


ANAM CARA: BODIES-IN-ABSENCE

**Surviving performance practices in light of the pandemic:
a collective film work in remote isolation**

ANAM CARA: CORPOS-EM-AUSÊNCIA

Práticas performáticas de sobrevivência à luz da pandemia:
um trabalho cinematográfico coletivo em isolamento remoto

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Abstract

This text is the confluence of various online lectures and talks by VestAndPage carried out during the two years of the pandemic (2020-2021) on the themes: the absence of the performer, virtuality, the sense of time during the pandemic, accompanying the online screenings of their performance-based film *ANAM CARA - Mirror in the Mirror* (2020). Talks and screenings were presented in the frame of international performance art festivals and encounters, which, due to COVID-19, had to be realized online. In Latin America, notably at *La Pocha Nostra Virtual School of Performance Dreams and Psychomagic* (Mexico/US), *Acciones al Margen* (Colombia), *Microcine de Performance* (Chile), *Videobardo* (Argentina), *CINE+PERFO* (Argentina), *LATTITUDES* (Bolivia). The text has been edited as a glimpse backwards on reflection, consideration, experiences, and difficulties encountered to adapt performance and Live Art practices on the Internet to keep working, for, in many countries, performance spaces were shut, public events cancelled, and the streets closed, although for safety reasons. The text includes images of the performances and an Annex comprising the film's spoken words and score.

Keywords: pandemic; performance art; absence; time; virtuality.

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Resumo

Este texto é uma confluência de várias palestras e conversas on-line de VestAndPage que aconteceram durante os dois anos da pandemia (2020-2021) sobre os temas: a ausência do performer, virtualidade, o sentido do tempo durante a pandemia, acompanhando a exibição do filme baseado na performance *ANAM CARA - Mirror in the Mirror* (2020) [*Espelho no espelho*, em tradução literal]. Conversas e exibições foram apresentadas no contexto de festivais internacionais de arte performática e encontros, os quais, devido à COVID-19, tiveram que acontecer on-line. Na América Latina, notavelmente nas *La Pocha Nostra Virtual School of Performance Dreams and Psychomagic* (Mexico/US), *Acciones al Margen* (Colombia), *Microcine de Performance* (Chile), *Videobardo* (Argentina), *CINE+PERFO* (Argentina), *LATTITUDES* (Bolivia). Este texto foi editado como um olhar retroativo sobre as reflexões, considerações, experiências, e dificuldades encontradas para adaptar performances e práticas artísticas ao vivo na internet para continuar atuando, pois, em muitos países, espaços de performance foram fechados, eventos públicos cancelados, e as ruas fechadas, mesmo que por razões de segurança. O texto inclui imagens de performances e um anexo que abrange as palavras faladas e a partitura do filme.

Palavras-chave: pandemia; performance artística; ausência; tempo; virtualidade.



Inside a caesura

When the pandemic broke out in February 2020, my partner Verena Stenke and I could not foresee that we would have to transform ourselves into Internet-based performance artists. Day after day, we gradually surrendered to cyberspace to continue working and find new solutions for an income. It was an obligatory choice, taken against our will, and the only possibility to inhabit a “void” when an artistic practice like ours, body-based performance art, is prevented from the physical environments where it usually occurs.

Following governments’ restrictions to contrast the spread of the SARS-CoV-2, all public live arts events were cancelled. The dates were no longer valid. Institutional and alternative spaces from which performing arts practices emerge and are hosted were closed, strictly regulated, force-constrained in their nature, waiting to be redefined otherwise. It was as if a boat ran aground for the tide’s receding or a sledge trapped by the buckling ice’s subsidence below.

When countries began experiencing massive hospitalization as coronavirus cases multiplied and worsened, what happened, particularly in performing arts, was a loosening, not a pause. Likewise, in medical-surgical terminology, an accidental factor causes the detachment of parts of a functioning organ until a few moments before, creating a dysfunction. It is the same in geology, when a crack, a cut, a fissure, or a split becomes the cause of the interruption of the continuity of the rock: a mobile fracture that discomposes it, at times breaking it down.

We felt to have slipped inside this crack despite ourselves. The ordinary course of events shrunk, causing a troublesome “shift” in our artistic activity and working plans. Suddenly, we found ourselves being performers “interrupted”. Our creative journey suffered an impasse because of an imponderable external factor far beyond our capacity to deal with it.

To say it with Dante: “Midway along the journey of our life / I woke to find myself in a dark wood” (Alighieri, 1984, p. 67). Dante wrote these lines precisely to recreate the emotion of an event: the feeling of being lost in an obscure, unknown place (Figure 1).

To do so, Dante arranged the words in hendecasyllable verses. This standard eleven-syllable line can always be broken down into two hemistiches, determined by a caesura placed between words within a metrical foot after an accent, although it is not fixed. So, it produces a suspension, thus changing rhythm, pace or linear fluidity inside the verse.



Figure 1- *Midway along the journey of our life*. Still from film. Scarification: Enok Ripley.



Drawing: Giorgi de Santi, 2020.

When the lockdown became mandatory, our artistic activity was suspended abruptly. Metaphorically, we slipped into an unexpected caesura contoured by obligatory confinement (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - *Inside the caesura (The White Crow)*. Still from film. Performer: VestAndPage, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.



Suddenly, we were cast away from the ‘normal’ before — absent actors and no more viable stages. Redefining our performance practice in the virtual and digital space appeared to be the only solution. By doing so, our concern was not to solely reinvent ourselves as performance artists and reformulate our practice according to the present circumstances. It meant becoming aware that whatever would have been the resultant (new works), inevitably, it would have echoed what our practice and production were before the spread of the pandemic, thus risking becoming a surrogate.

While our working dates started to be annulled one after the other and funding applications postponed on time to be determined, we began to devise alternatives. We relied on our poetic credo about reality, namely that of a *Perpetuum mobile* with fleeting outlines shaped by unpredictable events that often escape rational thoughts. When reality is unexpectedly “invaded by something too strange to believe” (Stretcher, 1999, p. 267), the threshold between paradox and certainty blurs, and the gaze is astonished. A strange sensation occurred: it was like hovering inside a *vacuum* surrounded by walls of liquid amber, our view confused on the outside beyond. In the first months of the pandemic, with the internet as the only tool to keep communication with peers, students and friends alive, it was that of feeling caged in a troublingly surreal state: a rabbit hole where time was waiting to tune in (Figure 3). Were solitude and disconnection the new common ground to experiment and steer our performance practice? How could we communicate meanings efficiently in remote through an artistic practice that relies on bodies engaging physically and directly with other bodies? In forced isolation, thoughts and ideas may become anaemic if not fuelled by relations in proximity and vital exchange. When seclusion becomes *lieu d’habitude*, and there is no way out, it is challenging to respond powerfully to what barbarously dies every day and is unjust for body-based performance practitioners used to perform live all that as their urgencies. Is there any way to shape new spaces for necessary human expression inside the web, where all is rapidly consumed, exploited, surveilled and instantly homologated? How can Live Art survive when “being physically invisible” is more factual than everything and “to be in proximity” is a no-no?



Figure 3 - *A rabbit hole where time was waiting to tune in.* Still from film. Performer: Verena Stenke.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

Absence in place of presence

Presence, time, space and communication are concepts at the core of performing arts practices and time, space, and communication. As Jacques Derrida argued, we do not assume presence “as a metaphysical entity, or as an emanation of a force field” implicit and activated by a performer to which an audience responds in the performance space (Macneill, 2014, p. 137). We look at it in terms of *corporeality*: bodily presence as a material fact in a given space where the performance occurs. When lockdowns and bans became enforceable and prolonged to contrast the spread of the coronavirus, performing live in a public space became an impossibility and, in some places, almost a crime. Thus, to continue practising and to find a way out, we began researching the antonym of presence: the notion of “absence”. By definition, “absence”, as a noun, indicates the fact or condition of somebody being away from a place where they should be or from companionship.

