

Rhythms of Presence
Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec

Written reflection submitted to the University of Bergen, Faculty of Fine Art, Music
and Design in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the Norwegian Artistic
Research Fellowship Programme

September 2017, revised June 2018

Abstract

My artistic research project *Rhythms of Presence* focuses on rhythm as an important element in everyday life, especially in understanding bodily presence. I explore the rhythm of everyday steps through a number of projects – including the three written about extensively in these pages: *Heredrum*, *Reading stanley brouwn*,¹ and *Rhythms of Presence* – leading to a deeper knowledge of walking as a complex interweaving of contacts and interactions between bodies and spaces. Here, this focus exclusively on rhythm in everyday activities provides a framework within which to reposition understandings of presence that manifest next to subjectivity, territoriality, meaning, and social life.

I reflect on three of my works, particularly the installation *Rhythms of Presence*, beginning with an introduction to the key elements that define its general process: rhythm of everyday steps as infra-ordinary phenomena, expanded listening, and production of experiential artworks as methodology. I then outline my engagement with theory and conceptual territories active in my work and that have deepened my own reflections on my installations and research, namely that of Giorgio Agamben, Karen Barad, Michel de Certeau, and Henri Lefebvre. I briefly situate my project within the context of past artistic practices engaged with walking. Contrary to predominant understandings of walking as territorial and narrative practice, I focus on the events of steps as negotiations between the body, the ground, and the surroundings. Following this I assume a position of “situated writing” in that this text aims to articulate insights and philosophical concepts that emerge from and are in dialogue with my artistic practice.

Three texts on the projects listed above form the core of my reflection and were written over the course of this artistic research project. In the first, the public intervention *Heredrum*, my focus on the events of steps rather than walking became clear. The second, *Reading stanley brouwn*, developed the relation to archival material as a set of instructions for future activity, and the act of “directed” walking as embodied “reading”. The third is the central text, looking into how *Rhythms of Presence* engages in a manifestation of presence through a remote transduction of the rhythms of everyday steps, and how this procedure reconfigures bodily presence and spatiality as temporal and rhythmical phenomena.

I conclude with a short statement on reconfiguring relations between the self, the other, subjectivity, and presence that rhythm – as activated within this research – might bring to the fore. The appendix includes brief descriptions of other artworks made as part of my research, followed by two texts by writers Salomé Voegelin and Vladimir Vidmar commission on the occasion of the solo exhibition at ŠKUC Gallery in Ljubljana, in November 2016, where all the works of this artistic research project except *Heredrum*, were exhibited.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction: Unpacking Infra-rhythm	4
2. Works	
<i>Heredrum</i>	10
<i>Reading stanley brouwn</i>	20
<i>Rhythms of Presence</i>	33
I. Body	39
II. Space	57
III. Temporality	62
3. Conclusion	69
4. Appendix	71
Works	
<i>With a Passerby</i>	74
<i>Unheard</i>	77
Commissioned texts	
Salomé Voegelin: <i>The Politics of Rhythm</i>	81
Vladimir Vidmar: <i>Rhythms of Presence</i>	84
5. Bibliography	87
6. Filmography	88
7. Endnotes	89

Presence is the rhythm of the body pulsating in between its infinite impossibilities of being entirely ungraspable.

Introduction: Unpacking Infra-rhythm

Process

My artistic research project investigates how everyday non-performative bodily movements might manifest presence as rhythmical and acoustical phenomena, adopting an experimental and a conceptual artistic practice towards creating experiential artworks. My methodology engages in expanded listening involving sensors and connective networked technology. Through this, I attempt to capture and rearticulate the hidden and invisible rhythms of everyday bodily expressions, and explore how these re-articulations might manifest presence beyond direct visibility and vicinity, allowing new poetics to form. I initiated this research in order to look into the hidden rhythms of everyday walking as an infra-ordinary activity.

