

Poetic Performance Impressions

at the IX Venice International Performance Art Week

Portals and Constellations

Caro Ruoff

Venice International Performance Art Week 2024

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Note

Throughout the poems there are references to the Strata Exhibition .

A VestAndPage production with Aldo Aliprandi, Marianna Andrigo, Andreas Bauer Kanabas, Anguezomo Mba Bikoro, Giorgia de Santi, daz disley, Francesca Fini, Nicola Fornoni, Saúl García López, Stephan Knies, Fenia Kotsopoulou, Boris Nieslony, Andrea Pagnes, Ralf Peters, Enok Ripley, Sara Simeoni, Marcel Sparmann, Verena Stenke, Susanne and Maite Weins, Douglas Quin.

Opening Portals

Wednesday, December 11th, 2024.

At the breakfast table
we are googling knife shops and candle stores
I get distracted while making coffee and manage
to destroy the rubber in the small Italian moka pot
on my way to the Palazzo
I look for a store with spare parts
and get beautifully lost in the narrow streets of the city

Venice is like a living fairytale
a portal of water and land
where they meet and mingle
intertwined like tree roots
digging through soil

these streets are a portal through time
a portal of fragile old stone
of everyday life
and the blatant consumerism
that is part of its destruction

Gucci, Prada, Louis Vuitton,
shop windows at every step of the way
and homeless people asking for money
“please, you don’t understand, I am hungry!”

a portal of rising waters
and changing tides
a portal of present and past
of what is
but what might not be
for much longer

this first day
this day before the festival starts
we are sweeping the Palazzo floors
a majestic space
and a cold one

at night
I spend my per diem
for two days on drinks
and the smallest amount of pasta
I’ve seen in ages

we talk with some of the artists
about opening portals
inviting the ghosts in
and soil performances
because maybe it is the time
we are living in
everything is decomposing

as I sit at that dinner table
with the rhythmic sweeping of the broom
lingering in my body
with the swoosh swoosh
swaying movements
with the song of a sound check
with the dimmed lights
and the wall-to-wall projections
of caves and bodies traveling
through deep time
I can't help but think in some way
the ritual has already begun.

We access portals by abandoning prejudices
to expand awareness and perception,
receiving inspiration, and
treading new, stimulating paths.
- VestAndPage

1. bron: veniceperformanceart.org/the-art-week/portals-and-constellations-2024

Enter the liminal space

Thursday, December 12th, 2024.

Performing artists

LA SAULA aka Saúl García López and Cecilio Orozco

SERAFINE1369

Ash McNaughton, Joseph Morgan Schofield and Marcel Sparmann

Enter the liminal space

where I wander

where caves echo

and whispers tell of a time

deep inside

deep in soil

here we are spectators

of the subterranean world

it invites us

it invites us in

there is a robed figure

with a feather in their long dark curls

gently waiting

and a person wearing chicken intestines

for earrings

there are white gloved hands

disinfecting his brown skin

then piercing his body

his shoulders

his ribs

piercing his sternum

piercing his groin

this person is steadily breathing

as silver needles are sticking out of his skin

like barbed wire

the one with the feather gently invites us

to decorate the pierced body

dressing ribbons and gold to his flesh

as a crowd gathers

slowly moving and kneeling

all my white atheist eyes see

is a human Christmas tree

with ornaments dressed to his wounds

smiling a subtle proud smile

through the pain

from above
the beautiful other
pours liquid on top
our living altar
is showered in paint
yellow substance covers his eyes
bright red fluid dripping from his chin
blue speeding down his stomach and legs
colour meeting and melting on his skin

as a glass heart filled with black blood
is emptied onto his head
our human canvas
holds up a hand

“stop now
a faith marked by violence”

paint dries up
with political poetry
about politicised bodies
not poetry - invocations
the palazzo
a chapel for the rebels
the ones that survived
breathe as the iron
is removed from your wounds
breath and
hang on

as paint is feverishly scrubbed
from the old Venetian floor
we move on
to a place that smells like soil
its soft surface
covering the cold floor
is inviting