Conversely, “presence”, as a noun, refers to the fact or condition of being in a particular place or proximity to something or someone else. To Derrida, those antinomies are “none other than the conceptual oppositions on which Western metaphysics has staked its logo-centric claims” (Fuchs, 1985, p. 72). For the French philosopher, the living



presence is not something absolute, primal, auratic or pure, “but rather reconstituted” (Derrida, 1978, p. 212).

Taking Derrida’s stance as our point of departure, we attempted to frame our performance practice within the concept of absence approached as a paroxysmal presence. We confronted it as a tangible, ineluctable phenomenon (experienced from our first-person point of view) from which we could not withdraw. It affected our consciousnesses, creative dynamics, work methods and way of life.

For Derrida and Deleuze, “absence and presence have lost their binaried distinction” (Bell, 2010). They reveal a discontinuous relation: both images of each other but “without resemblance” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 257).

Thus, how do our bodies, as two driving forces, relate to forced isolation and the feeling of absence it provokes? How can our bodies deal with it as a new, potentially active reality? How can we transform the state of paralysis it caused into a creative source afresh?

In performance art and Live Art, the complication of elaborating on presence and absence derives from both, depending on the notion of being. That is, being precisely in a given place, not being there, or in relation to that particular place. “Being”, therefore, exists within a precise structure, a framework or a specific state. Therefore, if being-in-absence is a state possessing a different kind of presence, its experience may not be just perceptual. It may be “an intellectual seeming” (Cow, 2021, p. 169), affecting cognition and decision-making. Thus, it may be represented through artistic operations to give it a face, a trajectory, or a luminous form. It was a question of overturning bodily presence into a corporeal being-in-absence state. Even in the digital age, performers still need their bodies to create working situations and gatherings in shared spaces. Just as in everyday life, people cannot ignore the relationship between their bodies and physical spaces. With the bans on performing in public spaces, theatres and museums, we reconsidered what it means to limit access to production spaces of cultural and artistic knowledge. Spaces for artistic production are necessary spaces, although not essential to life, but systematically relevant since they relate to more significant ones of the social sphere, where access is not only limited but often denied. To claim the need for physical, social and discursive spaces means to rethink them with care and long-term. The only space we had then to perform was our own home, for some just a shared room, yet at least a place somewhere to start. So, during the first lengthy lockdown, we invited twenty-two artists to collaborate with us “in remote”. It was as if we were pairing the tiles of a new mosaic entitled “Absence, Year 0”. We imagined gathering together in a virtual dwelling, imaginary, yet to inhabit, and where to perform. However, this *modus operandi* seems paradoxical when compared to a live



performance. If bodily presence is evidence of being alive, maybe being-in-absence is a state to embody to stay active and keep working. Although it sounds like a contradiction, are there ways to prove it somehow valid? How can twenty-two performers isolated in their homes realize a collective work through individual contributions? How can we intersect their states of being in absence to express togetherness and proximity despite the distance?

We imagined these contributions as invisible cut threads to collect and reassemble: fragments of personal experiences about isolation, insects of time prepared and skewed that connect us. If taken and stitched together, they belong to the collective psyche. If intertwined, they puzzle a current event that seems to freeze the clock's heart, integrating exploded time particles before they dissolve. Creativity makes us human, and it is where human becomes. We need art and culture because they make us a society. Performing, acting and storytelling always make a side of ourselves vibrate, and they are seminal elements for communities over time. They show us where we belong or where we want to go. In ancient times, before they came to rest, people gathered around the fireplace and reflected on the day just passed, creating rituals, engaging in storytelling, performing, and celebrating. These moments move a community forward together and harness the weight of insecurity towards the future, transforming this weight into regenerative rather than degenerative. Imagining our screens and video cameras as flames of the same fireplace, during spring 2020, we realized an experimental collective performance-based film, *“ANAM CARA – Mirror in the Mirror”*, a radical, contemporary fairy tale about the concept of home. In the rooms of an imaginary dwelling, we engaged in performance actions and poetic sharing about our notions of home, isolation and absence - a place-non-place, without inside or outside, where the invisible is made visible and vice versa (Figure 4).

What does “home” mean when forced inside, for insecurity, unpredictability, disease, and death are the denominators of the moment? What can body-based artists speak about then, and to whom? Physically distant, how can a collective co-creative spirit be kept up? Which philosophies, theories, and methodologies could we rely on to re-establish a sense of community, encounter and mutual belonging among us? How can we use our performative practices as an essential tool to frame our imagined definitions of “home” not in terms of geographic location but of body and self? Home can be a place to explore through temporality: a presence, a future, an aspiration translated into a shared virtual space to listen to each other and speak of the unsaid. Alternatively, through affectivity: from the intimate and personal to the universal, drawing from emotional states in which one feels safe or excluded, concerned, impacted by the consequences, but still inspired to offer their artistic response.



Figure 4 - *A place-non-place*. Still from film.

Image: Verena Stenke (VestAndPage), 2020.

Absence and ephemerality: a further consideration

Philosopher Timothy Morton uses the term “hyper-objects” (Morton, 2013) to explain objects so massively distributed over time and space that they transcend localization, including nature, climate change, race, class, and the internet. These are objects so vast that we cannot touch or control them. Even the pandemic is a hyper-object for Morton and “further proof that we live in a dark ecology” (Meis, 2021).

The SARS-COV-2 provoked a considerable U-turn in our lives, and we were unprepared to stem the spread. The pandemic demonstrated how fragile the human species is and quaked the anthropocentric view at its essence. It showed that reality is an entity in evolution not subjected to our will but carried out through dynamic forces we do not fully understand, nor can we regulate entirely.

However, this epochal moment also offered the opportunity to radically rethink how we relate to reality, exploring the political and social implications that follow. Humans have always been used to building environments to live inside and absent themselves from them. Factories, automated distribution centres and credit institutions can create an absence by replacing the human worker with a robot, a computer, or software.

During COVID-19, places to perform remained empty, triggering a sense of discontinuity, deficiency and lack. Without a live audience, many attempts were made to



keep these spaces alive through digital and virtual operations, which reminded us of past performances in which the performer was absent. For instance, performances where non-human machines replace the performer, bringing to consider decentralization and the eventual disappearance of the human being. One seminal example is “DJs Bots” (2007) by the German artist group *RobotLab*, a performance installation in which the human remains present but in a ghostly state, replaced by performing machinery; likewise, it happens in the *Matrix* tetralogy, where absences, spectral humans and digital presences collide continuously.

In replacing the human, the concept of the performer’s absence can stimulate an accretive reflection around anthropocentrism. It puts into question the relationship we have with technology. It allows for shifting the anthropocentric vision and focusing more on analyzing the discriminatory and violent aspects of several human activities, the ensuing conflicts and subsequent interactions and rearrangements wherever these occur. Ultimately, it may offer us the possibility of overcoming divisive norms with which we define ourselves for habit.

Performance art has the property of lasting for a short time. It reminds us that the state or condition of the human being is intrinsically temporary and transient. The finitude of humanity today is located between the euphoria of technology and the threats of pandemics, economic recession, climate change, and wars. Reflecting on the concepts of being in the absence and the ephemerality of the human being can push us to rethink the process of becoming in creative ways.

As argued by Parmenides, if nothing can be made from nothing, “nothing is not” (Mumford, 2021, p. 5). Perhaps the ideas that we need today were born before us. Perhaps we even knew what would have happened and what we would have done thereafter, only that we did not pay sufficient attention. To this perspective, to be absent is not a refusal to be present, to abstain or restrain oneself from doing something. It may be interpreted as a conscious act of retracting oneself for a while and taking time long enough to understand what our reason cannot grasp yet because of our crystallized beliefs.



