

PLAY 1: INVESTIGATING FABRIC AND BODY RELATIONSHIP ON STAGE

By
HALİL ATASEVER

Submitted to the Institute of Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design

Sabancı University
August 2014

© Halil Atasever 2014
All Rights Reserved

PLAY 1: INVESTIGATING FABRIC AND BODY RELATIONSHIP ON STAGE

APPROVED BY:

Murat Germen (Thesis Advisor)

Erdag Aksel

Ahu Antmen

DATE OF APPROVAL: 23/06/2014

ABSTRACT

PLAY 1: INVESTIGATING FABRIC AND BODY RELATIONSHIP ON STAGE

Halil Atasever

Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design, MA Thesis, 2014

Thesis Advisor: Murat Germen

Keywords: *fabric, body, Performative Staging and Acting Method*

The purpose of this thesis is to suggest a reading of *Play 1*, which is an outcome of many works created throughout 3 years period of time. The text grounds itself on two major subjects that are fabric and body relationship and Performative Acting and Staging Method.

The first part of the study states the development and transformation process of personal practice beginning with the studio practice mainly exercised on fabric related experiments and the performances followed. The second part includes the crucial elements of methodology used for *Play 1*, which is Performative Staging and Acting Method. The third section of the text explains the relationships of the artists with fabric and their attitude towards fabric and body relationship through their works and statements. Lastly, *Play 1* is described and defined in detail as a play taking the fabric body relationship as a base and by using a specific method stated above, disassociating the pre-determined meanings attached to fabric around human body.

ÖZET

PLAY 1: BEDEN – KUMAŞ İLİŞKİSİNİ SAHNEDE SORGULAMAK

Halil Atasever

Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı, MA Tezi, 2014

Tez Danışmanı: Murat Germen

Anahtar Kelimeler: kumaş, beden, Performatif Sahneleme ve Oyunculuk Yöntemi

Bu tezin amacı 3 senelik bir üretim sürecinde ortaya çıkan birçok işin sonucunda beliren *Play 1* üzerine bir okuma sunmaktır. Metin, Performatif Sahneleme ve Oyunculuk Yöntemi ve beden-kumaş ilişkisi olmak üzere iki ana konu üzerine konumlandırılmıştır.

Çalışmanın ilk kısmı, stüdyoda kumaşla yapılan deneyler ile başlayan ve performanslara uzanan gelişim ve değişim sürecimi ele almaktadır. İkinci kısım *Play 1* adlı oyunda method olarak kullanılan Performatif Sahneleme ve Oyunculuk yöntemini betimler. Sonraki kısımda ise yaptıkları işler ve önermeleri doğrultusunda farklı sanatçıların kumaş ve beden-kumaş ilişkilerine yaklaşımları incelenmiştir. Son olarak kumaş - beden ilişkisini merkez alan ve beden etrafındaki kumaşa atfedilen anlamların ayrıştırılmasını hedefleyen *Play 1*, detaylı bir biçimde tanımlanmış ve açıklanmıştır.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
CHAPTER 1: THREAD: The Beginning of the Fabric Experiments.....	3
CHAPTER 2: WARP: The Methodology of the Play.....	9
CHAPTER 3: WEFT: The Other Artists.....	21
CHAPTER 4: THE FABRIC: Play 1.....	29
CONCLUSION.....	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	43

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig.1, Experimenting by using fabric, 2011-2013.
- Fig.2, Halil Atasever, Video still from “Bird Performance”, 2012.
- Fig.3, Halil Atasever, “Impossibility of Sujud”, Photograph, 2012.
- Fig.4, Halil Atasever, “The Walk”, Photograph, 2013.
- Fig.5, Studio Players, FEAR OF DARKNESS, Photograph, 2013.
- Fig.6, Photograph from the play “PLAY”, 2012.
- Fig.7 Photographs from the exercises of Biomechanics.
- Fig.8, Studio Players, “ANTI-PROMETHEUS – HOW TO FORGET IN TEN STEPS”, 2012.
- Fig.9, Marina Abramovic, “The Artist is Present”, Performance, 2010.
- Fig.10, Joseph Beuys, “I like America and America Likes Me”, Performance, 1974.
- Fig.11, Yoko Ono, “Cut Piece”, Performance, 1964.
- Fig.12, Variations of body-fabric attachments, 2014.
- Fig.13, 8 poses selected for *Play 1*, 2014.
- Fig.14, Action pair selected for representing specific social class, 2014.
- Fig.15, Arrangements composed by the interrelated actions, 2014.
- Fig.16, Photograph from the performance of Play 1, 2014.
- Fig.17, Photograph from the performance of Play 1, 2014.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank,

My family by unconsciously creating the dilemmas of mine which boost my creativity all the time and supporting me intentionally in any means.

Murat Germen for being my thesis advisor like a safe and supporting nest while me shuttling from pillar to post within the search of pathways. Without his rational and calm guidance, this work never would showed up.

Erdağ Aksel for every talk we had and the ones never occurred. I simply express my gratitude for shaping my perspective with concise reference points. I will never know how to replace my scars but truly love them.

Şahika Tekand and Esat Tekand for teaching me the importance of execution and the ability to have pleasure by simply inviting me into another world and world view.

Michael Bishop for the phrase; “...you need audience.” above and among all the fatherly and mind twisting advices encouraging me to take one step further.

Ahu Antmen for encouraging me to be me in any case.

Selçuk Artut for his guidance in my *evolving* process from the beginning to the end.

and Aras Seddigh. I will never know how to state. It is never easy to thank someone to make me want to be a better man. Beyond her support, precious friendship and peanut butter, teaching me to bite the apple of life with its skin.

*“The thing we tell of can never be found by seeking, yet only seekers find it.”*¹

¹ Bayazid Bastami, quoted in James Fadiman and Robert Frager, *Essential Sufism* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 37.

INTRODUCTION

All human beings of modern world born into a life framed with and around fabric. From the beginning of a life long journey as an infant to the burial, the function of fabric manifests itself in various forms. Moreover, these forms also bring predetermined meanings for individuals to perceive and make sense of the world around fabrics which carry connotations regarding to social class, age, religion and many others.

My inevitable interest for fabric and body relation apparently comes from living in a conservative Muslim family and my textile merchant father. Both entities highly affected my thoughts as I am surrounded by the political and social issues related to fabric first as I helped my father in the textile business and also I was confronted with the challenges about Hijab ban in universities. My BA degree in Sociology encouraged me to dig deeply about the facts related to fabric-body relationship and I observed what lies beneath the surface of these issues from various angles. During my graduate studies at Sabancı University, my work led me to find new connotations related to fabric. In the process of art making, acting as it revealed itself helped me to discover the possible relationship with fabric by using my body as a tool.

Having these in mind and by using an acting method, I tried to dissociate the meanings attached to specific actions performed with fabric in daily life with human body. A play is prepared for the exploration of the possible other relationships between body and fabric. It was created with Performative Staging and Acting Method of which the most important quality relies on creating reality on stage with the shareholders in the very moment of the execution of the play. As it is the first play of the author of this thesis, it is named as *Play I*.

In the following chapters, you can find the development process of the *Play I*, that has its roots are hidden in the beginning of my graduate work at Sabancı University Visual Arts and Visual Communication Program and later was nurtured at Studio Player's acting classes on Performative Staging and Acting Method.

CHAPTER 1:

THREAD: the beginning of the fabric experiments

Subjectively, the practice of creating starts in early ages. However thinking intensely on creating began with the intention of being a designer. The names such as Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan were resonating in my mind as artists because of the ideas that I could come up while working on their understandings of fashion. My formal background in Sociology, led me to do it in a way that resulted in creating clothes with concepts from wide range of thinkers.

The time frame of graduate work on art including the assistantship and studio visits rather than art classes led me to think towards the practice of art making by practice of making. With these thoughts, I made various experiments with fabric. Starting with designing clothes, fabrics turned out to be raw materials for the experiments such as painting on fabrics, pouring plaster in fabrics, creating collages with fabrics, dipping fabrics into plaster / liquid polyester, taking photos of the fabrics, videos related to fabrics and many others.



Fig.1, Experimenting by using fabric, 2011-2013.

