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*This Bloody Show:
Outside and Inside the Artist's Body in Performance
and Video Work*

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

Claire Harris 2019

Abstract

Utilising autobiographical content and her own body as medium and subject, the artist seeks to represent aspects of risk and self-harming without replicating or staging acts of self-harm.

Drawing on writers Lea Vergine, Jennifer Doyle, Maggie Nelson and Amelia Jones, and artist Gina Pane's performance work, this exegesis identifies points of contention in the production and reception of performative acts of self-harm

Beginning with installation and video works the artist creates tangential situations alluding to anticipation, depersonalization, and self-reflexivity in self-harm. Through this research the artist arrives at eggs as a fluid proxy for the body/self and for dynamics of anxiety in video and live performance works.

Additional issues arising involve perceptions harm and risk; the "feminist performance art meets misogynous cinema" dynamic within this MFA work; and the double consciousness, self-management, and projection in being female subject, performer, and artist. This abstract is old now and not totally relevant.

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Cutting Both Ways

"Those who are in pain will tell you that they have the right to be taken seriously."
(Vergine 8).

This double-edged statement from Lea Vergine's 1974 essay "The Body as Language. Body Art and Like Stories.", presents it as given that people experience pain, while simultaneously raising and avoiding the question of whether pain demands response. Her view of pain can be read as either affirming or dismissive of the sufferer. Vergine does not argue those in pain have the right to be taken seriously, simply observes – dispassionately – that they will tell you that they have this right.

Being taken seriously has risks as well as rewards. According to writer Janet Frame news she had won a literary prize saved her from a scheduled lobotomy. Elsewhere in Frame's autobiography she describes a habit of enacting schizophrenic symptoms to hold the interest and sympathy of others, contributing to the repeat institutionalisation that landed her on the surgery list (Frame 82-85). A call for recognition received through existing social structures and power dynamics may be received by authority as grounds for dismissal or punishment.

My own art practice aligns to 'body art' (artists using their bodies directly in, or as the subject matter of their art work) and consists primarily of performance and video art works. The use of one's own body, self, or identities, in art making can function as a demand for validation. When perceived as artistic exhibitionism the resulting art risks being labelled as narcissistic 'attention-seeking'.

Likewise, popular discourse often dismisses deliberate self-harm by people in distress as mere attention seeking behaviour. When I used to self-harm (a year of cutting aged 15-16) it felt like attention was the last thing I wanted. But combined with a drive for self-effacement was an equal need to assert my existence in the face of overwhelming emotion.

An instinct to assault myself continues as my default response to strong emotion and ongoing trauma, and self-harm appears as both explicit content and unintended consequence in my art practice. Acts of deliberate self-harm also recur in the histories of body art and performance art works, often in canonical works. Aside from featuring as overt content there is a likeness between deliberate self-harm and art practice, as acts of communication carried out via objects and/or externalised experiences rather than through words.

Moreover, self-harm, particularly cutting, draws attention in the skin. As boundary between person and environment, self and other, the skin foregrounds a state of simultaneous outside-ness and inside-ness created and necessitated when the artist, their material, and their medium are the same human body.

In this exegesis I use deliberate self-harm as emblematic of this outside/inside relationship to the artist body in art production. It is specific hook to snag a series of concerns regarding relationships between art work, artist, and audience. With this in mind how might I explore outside-ness and inside-ness in my performing and performed body, and the responsibilities of recognition and expectation that can exist between artwork, audience, and artist?

“Body Art and Like Stories”

‘Body art’ as used here does not refer to bodily decoration or modifications such as tattoo, piercings, scarification, implants and augmentations. Rather it is the phrase used by English speaking art critics beginning in the 1960’s, along with the French equivalent ‘L’art corporel’ used by critics including François Pluchart, to describe a cross-disciplinary trend of performance, sculpture, photography and film/video works in which artists utilised their own bodies.

These genre–determining parameters are useful for an artist such as myself, working across video and live performance, using my body and/or autobiographic experience and diaristic reflection. Side steps discussions of ‘performance vs. video art, and live vs. documented performance by reframing classification from format medium (live art, video/film, photography etc) to material medium of the human body and self.

The Body as Language

Lea Vergine’s book originally published in 1974 as *The Body as Language: “Body Art” And Performance* is a systematic contemporary overview of “The body ... being used as an art language” (Vergine 7).

Body art – cross disciplinary arising at same time as performance and video.
Land art similarities? I.e. term is descriptive of content and approach and working with/ intervening in existing physical thing rather than descriptive of discipline style or technological means.

Vergine text key jumping off point for my research. Enjoy the immediacy directness and manifesto like authority of essay. Highly quotable. Note stylistic features may well be a product of French translated into English – a kind of round-about precision colliding with assertive dogmatism.

As well as essay and overview of then active artists e.g. Gina Pane, Gilbert & George Urs Lüthi, Rebecca Horn, Günter Brus the open-ended nature of ‘like stories’ examples include of musicians other performers etc.

Vergine's analysis of body art is largely psychoanalytic, entwined with a political and sociological analysis of capitalism and production. She characterises artists who use their own bodies as material and/or medium for art as typically creating works that enact narcissistic self-love and recreate traumas of separation, often in an overblown manner. Common features Vergine identifies in the art and artists she looks at include:

- a loss of personal identity.
- a need for primary love which is unmet and so transformed into aggression.
- a multiplication of selves "the self is doubled, camouflaged, and idealised" (Vergine 7) expressive of narcissism.
- individual and collective identity.
- a turn away from culture, return to nature, and embrace of unconscious urges.