**The original and its spectral double:
about holograms and phantasmal presences in times of contagion**

This, is my home. A space where through the revelation of our vulnerabilities, and the modulation of time, we hope to reach towards a deeper understanding of ourselves, and of each other. As if for the very first time. To me, this is the job of performance art when the body communicates all of these things and more, and in the absence of physical space in which to let these things play-out, I am very grateful to be in a position of being able to construct these holograms through time which might communicate affect and experience at distance—as objects in themselves rather than well-meaning but second-rate proxies for real experience (Daz Disley).

In July 2020, we were invited to participate as performance artists in a digital artist-in-residence in a Renaissance castle in Italy⁴. The artworks produced during the artist-in-residence would have been later exhibited online streaming and physically displayed on video and projections in the rooms of the premises for a limited audience in-person attendance. Because of the impossibility of performing live due to the COVID-19 regulations, we looked for alternatives without compromising our practice. We devised our intervention by confronting ourselves with “being in the absence” and how to render it performatively.

In art, the hologram is a way to represent the absence of someone or something visually, for it keeps its presence in some way visible even though impalpably. “Hologram” is a word that comes from *olo-* (from the Greek *ὅλος*, all) and from *-gramma*, which stands for *graph-ma*: letter, line, an engraved, hollowed sign (from the Greek *γράφω*, to write, scratch, cut, carve, draw, also sculpt).

Holography is a technique that enables a wavefront to be recorded and later reconstructed. It is a method of generating three-dimensional images and reproducing spatial information, such as the depth of an object or different angles of view. Even if it is just a picture, the eye perceives it as accurate and authentic because of its spatiality.

Holography offers a sensory impression of a tangible object through an intangible image that replaces it. The holographic image is a luminous shadow of an object/a real thing that it reproduces. It is likely to be the real thing, a trace of light that returns it in ghostlike, ethereal contours and shape, but it is not the real thing.

Holographic images are like avatars of something that exists or already has existed, in the sense that the holographic image, to be alive, still needs a real thing to reproduce. A hologram, replacing the real thing (the original), becomes its simulacrum. Even if it is only a semblance of it, it testifies to an absence, a lack, an insufficiency, a disappearance of the



original, since, to generate a hologram, there is still the need for an original. Sometimes, in musical or political events, the application of the holographic image defines a presence in the absence of semiotic signs. In those cases, it becomes a paradigmatic deconstructive gesture, a decompensation. For example, a holographic image of a real person resembling the original person produces an alienation, even disturbing. It is an artifice that reveals unique aspects of an already-known reality because technological construction is not hidden.

In pursuing our artistic operation, what we reckoned alarming was that the hologram could represent the point of exhaustion of the image of the original thing (in our case, our bodies) since it merges with them to return them immaterial, thus emptying them of its intrinsic characteristics and qualities.

However, in the context of our film, the primary entry point is not holography as a physical medium of visual information but the hologram as a higher-level abstract concept from which other aspects can be devised and uncovered. That is that the hologram of a living, existent person (or existed) transforms the original into an interposed, provisional creature, a sort of zombie avatar, a transient spectre that complicates the linearity of that thin thread connecting life to death, tracing but blurring their border. There is a mysterious fascination in all this, like entering a phantom-like manor. The hologram creates a subtle, articulated meta-reality/virtual reality that inspires awe and wonder but also addiction and fear.

Admittedly, it seemed to us that resorting to the holographic image to replace us as performers was the choice most in line with our poetics: an act of surrender, a failure, perhaps not definitive, although due to a precise historical moment in which distance, the closing of public performance spaces and protective face-mask served to reduce the danger of contagion.

We looked at the hologram as a “performing” device capable of presenting the ethereal impression of something existing or belonging to the past, creating a phenomenological situation of declared appearance while alluding to its disappearance. Perhaps it paradoxically becomes more potent than the real things it represents because of the illusion it gives (Figure 5).



Figure 5. *I can still smell the roses (At the edge of the spectrum)*. Still from the film.

Image: Daz Disley, 2020.

Holography (the medium) is a tangible analog process using phase coherence of light rather than simply light intensity, as seen in photography. Nevertheless, holographic images of a human being, when deployed to replace it (e.g. for a conference or a public speech in remote), function similarly to robotic substitutes of the human being in a factory. It is like that human liveliness is sacrificed to technology. The spectral double of the human becomes a functional component of the post-organic and post-human contexts, e.g. cyberspace, where algorithms encode social and human interactions into amounts of data. These replacements are not mere scientific choices: they relate to the current socio-political and economic situation. In the not-too-distant future, studies of the potential long-term impact of automation have estimated that over fifty per cent of the existing jobs are vulnerable to replacement by machines and software and will not be carried out by people anymore. These predictions raise questions that have to do with the ultimate meaning of our (human) existence. Why do we have the drive to invent devices that oust us? Why do we create more and more sophisticated machines that can replace us? What is it that we do not like about ourselves as human beings? Machinic devices will undoubtedly continue to replace a lot of tedious activities we have to do. However, there is also the existential risk that replacements and replicas of real humans may reduce our capacity to determine our choices and make meaning from reality through reflective and creative actions.

Returning to the hologram issue, a quality it has is to transform representation into abstraction. Representation is the action taken on behalf of someone or the state of being thus represented. It can also be defined as describing something in a particular, metonymic way. For instance, in rhetoric, it is the cause that describes the effect or the matter of the object. In art, symbols, metaphors and allegories help depict designated matters, concepts and abstractions. Representing a defined object through those rhetorical devices allows one to interpret it from another, often illuminating perspective. However, it can also lead to undesirable results. For instance, a symbol is not the original object to which it refers. It is like the symbol appropriates the original object to define it otherwise.

Representing a concept through symbols and metaphors returns that same concept by proposing a new reading. By appropriating it, it is as if the symbol corrupts the concept's identity to assume its own autonomous identity that is not that of the actual concept. However, it allows for a quality of managing ideas that may be surprising.

The holographic representation of a designated object stems from an experience of the object itself. It is not an exercise of translating the object the same as it is, and it offers a new reading of the object it represents beyond how the original object appears to the senses. The hologram takes away the physical dimension of the object it resembles and makes it something else. It may sound contentious if light is understood as a wave-field/wavefront rather than a particle. The physical dimension is visually communicated through a wave field, and this continuous field is emulated/reproduced (obviously with errors) by holography.

However, the point is that the holographic representation of a designated object proposes it as an abstraction, allowing an aesthetic experience of a different kind. Abstraction helps identify the commonly understood characteristics of defined conceptions and objects, isolating their standard features to rearrange them by retaining only the information relevant to a particular purpose. In philosophical terminology, abstraction is the mental process in which ideas are distanced from the objects they refer to, seeking a particular fluidity of experience concerning the designated object as a problematizing matter.

Furthermore, the experiential process of realizing a hologram of a specific object brings forth existing problems inherent in the standard definition of the object itself. It puts them in a different light, moreover if the object of study is the human body. The hologram, reproducing the object's shape, dematerializes it and questions its material substance's value. Eventually, it allows an acquired knowledge and a new understanding, which involves thinking, memory, and the ability to discern and solve problems. However,



in our case, the hologram functioned as a remedy, an episodic solution to the impossibility of being physically present to perform in physical spaces and convey the sense of absence we felt in that particular moment.

On the other hand, it was an operation to imagine possible “intermediate spaces” to assume being in absence as a political act of repositioning, distancing performance itself from being a product of entertainment. The characteristics of spaces where performances take place can be precisely listed. They can also change at any time, not necessarily due to performers and audience, since even a simple computer can change them. During the days of the pandemic, their features were univocal: spaces of stillness and deadlock— gathering and performing forbidden activities. So, the hologram allowed us to glimpse a liminal space where we can still act despite its evident artificiality.

We could have conceived an online live-streaming performance, as we have been asked other times, but we preferred not to. In online live streaming performances, we have always detected insufficient liveliness— the PC or mobile phone screen as if it were the performer’s digital exoskeleton, a functional operator of a more powerful non-human entity. Also, a strange moment occurs after watching an online live-streaming performance online. Instead of ending in applause, one can easily click a button, navigate elsewhere, or shut down the computer. Of course, this reading concerns how we deal personally with this issue.