In the end of the first year, there were rumors about the cuts of the scholarships for graduate students. I came up with the idea of performing a protest like performance in the dining hall of the university. *Bird Performance*² was simply dancing and running like a bird in the lunch time of the university, implying the obligation for the graduate student to be birds to reach home in the case of cuts in the scholarships. After the performance and the petitions had signed before, graduate students including me, kept

² Halil Atasever Vimeo Channel, *Bird Performance*, <http://vimeo.com/40593523> (accessed February 10, 2014).

their rights on their scholarship status. That was an instinctive and intrusive response of mine, but I could not locate it different than the natural creative process.



Fig.2, Halil Atasever, Video still from “Bird Performance”, 2012.

After that point my creative process intensified on practices that required my body. Later, another performance came into the scene; *Impossibility of Sujud*³ which I tried to pray in front of the university center with a huge purple fabric tied up to my head preventing me to kneel down for Sujud which is a simple act in pray that is putting your forehead on the ground. Universally, the position of Sujud can be found in many religious and cultural rituals and referred to; asking for forgiveness, worshiping, resignation to a higher power. It has same connotations in Islam and one of the must movements of Islamic pray, Salaah. Ideologically, this performance was paved with the economical conditions of my family and the struggle of my father of which I can easily observe his doubts while praying.

3 Halil Atasever, *Impossibility of Sujud*, Halil Atasever Vimeo Channel, vimeo.com, <http://vimeo.com/45532711> (accessed May 20, 2014).



Fig.3, Halil Atasever, “Impossibility of Sujud”, Photograph, 2012.

Another performance that initialized *Play 1*, was the *The Walk*.⁴ *The Walk* was basically walking from one wall of the space to the other as slowly as possible and took 2 hours and 26 minutes, approximately 30 steps. This performance was structured to imitate the relationship between a simple act of walking and the space that is organized for encountering and playing; Bahane.⁵ Bahane created by İlkay Baliç and İz Öztat inside the exhibition space for art, ARTER that intended to serve as a meeting and reading platform for visitors for a limited period of time. The only purpose of the walking was to realize itself, regarding to the quality of the term “play” proposing a space and meaning in itself. Sharing the process of this self creating act with the audience, then and there, gave reference not only the severity of the progress in physic reality but also its slowness in ideological level – slowness of art making. The form of the performance was also overlapping with Bahane's vision of collective production and open meetings.

4 Bahane @ ARTER, *Sürece ne kadar dayanabilirsin?*, bahanearter.wordpress.com, http://bahanearter.wordpress.com/2013/12/29/surece_ne_kadar_dayanabilirsin/, (accessed April 25, 2014).

5 Bahane @ ARTER, *About*, bahanearter.wordpress.com, [Http://bahanearter.wordpress.com/about/](http://bahanearter.wordpress.com/about/) (accessed April 25, 2014).



Fig.4, Halil Atasever, “The Walk”, Photograph, 2013.

After these performances, I took an important step towards; and decided to continue my creative process on stage. The pleasure of being the center of attention was irreplaceable. I tried to create performances that demand high levels of concentration. However, there was something hidden annoying me. As I was thinking about the forms and the narratives of the art works and I felt extremely disturbed by the works I was seeing at galleries and biennials. The conceptual side of the works was enough to trigger my thoughts delivered through the narratives of the pieces, however, from the forms of the works I could not perceive the narratives. It was one of the main breaks of my continuum of evaluating art.

The critiques about the performances given by the faculty members were on the form of the performances. Conceptually it was valid for me but a platform that can be shared by the audience was not visible enough to share the ideas hidden within the performances. Without any explanation or written statement, these performances were not enough to reveal themselves to the audience at the moment of execution. A certain discipline that would lead me to build a structure on stage was highly necessary. In this period, I was advised to join Studio Players, an acting studio that uses a method called Performative Staging and Acting Method. After watching one of the plays of the Studio,

I was filled with admiration how Studio Players created works full of artisanship and yet also were so abstract enough for the sake of the narrative. I decided to attend their acting courses.

For the past two years practicing and exhausting exercises, Studio Players contributed to my research on stage paving the way to find a meaningful relationship between fabric and body. The importance of “execution” at the Studio Players responded to the call of my particular research. In the section below I will attempt to examine the method of Performative Acting and Staging in detail and try to build a groundwork for *Play 1*.

CHAPTER 2

WARP: the methodology of the play

Performative Acting and Staging Method is briefly a different kind of methodology towards acting and staging created by one of the most prominent actors in Turkey, Şahika Tekand at Studio Players established in 1988 by the creator of the method and Esat Tekand.

The importance of Performative Acting and Staging method for this thesis finds its ground to the relationship between the Play 1. Play 1 as a performative play is mostly built on the principles of Performative Acting and Staging Method. Before the explanation of the elements the following should be stated. The academic information about the method is limited to the resources created by the actors of Studio Players who have academic background on theater and dramaturgy. Today, these actors are still the part of the Studio Players as players and tutors.

The necessity of the method

Before the explanation of Performative Acting and Staging Method, perhaps the notion of Modernist painting should be articulated for a far better understanding. Greenberg, in his article *Modernist Painting*, explains that the flat surface is the only thing that is unique and exclusive to pictorial art.⁶ According to Modernist painters, the integrity of the painting comes from its flatness and this flatness should be signified. The declaration of the flat surface that the piece is painted on, starting from Manet and Cézanne to Kandinsky and Mondrian, reached its peak point by detaching itself from the content of the artwork and creating paintings that cannot be translatable in any means. Here the content comes from the very basic shapes and the strokes on the flat surface and its criticism may only be made through the realm of the artwork. This quality of Modernist paintings actually helped them to gain their autonomous position.

Similar to Modernist painting, Performative Staging and Acting Method's basic

⁶ Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 85, <http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/wittgenstein/files/2007/10/Greenbergmodpaint.pdf> (accessed May 1, 2014).

premise lies on creating a declaration for theater. In the method, a play reveals itself as a theater play and its being of a theater play is never hidden. In order to succeed it, the method puts forward the characteristics of the theater. Theater, as it is the art of present moment, dissociates itself from other art forms. In that sense painting, sculpting and other similar forms of art could be regarded as the art of past time. The action of painting itself is not the art but the result of this action is called the artwork. What is aimed through the plays of Performative Staging and Acting Method is to create plays which cannot be translatable to any other language in any other art form. So the content of the art form, parallel to the consideration of some of the Modernist painters on painting, should rise upon the very basic qualities of the theater. The characteristics such as being here and now in the play seem quite useful to make a play different from the any other art form. However, the text, as also the text belongs to an activity of past time, will not help theater to catch its theatricality. In this regard, Studio Players chose to create body forms and movements that are different than observed in daily life.

In a sense, this method has resemblance to the principals of Cubist Painting. Here by the example of Cubist Painting what is emphasized is their standpoint on reflecting life on canvas. If the example is taken from Picasso's *Violin and Grapes*, the observer can see the parts of the violin on the canvas, but reaches the information that "the object is a violin" in his mind. Picasso decomposes a violin and reconstructs a new thing that can only be possible on a flat surface. It is different than daily life, but has attachments to it and opens itself to the audience in its own qualities. The forms on the flat surface mimes the qualities of the object, and in Performative Staging and Acting Method the forms of the bodies as its the primary point detach itself from naturalistic acting, describes the qualities of human being in daily life. The content rises from the narrative constructed by the different formations of body and only significant in the structure of the play. This claim can be referenced to McLuhan's statement of *medium is the message*. As relating Cubism with medium is the message motto, McLuhan states that Cubist works cannot be analyzed with its content but can be perceived with its entirety.⁷

7 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 13.

Performativity; as a solution and the base for the method

Tekand stands out with the performativity of the plays and this characteristic of the plays created in Studio is actually referenced with the needs of the contemporary conditions of the theater world and today's audience. Tekand does not take theater as a dead art, but claims that theater lost its cogency.⁸ For altering these conditions, Tekand uses performativity in her plays.