My interest in first four of these and apparent contradictions between them. For Vergine the body artists' individual identity is simultaneous lost and multiplied, and always seeking affirmation through an audience's attention and recognition.

After the 1970s

Revived use body art as framework of discussion toward end of 1990's.

Amelia Jones inextricably links body/performance art to postmodernism. Intersubjective practices that decentre "Cartesian subject of modernism" (Jones *Body Art/Performing the Subject*). In her survey essay for *The Artist's Body* (Jones "Survey") Jones traces a progression from obscuration of artist's body within Modernism to a prominent emergence to visible in the European and North American art during the 1960s through an activist body invested in "projecting authenticity ". Moving through intensity of 1970's and then mutating into 1980s "parodic self-commodified body" and 1990s fragmented prosthetic technologically embedded body.

DISCUSS "PERFORMATIVE TURN" AND "AND SELF AS ARCHIVE"

Lea Vergine reinforces this narrative in "Defused Body and Mystical Body" update essay from 2000 reissue of *Body Art and Performance*.

Role of documentation. Repeat video as video, video as documentation. Audience always encountering artwork 'live' in terms of their experience. Ways in which questions of documentation are questions of role of audience.

Audiences and Empathy

The other half (or third) of the equation.

Maggie Nelson *Art of Cruelty* Avant Guardist shock and awe. Acknowledge Artaud plus Viennese Actionists but close off further discussion.

Jennifer Doyle's discussion of 'Difficulty' in *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Doyle) a term she uses in preference to shocking, obscene etc. to discuss artwork whose affective content tends to create difficulty (not necessarily distress or anger) for audiences. Doyle's key argument has two sides – first, that shocking content does not necessarily create difficult works, and secondly, that emotional reaction does not negate the possibility of an art works conceptual complexity. Doyle focuses on artists creating discomfort through emotional and physical proximity. Documentation provokes a more extreme reaction than the performance in real time. The BDSM inspired collaborative practice of HIV positive performance artist Ron Athey.

Back to Vergine – key aspect of body art she identifies authentic experience and self-knowledge "Most of the time the experiences we are dealing with are authentic, and they are consequently cruel and painful".

Susan Sontag Regarding the pain of other

"No "we" should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain" (Sontag 7).

Reaction to images of suffering/pain depends on identity/identification.

"The photographs are a means of making "real" (or more 'real') matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore." (Sontag 7).

How is this complicated when pain of other is self-inflicted?

Seeking Attention? Directing Attention?

Self-harm as lens for communication via body and relationships of performer and audience.

Initially discuss in art context then link to disavowed 'real life' "self-indulgence".

Add western art traditions of heroic suffering/ Christ like suffering. Noble and necessary. Artist body as activist body.

At the beginning of the seventies, the female body ceased to be an aid in overcoming the extra-artistically exercised violence against the body and no longer held the promise of "wholeness," "presence," and "salvation." Instead, female artists began using their own bodies to equate violence and death, which often involved a simultaneously violated and violating body.
(Zimmermann)

Article "Staging the Bleeding body" .Sharing and generosity, create disgust also empathy (Richards).

Kathy O'Dell *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970s*
- masochism lens performers' contract with audience

As a result, Performance Art from this period has often been labelled as masochistic, notably by Kathy O'Dell for whom artists' masochistic gesture evidenced the breakdown of the social order. For masochism precisely involves a contractual aspect which places the act of wounding oneself within the social realm. (Baumgartner).

Question how accurate is characterisations as masochism when acts of self-harm are acts of inflicting pain/injury as much as enduring it?

NOTE: Awareness of audience as containing those with own histories and experiences of self-harming. Centring these people/experiences. Ethics of this. Firstly, sensitivity does not mean avoiding subject. Responsibility to those with this history who will still be upset, aware of this but prioritise acknowledgement and sitting with subject over urges to ignore or dismiss. Secondly copycat effects. Media

influences in my own history, Ann Shelton Redeye photos reproduced in Pavement magazine, young adult fiction pervasive message that cutting was just what depressed teenagers where meant to do.

The One Who Cuts and is Cut

Deliberate self-harm appears in my earlier art work through representations of (fake) cutting in video works, and as a consequence of durational performance pieces.

For Transcendent Self-Harm Fantasy: To Bleed Forever and Ever with No Pain and No Damage Done (2012) I glued red sequins and streaming thread to my forearms. In *Big Hell* (2013) applied theatrical face putty and fake blood to my shins, which I then sliced, roughly stop-motion animating the resulting video to show word-wounds spontaneously opening in the skin. At the time I considered both videos humorously over the top due to the obvious fakery employed. Aside from a knee jerk reaction to the content it did not occur to me that audiences might find these videos upsetting. I was surprised when they did. I was especially surprised when people close to me, and people whom I knew to have similar histories of cutting were distressed, although I should really have anticipated these people would be most likely to be upset.

An additional difficulty of reception seemed due to the open-ended nature of both works. The action of cutting is not depicted in these works, and bleeding for being cut is represented as, respectively, frozen and spontaneous. Narratively neither has a resolution, both ending (as such) in an ongoing state of bleeding. This may well have reflected my own position — an ex-cutter missing the former comforts of cutting, but no longer in a state to accomplish it.