I dream of being covered by warm summer soil
it dark here
really dark
it is like falling asleep
it is a waiting
in anticipation

in this circle of soil
all I see is a buttcheek
hard to place
nothing more
but I know
there is someone
in the soil
waiting

soft black leather
brown skin
someone is moving
hair, head, fingers
almost invisible
breathing
slow motion movement
and poetry like water
growing
a muscular back
a bend figure
slowly but surely
rising
black body
black muscle
rising
in spite of the moment
sometimes
it's okay to stay still

movements change
expressions evolve
into something hard
something searching
fighting
resistance or
decomposing
words like water whisper
of plastics and
systems of oppression
things that last

in this darkness
I can not see
so what could I possibly know

they are risen
again
and moving faster
footwork
no time for
repetitive falling
falling
in slow motion
again to the soil
in darkness
and anticipation

above the soil
there are ropes
buckets and weights
suspended in the air
concrete blocks above bare feet
broken pieces
sharp wood
the structure is moving and squeaking
as buckets are pulled up in the air

a song
an unfamiliar sound
lips pierced with needles
like jail bars in front of an open mouth
frozen in motion

a man holding a flame
his hand burning
wood shavings
peeling skin from bones
a table slowly pushed out of proportion
wood loudly protesting its destruction

a blindfolded man
moved by his head
in a threatening grip like
almost breaking his neck
the man a marionette
a loud crack
landing softly
head against head

what strange world did we enter?
what strange creatures live here?

drool like a fool and read me another story
the harbor
the blue moon
and a person taking off their clothes
top till waist
becoming moon

a spoon swirling
steaming hot liquid
it is dripping
translucent
candlewax
dries much faster on naked skin
drops frozen in motion
on their back

a fool biting a table
spilling blood from their mouth
red spit dripping from their chin
piercing their forehead
now attached to a string
to a bucket
another needle to the table
to their chest
little strings constricting their
movement

they are building
constructing
the broken pieces
it's not a house
not a home
it is their work of art

a waxed skin cracking and folding
to make yourself a second skin
to make yourself silent
to make stalactites from your shoulder blades
to make water into bloody lemonade
to make the spikes on your skin grow larger
with every scoop of burning liquid that you pour
to make larger
larger than life
larger than you
to make yourself

a creatured skin
shed the old
make shredded wings of molting skin

a pot of honey
and a thick wooden pole
in your mouth
and everything sticky
you are sticky
soft flesh, hard wood
syrup dripping
on soil
on skin
wasting sweetness
in dark matter
the drops linger
feel the thick fluid
slide along your skin
in your broken home
no bucket will stop
the leak in your ceiling
your trousers all shiny like
raindrops have frozen in their place
what ghost did you bring forth?
who did you call when
the hurt pierced your skin?

a washing turns into a drowning
themselves in their buckets
holding the breath for so long
again and again
the air is getting thick
you cannot breathe
drowning themselves in their bucket
and still they go on
bellies tense
muscles shaking
it's not a competition
god dammit
when are you done
waterboarding your demons

light a candle
for all that was lost

for all that was gained
light a candle.

Into deep time

Friday, December 13th, 2024.

Performing artists

Mykhaylo Barabash, Roman Haideichuk, Ostap Manulyak & Yaryna Shumska

Małgorzata Sady

Weronika M Lewandowska

Sylwia Hanff/Limen Butoh

Enter again

the freezing Palazzo halls

land in this portal where we meet

flow with the soundscape

and sink into the side chambers

into a deep space

a deep time

no wind blows here

there are traces of a person

twisting around themselves

spinning in time

skin

scars

bones

becoming fossil

in front of our eyes

what has been and

what we become

twisting around itself

what remains when we are gone?

to the next space

where the wailing howling of humans

is most present

there are traces of a human stalactite

colorful drippings

weathering stone through the ages

the face

slowly obscured

remember the name of the writer

who died but made this work too

it starts with a warning

in case of a blackout

we will go on

in case of an air raid alarm
find your way to the nearest shelter

children be aware
don't touch the objects on the ground
there are strange birds in the sky
cassettes
nets
helicopters
that fall like feathers
a multi-vocal bird song of bombs and destruction
seven thousand one hundred and twenty-eight mines
installed in forty minutes
they are singing of their world
while moving cardboard boxes
and big speakers through the space
the crowd
like a slowly scattering flock
making space
listen
to the boxed-up birds
underneath their song of destruction
is a silence

look
there is a beamer strapped to a suitcase
projecting maps
while a monotone choir of coordinates
in a strange
but familiar languages
is echoing
morphing

a flashlight pinpointed on the map
a lecture on birds and migration
the flightless birds
feeding sites
birds that don't tolerate others
too close to their nests
camouflage
maps moving through space

project, migrate, move
people scattering
unsure where to go

project, migrate, move
a talk about electricity
and interviews in the dark

do you have a basement at home?
where is the nearest shelter?
is your home safe?
flashlight on faces
is your home safe?
rarely the answer is good

do you have a shelter at home?
are you in a safe space?
is your home safe?

a silent chaos
cords and cables spread out like wings
chattering birds
the white stork
a long-distance migrant
sounds like distant machine gunfire
is your home safe?