Using generic webcams and simply dumping the laptop at the back of a space to do a zoom performance has not the impact that this framing and field of view has on the gaze and the direction of attention that happens through a live performance with a live body influencing the space. Good video cameras, e.g. used for online teaching, help to reach a more present presence, allowing a more sympathetic aesthetic to be delivered. The channel is one thing, but the content that reaches through the channel is semantic. Ideally, the syntax should not impact the semantics, but it does all the time with bad cameras, lighting, and usually feeble sound for online performances (Disley, 2023).

In this regard, however, it is also necessary to reflect on the accessibility and democratic use of technological devices: how many artists can afford sophisticated technological tools? According to a 2022 United Nations International Telecommunication Union report, one in three people worldwide does not have internet access yet.

By this, it is not that one solution is better than the other. At first sight, holographic projections are not referable to anything other than the memory that one has of the original they represent, while an online live-streaming performance lacks the vital energy that bodies express in proximity while being in a physical space. However, they still achieve



something accomplished. They both allow the original to communicate differently. They formally reproduce or channel the original through a temporary, specific, performative action using bytes, pixels, and beams of light from an energy source. The human senses perceive the original as immaterial, a *locum* of cold light that stands through an infinite *vacuum*, phantasmatic presences tracing intermediate, virtual spaces where we can still meet. However, when the electric source is removed, the game ends.

With body, I attempt to understand, in the infinite present

The digital makes us discover something not known before. Discovery creates satisfaction, and satisfaction creates addiction. For example, thanks to artificial intelligence, unifying biological and chemical phenomena theories can be explained. Still, in this way, the distinction between biology and chemistry no longer becomes significant. Artificial intelligence can aspire to certainty, but AI cannot achieve a “rightness” beyond the possibility of future criticism (the same for any scientific theory). It is as if AI “blocks” pieces of information.

I think of the word “absence” after every live intervention I perform on the web. I wonder if the only sensible thing to do is demonstrate that it is only an obstacle to overcome, almost a nuisance. I have the privilege of relying on abstract, digital, more or less mechanical techniques. Notwithstanding, I also feel how much these techniques limit me in choosing specific topics and situations that I would like to explore more deeply. Thus, they limit my understanding and the possibility of reasonably attempting to solve unexpected problems related to them in the present and future. On the web, understanding is anything as a bonus, an optional extra. Eventually, what are we aiming for, if not to understand and evolve?

As a performer, I understand the reality with my body as long as I am alive. Over the years, I realized how a particular ideology identifies the human body, demonstrating the prejudices of that ideology itself. For example, the doctrine of a class seeking to maintain its dominion over that one engaged in direct physical work for its daily existence. The body and its alleged manifestations—work, sweat, pleasure, and pain, have often been defamed compared to the subtle bodies and their alleged manifestations: soul, mind, thought, intellect, and knowledge. I do not rely on these clear-cut separations, for the human body is an active part of the cognitive process, which in the future might be subject and depend on the extent they can be related to other kinds of operations. Still, I hope that future generations can operate not only in contexts precisely like those we presume or imagine



today but also evaluate and choose systems and processes most suited to them. It will be more difficult if they no longer recognize any connection with the similarities, differences and situations that direct communication between people allows.

Humans tend to look to the future with hope, optimism or pessimism, and somehow, they always try to foresee it. For instance, during the first two years of the coronavirus, predictions relating to the future were innumerable.

The tendency to make predictions assuming that what is happening now can continue in the future, rather than considering it a progressive change related to a *continuum* sequence of events, does not offer a reason to believe that a current situation will continue beyond the present. When insufficient knowledge of the fundamental causes leads to a specific state of circumstances, any prediction is in vain.

A progression of articulated occurrences often includes unforeseen incidents that escape logic beyond human control. Nonetheless, they are still a result of human activity—thoughts, decisions, actions, and consequences. So, we have to position ourselves accordingly as an act of responsibility.

In light of the increasing tragedies we are experiencing nowadays, it is evident that we still make mistakes similar to those of the past, but also, it is somehow trivial to reiterate the obsolete expression that history repeats itself and that there is little that we can do. However, a question lingers - how can we bring about positive societal changes if we persist in those same errors that inevitably lead to conflicts and division?

If I look at the performer's work, whose requirement is to be present in the here and now, I wonder if, by chance, we still fail to inhabit time as we should, operating entirely in the present, in the *nowness*, instead of shifting the focus on expectations and pre-occupations towards a future that we do not yet possess and that when it becomes often contradicts them. The capitalist system we have built shows us precisely that: we live under pressures of every sort without knowing why. It takes us down instead of forward.

During the first two years of the pandemic, it was as if the past seemed to push forward towards the present, and the future bounced backwards as if a stalemate had occurred in the temporal continuity as it was previously perceived in situations defined as "normal". Temporal continuity is intimately connected to spatial continuity, the continuity of the self, the body, the matters and all the elements that participate in the universe's formation. Nature implies that all beings are in relation. The pandemic, manifesting as an unexpected experience in time and space, has affected consciousness, understood not as an empirical subjectivity but as a transcendental foundation of every possible experience. It



also revealed the flaws in the anthropocentric worldview and conceptions of temporal continuity.

Continuity between past, present and future infers that human beings act on hypotheses drawn from experience. “The problem is how to justify the root assumption that the future will may resemble the past and counter the argument of extreme scepticism which holds that this cannot be done” (Rogers, 1972, p. 87).

This dilemma concerning human understanding of time was already present in the ancient Indian and Hellenistic philosophical traditions. Later, in the mid-18th century, David Hume formulated it as the principle of uniformity of nature (elsewhere said the problem of induction), postulating that a sequence of events in the future will occur as it always has in the past (Hume, 2000).

In principle, it is conceivable that the future may differ from the past. Still, certain proofs cannot establish it since there can be no evidence concerning the future other than the inference from an experience whose validity can otherwise always be questioned.

Even if historical knowledge and the reading of the present allowed any prediction, what future should we talk about when the future has not yet arrived?

If evidence for a future exists because predicted available, the “future would no longer be the future, and the evidence would no longer be evidence” (Rogers, 1972, p. 88).

In this sense, the future is a time that never comes. Consequently, nothing can be known because it does not yet exist (Will, 1947).

There is a risk in expressing ourselves about a possible future that arrives, assuming the unsolved problematics of the present. Forests devastation. Climate change. Pollution. Automation in place of human labour. Mass migrations due to wars, poverty, and forced displacement. Looking at such shreds of evidence, one can forecast a time in which worse things than today may happen and that if there is no radical change, the exactitude of such a prediction can be verified correctly.

One can even foresee that the near future will be like the recent past because the experience of countless positive and more negative examples on those matters and in daily life confirmed it. For instance, looking at how today’s politics are turning increasingly authoritarian, one may predict a near future with particular specificity resembling recent past examples of that kind - moments and events already occurred during history and defined over time, as if to say that history between courses and resorts always returns to where it began.

Historical floods and ebb tides in the social and political spheres have always been effects of conflicts between groups of powers, ruling classes and people clashing, often



bringing the destruction of the previous order to leave space for a different one. This way of reasoning may bring us to formulate a more valid prediction due to “the criterion of frequency with which similar events, or patterns of them, are repeated” (Rogers, 1977, p. 89).

Alternatively, one may say that the near future is precisely here and now because, from observing current circumstances, the short-term future consists of events shaped by those same circumstances. If so, T.S. Eliot’s concept about time, which infers on St. Augustine’s *Confessions* and takes roots in stanza XVII, 16-18 of the *Paradiso* by Dante, confirms to be valid: “Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future / And time future contained in time past. / If all time is eternally present, all time is unredeemable” (Eliot, 1943, p. 1).