According to Habif, theater necessitates performativity as a solution to condition of performance arts after 1960's.⁹ Giving reference to Donald Kuspit, Habif states that art lost its aesthetic identity and theater arts also affected by this development. Contemporary performance art built upon the action that is lived by the artists on stage. With this point, the artist on the stage does not duplicate or copy the real life but lives it. There is no difference or line between what is performed and real life. So the form of the artwork and the aesthetic value are no longer in discussion but the living life becomes the objective of these artworks. The sincerity towards living on stage is the major defense of these artworks but the honesty and form of the artwork disappear. In the case of this formless attitude, criteria also disappears because of the reason that there is no ground for evaluation, vast freedom is taken for granted and it defines a platform that every action is legitimized.

On the other hand, performativity is the only valid pathway to take attention of today's audience. Today in various sectors and art, artists do not have any problem about duplicating or copying an image, scene, text taken from the real life. In cinema industry, we confront with various scenes that can hardly be distinguished from the real life. Starting from the invention of the Camera Lucida, representing of an daily life event is no longer a significant skill in arts. Building a real life like action on stage loses its significance too. Today, even the writer of this thesis himself, chooses to watch a high budget Hollywood movie rather than a Shakespeare's re-visited play. Theater cannot

⁸ Erem F. Kargül and Yavuz Meyveci, "Oidipus Şimdi Sürgünde," *TurkishTime*, May 15, 2004.

⁹ Verda Habif, "Antik Yunan'da Oyunculuk ve Çağdaş Uygulamalar" (MA thesis, Istanbul University, 2008), 2.

compete with movies in the terms of duplicating life.

What engages attention of today's audience is the reality. Giving an example from sports, one of the charming side of football match is the very idea of watching it in real time. It cannot be duplicated, copied or re-played. The performances of the football player is here and now. Everything on the field happens in its real time and conditions. Similar to the sports, performativity creates a salvation for theater by being real. The methodology of the Studio Players gives an answer to the question of possibility of creating a play that distinguishes the line between life and performance with a certain structure and at the same time being real on stage.

Game as the structure of new reality

The construction of reality on stage is provided by the structure of the play. For a better understanding about the term play and as it served efficiently to construct reality, Studio Players take Huizinga's work titled as *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* as the basis of the framework of play.

Tekand defines her practice as creating games. And these plays are similar to the sport games consisting certain rules. Every action performed by the player is not simply projecting the text given to the actor but responding the rules of a game as a player. The rules of a game are valid in the moment of the game, so the actions of the players are real in the moment of the performance. Tekand claims that all the play is built upon the reality of that moment. By introducing these rules throughout the play, the audience can understand the rules of the game and enjoy.¹⁰

Considering the statement of Tekand explained above, the major characteristics defined by Huizinga creates a base for Performative Staging and Acting Method. According to Huizinga play exists on the contrary of which is not play¹¹, it is irrational¹², has its own spatial borders.¹³ Moreover the play itself has a structure and is actually the

10 Efnan Atmaca, Interview with Şahika Tekand, *Radikal Gazetesi*, June 06, 2006.

11 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: Oyunun Toplumsal İşlevi Üzerine Bir Deneme*, trans.

Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları 2010), 18.

12 Ibid. , 20.

13 Ibid. , 27.

structure itself¹⁴ and only possible with certain rules.¹⁵

This set of rules enables a structure of play what is physically separated from the audience as an opposition to the contemporary performance art. Moreover, with its rules and its certain structure which is irrational enable the play to create a new language. Furthermore, as its rules are visible to the audience, a common platform arises through this language although there is a certain distinction between stage and audience. However, as can be stated as the crucial point, these set of rules are the play itself. So what Tekand leading is, referenced to Huizinga, creation of a game that can be played and be real in the moment.

The story of the performance

Any game is possible via set of rules. Studio Players create rules for the existence of the game that can serve for the play. With these rules, players confront specific challenges. So if the player plays the game with his/her honesty, cogency of the theater becomes valid again. Because the struggle of the player which appears while confronting these challenges enables the risks to be real in the very moment of execution. This struggle of the player also brings the story of the performance itself. What is seen on the stage is not the story telling as being the character in the text and acting with it, but being in a game as a game player of whose actions performed against the struggle becomes the story that wanted to be delivered.

For a better understanding, an example should be given. FEAR OF DARKNESS¹⁶ as a play deals with contemporary individual's transformation into a game piece throughout the staging of the play. Basically, the play includes 5 different characters sitting on chairs and talking in front of a black background. The stage turns into a simulation room that refers to the system we live in and the actors learn how they have to behave in order to continue their stories. This is basically disciplined by the command of the light from the very beginning of the play till the end. One of the main rule of the play, actors are required to talk whenever the light turns on. This light also

14 Ibid. , 28.

15 Ibid. , 29.

16 Studio Oyuncuları, "Plays – FEAR OF DARKNESS (2008)," Studiooyunculari.com, <http://www.studiooyunculari.com/default.asp?2,4,11> (accessed March 11, 2014).

defines and limits the personal spaces of each actor. Beside the command of the light, we also see signals on the background which all of them shows specific body movements that can be performed around the chairs that the actors sit on. The actions are based on the actions can be made around a chair; sitting cross-legged, standing on one foot etc. Taken from the daily life, the actions in the play turns into synthetic “not life like” actions by the commands of the light. Moreover, all the signals are assigned to specific sounds. Not only responding to the light, but also responding to the movements obliged by the signals is required for the actors to continue his/her speech.



Fig.5, Studio Players, FEAR OF DARKNESS, Photograph, 2013.¹⁷

The monologues are written for five different characters. However the structure of the play intertwines different monologues in scheduled moments to create new meanings. The nowness of the play not only creates struggles for the actor but also even with its silent sequences arise new questions that can only be provided by meshing different directions.

So here, beside the monologues of the characters, we also watch the transformation of their bodies by the rules that are ordered in the game structure.

¹⁷ Koç Üniversitesi, “Şahika Tekand'ın Karanlık Korkusu adlı tiyatro oyunu 1 Nisan Pazartesi akşamı SGKM'de! Biletler Cuma günü Öğrenci Merkezi -1'de!”, events.ku.edu.tr, <https://events.ku.edu.tr/detail.php?i=6564>, (accessed May 10, 2014).

Ideologically, even the toughest character of the play – as it turns out in the process of their monologues – becomes a game piece of the play. This dichotomy and many others create the story of the performance.

Another example can be given as the answer of the Şahika Tekand herself for the question of mine about the play PLAY.¹⁸ Originally, Play is Beckett's 8 pages long text illustrating a love affair between a man, his wife and his mistress. Tekand turns this play into a 15 actor version with the length of 55 minutes. The light as the commander of the play again, commands 15 actors located in stage construction structured as a 3X5 rectangular grid. Similar to FEAR OF DARKNESS, actors are allowed to talk when the light which designates their personal spaces turns on. In the last sequence, the play gets an enormous speed which is not only easy to be responded by the actors but also difficult for the audience to handle. The question of mine was about the necessity of the last sequence that creates a huge pressure and make the audience feel like trapped. The answer was quite enough for me to grasp what actually story of the performance resembles; “Don't you feel like trapped in these situations in real life?”



¹⁸ İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Şehir Tiyatroları, “İstanbul Şehir Tiyatroları'nın Yeni Oyunu: Oyun,” İbb.gov.tr, <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/sites/sehirtiyatrolari/tr-TR/Sayfalar/Haber.aspx?hid=356> (accessed March 12, 2014).

Fig.6, Photograph from the play “PLAY”, 2012.¹⁹

The position of the actor

The actor working with Performative Staging and Acting Method plays on the stage with the acceptance of impossibility of being a character. According to Studio Players being a character is not possible. Even the character itself, if it is staged by the person him/herself, is fictional again because even in that case the person on the stage would be replicating him/herself but not be himself. In this very point, Studio's method takes itself away from the well known and widely accepted naturalistic acting methods such as Stanislavski and Morris Method.

Actor as a game player in the process of confronting challenges tries to understand the character in life and creates emotional attachment with the person in real life. In that sense, different levels are superposed on the stage as a single person. The first one is the player him/herself on the stage, secondly the game player who plays the game in that stage on that day and in that moment and lastly the person who is reflected through the medium of performance. All these levels result in as a person described in the text. The actor experiences the character in real life by throwing him/herself to the very condition and challenges on stage that mimes the position of the character in real life. The story is transferred to the audience not by trying to be the character but empathizing with the character. The emphasis on understanding an “other” is quite repetitive in the education discipline of Studio Players. Being a worker, salesman or another individual can only be absorbed by the actor via the struggle created on stage that can describe the real life position of these people.