the white stork
sounds like distant machine gunfire
in this starless night
in this darkness
only birds answer

what has been
and what we become
twisting around itself
what remains when we are gone
to the next space

with the whispers of a washing
shedding hair in underground waters
they say hair collects our sorrows
they say hair collects our wisdom
the sound of dripping water
calms a racing mind
let's wash our sorrows
our sins
together in this thick time
wash them away

but does it?
does anything ever
away?
it's a place underground
that's for sure
a place quickly forgotten
where things placed in hiding
can linger for ages

tracing scars
a skull like a landscape
every shaved hair
like a forest from above
fingers feeling for the landscape of your skin
and what does this tick skin
remember of the piercing
the moment of breaking
invasion
invading
the flesh and the self
what does the water tell of the cold
the places deep down in places where
no sunlight reaches
naked bodies exposed to the elements

there is no wind here

but there is
an old-fashioned music tune
with a nervous undertone
announcing a history of hope

a red ribbon
laid out alongside numbers on the floor
nineteen fiftysix
nineteen sixty-eight
nineteen seventy
and candles
like gravestonemarkers

a white ribbon
like a scar on the floor
timelines in red and white
an altar of forgotten histories

flames snuffed out
with a fragile voice
she speaks about a dress
her mom's wedding dress
she speaks of loss
she speaks of fear
of a timeline of loss
or a timeline of hope

a far horizon
a frozen world
another wedding dress
owner unknown
her face is in shadows
dreams misty and pale
of freedom and love
like coloured balloons
an old movie clip
of a place barely visible
where people are dancing
in a weird way
remember this dance

remember
what has been
and what we become
twisting around itself
in the next space

a small tent
pitched underneath a chandelier
there are lights and shapes
projected on the canvas
inside someone is recording something
filming their private world
filled with technology
a red laser light
a hand
fingerprints
checking their traces
projecting layers upon layers
of a world of words upside down
of a phone uncontrollable
of 'social time limited'
of a digital stargazing

video game

a blue and red world
becoming purple
a rainbow tent
like a shimmering portal to a ghost world
turn off the lights
turn off the time
life is more slow in the real world
how long do you sit with
the discomfort of not understanding?
how long are you willing to waste your time
with all this technology?

whispers
unfamiliar words
a fast-paced voice
a techno-capsite-party for one

long white socks
turn blue in ultraviolet light
filming her feet
what traces do you leave
in this invisible world
retracing your steps
in ultraviolet light

what has been
and what we become
twisting around itself

in the dark
as if bewitched she dances
descending to a golden bowl
filled with powder
with a cinnamon smell
all hair no face
her tripled shadow
expands into the space

screaming she falls to the ground
spreads her legs like in childbirth
rolls over to the bowl
a small bag
filled with needles

she pierces her forehead and lips
lights a red candle
then another
and passes them around

we sit with fire
small flames in her hand
creeping closer to her skin
wax is dripping on bare breasts
a belly filled with trails of red
as she removes the needles from her skin
blood trickles down her face
what is this madness?

she opens her dress with a zipper
lifts it over her face
naked but covered still
a faceless nude
breathing
shivering
with her hands up in the air.

Vibrations

Saturday, December 14th, 2024.

Performing artists

Douglas Quin

Anne Bean

Emilyn Claid

Aurah Jendafaaq

We are walking blindfolded
through the streets of Venice
feeling sounds reflected by surfaces
walls, water, cobblestone
it is the fabric
of the elastic Venetian space
sounds layered by differences in duration
sloshing water against the quays
the hum of motor boats just
around the corner
tourists walking by and that kid
that dragged its feet
on the bridge
above the water
laughter
from an open window
echoing
anticipating
every step
every sound
it's momentum
its texture
it's timbre and tone
and I wonder
whether I belong
in the soundscape of this city
these fluid spaces
connected by vibrations
in a constant sonic morphing of space
Venice is unique for its echoes
where the sound of water bounces off buildings
holding you captivated
floating
in its embrace

exhaustion is seeping into my bones
slowly
every night a bit deeper
I am floating
in its embrace
embracing

a bilingual duet
of umbrellas as missiles
the power of the voice
in an imaginary performance
sucking the water out of the Venetian channels
in an imaginary performance
of three cubes in three forms
ice, water and gas
trash
translation
a late translation
transforms
a play with words
and sound's vocal quality
forcing yourself to laugh
herself to laugh
a voice bouncing sound of the walls
echos transforming perception
of word endings
a multi-vocal echo
testing words in their mouth
tasting prayers
and screams
tasting a technical failure
becoming voiceless for a moment
in stillness
like the death of a performer
who didn't eat
can you eat stillness?
and where does it take us?
a vocal person goes quite
having no idea what they are meant to be doing on stage
a joyful, foolish, and fearful performer
with a desire to be present
presenting a song
for the fearful who desire to be present
shadows forming in their mouth

how does one eat shadows
how does one breathe shadows
speak shadows
and how does it end?