Nevertheless, even though the short-term future will resemble the past and the present is contained in it, and the future is shaped by causes and effects of similar cases (which, however new, can be associated with predicting the near future), to establish precisely how much time can pass from today to the near future is perhaps impossible. Still, it does not mean to nurture expectations - always present time points - for the future and that, if wrong, they can be hopefully corrected.

Historical knowledge allows us to conceive limited but practically useful predictions and anticipations. However, the past may be useless as a guide if not contextualized and analyzed objectively. There is probably no way of knowing if the future will be like the past. Little can be learned from history when interpreted in a way too general since all events are unique. The assumption that past, present and future are not separable implies that they regularly contaminate one another and that parts of them coagulate. In turn, they generate conceptual frameworks of expectation that may vary from negative to positive to predict which connections between past, present and future should be reinforced and strengthened for a constructive change.

As the lockdowns continued, it was like being stuck in an infinite present. Being unable to choose otherwise from a physical distance turned into an existential experience. The paradoxical interdiction of the performer’s usual activity left on hold in an infinite present gave room for reflection. Thus, the experimental, collective performance-based film “*ANAM CARA – Mirror in the Mirror*”¹ was born as an urgency to provide an autonomous zone of encounter, albeit in remote, where the performers could meet and form a temporary artistic community to share their feelings of helplessness in the face of the unfolding of events but perform their hopes as a reaction.

¹ <https://www.vest-and-page.de/anam-cara-mirror-in-the-mirror>



Stagnation as a sensation is when the future appears to be present “in the same sense in which the past is present” (Pinar, 1975, p. 9). However, it is precisely there that, for those artists who explore the human and the politics of the body, all the more must be done to devise alternative strategies to continue to put in multidimensional dialogue biographies, the conceptual and pre-conceptual, the material and the immaterial, impossibilities and possibilities. It may be an option to extract a matter of more in-depth understanding to withstand time by using it qualitatively to shed light on the fragmented beauty of our inner and outer violated landscapes from which to create live images to nail and hang onto the sliding doors of the nowness. “Beauty, without a doubt, does not make revolutions. But a day comes when revolutions need Beauty” (Camus, 1991, p. 276).

In the age of ethics adrift like ours, beauty may spring from connections formed by sharing ideas of fairness and equality necessary for a new planetary harmony that takes precedence over economic and instrumental relations (Expósito, 2020).

The pandemic has proven that nature is an intelligent, self-organizing living system/living matter. It is above the finitude of the human mental structures which organize knowledge (Braidotti, 2018).

The human being as the Being-as-Being per se, deemed alone, is limited. Instead, relations allow countless transformations to a diversity of beings linked continually to one another, shaping reality and forming history. Eventually, they are an indispensable, inspirational source for our imagination. To imagine it is no escapism nor generalization. “No imagination helps avert destitution, in reality, oppose oppressions or sustain those who ‘withstand’ in body or spirit. But imagination changes mentalities, however slowly it may go about this” (Glissant, 2010, p. 184).

CODA (For a Post COVID-19)

Nothing will ever be the same again. At least, so we say. Many aspects of our lives and political scenarios will change because we will soon have learned the lesson. An external enemy has taught us, humans, that we are part of a single species, vulnerable and fragile, and that in the face of such a calamity, we must unite and act in harmony, creatively and consciously, to save ourselves. An enemy invisible to sight has broken through everywhere. It has easily crossed walls and borders. It can affect anyone. It has proved that national differences result from stories steeped in the blood of many innocent people but then misused by a few groups of power to exercise their authority and impose their



dogmas. I think again about the meaning of borders: abstract lines on Earth, hosting us for about 200,000 years. Measly, if compared to its birth, about 4.5 billion years ago.

As in a classic science fiction B-movie, we will realize that it is useless to keep fighting each other because the real enemy has arrived and is of a different species. We cannot see it. We cannot grasp it, but it has attacked us from all sides. It is an emissary of nature: an infinitesimal virus with its spiky crown. Its diameter is about 0.10 microns but has upset all our petty certainties. Nature has decided to strike back, and maybe SARS-Cov-2 is but a shot across the bow. For too long, we have disrespected her. Now, she has turned against us. She does not care about borders, nations, or social classes. For her, we are all the same. Perhaps this is what it means to us: that we are all equal and must care for each other without unnecessary distinctions, accepting to live in balance with the planet, without exploiting it or presuming to dominate it, realizing that we are part of a whole but fragile, vulnerable, as all things are.

Indeed, through the virus, nature has told us that we are an extraordinary animal species. We have the gifts of learning, conscience and awareness. Therefore, we can also imagine humanity born anew in solidarity, where we no longer need to operate through lies, crimes and abuse but by exercising benevolence, compassion and togetherness. There is still time to change and turn our dreams into reality. We will soon understand it will no longer make sense to say “the other” because the others are all of us, we humans. We will agree that investments in military arsenals are entirely useless because they contradict the needs of humanity. So, we will use those same investments to build new hospitals and schools to protect everyone’s health and disseminate education. Armies will turn into peacekeepers and social workers. Nations will turn into administrations for the welfare of the people, cooperating internationally to protect human rights without exception, distinction or limitation. Weapons of mass destruction and nuclear and atomic warheads will be defused and banned forever. The war industry will recycle itself and provide clean energy and homes for all. To contradict the need for humanity to live in peace no longer makes sense.

Peace begins in people’s minds and hearts. The virus will pass, but something has changed forever. A new prosperous economy will develop through solidarity, and there will be no room for fear. Knowledge and health care will be freely delivered. Hence, everyone can study for free, cultivating resources hidden in everyone’s desires. Everyone will have medical attention. Artists, cultural operators, artisans and other categories with uncertain incomes and precarious living will enjoy financial support to keep their work and their culture, or rather cultures, alive.



The new humanity - we, tomorrow - will have learnt to love life as it is: accepting problems and solving them together, with reasonableness and empathy - moreover, all accepting aspects of one another, progressive, open spirits who yearn for knowledge and compassion. We will stop hurting each other over any dispute and controversy because we are committed to rebuilding something better, no matter how long it takes. We will finally end human mistreatment, abuse, exploitation, and devastation of nature. We will do it because we have imagined all this for some time now, and it is today's emergency. Nature warned us in time, and we understood it. Did we?

The impact of the pandemic has stretched beyond the health crisis. 2020 saw many events, including BLM, climate change and the inequalities endemic in society. Now, there are new wars in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and armed conflicts in Latin America and South Asia. These global crises and atrocities require a wisdom of "non-violence" responses. If accepted, common-sense ideas are invisible, words matter, expressions matter, and performances matter to describe, challenge and contribute to change the way the world is.



Annex

ANAM CARA – The Mirror in the Mirror Film texts and score

Prologue. The White Rabbit. Performance: Verena Stenke (VestAndPage)

The White Rabbit's spoken words: “In the beginning, the possibility was still astounding. At the fence, next to the burdock, they could have cared. And they did not. May we be frightened by tomorrow’s numbers. The blackbird sings. The blue tit builds its nest for this year in the wild sunshine. If only the virologists would agree. Everything is hamstrung, disoriented and at Home. And the frontiers are closed - this is called dynamic. And seeds are sprouting, and one is coughing. The city shakes lanterns to test their stability in the storm. The hawk defends its territory in circles. A chicken crosses the road in the village. The gardens will never have been so well prepared. We gain time in the encounter filled with questions. One to the other with distance without compulsion. But what do we know? We pass through fears like rooms. A week like a year already, no more counted on the day. And numbers that float, and every country is different. And all are somehow – not – the same. Times beat onto each other. The season changes. One grass weighs. The wind blows - further, wider, higher, faster, through the alleys, spreading it. Today, you have again thought of a tomorrow that feeds on yesterday - being now. Time raises wings through the quake we pass you on. A morning then beneath me. You will wear the mask in the morning. You follow the traces at night. The sheep are back. It is Eastern. A tickle beside the development curve, there is who doubts, who asks, and who desponds. There is nothing to find. And this idiosyncrasy that is happening cyclically postponed by two weeks. And there is truly news from the past. But you won’t hear what the one from the future says because you don’t see it. And until you see it already is today. So it comes to everyone, and news fades inside our mouths. We keep swallowing the time that we have. Wheat grows on dry ground like green fluff. It could go on like this or differently. To whom it is enough and who wants something else. In the morning, we ask why the days are all the same - as if before it had been any different. The distance is good or compels. The fear of loss of breath makes us afraid to breathe. It twitters. No scream. Spawn swims in the pond. For a brief moment, I had this feeling: This is what it feels like to be the last person on earth. And I drove on and looked, and there was no one. And no bustle in the village. And the factories quiet like forgotten relics. And no cars on the empty road. And no ships on the river as smooth as glass. And no one else on the crowded path” (See figure 3).