The position of the actor as a player, in a wider sense “do”er, shows parallelism with Theater of Cruelty of Antonin Artaud. Artaud is as one of the Avant-garde theater theoreticians emphasizes the importance of execution and claims that theater should never be the servant of the text. According to Artaud, theater should create a new language that is freed from the subjugation of the text. The emphasis of Artaud's manifesto is on spatial expressions.²⁰ So the movements, gestures and other elements of

19 Haftalık Haber, “Şahika Tekand Yaratımıyla Oyun”, haftalikhaber.com, <http://www.haftalikhaber.com/sahika-tekand-yaratimiyla-oyun/>, (accessed May 5, 2014).

20 Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Victor Corti (Richmond: Oneworld Classics Ltd, 2010), 63.

body serve theater to create a language that is defined in each new play via its physicality. In that way, the body itself turns into a new language. In that regard, it can be stated that Performative Acting and Staging Method is in a certain relation with Artaud's understanding.

Studio Players' charge the actors to be physically active on the stage and the text and story of the performance superposes for the specific narrative. The relationship between the actor and the text as another challenge seems visible in Studio Players' plays. Text is crucially important, but the main aspect of the text beside its role in the narrative, its obligation for the actor to be spelled out simultaneously within the challenge confronted. So this struggle brings a real risk on the stage that can be observed by the audience.

Another important point is the form of the bodies of the actors. The forms of the bodies are different from the daily life but in a relationship with daily life. However the arrangement of the specific forms in a specific repetition and direction take the forms out of its daily life realm and create new meanings. As it stated before, in the FEAR OF DARKNESS, actors are obliged to respond to the signals with specific body movements such as standing on one foot, kneeling down and etc. While performing these movements, these forms start to create new meanings other than their own meanings in daily life.

Creating new body forms on stage is a method of abstraction. This quality of the plays also connects the position of Studio Players to Russian Avant-garde director Vsevolod Meyerhold. Meyerhold sees the actors as sculptures. With this notion, he draws clean cut lines for the movements of the actors. The spatial aspect of the theater for Meyerhold is preferential. The stage as a space is constructed by using the actor's body of which the possibilities of the movement is limited in specific forms. Meyerhold reduces every movement into three major components and reconstruct every movement on the basis of these three actions. By this limitation Meyerhold succeeds to establish a highly abstract narrative. This abstraction of the body not only creates a new physical language that is freed from the text but also opens the way for the audience to be aware of what is happening on the stage and pushes the audience to think further. Meyerhold

sees the audience as the fourth creator of theater.²¹ So the narrative of the play is not ended in the actions of the actors but it becomes a platform shared by the audience and completes itself with the audience.

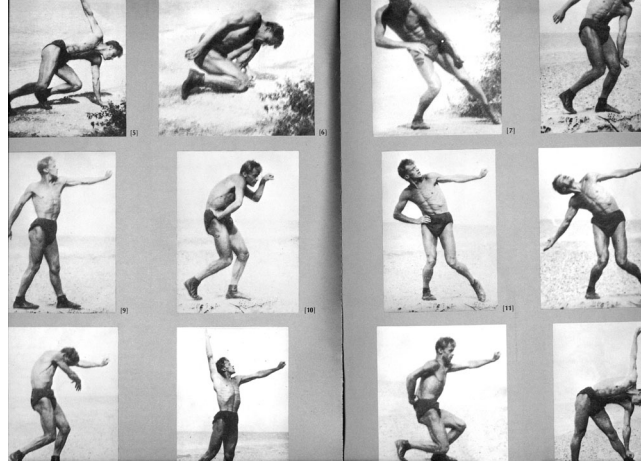


Fig.7 Photographs from the exercises of Biomechanics. ²²

This shared level of consciousness can be seen in any play of Studio Players. To be more concrete, in the play titled HOW TO FORGET IN TEN STEPS (ANTI-PROMETHEUS), we see actors trying to learn the movements that are controlled by light. Here, light as the commander of the play, forces the actors to walk, run or crawl towards the designated directions on a grid. The physical movements such as walking, running or sitting imply different meanings other than daily life. Each actor and also audience learn the movements throughout the play and a common language starts to be used in the communication of the play.

21 Nagihan Gürkan, “Sahnenin Seyircide Açtığı Alan Sorunsalı: Meyerhold, Grotowski ve Studio Oyuncuları'nın Yöntemi Üzerinden Bir İnceleme” (MA thesis, Istanbul University, 2011), 62.

22 Luca Stano, “LA BIOMECCANICA E I SUOI PRINCIPI”, www.lucastano.it, <http://www.lucastano.it/la-biomeccanica-e-i-suoi-principi/>, (accessed May 25, 2014), date of the photograph not specified.

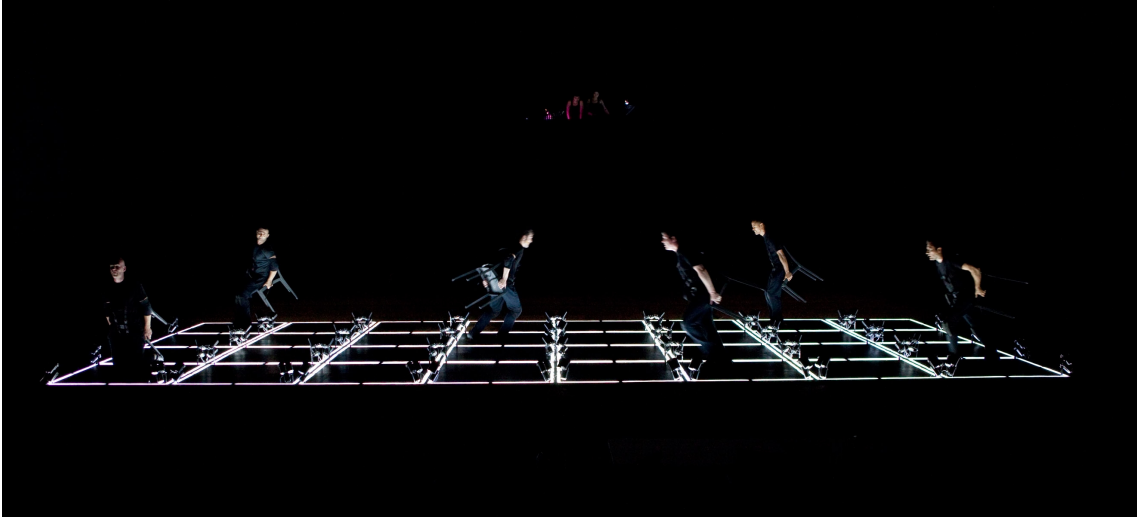


Fig.8, Studio Players, “ANTI-PROMETHEUS – HOW TO FORGET IN TEN STEPS”, 2012.²³

The method of Studio Players is an appropriate method that enables to create works that can be read without any literal explanation. Deconstruction of the daily life actions and reconstruction of them were showing parallelism with the experiments I was making in the studio; using fabrics other than their usage in daily life, creating performances taken from daily life and interpreted in a different realm.

As it stated above, the languages constructed throughout the plays of Studio Players were inviting for the audiences. The actions that are reconstructed, not directly signifying specific names or characters, allow audience to take the actions as base but look from various angles and evaluate the performances. The forms of the bodies in three dimensional space are like words in a poem which are interrelated but always open for interpretation.

Transforming into another entity using my body was an intention of mine which stepped out in the process of performance making. When the nature of the movements distorted by changing the rhythm, direction or the expansion of it, the meaning implied also changes. Tremendous amount of different meaning was possible while I was trying new body forms with fabric. These new forms force me to think about the relationship

²³ A Haber, “ “10 adımda unutmak” sahnelerde!”, ahaber.com, Yaşam Haberleri, <http://www.ahaber.com.tr/Yasam/2012/02/02/10-adimda-unutmak-sahnelerde>, (accessed May 10, 2014).

between the fabric and body out of the box; out of daily life.