fleeting vibration
and echoes floating in space

a swarm of people looking slightly lost
loud dance music
latex and furs
encapsulating a body on the floor
it is cold
it is breathing
this could be a club scene
soft fucking weird
Berlin sexy
maybe

with a bend back
crawling on the floor
what a weird party this is
the creature grows taller
almost alien now
invites us
to move through the space
reaching
almost touching
full human form
or are they more beastly?

in and out of sight
loving everybody's eyes
sheep-like we follow this model through space
club creature
makes you work for your money
people running
to catch a glimpse
of this creature
smell it
bite it
taste it
crawl on the floor
temptation
teaser

scary
seducing
touch my fur
wear it
be creature with me

a duet unfolds
crawling
shivering
serene
almost shy
look for the bald-headed creatures
they'll lead the way
know the rules of the game
softly but headstrong
standing their ground
fragile dancers
with a fierce fire within

vibrant
vibrating
floating in space

a carpet
a creature
a costume
a sparkling satyr
shining nails
long dark hair and glittering horns
smell the flowers that grow from their shoulders
a soft song
and soft whispers
born from the earth of your motherland
ancestral prayers
to this queer-diety-god
gentle gestures
shiny jewels
admire the wonder
of forgotten times
and see it transform

give me a beat
give me sassy
give me disco lights
give me catwalk

give me cheers
give me sexy
give me sas
be a rapper
be a party animal
wild flying hair
eat it
give me creature drag
claim
your
space.

This temporary home

Sunday, December 15th, 2024.

Panel talk with

Giorgi Rodionov
Aurah Jendefaaq
Uta Bekaia
Dato Koridze

Performing artists

Chinasa Vivian Ezugha
Amy Mauvan
Yaryna Shumska
Irina Baldini & Emily Welther

As we entered the palazzo garden once again
the noise of touristy streets
fading away in the background
soft music is playing
a small oasis
a shelter
the overstimulated brain
at ease in the stillness

walking up the stairs
the music grows louder
continues to wash
busy streets off your shoulders

in this temporary home
live-ness is our legacy
to be alive
to be present
but when
does this live-ness
become a living?

all artists are on strike in Georgia
all who love freedom
are demonstrating in the streets
four artists tell us
about the sleepless nights
on the frontline of the revolution
eleven in a row
and counting
with a background of fire and fighting
displayed on the wall

images from the artist turned journalist
images from the streets of Tbilisi
where the air is filled with toxic-gases
even with a gasmask
after two hours
you get visions in your head
the frontliners strategy
using water bottles to stop gas-bombs
there is beauty in chaos
fireworks used at demonstration
and teenagers knocking the walls
protesting the face of power
only one generation in Georgia
was born with the freedom of speech
it is the youth who stand against
pepper spray, gas bombs and water cannons
united to fight for their rights
but holding the lines as they do
is a poisonous job
still
they are fighting
for basic human rights
and the queer youth

wait

why talk about queer rights
while there is hardship and danger on the streets?
because the government is blaming the queers

once again

transwomen are being arrested from their houses
locked up and shaved without reason
and they are lucky if it doesn't get any worse
these brutalities
remain without repercussions
it's alarming
how it doesn't get any attention
it's alarming
and it's an international trend
this
- they tell us -
is why we keep screaming to Europe
it doesn't happen in days

they will feed on your fear
the fear of the many for the few
the fear of the strange
the fear for the ones that defy
what is perceived to be right
by 'traditional' standards
be aware
it is not about Georgia
it is Georgia now
but in these war times
If things go badly
it will spread
already the fear is eating its way into Europe
already the fear is festering in the minds of American leaders
it's not an ideology
it's some kind of madness
fear and greed together are strong
equal rights
in the white man's world
are already a joke

slowly they will deconstruct democratic society
with their scapegoat politics
with their talk of swift action to keep us all safe
easy lies
to put the blame on the most marginalised of voices

the lawyer of their queer collective suggested
not to post anything on Instagram anymore
it is dangerous
but exposure is important
visibility saves lives
when mainstream media frame things without nuance
accessibility of information is vital
and funding is slow

to be an activist
on the frontline of the revolution
it is hard
but the bridges back are all burned
it's a devil's dilemma
stand your ground and fight
or emigrate