The White Rabbit speaks softly and calls Marianna Andriago and Aldo Aliprandi to perform from their own room: “Home is neither inside nor outside, neither East, nor West, here or there... Marianna, Aldo.”

Marianna Andriago's spoken words while she performs: “Home. Body of harmony. Of spaces. Objects. Colours. Years. Smells. Rites. Warmth. Years. And home. Streets. People. Night. And home. Body. Again. Encounters and relations. And night. And gestures. And love And thoughts. And brain. The body. Still. Enjoys—the space. Power. Of infinite. And possible. Images. But today. Now. Silence. Concerning. Anomalous. Forced from the outside. It enters. Home. World. People. Streets. Work. Life. Today. Silence. Home. I search. Quiet. Spaces. Prayers, which silence cannot suffocate” (Figure 6).



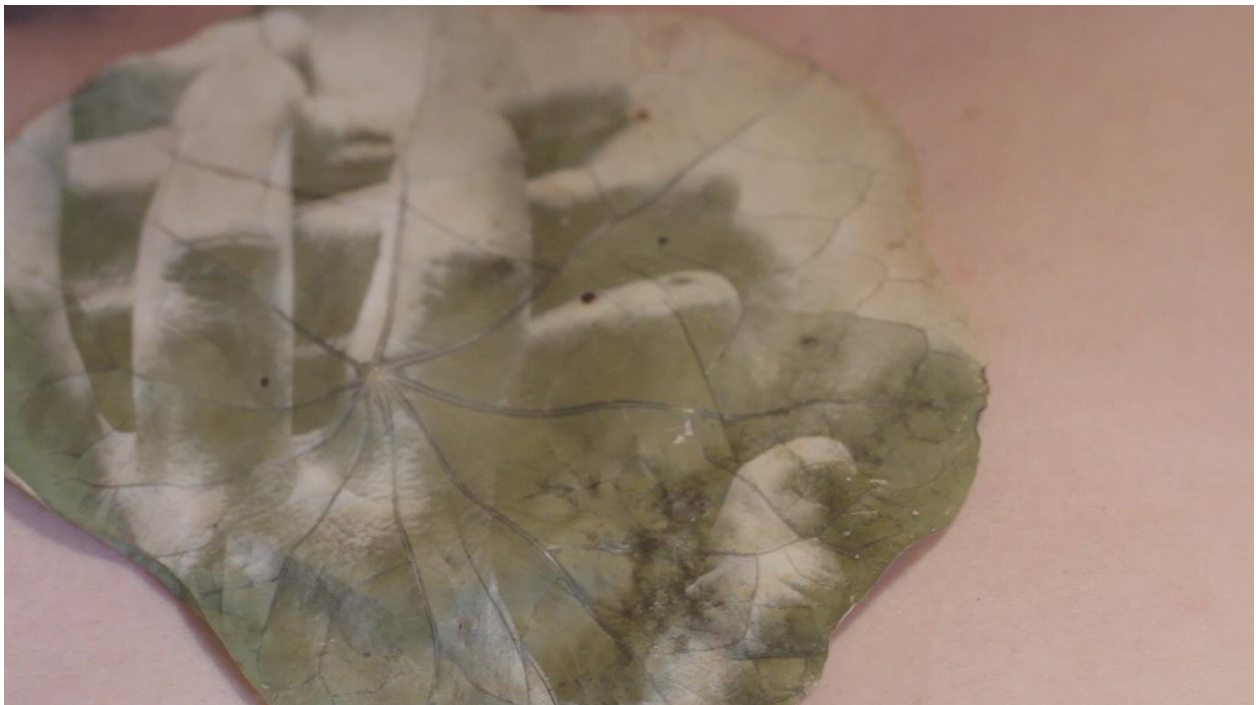
Figure 6 - *Prayers*. Still from the film. Performance: Marianna Andriago and Aldo Aliprandi, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit speaks softly and calls Fenia Kotsopoulou to perform from her own room: “Home is my skin touched by a single drop... Fenia” (Figure 7).

Figure 7. *My skin—a single drop*. Still from the film. Performance: Fenia Kotsopoulou, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit speaks softly and calls Marisa Gareffa to perform from her own room: “Home is in the crack through which the light gets in... Marisa.”

Marisa Gareffa’s spoken words while she performs: “Today, it was more peaceful to sit in my chair than to talk. This is new for me - that the body can be a sanctuary again. This is something very new. Deep down, I’ve held the goal to be invisible, able to vanish at any time. I want to be able to disappear in a moment. But this fibroid is forcing me to get very real. For now, the hospitals in and around Florence are all blocked. My health service card is for illegal people, so private clinics aren’t an option. To be caught in a safety net when you feel that you have no right to be safe. And this ability to disappear is a kind of illusion of safety. This giant lump that has grown and grown and grown inside of me is forcing me to acknowledge that I need other people. They have to cut it out of me. Every day, my stomach is bigger. They are finding a way to operate in the middle of the pandemic. So, there has to be a way to be here in this place that I now understand is Home. I don’t know how you say “thank you” to the people who help you for nothing in return. I speak to other women around the world, and they tell me that their fibroids are also growing. The wombs of the world are expanding together, swallowing the stress of chaos. My scar will be the same as women who’ve given birth. Once the lump is gone, I wonder, will it take the past with it? It’s a pandemic, and here is where I chose to stay. So, I know. This place is Home to me” (Figure 8).

Figure 8 - *The body can be a sanctuary again.* Still from the film. Performance: Marisa Gareffa, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit speaks softly and calls Sabrina Bellenzier to perform from her own room: “Home is in the inside, the besides, the over and under, the far and the near... Sabrina.”

Sabrina Bellenzier’s spoken words while she performs: “A second skin - as it can expand, as it can contain. A mirror inward. Shards of broken flares - as they can ripple as water, as a wave, as a waveform, as place, a hope for a spring that breaks through cracks of ice, giving the words, teaching the language, a shimmering transition that gives birth to a bird, diffracting, doubling, take in, take out, clotting in a new shape, a sensitive membrane, I tear, I burst: where do we carry home now? Where do we



carry home now? I burst, I tear, a sensitive membrane clotting in a new shape take out, take in, doubling, diffracting, that gives birth to a bird, a shimmering transition teaching the language, giving the words, through cracks of ice a hope for a spring that breaks as place, as waveform, as wave, as water, as it can ripple shards of broken flares, a mirror inward as it can contain as it can expand, a second skin” (Figure 9).