So, using fabric in order to reveal different relationships related to fabric and body became the crucial point of my research. While examining, few artists should be stated in order to understand how different kind of connections emerge from different artists and how they give meaning to fabric and body relationship. In the following chapter, artists influenced my creative process can be found for more detailed exploration of the possibilities created with fabric and body.

CHAPTER 3

WEFT: or the other artists

Fabric and body relationship on the basis of changing perspectives

In this part, body and fabric relationship of the selected artists will be examined. These artist have always been influential to me in the way how they relate themselves to the materials they use.

In order to build an appropriate ground to disclose the relationship of my creative process with the other artists', specifically working with her own body, Marina Abramovic steps forward. One of her recent performances can be suitable; The Artist is Present. The Artist is Present was a performance lasted almost two months of time parallel to the retrospective exhibition of the artist. The participatory performance is basically designed with the action of / stillness of Abramovic sitting on a chair and silently welcoming the participators who would like to sit on the other side of the table and catch the artist's eye. The important point of this work for this research is the three dresses (same dress in different colors; blue, red and white) that the artist wore during the performance. Abramovic did not give any clue why she wore these dresses, however after the performance from the information revealed on MOMA's blog pages, it can be deduced that the colors of the dresses are based on the energy artist would like to reflect.

“For the opening of the exhibition, she chose the bright red dress. For the rest of March, the first month, she wore the meditative, deep blue dress. In April to gain new energy because of the increasing difficulty of the performance, she has chosen the red dress. For May, Marina will wear a white dress to achieve a calm state for her final month of performing.”²⁴

²⁴ Julia Kagansky, *Visitor Viewpoint: Marina Abramovic*, www.moma.org, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/03/29/visitor-viewpoint-marina-abramovic/ (Accessed July 10, 2014).



Fig. 9, Marina Abramovic, “The Artist is Present”, Performance, 2010.

Considering the action performed by Abramovic is a nonverbal act and simply looking to the other participator of the performance, the importance of decision making for the dresses becomes vital. As you can see from the image above, the loyal and quite conservative selection of the dress easily elevates the presence of the artist in the performance. The only body part that can be observed by the participator of the performance is the head and the hands of the artist. The hands, mostly as they were under the table because of the calm body position of the artist, are also out of eye sight. So the dress, as a fabric that is covering body, actually points out the head and enables the concentration to be on the eye level. Moreover, as it can be seen from the image, the fabric that is used for the performance is neither stiff nor fluffy. So to speak, this medium level of thickness of the fabric and the clean cut form bring a welcoming gesture for the performer. Furthermore the form, color and the material quality of the fabric also humanize the artist and by that way create more generic look for the public eye in order to boost the presence of the artist throughout the performance. It seems as clear as a crystal that for the sake of inviting the participator into a new atmosphere and catching and holding the attention, the dress is used as a servant for the performance.

Another example can be given from the same artist but with a different usage of fabric. In this example it can be seen how a simple tablecloth can change its meaning

throughout the performance and shuttles between different references. In the *Lips of Thomas*, Abramovic performs several actions one after the other for seven hours including eating 1 kg of honey, drinking a bottle of wine, whipping herself, cutting a line on to her stomach with a razor – eventually turns into a five pointed star, lying on ice blocks and wearing military boots and cap and listening to Russian folk song while waving a white flag. In the process, after cutting a line on her stomach and lying on the ice blocks under a heater – that causes the wound to bleed more - she cleans it with a piece of fabric and ties it to a stick and waves it like flag while listening the folk song. Without any literal explanation and apart from the analysis of the whole performance, what we see as the audience of the performance a white cloth, similar to a tablecloth on the table at where Abramovic eats honey and drink wine, becomes an instrument that cleans the wound and at the same time becomes a flag. The transformation of the white cloth from a healing apparatus to a blood stained white flag is also the transformation on the side of the observer.



Fig. 10, Joseph Beuys, “I like America and America Likes Me”, Performance, 1974.

The meaning applied to a specific kind of fabric; here that is felt, can be one of the crucial examples that can be given for this research considering the fabric and body relationship of Joseph Beuys. Apart from his iconic look wearing felt hat, the doubtful and famous story of Beuys – after the plane crash saved and healed by Crimean Tartars who wrapped the artist with felt and fat - actually brings consistency for the usage of

felt in his works. Many examples can be given for illustrating Beuys' works with felt, however for explaining the relationship between the fabric and body, I would like to prefer stating his performance follows; *I Like America and America Likes Me*.

In this well-known piece, Beuys lived with a coyote for several days inside of René Block Gallery - New York in 1974. The objects installed in the room for the performance was limited; a cane, a flashlight, a felt blanket and daily copies of Wall Street Journal. The performance actually started at Kennedy Airport where Beuys was wrapped immediately into felt and transferred to the gallery in an ambulance. Creating several rituals for the coyote, in this piece Beuys symbolically tried to heal the trauma of American relationships with the Indians.

The usage of felt in this piece can be analyzed under different explanations. One of them is obviously the thickness of felt, as it is a form of shield protecting the artist from the coyote. Secondly it is a costume for Beuys regarding to the stance of Beuys as a Shamanic healer covering his all body. Moreover it is referenced with his story with the Tartars. Another explanation can be given considering his stance towards America, and in that case felt becomes the wall separating the artist and a country;

“I wanted to isolate myself, insulate myself, see nothing of America other than the coyote.”²⁵

For the *Felt Suit*, Beuys stated that this piece is an extension of the sculptures he made during his performances and felt appeared as an insulator or as an element of warmth.²⁶ Again, in this example from Beuys, we confront with different connotations concealed from the fabric with both fabric's material quality and its symbolic meaning.

25 Joseph Beuys: Actions, Vitrines, Enviroments: Room 4, www.tate.org.uk, <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/joseph-beuys-actions-vitrines-environments/joseph-beuys-actions-4>, (Accessed July 10, 2014).

26 Jörg Schellmann and Bern Klüser, *Questions to Beuys*, www.walkerart.org, <http://www.walkerart.org/archive/0/9C43F5AB0D3D8FBE6167.htm> (Accessed July 10, 2014).



Fig. 11, Yoko Ono, “Cut Piece”, Performance, 1964.

Yoko Ono's Cut Piece is an illustrating example for understanding the symbolic meaning attached to a fabric in the process of the performance. The performance includes a basic instruction for the participants; inviting them to cut off artist's clothing while artist is sitting on stage legs tucked underneath. The participants are allowed to keep the piece of fabric cut off from artist's clothing. In 1967, Ono states that this performance about giving and taking and giving is related to Buddhist understanding.²⁷ After the reenactment of the piece in 2003, in the speech given by the artist herself to Reuters News Agency, Ono conceptualizes this performance as follows; “against ageism, against racism, against sexism and against violence”.²⁸

The color of the dress, that is black in several reenactments, may be referenced to the narrative itself as it is an opposition to the conditions of the world according to the artist but also may be related to the decision that is directing the audience attention towards the action itself, parallel to the piece of Abramovic's performance stated above. The important point that I would like to evaluate in this performance of the artist is transformation of the fabric. The piece of clothing becomes more than simply a piece of

27 Kevin Concannon, *Yoko Ono's CUT PIECE: Text to Performance and Back Again*, imaginepeace.com, <http://imaginepeace.com/archives/2680> (Accessed July 12,2014).

28 Ibid 28.

clothing and transforms into a kind of a souvenir that will remind the performance and its context to the participant. Rather than its material qualifications, the fabric itself points out as a symbolic memory for the participant.

To sum up, I tried to discuss the relationships of these artists with fabric and their body. The important aspect of these selected works is, all of them represent different meanings with fabric rather than we perceive a piece of fabric or a clothing in daily life. This fact leads us two important points in this thesis. First, the different meanings of fabric used in the performances reveal themselves in the very moment of the execution of the pieces – the time periods of the performances. Before the performances, Ono's dress or Abramovic's dress did not signify a specific connotation. However, the meanings are born in the very moment of the confrontation with the audience. Secondly, these different meanings change the perception of the audience throughout the performance, Abramovic's dress is no longer a simple dress, Beuys' felt blanket is no longer a felt blanket.