In “Approaches to What?” (1973), Georges Perec coins the term “infra-ordinary”:

What speaks to us, seemingly, is always the big event, the untoward, the extraordinary: the front-page splash, the banner headlines. Railway trains only begin to exist when they are derailed, and the more passengers that are killed, the more the trains exist. [...]

What’s really going on, what we’re experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual? [...]

What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms. To question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us. We live, true, we breathe, true; we walk, we open doors, we go down staircases, we sit at a table in order to eat, we lie down on a bed in order to sleep. How? Where? When? Why?²

The rhythms of everyday walking, being an infra-ordinary activity, act as a bodily infra-rhythm – an omnipresent and somehow overlooked phenomenon, that nevertheless crucially contributes to our situatedness in the world, as well as to our perceiving, experiencing, and making of that very same world. Infra-rhythm is a pace, measure, presence, and reference for any other rhythm that might be perceived, felt,

or enacted. As such, everyday walking is understood as a liminal, semi-conscious, and semi-automatic activity in which rhythms pronounce bodily presence as a constant negotiation between the moving body and its inner being on the one hand, and its social, architectural, and geographical surroundings on the other.

Theoretical Research

As part of my research, I also engage with ideas from a number of theorists and conceptual territories, detailing key points active in my work. Looking to Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre helped me to contextualize everyday walking as a part of the practice of everyday life, pointing towards the material and immaterial forces and structures that might be *rhythming* the walking bodies into motion. I relate Jean-Luc Nancy's considerations of how the body might constitute its presence outside of language, to the re-articulations of bodily presence as they unfold in my artworks. Karen Barad's proposition of intra-action in understanding the body as a site and as a process of becoming, informs my understanding of body as process; such a view on simultaneity can shed light on the "intra-dependency" between visitors and artworks, constituting one another in the process of intra-action. Throughout my research I revisit Giorgio Agamben's pertinent question "what is the contemporary" to consider how attending to the rhythm of steps affords contemplation on relations between the lived, endured, experienced, and inaccessible passing of the present.

From Walking to Steps

Besides theoretical research, I investigate existing artistic practices related to walking. I quickly discovered an intrinsic connection between walking, territoriality, and narrative that in very general terms underline much of what is considered "walking art": marking territories, mapping practices, tracing movement by GPS devices, literature and poetry derived from walks, or transforming found materials into sculptural objects by exhibiting them in galleries and museums. The representatives of this rich tradition are many, most notably Francis Alÿs, Sophie Calle, Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, and the Situationist International to name just a few.

In tandem with developing my intervention *Heredrum* (2014), it became clear that my interest in the practice of everyday walking differed from this intrinsic connection to territoriality and related narratives: I sought to focus instead on the

event of a step as an occurrence that embodies bodily action and bodily sensation simultaneously. The step in this approach can be defined as a relation and as a liminal event that occurs in between the body and the ground, in between intentional and automatic movement, in between self-expression and sensation of self. My interest in the rhythms of everyday steps rather than everyday walking steers my practice away from narrative and representational modes of expression towards experiential and conceptual works.

Yet this artistic stance can still be situated in relation to the “walking art” tradition. I found traces of shared affinities in works such as *Seedbed* (1972) by Vito Acconci and in the oeuvre of Stanley Brouwn, whose work I later actively and productively engaged with as a part of my own artistic practice.

Writing

Writing was and is an important part of my artistic research process. Throughout my three-year fellowship at the University of Bergen I was “writing along” my artistic practice as another modality to further my research. Upon completion, I gathered these writings and developed them into this document. I would like to stress that with my writing I do not attempt to analyse or explain my artistic practice, but to formulate insights and philosophical concepts that emerge from the embodied experience of my material practice and question, contextualize, and are in dialogue with this practice. This process might at times complicate the works’ reception, while generating ideas for new works. In this sense I understand my writing as being “situated”.