Figure 1. Claire Harris, Frame from *Transcendent Self-Harm Fantasy: To Bleed Forever and Ever with No Pain and No Damage Done*, 2012, single channel digital video, <https://vimeo.com/58233161>.



Figure 2. Claire Harris, Frame from *Big Hell*, 2013, single channel video, <https://vimeo.com/75369736>.

Indirect self-harming behaviour surfaced as an inevitable part of durational performances. For *Happy Birthday Lindsay Lohan* (performed annually 2010-2016) I stayed awake watching Lindsay Lohan films for periods of over 24 hours, live streaming a view of my face as a watched. After the later iterations I began suffering worrying consequences from sleep deprivation, eventually extending to several days of disorientation and confusion post performance. As of 2017 I have changed the format of this annual work and committed to avoiding any form of intentional sleep deprivation.

Facetime (2013) was another web streamed live durational work in which I licked a poster of Donnie Wahlberg from paradigmatic boy band New Kids on the Block until his image (and the poster paper) was entirely worn through. Discomfort and repetitive stress, visual problems associated with close-up focus.

Humorous and relatable exaggeration of fan devotion. It was discomfoting to me that the works in which I risked damage to my health were more acceptable than those with an overt (but entirely simulated) reference to cutting.

More so than worry for myself this was motivated by both becoming primary care giver of a small child and simultaneously developing epilepsy. It has been easier for me to commit to taking better care of myself

Deliberate Self-harm IRL

Self-harm as form of documentary practice. Making real via making visible. Art as therapy/communication.

Cross media approach. Art/entertainment/popular culture and sociological/clinical.

The following is a brief and idiosyncratic look at clinical and sociological research on self-harming behaviour in 'real life' contexts, deployed as an expression of emotional distress and/or coping mechanism. The methodology for this review largely to read database search results with the most artistically interesting titles. Results from journals spanning *give examples* this was supplemented by following up frequently cited and assumed to be standard texts such as

Common themes encountered in the literature included;

- deliberate self-harm as attempted communication;
- deliberate self-harm as reintegration into bodily experience;
- with reference to cutting, the importance of visuality in the cutters' experience.
- metaphors of body as container
- Writers were unanimous in stressing deliberate self-harm as a separate act from attempted suicide, and in noting the emergence of self-harming behaviour in otherwise functional individuals through the later 20th century, with a marked increase during the nineties.

Communicative function. Relief/ release. Expressing the inexpressible.

Brady argument cutting as symbolic action in sense of symbol as an object cut it two that functions as sign when put together. Communicative value of cutting takes place when message assembled by therapist (or other audience called to witness?)

I wanted my existence and my struggles to be validated magically without me having to perform the threatening work of putting my experience into words and communication it directly to my family and peers.

Communication function similar thought processes.

Reintegration into bodily experience

"overwhelming feelings or experiences of dissociation" (Sternudd)

Importance of visuality CUT BLEED HEAL SCAR

Summarise functional similarities between cutting and art. Cutting/deliberate self-harm recurrent as overt content in body art. Vergine characterisations/categorisations of body art performers in 1974 and in 2000 update

Body Art's Greatest Hits

- Yves Klein. Le peintre de l'espace se jette dans le vide. 1960
- Yoko Ono. Cut piece. 1965. Yoko Ono self, scissors, and invitation for audience to interact
- VALIE EXPORT. Tapp und Tast Kino (Tap and Touch Cinema). 1968 – 71
- Chris Burden. Shoot. 1971 Lecturers always bringing up Burden.
- Marina Abramović. Rhythm 0, 1974. Abramović focus on audience's responsibility
- Ana Mendieta

Canonical works of body art involving deliberate self-injury or the artists' set up of situations which include or invite the possibility of harm by audience/participants. As with the discussion above I focus on acts of cutting and puncturing skin, or of blood.

- Invitation to harm versus self-harming
- Talk about music/underground/BDSM subcultural situated performers Bob Flanagan, Catherine Opie, and Ron Athey etc.
- EXPAND ON UP TO DATE EXAMPLES AND REALATION TO MARGINALISED IDENTITIES
- William Pope L

Brief overview from both necessity and the role these precursors play as background knowledge. Encountered via media. **Specifics forgotten (memory loss/overload)**. All part of back ground narrative of my life and times 90s body modification art and media attention on subcultural and performing art precursors. Plus, self-selecting based on own interest from pic n mix art history narratives enabled by internet. Marina Abramović in Eurotrash cinema Tumblr feed alongside Roger Vadim vamps. The big flat now.

Key idea "implicating the audience" wider cultural narrative. Complicating factors/problems. Shitty move by artist to construct a high stakes situation then berate audience for their fascination.

Theatrical = bad?

But what gets identified as theatrical?

Maps to unnecessary, over reaction, attention seeking, hysterical.

Opposing claims as to presence/extent of theatricality in e.g. Gina Pane's work.

Bernard Blistène claim Gina Pane work not theatrical. (Collier and Foster)

What I like

- Parody
- Pastiche
- Artifice

What I don't like

- Bombast
- Straining for 'transgression'
- Hitching wagon to existing cultural narratives of worth/importance e.g. martyrdom, heroic suffering, grand historical narratives.