Importance of execution and the other artists

As a student at Sabancı University and Studio Players, I was driven to understand the matching points with my relation with fabric, the points revealed in my art education and acting courses.

The most valuable point was to understand the importance of execution. Throughout the experiments in the studio at Sabancı University and experiments in Studio Players, the importance of execution was highly emphasized. Here, I should state that this process of execution actually led me to understand that I should move forward on stage. Without any determination for the outcome, Beckett's famous quote was the primary principle for me to move forward in my research; “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

The beauty of the process was the most admired teacher for me. Moreover this is not something that can be easily defined. While analyzing the works of the artists stated below, I came up with valid points that support this idea. It is very clear that repeatedly executing a task brings one to be the master of it. Moreover, day by day this action or condition opens the reality hidden in itself. It seems a bit hard to find a solid ground to make this statement rather than mystic connotations but few resources can be given for

further reading. Another point is, what is revealed in this process, the reality, is totally related to the person who is executing the action. Ionesco, one of the prominent Absurd Theater director of our times, states that artistic creation is not different than knowing the essence / reality of yourself.²⁹ This standpoint also brings the attachment to the form rather than the conceptual framework of it. The idea of execution of a specific task gives birth to concepts, ideas, thoughts. Beside the attachment of mine to the artists working with fabric, the artists who work basically on form and avoid talking about their work was an intriguing point for me. This is also about the transformation of mine from the “think”er to “do”er.

One of them is obviously Anish Kapoor, whose works I admire most because of the reason that one do not need any kind of literal explanation while interacting with any of his works. My interaction with these works starts within my mind and I need no explanations or pages long statements to enjoy it. The physical space activated by the voluminous works and the color choices engages the audience to interact with the artwork instantly. The organic references within the forms of Kapoor creates an smooth impression for the audience. Moreover, in the interview session held at Sabancı Museum, he admitted that it is “daunting” and “boring” to talk about his own works.³⁰ Besides, he explained that he likes the idea of “certain space of not knowing” while creating. His openness for not knowing the following step was matching with my understanding of execution without any kind of determination.

Secondly and similarly, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, as a couple, do not like to talk about the works they create. It is an obvious fact that they have many stories about the execution of the work, but there is no single explanation coming from them explaining the meaning of the work and how one should read or analyze it:

“We wish to create works of art of joy and beauty. And like every work of art they have no purpose at all. No justification.”³¹

29 Seveda Şener, *Dünden Bugüne Tiyatro Düşüncesi* (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2012), 307.

30 Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi Youtube Channel, *Konferans: Anish Kapoor'dan sanatını dinleyin / 10 Eylül 2013*, http://youtu.be/flx_V2_CZYA (accessed January 11, 2014)

31 *5 Films About Christo and Jeanne-Claude - A Maysles Films Production*, dir. by Albert Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin (NY : Plexifilm : Plexigroup, Inc., 2004).

When the TV show presenter ask Christo and Jeanne-Claude about the meaning of the works, Christo replies as follows;

*“They should go and see the work. There is nothing to understand. Go, see the work, walk through the work, walk around the work. There is nothing to explain. You do not explain the notes of the music, you do not explain the meaning of Sonnet 5... Visual arts more like a music... You only need to educate your eye to enjoy the physicality of the space...”*³²

This attitude of the artists echoes in my mind with the Meyerhold's 4th creator, as he locates the audience in theater as one of the creators in the space and the play itself actually is not finished till its moment of coming across with the audience.

³² LX.TV Youtube Channel, *The artists behind The Gates Christo and Jeanne-Claude*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bADfh_JLLo (accessed December 20, 2014).

CHAPTER 4

THE FABRIC: or the PLAY 1

Preparation for Play 1

As it is stated in the first chapter, with the contribution of Studio Players' acting classes, my experiments with fabric transformed into experiments which necessitates body as a tool to discover fabric and body relationship. Meanwhile, I had realized how a single action on stage serves to deliver a certain meaning to the audience and in my case every action performed with fabric related to its rhythm, direction and scale creates different meanings and connotations in the eyes of the receiver.

By using a technique named “do it and feel it”, I tried to find different movements and poses can be created by fabric and most importantly what they triggers in my own body memory. To clarify the technique, “do it and feel it” is basically listening your own body and mind while performing a single movement and trying to understand what these remind you. So that you can understand what is hidden inside a movement for yourself. While practicing, more than 30 movements appeared in the first glance, some of them can be seen in Fig. 12.



Fig.12, Variations of body-fabric attachments, 2014.

As it can be seen in the figures, the conservative side of mine has always showed itself on purpose or not. The paintings I did on fabric was about women wearing Hijab (Fig. 1), *Impossibility of Sujud* was a performance although dealing with economical issues in a form of Sujud (Fig. 3), and the motives I used while trying to pour plaster in to the clothes had Islamic connotations (Fig. 1). It is not surprising to see the references are coming on to the stage pointing my Muslim identity in the process of searching fabric – body relationship. Honestly, I would like to tie this self – revealing movements to the attitudes of the artist of whose works primarily stated with their own form. Similarly to Kapoor's openness to not knowing and being brave enough to give space to the creative process itself, I tried to practice more and more to reach movements that can stand by themselves but at the same time be able to deliver a narrative which can only conceal their own meaning in the form of the works without literal explanations.

After discovering different movements with fabric, I simply wanted to create a narrative which can deliver different meanings to the audience other than the meanings appears in the daily usage of fabric. It was totally interesting for me to see how fabric changes its meaning throughout a performance, as the examples stated in the previous chapter. The works of Abramovic, Beuys and Ono, lead me to think more on how a piece of fabric delivers so much different connotations. Another point directed me to investigate the fabric and body relationship on stage was the immediate establishment of a communication ground between the audience and the performer in the very moment of the performance. The dress Abramovic wore during the performance is not a specific dress that can be perceived with the meaning delivered in the period of performance. Similarly, the felt blanket was just a felt blanket before Beuys used it in order to create a different narrative. So this communication ground accepted by the both sides appears in the moment of execution of the performance.

Considering this communication ground established between the performer and the audience, the meanings delivered to the audience with the movements of fabric are always open to discussion. For arbitrary relation of what is projected and what is received by the movements created with fabric, I would like to bring up semiological

analysis of Ferdinand de Saussure.

Saussure, as the father of Semiology, divides the signs into two; *signifier* and the *signified*.³³ Briefly, in a text the sound of the word itself defined as the *signifier* and the concept of the word is defined as *signified*. Although these two terms are highly interrelated, the crucial point about the theory for this research is the arbitrariness of the relationship between the *signifier* and the *signified*. There is no certain rule or pre-determined relationship between the *signifier* and the *signified*. This is not only valid for the sign itself but also valid for the sign systems; two different languages never have the same connections between the *signifier* and the *signified*. So the language plays a crucial role for the construction of the reality.

If a movement created with fabric is considered as sign of a language constructed on stage, the meaning I attribute to the movement can be read as *signifier* and the meanings emerging on the side of the audience can be regarded as *signified*. The existence of this relationship between the signifier and the signified is unquestionable, however because of its arbitrary nature every moment performed is also open to different interpretations. So I decided to use that arbitrary relation and wanted to discover how the movements with fabric bring new narratives on stage. In this process, I tried to make this abstraction with the movements and, on purpose, did not write any text qualifying the movements. The nonverbal quality of a movement, as it is freed from the subjugation of the text as Artaud claim, begun to open more doors for the audience.

So the idea of creating a piece dealing with this relationship became apparent. But the decision for the form of the piece was lingering in the air as a huge problem. I should admit that, the craft intensive style of Studio Players highly affected me while deciding the form of the art piece I was preparing. In addition to that influence, I was not sure about the decisions taken by the artists who used fabric as a tool in their performances. Although, I very much like the idea of creating a performance piece, the evaluation for these pieces had to be on the basis of being impressed by the artwork or not. To make it clear, it is not possible to read Abramovic's Artist is Present piece with the tools of theater or one cannot simply criticize how and why she looks to the

³³ Arthur Asa Berger, "Semiological Analysis" in *Media, Knowledge and Power*, ed. Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Peter Braham (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1987), 136.

participator in a certain way. The artist is free to look, see or stare to the participant and it is not questionable. In the same manner, Yoko Ono's decision for inviting people to the stage to cut her dress lead the audience into an ambiguous platform of thought. The erosion of criticism is legitimized under the title of “performance art”, so the audience is neither evaluate the performance with a definite tool nor free to question the decisions taken by the performer. As it stated for the necessity of Performative Acting and Staging Method, the line between life and art melted in the blur area of the decisions of the performance artist.