Embedded within the process of artistic research, there is a tension between the material creation of artistic works and the practice of reflective and analytical writing – the latter “unpacks” while the former “packs”. As my artistic practice aims to address the visitor as a whole body, I look to produce a moment of suddenness in the encounter between the work and visitor. Once more this stands in contrast to the temporality of writing and reading reflective text.

In the final process of editing this text, in particular reflecting on *Rhythms of Presence*, much of the material has been omitted, this in an attempt to achieve greater clarity and flow within the text. Yet I would like to conclude this introduction by re-inserting one of these omissions, after not being able to weave it into the final version of this text. I reintroduce it here as I nevertheless feel its pertinence loom above and

around this reflection. I have frequently asked myself: Can language/discourse listen to this other body instead of being preoccupied by colonizing it with knowledge?

This question finds resonance with a statement by Avital Ronell in an interview in the documentary *Examined Life* (2008):

You can't presume to know or grasp the Other. The minute you think you know the Other, you're ready to kill them.

You think, "Oh, they're doing this or this. They're the axis of evil. Let's drop some bombs."

But if you don't know, you don't understand this alterity, it's so Other that you can't violate it with your sense of understanding, then, um, you have to let it live, in a sense.³

Works

Heredrum



Heredrum, sound intervention in public space, Bergen, September 2014.

Photo: Bjarte Bjørkum

Heredrum (2014)

Sound intervention in public space

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/126236781>

Introduction

In this text, largely unchanged since its initial writing in 2015, I contemplate the sound intervention *Heredrum*, lay out its conceptual premise, and consider what it activates, involving legs, steps, ground, ambiance, et cetera. I conclude by speculating on the drum stroke as catalytic event that reconfigures the relations between the stepping bodies, their steps and the ambiance around them, while accentuating the passing of the present as the “unlived element in everything that is lived”.⁴

Description

Heredrum trains its attention on the imperceptible and hidden rhythms of everyday walking by observing, capturing, and performing these rhythms where they occur. The work involves a group of ten or more drummers with snare drums attached to their waists, who walk into a populated public square during an afternoon, spreading out evenly in a large formation. Each drummer focuses on the steps taken by a random passer-by, hitting their snare each time the passer-by’s foot hits the ground until they leave or are out of sight; the drummer then pauses for a short time only to focus on another passer-by.

Conceptual Premise

Negotiating gravity, steps continuously form imperceptible flows of rhythms. Their variations echo individual itineraries, intentions, and emotions, as well as spatial and social situations. The way the body moves through space, interacting with architecture and other bodies, is reciprocated in the rhythms and modalities of walking and defines how one perceives that space. The step as contact point between foot and ground embodies the relations between body, space, inner mental state, and social life; it is both a personal strongly felt yet largely unnoticed sensation, and a public manifestation of presence.

The immediate, percussive accentuations of perceived steps at the location of their occurrences result in audible drumbeats that bring into presence hidden rhythms

in everyday walking and enhance the presence of walkers as moving bodies in an affective and evocative manner. This aurality transforms the ambiance of the space, instantly affecting how one occupies and moves within it as a walking individual. These consciously performed rhythms therefore accentuate and disrupt the way one inhabits public space, creating a moment of intense resonance and friction between the personal sensation of one's own steps and a public manifestation of a walking individual as part of a crowd that constitutes a place's social life.

By echoing the steps, the drumbeats abstract the rhythm of walking, transforming the perception of walking as a purposeful and automatic way to close distance, into a qualitative and symbolic, perhaps even poetic activity. The intervention intrusively captures and exposes personal bodily activity and is an emancipatory act that gives voice to the multitude of individual presences in public space. The resulting heightened awareness of being observed while also being heard challenges the walkers to actively explore and transform given ways of occupying public space; from being a passive citizen automatically adhering to culturally prescribed behaviour, to an agent whose articulated presence has (trans)formative power within, and immediate influence on, the social and symbolic place they occupy. The aim of the intervention is to experience and investigate this affective activation of place, observing the transformation of place and relations between the self and public as well as the experienced and symbolic.