Differentiate this from reflecting these in a way which brings back to the specific/everyday e.g. Gina Pane saint works.

Theatre that works theatre that doesn't

DOYLE 'DIFFICULTY' AND EMOTIONAL LEGIBILITY. DISCUSSION OF OFFENSIVE CONTENT IN Books AND MOVIES AS MORE ACCEPTABLE WITH NARRATIVE FRAME AND CONVENTIONS.

"Instead of giving us a story and character these artists become both story and character." (Vergine 9)

"suffering is not transformed into mysticism"(Vergine 8)

Gina Pane's Theoretical Wounds

Intro to Pane's work. Potted bio. Described by As one of few woman artists who used actual cutting of herself.

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Enjoy matter of fact-ness of self-harm in Pane work Cutting of hands and face with a razor blade in small deliberately executed cuts recurring element of Pane's 1970s actions Similarities to my own cutting habits reason I find her work compelling? Relatable on an ego level but also linking to shared bodily experience. Plus, not challenging in the way Athey etc extreme actions are.

Audiences. Not fobbed off on to audience/takes responsibility. Balances symbolic role with actuality and specificity – not subsumed into a narrative.

I like Pane's documentation. Worked closely with photographer. Function as separate art work from performance. Referred to by Pane as *constat* guide/score/briefing. Also note *constat* as proof sheet.

Theoretical Wound (1970) First work I really responded to. [Link to my own photo collaging practice progression from cutting paper – to cutting skin related to my movement from self-harm to cutting up representations of celebrities.](#)

Figure 3. Gina Pane. *Blessure théorique* (Theoretical injury or Theoretical wound). 1970. Black and white photograph. Collection Anne Marchand, on permanent loan at FRAC des Pays de la Loire.

Scanned from Chavanne, Blandine. Gina Pane: Situation Idéale, Les Presses du Réel, 2011, plate 18

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Figure 4. Gina Pane. *Action Escalade Non-anesthésiée* (Action Non-anaesthetized Climb).
1971. Black and white photograph, steel. Collection Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre
Pompidou.

Scanned from Daderko, Dean. *Parallel Practises: Joan Jonas & Gina Pane*, Contemporary Arts
Museum Houston, 2014, 72.

Unanesthetised Climb Most written about

Different suppositions as to duration. "performed alone in her studio, but photographically documented for posterity..." (Jones "Survey"). Documents section?

No live audience aside from photographer. Performance of approx. 20mins duration. Performance minus audience seems wise move to avoid pressure to perform past ability safety. Also removes audience responsibility.

Exhibition of photo series constat mounted in barbed ladders – documentation and artefact = temporal recreation in audience mind- a consideration of audience.

Vietnam War reference = validity

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Figure 5. Gina Pane. *Azione Sentimentale (Sentimental Action)*. 1973. Colour photographs.
Private Collection, Paris.

Scanned from Collier, Caroline and Foster, Stephen. *gina pane*. John Hansard Gallery,
University of Southampton, 2002, 24.

Sentimental action

Live work. Role of audience and documentation in each. Women only audience

Letter to a Stranger

Audience other stranger. Direct hailing of reader/audience

“...you are the fundamental “unit” of my work: the OTHER.” (Pane 29)

“She explained that a performance included three parts of equal importance: the groundwork, consisting of preparatory drawings, photographs, and texts; the actual performance; and the selection of photographs taken during the performance, which constituted the constat. In this context, the presence of an audience did not appear as essential, as the constat, in Pane’s view, transmitted the performance most efficiently. In fact, she made clear that the constat was not separate from the performance; instead, it was part of her performative language, as it allowed her to guide more closely the viewer’s gaze in his/her encounter with the performance.” (Baumgartner)

"If I open my body so that you might see your blood, it is because I love you." (Pane)

Relationship individual to collective. Supposed loss of identity – doesn’t have to equate to universality or dominant identity as default. Acknowledge shared and specific experience.

“...Pane simultaneously emphasised the importance of the ‘sociological body’ in her work.” (Baumgartner)

“Indeed, for her, the body was in essence sociological, insofar as it did not exist by itself but always in relation to a community. Hence, the relevance of using her own body as the medium through which to address socio-political issues on a collective plane.” (Baumgartner)

“Exploiting the biological fact that each individual is a body, Pane reflected on the collective implication of our corporal condition evidenced in her query ‘is

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your body mine?’ and her declaration ‘I am the others’.⁴³ Lucy Lippard’s emphasis on the fact that Pane ‘used her body as a “conductor”’ was, in this sense, insightful” (Baumgartner)

In Anticipation of the Cut

At the beginning of 2016 I entered this MFA programme with vague sense of imminence. Something was 'there' just out of reach, under the surface.

Surfaces of paper, skin, and celebrity, were my ongoing preoccupation. I had stepped back from durational video and live-streamed performances into what I referred to as an art therapy project; collaging images from gossip magazines into grids or quilts of celebrity skin. Using weekly magazines *NW* and *Famous* I selected all female celebrities pictured in both titles at least once per issue for January 2014. From these images I harvested 7mm squares of featureless skin, gluing them to graph paper in a chronological outward spiral for each celebrity. Over a year this quasi scientific methodology formed a rough infographic of media saturation, and a record of my repeated action. The process was also very calming, similar I imagine to adult colouring-in books.