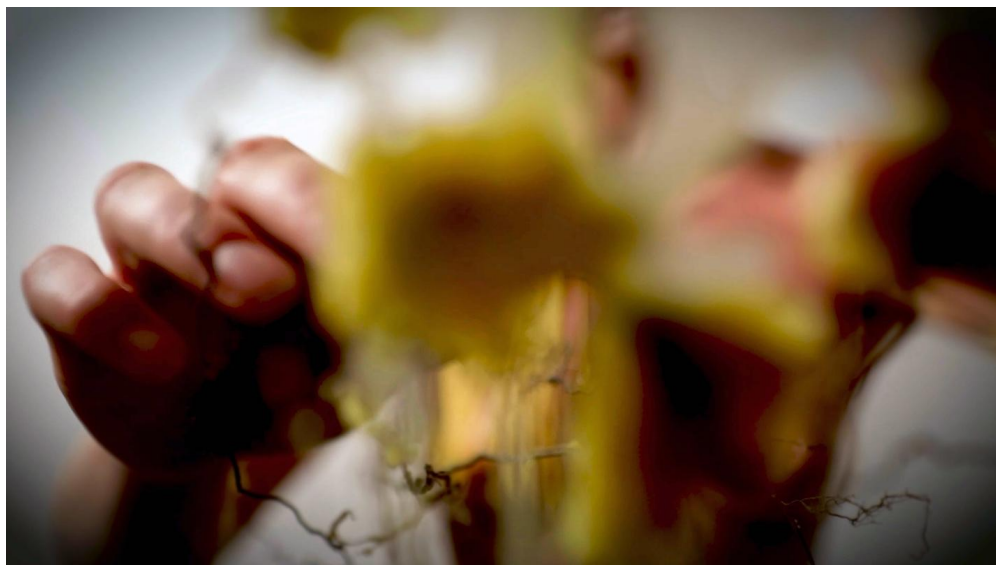
Figure 9 - *A second skin*. Still from the film. Performance: Sabrina Bellenzier, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit speaks softly and calls Ash McNaughton to perform from their own room: “Home is the waxing from the bones through my skin onto you... Ash” (Figure 10).

Figure 10 - *From the bones*. Still from the film. Performance: Ashley-Louise McNaughton, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit speaks softly and calls Marilyn Arsem and Sara Simeoni to perform from their own rooms: “Home is – in every direction – the centre... Marilyn, Sara.”

Marilyn Arsem’s spoken words while Sara Simeoni performs: “This spring in Boston has been very long and slow. The temperatures have stayed cool, and we have had rain nearly every day. The leaves on the trees are still not fully unfurled. I can see the difference each day as they emerge slowly, slowly. Being at Home during the coronavirus has allowed me to see the small signs of progress each day. The season is unfolding from winter to spring to summer. I welcome those tiny yet steady signs of change. Last week, I overheard a conversation between boys confined to playing in their backyard next door. One was answering the other, saying, ‘you are not going to die until you are very old’. They are no more than 8 or 10 years old. Would that conversation have happened if we weren’t in this pandemic? It is hard to mark the passage of time without our normal habits – of work, travel, meetings, seeing friends, going to museums and performances and concerts. Instead, time folds back on itself, on us alone in the small spaces of our homes. When we feel the need to range, we do it instead on the internet and then return to be sitting, still at Home, at our tables. I read old and familiar books, revisit memories, think. Time slows and eddies. Even the best-laid plan to finish something is not easy to follow. Other concerns take over. I worry about friends who are ill, those who are not safe, and politicians who make unbalanced decisions. So listening to the birds, weeding the garden, watching the foliage on the trees emerging becomes important. They are necessary anchors in this world of the pandemic, where time seems to keep circling back on itself. They are signs of change, of renewal, of new worlds emerging” (Figure 11).

Figure 11. *At home*. Still from the film. Performance: Sara Simeoni. Words: Marilyn Arsem, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit calls Francesco Kiais to perform from his own room: “Home is in becoming... Francesco” (Figure 12).



Figure 12. *In becoming*. Still from the film. Performance: Francesco Kiais, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit calls Mauro Sambo to perform from his own room: “Home is where I lay my memories to rest... Mauro” (Figure 13).

Figure 13 - *I lay my memories to rest*. Still from the film. Performance: Mauro Sambo, 2020.



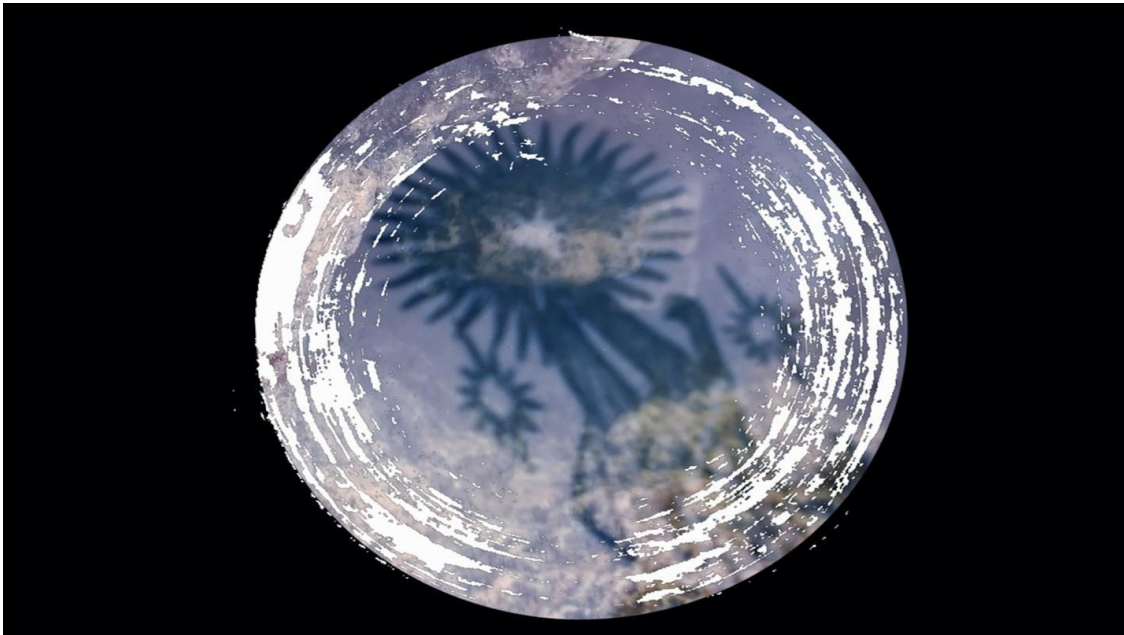
Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit calls Joseph Morgan Schofield to perform from their own room: “Home is your words through my mouth... Joseph”.