In order to create a piece on stage, considering the facts above, I decided to create a play by using the solutions offered by Performative Acting and Staging Method. The reasons for choosing this method can be explained in several points.

First of all, I wanted to create a piece which can only be understood in its own sphere. If you recall the resemblance given between Performative Acting and Staging Method and Cubism, it will definitely help to take us one step further. Rather than its quality projecting life in a different version that we are not used to see, the importance of Cubist painting actually comes with the habitat of the painting that is the canvas itself. So Performative Acting and Staging Method served in my research to create a play that can only be understood with its own terms and able to reveal its narrative only on stage. As the direction, rhythm and the scale of a movement delivers different meanings to the audience, these properties of an action are only valid on stage. The term offered by the method; story of the performance brings this untranslatable quality of the play by using movements on stage. Basically, it means that the totality and the unity of the movements would create a narrative detached from the text of a play. In our case, as the play I was preparing was nonverbal play, the vitality of the movements stepped forward.

Secondly, my main attempt was to create scenes on stage that will be totally honest to the audience and wanted to stay on the stage as naked as possible with the movements regardless of duplicating any individual definitely pointed out. This decision also would build a platform of anonymity for the audience. The movements performed with fabric although signify designated group of individuals, it would also leave some space for the audience related to the arbitrary relation of the movement and the meaning

of the movement perceived on the other side.

Thirdly, for the structure of the play, I choose to use Performative Acting and Staging Method's game creating structure with the purpose of creating reality on stage. The method uses game structure by setting up rules for the player who is obliged to respond to the commands immediately. The response of the player like talking in the moment of light turns on above the head of the player (FEAR OF DARKNESS) creates a challenge for the player in the very moment of the command. It also reveals reality on stage as it clearly stated in the explanation of the method. Because the player had to respond to the commands and execute the physical tasks given with the commands. In order to build a game structure like that, I had to create several rules for my play so that I would be able to perform with commands which will deliver reality on stage.

Play 1

In the first place, I would like to give a hint about the white fabric. The size of the white cloth is exactly 1 meter square. The decision comes from the widely accepted size of a Hijab and also this size can cover nearly all the body of an individual. Moreover this size of a fabric can be used as a blanket, tablecloth or a prayer rug. The white color fabric can be matched with so many connotations such as shroud, wedding gowns, purity, cleanliness, flags used for defeat etc.

Starting with eliminating movements, I choose 8 poses; each of them signifies different movement in life.



Fig. 13, 8 poses selected for *Play 1*, 2014.

Then I tried to relate these poses, considering their interrelation: What happens if action A comes after action B? In that way, I created some arrangements with the poses. While creating these arrangements some of the pairs started to signify definite classes and people. One of them was a cleaning lady who wears Hijab. (the action of cleaning ground + wearing Hijab + sleeping one after the other) Another one was a waiter who is working hard and sleeping. (holding fabric like a waiter + sleeping). In the process, these arrangements were organically create the narrative of the play.



Fig. 14, Action pair selected for representing specific social class, 2014.



Fig. 15, Arrangements composed by the interrelated actions, 2014.

However, another decision had to be made for making the play attached to Performative Acting and Staging Method; the game structure. In order to create a game structure, I designed 8 different sounds for each poses. This would also create a physical challenge for me on the stage; the necessity of an immediate response to the sounds. There was also another sound which dissociates itself from the other sounds. This was the sound of the wrong movement.

The play starts with the position of the actor on the floor, assuming that he is thrown to the stage. Being thrown to the stage is a compliment to Beckett's play titled *Act Without Words I*.³⁴ In the beginning of this play, the actor flung backwards to the stage that seems like a desert. As the audience, it is not possible to understand why the man is on that desert and how he came there. In that regard, being thrown to the stage as an artistic decision became rational for me, according to the fact that, as individuals living in society, we do not have any kind of chance to choose to be alive in the

³⁴ Wikipedia contributors, "Act Without Words I," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Act_Without_Words_I#cite_note-1, (accessed May 10, 2014).

beginning. From the beginning of our lives, we are compelled to have a relationship with fabrics. After being thrown to the stage player sees the white fabric on the floor.

Similar to Studio Players plays, I wanted to teach all the movements to the player and the audience so that the audience would be able to judge every action of the performer. In that way, the audience would be able to evaluate the performance of the player and his honesty. For this reason, I designed 3 different parts in the play. The first part of the play, teaching part, which the player learns every movement that the audience will see throughout the play and also learn which sound is assigned to a specific movement.

On the other hand, in this part of the play, I detached the meanings wanted to be delivered in the play from the movements. Here, what I tried to stress is that the player learns the movements with the commands of the wrong and the right sounds. The player learns to wear Hijab not with the intention of wearing a Hijab, but with the intention of covering his head with fabric with the reason that he is ultimately bored because of the repetitive commands. So the movements are learned in the first part of the play turns into different meanings when the arrangements come in the second part.

After the first part, when all the movements are learned, the light of the stage turns off. I used light in order to underline the separation of the parts in the play.

The second part of the play includes different arrangements. Between the arrangements the first pose was (holding fabric wide open and looking at the audience) used as the separator. The purpose of the movement arrangements in this second part was to deliver examples of the people who deal with fabric in their daily lives.

In the third part of the play, I aimed to completely dissect the relations of the movements that could be grasped in the second part. There would be no definite narrative between the movements. In that way, I expected from the audience as the 4th creator, to fill the gaps and invent new relationships between movements. Furthermore in this last part, the speed of the play dropped to 15 seconds of standing still poses and also sped up to a point that the player could not response. The third part finishes with the sped up period of the play which delivers a lunatic scene for the player who misses all the movements and try to catch any sound he hears.

When the third part finishes, the light turns off and when it turns on again, the

audience confronts with the player trying to reach a rope lying on the ground and the light turns off again. In this final act, I tried to create a piece of information for the audience suggesting that the continuum of this object – body relationship.

Back to the basics

Play 1, was performed on June 23th at Studio Players' main stage. The play lasted for approximately 18 minutes. The photographs from the day of the performance can be seen from the following images.



Fig. 16, Photograph from the performance of Play 1, 2014.



Fig. 17, Photograph from the performance of Play 1, 2014.

After the performance, several important points revealed from the feedback given by the jury of this thesis and the audience. I would like to include these points here to deliver a better reading.

First of all, I would like to include the critiques given related to the structure and the method of *Play 1*. One of the major critique was given by the creator of Performative Acting and Staging Method, Şahika Tekand related to the intention of creating a play with the method. Until the time of the performance, I always consider *Play 1*, as a play truly matching with the notion of the method. However, the main point missed in the play was not to think about the transformation of the actor while confronting the physical challenges. The physical challenges I created for the play was there, however the tiredness of the player or the lunatic condition of the player in the end of the play were not signifying a definite condition of an individual. The intention of the narrative was in the play partly but did not echo on the side of the audience. Moreover, another point perceived related to the method, but cannot seen in *Play 1*, was the importance of the commands and the resignation of the player to the sound of the wrong movement. The sound of the wrong movement was supposed to intervene the on going process of the player in an action or an arrangement; however, sometimes it is ignored by the player. So the audience grasped the idea that the sound of the wrong movement implies something wrong, but, at the same time it can be ignored. Transformation of the sound in the play from something terrifying to something

mundane to be ignored affected the cogency of the performance of the player. Furthermore, the function of the light as a separator between the parts of the play was not perceived as a separator and naturally did not serve its purpose.

Secondly, another critique was on the similarity between the structure of game playing in *Studio Players* and in *Play I*. Especially for the first part of the play, in which the player learns the movements was carrying a huge resemblance with the plays of *Studio Players*. So the originality of the structure of *Play I* became highly questionable. The expectancy of the audience and the jury was on the side of creating a totally new different structure.