Here was a collision of specific and anonymous; an obsessive focus on exposed and famous skin devoid of identifiable features within a flat grid. Also, an undeniable creepiness – slicing, collecting, and reassembling pictures of women's skin.

Reworking these celebrity skin quilts was the starting point for my MFA studio practice. Mixed with the unresolved irritation over responses previous video and performance works utilising my own body, this led to a desire to readdress self-harm/cutting in my art work.

Awareness of wishing to avoid hurting myself or causing disproportionate distress to others. Entering work with goal of not performing actual self-harm or restaged acts of self-harm by removing my bodily presence. Goal of self-harm minus the self. Following on from removal of self from Facetime removal of the narrative created by completed action to a potential narrative

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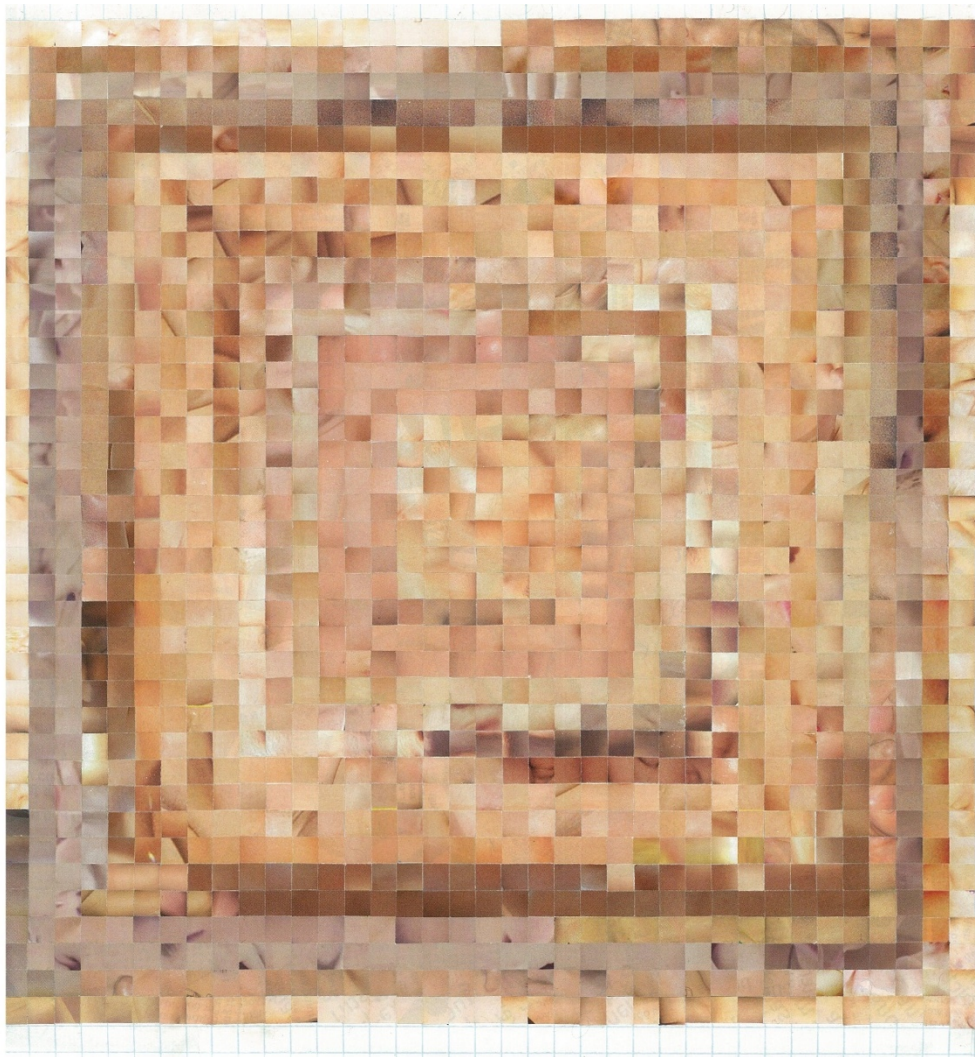


Figure 6 Claire Harris. *Miley (Famous 2014)*. Paper collage, work in progress. April 2014

The Waiting Room

Experiential key is adolescent angst – linking back to Big Hell positioning in the past.
Waiting to be adult, waiting to be elsewhere, waiting to be worthy and waiting for life to begin.

Coincidence of being 17 years old in 1999. Literalised self as archive.

Premillennial expectation/tension. Pre-ubiquitous internet access to celebrity culture and aspirational images/lifestyles via print media.

Promise and anticipation of opening sealed magazines.

Downside – overdetermined reading as cosmetic surgery.

Faith Wilding Waiting 1971 Spectacle of self waiting – transformed into environment of waiting.

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Figure 7. Claire Harris. *The Waiting Room*. 2016.



Figure 8. *The Waiting Room*. 2016.

Accidents Waiting to Happen

Proximity of scalpel blade and shrink-wrapped magazines

Expanding on idea of 'waiting'

Narrative desire for completion of foreseen action

Enduring power of broken glass and unattended small appliances. (Harris 30/03/2017).



Figure 9 Claire Harris. Broken microwave. Stills from video work. 2017

Proxies

As opposed to prostheses.