Elements of the Work

Legs

For those with the ability, legs support the body's weight. Most of the time while walking or sitting they touch the ground. With our feet we sense the margins of our bodies, our weight, and the possibilities and the limitations of our movement – we sense our bodily situatedness within the world. Legs remind us that we cannot really take matters into our hands entirely. Legs, down below our torsos, are existential limbs. Their movement echoes bare presence. They are our gravity-sensing organs, always active in carrying our weight while sensing the ground. Legs fulfil our desire to move, enabling us to be in active physical relation with everything beyond the limits of skin. Their movement unconsciously influences our beings as much as we consciously control them. When meditating on this thingness of legs, it is difficult to

imagine the Cartesian division between the body and the mind, movement and thought.

Steps

When we move our legs, they spatially dislocate our entire bodies. Steps set our bodies into motion: a short moment of almost weightless floating in mid-air, followed by a fall towards the ground with the force of our weight multiplied by gravitational acceleration, and a final hitting the ground only to rise again towards the next weightless moment. We undergo this cycle with every step. This movement shakes our entire bodies – organs, bones, and fluids – conditioning our fundamental corporeal existence and mental state, and in turn influencing our perception and sense of ourselves and our surroundings. Steps are semi-automatic actions that have an enormous impact on subjectivity and perception; they embody an intrinsic connection between movement, sensation, and experience. As Erwin Straus writes in his essay “The Forms of Spatiality”:

(Expressive) movement cannot be produced apart from the immediate experience of which it forms and integral part. The immediate experience and the movement in which it actualizes its meaning are indivisible; the movement is not the cause of the immediate experience; neither is the immediate experience the purpose of the movement.⁵

Even though in this quote Straus refers to expressive movement in the context of dance, I would like to point to his observation in order to highlight the unnoticed interdependence between bodily movement and sensation constantly at play in steps. It shows that we are thinking bodies inhabiting a concrete space in a concrete time; how we move is integral to thought, perception, sense, and making sense of ourselves, surroundings, and the other. The step is not only semi-automatic and mechanical, but also a “lived movement” that expresses vitality and a modality of presence at its most bare.

From an external perspective, steps are a physical force that hits the ground, possibly leaving traces and radiating vibrations downwards into the ground as weak shockwaves, and upwards into the air as sound. While the vibrations in the ground remain largely imperceptible to us, we hear the steps echoing through the air. They

signal presence, contributing to the ambiance of a place. Attitude, age, agency, gender, weight, and fashion can to some degree be evoked in their echo. The step as a contact point between the body and ground is a probing gesture – sensing the firmness of the ground, revealing acoustic properties of the space, and giving us feedback regarding our own physical and mental conditions. One step at a time, we read the ground we walk on.

Ground

Ground as surface

Ground as point of contact

Ground as territory

Ground as margin of visibility

Ground as condition

Ground as possibility

Ground as resistance

Ground as limitation

Ground as stage

Ground as vibrant matter

Open ground

Ground as medium

Ground as construction

Ground as membrane

While walking we constantly hit the ground with our feet, sending weak shockwaves down through solid matter. Inaudible to the naked ear, these shockwaves vibrate the earth, exciting molecules in stone and asphalt, or resonate in built chambers, parking lots, or canalization tunnels below the surface. The ground absorbs our steps and echoes our presence in the solid subterranean acoustics. Always in touch or only a step away, this space remains inaudible, invisible, and inaccessible to us.

Ambiance

Ambiance engulfs us. We are immersed in it and sense it continuously. Ambiance evolves in an empty space between the structures of the built environment, the

ground, the sky, and activities taking place. It is ephemeral, airy, transparent, immaterial, and transitory. It is “imperceptibly in the foreground”,⁶ affecting us without being noticed. We are always a part of an ambiance. Our individual movements, attitudes, appearances, voices, and mental states radiate through atmosphere, fusing into an overall ambiance of the space. Therefore we are active agents of the ambiance that engulfs us. As a result of countless human and non-human activities in a place, ambiance makes us behave in a certain way. Our behaviour in turn reinforces the mood of that ambiance. Where does the initial mood originate? Is it communal, is it subjective, is it imposed, or is it self-propagated?