in this temporary home
live-ness is our legacy
to be alive
to be present

after all that we have seen
after all that we have heard
I would like to be speechless for a while
to stop making sense of the world
and it's madness

words are just symbols
we agree to their meaning
but most will get lost in translation
to stay undefined
to linger in wordless wonder
is a privilege
not many of us hold

another pile of soil
chalk sprinkled in a circle around the edge
she draws a white line
across the dark skin of her face
bows down to the earth
begins

a rhythmic forceful slamming
a strong wooden staff
and a pot
a human-sized mortar and pestle
it echoes
filling the empty halls
slamming, twisting
slamming, twisting
the mortar balancing
unstable in loose soil
soon she is on her knees
elbows swaying
the echoes continue
she wipes her nose on her shirt
at the shoulder
chalk vapor drifts in the sky

stop for a moment
see the determined look set in her eyes
the task at hand clear

she stares at her tools
bows her head
takes a moment of rest
whispering to herself
speaking for courage
speaking for strength

then continues
with sighing resolve
slamming
coughing
slamming
coughing
her shoulders pulled up to her ears
slamming
breathing
working her tools
she starts singing
a soft soleful song
a voice filled with strength

it's been an hour now
working and sweating
bare feet on a freezing cold floor
only a few watching this labor
it seems lonely

to be alive
to be present

in this temporary home
as day turns to night
the black hooded creatures
dressed in fur
appear everywhere
and the cold is spreading
in your toes
in your feet
creeping up your legs
this night
will be a cold one

approaching us
are long white legs in black lingerie
a headless creature

a body of white ruffles of tulle
gaining volume
a hand grows out of the fabric
bare feet on the floor
a reminder of a wedding dress
dancing on its own accord

but something is weighing it down
it is folding in on itself
sinking but fighting
trying, hesitating and rising
another arm appears
a head
a female torso
a woman in black lace
shivering softly
her back strained
moving in slow-motion arches
long blond curls dangling in the air
a spine shiny with sweat

she bends
pulls the sinking form to her hips
struggling to hold form
always moving
in her holding
her reaching
her grabbing
to keep the fabric away from her legs
to keep the dress
from restricting her movements

a look in her eyes
half crazy, half mad
the ruffle a harness
a play toy
a peacock showing her feathers
the soft airy fabric
like a cloud she is controlling
losing parts of what
once was a dress

moving
in jagged circles
the sinking fabric trapping her feet

she falls to the ground
puts her face in the fabric once more
then rises
the soft white tulle
a rag on the floor
as she leaves

this temporary home

she enters dragging a metal sheet
along the precious floor
creating a scratching sound
that is hard not to hate

carefully bending the metal
reflecting light on faces
she explains
this is a stolen piece of the sky
when it shivers
there is thunder
or it could be a piece of a wing
a piece of a weapon
with the metal reflecting the ceiling
the sheet becomes a sail
catching the wind
catching the landscape

a white line is drawn
the horizon in chalk
water levels are rising
we need to be prepared
keep the back straight
and don't forget about the balans
the buckets
the wooden shovel
and hands iracing lines
be ready
to put on your swimsuit

something from a far
is getting closer
an old picture of a boy
age seventeen
as a soldier
nineteenseventeen

Fede
a soldier in Italy
"my grandmother's father"
is it the first
the second or the third
soldier
in five generations
remember
the fields of white crosses
reaching further than the eye can see

remember
in this temporary home
to be alive
to be present

this is my last working pencil
I hope it will last till the end

computer soundboards
hightech darkness
a rumbling sound
distant thunder
muffled voices
water distortions
footsteps in a landscape of rain
sound swelling
incoming thunder
the bass in your throat
you can feel it
tugging at your skin
vibrations reaching into mussels
then silence

shadowy shapes on the walls and the ceiling
a figure dancing in torchlight
breathing the start of a song
a duet
looping time, looping sound
the echoes are circular
folding the space like
a tunnel around us
through a megaphone
a story is told
like a thriller

like a ghost story
rain falls around us
while we travel
to the underbelly of the Earth's crust
where rain rains up
microphone echoing emptiness
in this story of a reversed world
we hear the echoing cries
of a tormented soul
there is darkness
in front of our eyes
imagine a cave
without ceiling
dark rivers of sand
black and cold
where rain rains up
and a tormented soul is hanging
by its feet from a
floor up-side-down
and waves of water are
engulfing us all.

“Crossing a portal means trusting
that change is possible.”

- VestAndPage

2. bron: veniceperformanceart.org/the-art-week/portals-and-constellations-2024

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<https://veniceperformanceart.org/the-art-week/portals-and-constellations-2024>