Personal iconographies open to unwelcome divergent readings. E.g. scalpel shape of mirror and clinical waiting room over determining readings related to cosmetic surgery
Situational works more promising able to balance domestic, scientific, quasi-experimental, technology fetishism. Etc.

Abraham Cruzvillegas Ben Woodson potential models for further development in this direction

However, feel Need to reincorporate self. My presence in work even as disembodied hands carrying enough.

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What began as attempt to evoke the emotional tenor of a situation minus the specific acts opened tactic of using neutral(ish) everyday objects and actions to approximate emotional and perceptual states like those of anxiety and self-harming.

For drive toward and anticipation of cutting

For surface/skin



Figure 10. Claire Harris. *Glass Knuckles*. Digital photograph. 2017

Out of body experiences

Self, minus harm.

NOTE that the relation of myself to my body has proved to be an unanticipated rich territory a densely packed period of new and profoundly altering experiences - pregnancy, miscarriage, seizures, memory loss, and a diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy, childbirth and new parenthood.

Research curtailed. Outside and inside. Too specific and painful or pathologized, of too broad and anodyne.

- George Herbert Mead 'generalised other'
- W.E.B. Dubois 'double consciousness'
- Mental health symptomology Dissociation and/or derealisation.
- Gina Pane's 'other'

What I'm trying to describe has aspects of all at once. Especially as always performing for/to multiple audiences.

NOTE Inseparability from ongoing/real life relationship to body, esp. **those who are already pointedly aware of relationship to body** through 'otherness' exoticized, feared body. Awareness of modifying and projecting acceptability. Or navigating world with illness and/or disability. Treating this as a given.

Documentation can it be separated from audience? Can performing for camera be separated from performing for audience?

Medium Glove as bridge/pivot work.



Figure 11 Claire Harris Frame from *Medium Glove*, 2017, single channel video.

Glove as proxy for skin and symbolizing conflicting metaphors for the skin. As summarized by medical writer in *The Body's Edge* the conception of skin as "Barrier or Sieve?" (Lappé 66) is one that shifts back and forth in medical and popular schemas.

Visual language of health and safety. Allude to danger through emphasis on precaution.

DISCRIBE lucky accident of motion of breath motion captured while chest bracing camera as improvised tripod.

Hyper focus/unreality

Dissociative states, state of oncoming anxiety attack hyper focus on individual objects, details of environment, or sensory inputs heightened clarity accompanied by overall sense of unreality. The (often literal) tunnel vision of heightened clarity surrounded in fuzzy obstruction.

Camera as bodily/ breath personification.

Hands of the Killer



Figure 12 Dario Argento. Film still. I forget which one. Could be any TBH.

Close-up implied POV of killer's hands

In case of Dario Argento notoriously always his own hands.

Hitchcock, de Palma, Argento.

For ouroboros nature of self-harm – simultaneously the one who cuts and is cut, acts, observes, and experiences.

It is not surprising that each of the participants have a desire to identify with the male gender. All have encountered male power and domination, and all have learnt from their female contemporaries, in particular their mothers, that what is not permissible for them as women is often expected and accepted of their male counterparts. (McAndrew and Warne 177)

Vertigo Zoom

Reshoot going down the rabbit hole of my love of deeply misogynistic film. The stalker camera. Self-operated it replicates the outside-ness/inside ness.

"I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking."

(Isherwood 13) however I am a camera stalking myself.

Relationship between the artist, their points of reference/material/inspiration, and their medium when all three of these things are the same individual human body. I engage with the state of simultaneous Inside-ness and outside-ness that this creates and necessitates. Watching oneself perform plus watching audience watch performance. Relationship artist to audience. Experience as audience to one's own body, audience to the audience, audience relationship to own bodies and experiences. Holistic and recursive series of attentions and awarenesses



Figure 13. Claire Harris Frame from *Medium Glove (Take Two)*. 2017, single channel video.

All about eggs

Alfred Hitchcock: ovophobic

I'm frightened of eggs, worse than frightened, they revolt me. That white round thing without any holes ... have you ever seen anything more revolting than an egg yolk breaking and spilling its yellow liquid? Blood is jolly, red. But egg yolk is yellow, revolting. I've never tasted it." (Fallaci 61).

One might suspect Hitchcock of self-parody in this interview with feminist communist reporter Oriana Fallaci. The voyeur and fetishist of icy blondes repulsed by a visibly whole, hole-less, and white thing. Half remembering this quote (mentioned perhaps in a text on representing blood in cinema?) I experimented with hens' eggs as a generalized stand in for blood and body fluids.

Egg yolk's viscous flow, reaction to air, and startling colour is equivalent to blood, but with no chance of being confused for it. Nestled membranes, fluids, and round bodies seemed an analogue for both organs and the entire body. Eggshell's fragility and the tense anticipation of cracking was a possible replacement for previously discussed dynamics of ruptured skin or emotional outbursts.

My initial impulse was to smash eggs open – recreating fantasies of transformative self-destruction recast as joyful prank. Opening a presentation "...with egg smash into eye socket... fantasy of smashing the side of my face. Cheekbone smashes like an egg shell and ruptured eyeball slides out of socket like a yolk. I will have egg on my face." (Harris Note 12/11/17)

Egg as potential, egg as perfection

- Rebirth fertility near universal
- Cosmic egg Asian religions/ philosophies
- Resurrection (life inside the tomb) Christian tradition + incorporation of Pagan spring time rituals.
- Perfected and perfectible self. Alchemical traditions egg as final stage of transmutation.