Thirdly, the clothing of the player is criticized. As the play was investigating fabric and body relationship, the nakedness of the player was one of the expected thing to be seen on the stage. For this critique, my response was related to my religious identity that retains me from such kind of decision. Moreover, it is also generally accepted among the audience that nakedness of the player challenges the attention.

Overall, beside the critiques given, the physical effort of the player was highly appreciated and advised to design a better structure considering the fabric and body relationship.

CONCLUSION: thread again.

“There in the Simorgh's radiant face they saw
Themselves, the Simorgh of the world - with awe
They gazed, and dared at last to comprehend
They were the Simorgh and the journey's end.
They see the Simorgh - at themselves they stare,
And see a second Simorgh standing there;
They look at both and see the two are one,
That this is that, that this, the goal is won.
They ask (but inwardly; they make no sound)
The meaning of these mysteries that confound
Their puzzled ignorance - how is it true
That 'we' is not distinguished here from 'you?'”³⁵

In the process of this research, personally, one of the most valuable points that can be deduced is the execution of something different than daily life. The predetermined relationships are not subject to change easily in the public eye. My intention, as finding new meanings in fabric and body relationship, found its own realm with the method of Performative Staging and Acting. This method let me transform my body with physical challenges and let me think more about the relationships of these two elements. The body as the medium and the fabric as its secondary aspect of the play were two crucial points that made this exploration platform available to me. Although it was agonizing, delicate and pragmatism, the primary lesson is internalizing the idea of execution for the sake of any possible outcome.

There was no particular agenda to create another play related to fabric before confronting with the feedback given by the audience. Sincerely, instead of taking these critiques as something daunting, I prefer absorbing their enlightening effect which will improve my creative process. The informative side of execution appears once more and leads me to think about developing an idea of creating a play with fabric.

On the other hand, diving deeper, I found out that fabric itself has a symbiotic relationship with me. The more I tried to escape from the term fabric, it catches me one way or another. Objectifying fabric as a tool to create paradigm shifts also affected me

35 Sheikh Farid ud-din Attar, *The Speech of the Birds*, quoted in Rehan Damani, “The Conference of the Birds-Simurgh portrayed by Attar”, rehandamani.blogspot.com, <http://rehandamani.blogspot.com.tr/2009/06/conference-of-birds-simurgh-portrayed.html> (accessed May 10, 2014).

to think this process vice versa. Maybe it is something that I crave to vomit, but could not. And maybe it is something that I hold on to. Probably this is something that will reveal its truth in my creative process. Again, the facts related to this relationship is expected to disclose itself in execution. Only fact that is certain about this process is keeping my faith on creating.

This text as much as its value for contributing to academia as a slice of description also stands for possible future explorations related to fabric and body relationship on stage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

5 Films About Christo and Jeanne-Claude - A Maysles Films Production, dir. by Albert Maysleys, Charlotte Zwerin (NY : Plexifilm : Plexigroup, Inc., 2004).

A Haber, “ “10 adımda unutmak” sahnelerde!”, ahaber.com, Yaşam Haberleri, <http://www.ahaber.com.tr/Yasam/2012/02/02/10-adimda-unutmak-sahnelerde>, (accessed May 10, 2014).

Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Victor Corti (Richmond: Oneworld Classics Ltd, 2010), 63.

Arthur Asa Berger, “Semiological Analysis” in *Media, Knowledge and Power*, ed. Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Peter Braham (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1987), 136.

Bahane @ ARTER, Sürece ne kadar dayanabilirsin?, bahanearter.wordpress.com, http://bahanearter.wordpress.com/2013/12/29/surece_ne_kadar_dayanabilirsin/ (accessed April 20, 2014).

Bayazid Bastami, quoted in James Fadiman and Robert Frager, *Essential Sufism* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 37.

Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 85, <http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/wittgenstein/files/2007/10/Greenbergmodpaint.pdf> (accessed May 1, 2014).

Efnan Atmaca, Interview with Şahika Tekand, *Radikal Gazetesi*, June 06, 2006.

Erem F. Kargül and Yavuz Meyveci, "Oidipus Şimdi Sürgünde," *TurkishTime*, May 15, 2004. (Accessed July 10, 2014).

Haftalık Haber, “Şahika Tekand Yaratımıyla Oyun”, haftalikhaber.com, <http://www.haftalikhaber.com/sahika-tekand-yaratimiyla-oyun/>, (accessed May 5, 2014).

Halil Atasever Vimeo Channel, Bird Performance, <http://vimeo.com/40593523> (accessed February 10, 2014).

Halil Atasever Vimeo Channel, Impossibility of Sujud, <http://vimeo.com/45532711> (accessed February 10, 2014).

İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Şehir Tiyatroları, “İstanbul Şehir Tiyatroları'nın Yeni Oyunu: Oyun,” İbb.gov.tr, <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/sites/sehirtiyatrolari/tr->

TR/Sayfalar/Haber.aspx?hid=356 (accessed March 12, 2014).

Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: Oyunun Toplumsal İşlevi Üzerine Bir Deneme*, trans. Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları 2010), 18.

Jörg Schellmann and Bern Klüser, *Questions to Beuys*, www.walkerart.org, <http://www.walkerart.org/archive/0/9C43F5AB0D3D8FBE6167.htm>
Joseph Beuys: *Actions, Vitrines, Enviroments: Room 4*, www.tate.org.uk, <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/joseph-beuys-actions-vitrines-environments/joseph-beuys-actions-4>, (Accessed July 10, 2014).

Julia Kagansky, *Visitor Viewpoint: Marina Abramovic*, www.moma.org, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/03/29/visitor-viewpoint-marina-abramovic/ (Accessed July 10, 2014).

Kevin Concannon, *Yoko Ono's CUT PIECE: Text to Performance and Back Again*, imaginepeace.com, <http://imaginepeace.com/archives/2680> (Accessed July 12, 2014).

Koç Üniversitesi, “Şahika Tekand'ın Karanlık Korkusu adlı tiyatro oyunu 1 Nisan Pazartesi akşamı SGK'de! Biletler Cuma günü Öğrenci Merkezi -1'de!”, events.ku.edu.tr, <https://events.ku.edu.tr/detail.php?i=6564>, (accessed May 10, 2014).

Luca Stano, “LA BIOMECCANICA E I SUOI PRINCIPI”, www.lucastano.it, <http://www.lucastano.it/la-biomeccanica-e-i-suoi-principi/>, (accessed May 25, 2014), date of the photograph not specified.

LX.TV Youtube Channel, *The artists behind The Gates Christo and Jeanne-Claude*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bADfh_JLLo (accessed December 20, 2014).

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 13.

Nagihan Gürkan, “Sahnenin Seyircide Açtığı Alan Sorunsalı: Meyerhold, Grotowski ve Studio Oyuncuları'nın Yöntemi Üzerinden Bir İnceleme” (MA thesis, Istanbul University, 2011), 62.

Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi Youtube Channel, *Konferans: Anish Kapoor'dan sanatını dinleyin / 10 Eylül 2013*, http://youtu.be/f1x_V2_CZYA (accessed January 11, 2014).

Sevda Şener, *Dünden Bugüne Tiyatro Düşüncesi* (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2012), 307.

Sheikh Farid ud-din Attar, *The Speech of the Birds*, quoted in Rehan Damani, “The Conference of the Birds-Simurgh portrayed by Attar”, rehandamani.blogspot.com, <http://rehandamani.blogspot.com.tr/2009/06/conference-of-birds-simurgh-portrayed.html> (accessed May 10, 2014).

Studio Oyuncuları, “Plays – FEAR OF DARKNESS (2008),” Studiooyuncuları.com, <http://www.studiooyunculari.com/default.asp?2,4,11> (accessed March 11, 2014).

Verda Habif, “Antik Yunan'da Oyunculuk ve Çağdaş Uygulamalar” (MA thesis, Istanbul University, 2008), 2.

Wikipedia contributors, "Act Without Words I," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Act_Without_Words_I#cite_note-1, (accessed May 10, 2014).