sabancı University, I've extensively utilized food, focused on senses and realized performances by constructing the relationship between body and space, creating a potential space for performances or utilizing video. Whether there is an audience present or not, I investigate communicating my own experiences through various outlets, drawing on the nature of art intertwined with life. In my studio, my house, with my friends, my family or by myself, I accumulate what my body observes and feels through sharing. Food spoils, movement flies, my body dies and I continue living acknowledging the fact that I'm a human animal.

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