- Egg as symbol of Virgin Mary 'sealed' and yet fertile. Appearing in paintings (9fig) plus in Coptic and Eastern Orthodox Christian traditions eggs suspended within or used to crown domes of churches.
- Eggs as synecdoche for a kind of body /personhood

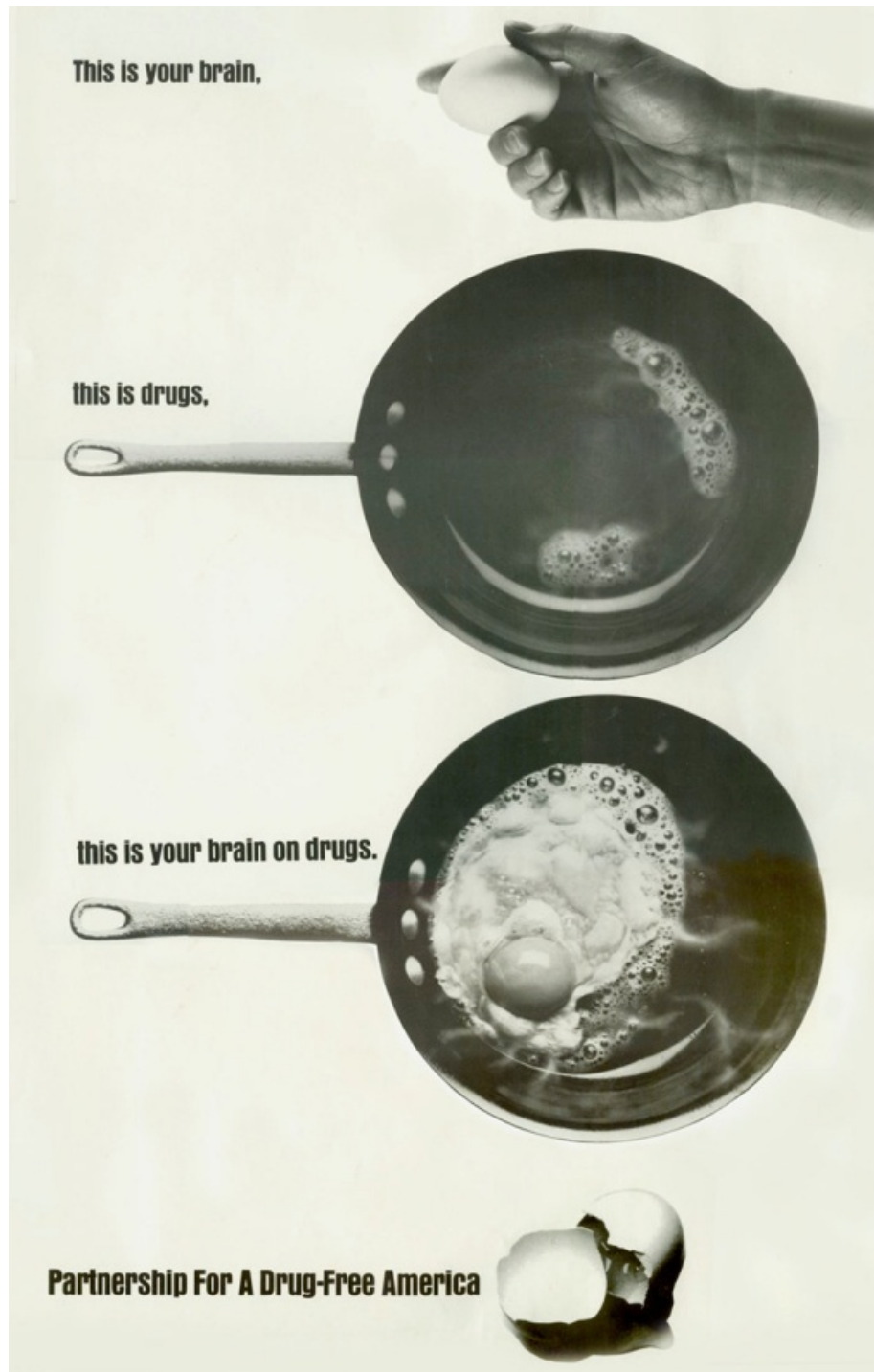
Self-contained perfection – illusion of self-sufficiency almost replicating ideologies of self-made success. Or perfection of impervious hard-shelled protection – along with threat of total destruction



Figure 14. Piero della Francesca. Montefeltro Altarpiece, (detail), 1465, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. Photo designboom.com. retrieved from <http://inhalemag.com/ingo-maurer-broken-egg-architectural-installation-for-artpark-in-inhotim/>

Egghead

Also, in English vernacular and metaphor used particularly as symbol for the head/brain/mind. Much as head/brain/mind functions as synecdoche for selfhood.



EEG

In October 2016 I sat in the Clinical Measurement Unit at Wellington Regional hospital trying to take a cell phone photo of the electrodes attached to my scalp for an electroencephalogram (EEG). The clinician swiftly volunteered to take a photo of the back of my head. She seemed to expect it – that the patient under examination would want a selfie.