Joseph Morgan Schofield's spoken words while they perform: “What is the rhythm of nothingness? Orgasmic vibration is an example of attuning with the bio-rhythms of another body: sinking into unconsciousness may suddenly fling wide the doors of cosmic perception. The French call orgasm *petite mort* (little death), meaning an intense momentary loss or weakening of consciousness that enables a vision of nothingness and simultaneously opens the possibility of listening to the sound of chaosmosis. Philosophy must consciously forge concepts for the attunement of the mind and body for the process of becoming nothingness. Poetry has to prepare our lungs to breathe at the rhythm of death. The Latin word, which used to mean promise, the Latin word or promise *abstrahere* means or intends, or meant to drag away, to divert from, to pull out, to remove. *Abstrahere*. Abstraction means the pulling out of nihil or nothing from something. This last century has been a slow process of abstraction. You took me to the shore. You placed me before your mirror. You buried my limbs in the rock and held me there until I took root. Chaos is Greek and means abyss, that which gapes open, that which is vast and empty. Phalanges. Knuckles. Metacarpals. I wanted you to hollow me out so I might take flight – thumb - palm - or else there might be space - wrist - to hold you, to hold your shame, your guilt, your fear, your longing. Gust of desire reverberates in the abyss - no mouth no tongue no teeth no larynx no stomach no organs. My body - your vessel, my body - your temple, my body - your Home, my body - your tomb. Spit and sweat rush as the tides - becoming a river, becoming a sea. Once, there was matter, mass, magma - possibilities without form. Then signification, which is to say language, turned matter into form, chaos into order. Chaos is Greek and means abyss. Growing old means being invaded by chaos - the ageing brain growing unable to recognize order in the environment. The earth is growing old. The sea comes from nowhere, which is to say everywhere, and eats the cliff, which comes from the ground and pleads upwards to the sky and comes from the old English for cleft and is always going away/always giving way/giving up/letting go/letting in/putting out/pulling down/always going away. Away comes from *aveg*, which means or meant on from this place, and then from one's own place and then from one state into another: no more churches, but war hospitals, no more presidents or precedents, but prophets. The word apocalypse comes from the Greek, and it used to mean a revelation or an uncovering. Now, it means a cataclysmic event. Cataclysm from the Latin, meaning a deluge, a flood, a washing clean. A washing. In the tide of the real, the sea is eating the cliff, and metaphor is disintegrating, and we fall. We fall; the fall is revolution, movement into the then and there, music becoming denser and denser, accumulating rhythm and motion and speed plunging to the waves, cutting the surface, water rushing to fill the space where the lungs had been. Your words will not be heard but felt as tiny pricks and frequencies and storms and caresses pushing in all ways and times through salt and sand and skin. Your word will crash on the shore, carried by the tides, eroding the cliff, nature, and nations. Un-bodied, falling into the unknown, restless, unimaginable, fierce surging impossible, no longer trusting in sense but feeling no longer whole but soaked selfhood dashed on the rocks not whole but shattered in shattering throes that promise oblivion but also freedom in shattering throes free me, take me, devour me. Desire breaks on the shore the way memory breaks on the body; there is no other way again and again. I thought of your fall, a *jéte* from the cliff, of your lips in motion, your body held by the air, hollowed by desire, arching through time and space, wind resonating through your hallow form, the here and now vibrating in dissonant time. Pulled into the flows, flying over and over or just for moments, from bardo to bardo, away from good sense, in no-motion or un-motion, beyond chronology, stitched into the sky and myth, like a sculpture but weightless, like a painting but honest, like the cinema-like sea, like love, an image in movement. What does it take to fly? A chaotic act in the face of the consecrated order. Yearning gives me love. Yearning gives me chaos” (Figure 14).



Figure 14 - *Abstrahere*. Still from the film. Performance: Joseph Morgan Schofield, 2020.

Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit calls daz disley to respond from his room: “Home is where I still can smell the roses... daz.”

daz disley’s spoken words accompany his holographic music video: “Home. At the edge of the Spectrum. Almost invisible. Indivisible Light, Our Light, is hope. Our hearts: Inseparable. Home. At the edge of this world. Between sleep and hugging. Where we are the same Creature in Home. Protected: and not forgotten. At this edge, where we overlap. I find solace and forgiveness. A new light. Almost invisible. Inextinguishable. So, we see ourselves as if for the very first time—refreshed and new again. Where I find you is Home. Where we belong. Outside of expectation. This space. These sacred bodies. This delicate moment. My true Home is in your Heart. Home. At the edge of the Spectrum. Almost invisible. Indivisible Light, Our Light, is hope. Our hearts: inseparable. In this space we make called Home. At the edge of this world. Between waking and caressing. Because we are the same Creature. In-Home. Protected, not forgotten, at this edge where we overlap. There is Solace. There is forgiveness. There is new light. Almost invisible. Inextinguishable. So, I see you again, as if for the very first time - refreshed and new again. Home. Where we belong. Outside of expectation. This space: Our space. These sacred bodies: Our sacred bodies. This delicate moment. My true Home. Our true Home is inside Us. Nestled in the very depths of Our Hearts. Where Together, being the same Creature, we are reunited. Reinvigorated. And Together” (See figure 5).

The White Rabbit calls Marcel Sparmann to perform from his own room: “Home is in the loud fullness in the slow contemplation of silent things... Marcel.”

Marcel Sparmann’s spoken words while he performs: “I want to meet you in the branches of the hand, where the world was already happening long before me. Never that I sat there in many. Sometimes, very rarely, I added someone. A star had settled down for him. After weeks of flying by his side, he sat still on a branch in his hand for the first time. Here, they could look at each other, from black to black. Let me say that it is snowing, my love. Let me say that it is raining, my dear. It is the beginnings of sentences that count. My hand is a lonely piece of earth. Please keep the grass between your ring fingers. It shall grow in the palm of your hand and nest inside. Bees and ants



shall live there. I want to meet insects in your hand. I want to be at Home where there is rustle” (Figure 15).

Figure 15. *A star had settled down for him.* Still from the film. Performance: Marcel Sparmann, 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

The White Rabbit calls *Andrea Pagnes (VestAndPage)* to perform from his room: “Home is Home is Home is Home... Andrea.”

Andrea Pagnes (VestAndPage)'s spoken words while he performs: “I was waiting for someone like you, trained to spread misery and hopelessness. On people. I have seen shame dirt wandering across some of the same horrors you’ve seen. You have no right to call me a bastard. You can terminate my life. I know you are able to do that, but you are not entitled to judge me. I may fear a real danger like you, although fear is always a product of the mind, a choice. I remember my overdoses, my last abstinence crisis. It seems like a thousand years ago. Eyes wide open, pulling out of their sockets. I couldn’t see anything. Only my horror. Reversed on the floor. Pale, cold, sweating skin glued to a pile of bones. And I remember. I was weeping like a child, shivering in convulsions. I wanted to tear my tongue out and grind my teeth into pieces. I didn’t know what to do. And I want to remember those days. I never want to forget them. I never want to forget. Then I realized I was slithered, slid with a sharp stainless steel blade right through my throat. And I thought. The decision to do that! Genuine, authentic. In and out. Out-and-out. Then I realized that I could stand my demons only if I had been capable of changing my trajectory, relying on my primordial instinct to survive without blaming. Without judging, because judgment suffocates you as a snake does when it traps its prey among its coils. Every night, I dream of a knife carving deep into my flesh. And I, surviving. Have I ever considered any real freedoms? Freedoms from. All this materialistic bullshit that remains the [expected norm], perhaps gaining impotence, at last. What if we would stop talking about “crisis” altogether and start calling them “challenges”, “summon”, or “tasks” instead? The self-victimization that goes hand in hand with the common usage of “crisis” can only be counter-productive. When we face only its symptoms without grasping it at its origin, a crisis becomes a paralysis, not an act of change” (Figure 16).



Figure 16 - *When we face only its symptoms, a crisis becomes a paralysis, not an act of change.*
Still from the film. Performance: Andrea Pagnes (VestAndPage), 2020.



Source: VestAndPage, 2020.

Epilogue. The White Crow. Performance: VestAndPage (Verena Stenke and Andrea Pagnes)

The White Crow's spoken words: “Last night, I dreamed that we were walking together in the darkness across a rainy valley. Everything was white. You were our guide, dressed in a sort of white-furred skin cloak. Two large tree branches were tied on your womb. You tried to move us all to a warmer place so we wouldn’t freeze. We got further away and arrived at a planet where all colours were saturated and all shapes were arranged symmetrically in perspective geometries. There stood a figure that I call ‘the king’. He pursued us no matter how we tried to escape him. Since you were leading us, the king caught you first and asked for your ID. You showed one, but it was fake. A cyber screen appeared. It showed one of your family members about to be kidnapped. We got up. We kept going” (See figure 2).

Film Credits

Concept: VestAndPage. Performance, video, words: Aldo Aliprandi & Marianna Andriago, Marilyn Arsem, Sabrina Bellenzier, Giorgi de Santi, daz disley, Marisa Garreffa, Francesco Kiais, Fenia Kotsopoulou, Ashley-Louise McNaughton, Enok Ripley, Sara Simeoni, Mauro Sambo, Joseph Morgan Schofield, Marcel Sparmann, VestAndPage (Verena Stenke and Andrea Pagnes), Susanne Weins. Contribution: Giovanni Dantomio, Giorgio de Battisti, Susanna Petternella. Graphic contribution: Franko B. Original music: Aldo Aliprandi, daz disley, Nat Norland and Mauro Sambo. A performance-based film project by EntrAxis e.V. and Studio Contemporaneo. <https://www.vest-and-page.de/anam-cara-mirror-in-the-mirror>.



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