Ten days earlier I had been witnessed having three seizure episodes and was admitted to hospital. I don't remember any of that. Post ictal state memory transfer. **Hippocampus. There are a lot of events that I now don't remember.** Both from since that time and from the years beforehand. It was very strange to read work emails I had written and sent while post seizure. There are perfectly cogent, but I have no memory of sending them, writing them, of the situations they were about.

Having my scalp wired to measure the electrical activity of my brain while being asked to count back ward and looking at flashing lights brought me to an intense awareness of my brain as big squishy organ inside shell of skull. I kept remembering the of textbook MRI view of a skull in cross section that I had etched a plate of for Bursary printmaking - walnut halves of the brain and optic nerves extruded outward to eye bulbs, sitting oval in their sockets.

Within the hour I had been diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy. Thankfully not photosensitive variety so I can still enjoy strobe lighting. Temporal lobe seizures typically involve perceptual disturbance (phantom scents, déjà-vu, sudden feeling of dread) rather than the tonic-clonic (physical rigidity and spasms lasting several minutes) seizures I had experienced. A tempting new possibility was raised what if all the ghosts and visions and black tunnels and berating voices and sudden shaking I had felt for decades was due to epilepsy and not to anxiety?

Was in all in my brain and not in my head?

Cartesian reason and matter. Temptation of complete 'reasoned' self, inside a faulty organic apparatus.



Figure 15. Claire Harris. Frame from *EEG*, 2018, single channel video.

<https://vimeo.com/278973489>

Juggling an egg yolk

Suspension /tension. The longer the yolk membrane is exposed to air the tougher it becomes. The more forceful the juggling the quicker and higher the drop. Pushing toward limit of its surface tensions.

The egg as me

Domesticity, experimentation, haphazard science experiment.

Eggbed I

Eggs as proxy for situational anxiety/awareness.
Walking on eggshells etc.



This Bloody Show



Sink or swim situation.

Two versions Eggbed social and quiet

Social within context of an opening. Need to host to make people feel comfortable to actively guide and shape experience. To respond constantly and invisibly to manage experience to make OK for audience. Social version. Need. Also “acting normal” talk about Christian Boltanski South bank Show interview refusal to acknowledge anything bizarre or traumatic in experience.

Health and safety anticipation of harm/results/response/potential outcome.

Eggbed II



QUIET/still version

ALLOW FOR COMFORT WITHOUT OVERT MANAGING OF EXPERIENCE. IE
FIRST DO NO HARM, BUT OTHER WISE DON'T PRESUME TO TAKE
RESPONSIBILITY. OPEN EMOTIONAL SPACE. SIT WITH AWKWARD.

Lying in concert with my proxy selves.

Spilling over

Eggs are brilliant. Eggs are having a moment.

- Sarah Lucas 2018 egg throwing participatory work. 100 women 100 eggs.
- *The Good Place* Kamilah al Jamari parody of a contemporary artist and art writing “As momentary replicas become distorted through diligent and repetitive practice, the viewer asks which came first? KAMILAH or her ART?”
- Instagram egg, internet democracy, spirit of fun becomes most liked image on Instagram. Dethroning Kylie Jenner selfie. (note have eggs also replaced celebrities as my obsession/ alternative/ proxy for self? Later revealed as work of advertising start up. Landed job using egg for a social media anxiety awareness campaign.
- Egg boy

Hey folks I really wanted to at least get a coherent conclusion written here. But it's still all too big for my brain and current demands on my waking time. So here's the disjointed purge.

Conclusions regarding relationship to my body and outside/inside awareness. I am a steward of my body, body is a steward of myself.

Goals for audience

For audience space to feel bad or difficult feelings safely. Without placing an impetus on them to react/intervene/ or feel complicit. TO NOT DEMAND FIX OR SOLUTION WITH ONLY OTHER CHOICE TO IGNORE. Negotiating fraught potentials of relation in and with body in a safe space for performer and audience to experience reflect and feel together.

Much like the position I've long maintained re performance and art in general of the desired attitude being one of the performer/artist taking the work incredibly seriously while not expecting anyone else to, perhaps my goal is to take my feelings/myself seriously while not expecting any fix for them? Or creating any sense of obligation? (Harris note 13/04/2016)

IMPORTANT AGENCY FOR AUDIENCE. TRAD VIEW OF PASSIVE APPRECIATION/CONISOURSHIP VS AVANTGUARIST NEED TO SHCOK CHALLENGE IMPLICATE AUDIENCE. AUDIENCE TO HAVE SPACE TO ACT WITHOUT BEING PRESS GANGED INTO ACTION. SPACE TO INTERPRET TO FEEL TO PARTICIPATE VIA

PAIN AS A SHORT CIRCUIT TO OUTRAGE AND DISAVOWAL. Maggie Nelson desire for rigor without cruelty something like that in a desire for care without coddling. Praise? I hate praise and its expectations – of shared superiority and continued self-exploitation.

Many ways event can be communicated which have meaning for an audience. Not contingent on being in the right place at the right time. Pace discussions of 'liveness vs. done for the documentation (staged). The encounter is always in a sense live. And can be met un-digested.

Lack of live audience doesn't mean audience is after thought. Many ways to have consideration for audience(s) experience(s).

Mostly it seemed to be a necessary form of emotional self-regulation, a halt to rising panic and repetitive thoughts

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