In his paper “A Sonic Paradigm of Urban Ambiances” Jean-Paul Thibaud describes ambiance as follows:

[ambiance] questions the idea of a clear distinction between the perceiver and the perceived, the subject and the object, the inside and the outside, the individual and the world. [...] ambiance enable[s] us to emphasize the “in-between” and the “in-the-middle”, and through them a relational thought can develop.⁷

Perhaps this “in between” is a relation that ambiance has with itself. A moment or a duration, an event or a constellation between one or many, alive or not, active or passive. Not being fixed to a place or time, this relation can occur between any of the elements at any moment, whether or not they are noticed.

Perhaps this “in between” is the moment when the ambiance hears itself.

Perhaps this “in between” is another way of saying that the ambiance hears itself.

Everyday Walking

Taking one step after another, along an invisible itinerary negotiated between our will to get from here to there, our physical ability to move, and external conditions, we walk. We stroll, we hurry, we drift, we hike, we follow, we protest, we run away, or we walk towards. Depending on the physical and social conditions of the space, we adjust the way we walk and which itinerary we follow. In this sense walking is a liminal activity, shaped by the walker as much as it is conditioned by the space in which it takes place. Walking never belongs entirely to us. The way we move through space and the itinerary we choose, defines how we perceive that space, and

conversely, while moving from one point to another, we bring the space we traverse into presence, infusing it with our vitality. According to our itineraries, we generate various intensities of the spaces we are passing through. Perhaps it is in this sense that we can read this quote from Michel de Certeau:

[Footsteps] weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these “real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city”. They are not localized; it is rather they that spatialize.⁸

These dynamics constitute an interdependent relation between the walker and the surroundings – as much as the spaces condition movement and itineraries, walking through them charges and brings these spaces into presence. In manifesting as kinetic, acoustic and visual phenomena – pace, rhythm, intensity, direction, and modality – walking as such does not convey meaning, but rather gives a “tone” to our presence. As much as we assert our presence through walking, walking “speaks” through us. Its rhythms reveal as much as they hide.

Drummers

The drummers are an organized group, focusing their attention on the steps of passers-by, drumming their rhythms as they see them. From countless activities taking place in the square, they are only interested in the rhythms of strangers’ steps. Tuned into this activity, they pay attention, observe, surveil, and expose. They amplify, interpret, articulate, and make audible these otherwise imperceptible rhythms. They are in service of the place or of some other invisible and opaque entity. They intentionally mark the semi-conscious and semi-automatic activity of walking and therefore give a voice to something that is there, that sounds but has no voice. They voice an everyday human activity that is not reflected upon. They become a place’s selective ear, transforming the ground into a strange vibrating membrane on which some steps resound as drum strokes while others remain silent.

By hitting the drum, the drummers are not expressing themselves, but voicing somebody else’s presence. This inverts the usual relations between the drum, body, and foot, in which the drum usually dictates the movement of the foot and body; in this case the foot dictates the vibration of the drum. The drummers surveil, expose, and perhaps terrorize the passers-by with their activity.

Drum Stroke

The drum stroke follows, makes public, commands, questions, comments, punctuates, and accentuates. It exposes, disturbs, gives voice to, arrests, and stimulates movement. The drum is struck each time the drummer sees the foot of the person they are observing touch the ground, the strike inserting itself in between the foot and the ground at the moment of touchdown. It occupies a concrete and imaginary space. The drum stroke does not only establish a complicated relation between the walker and the drummer – the one who is being observed and the observer – or merely resonate acoustically by making audible otherwise imperceptible rhythms of walking. The drum stroke also alters acoustic and social properties of a place by destabilizing the usual relations between foot, ground, step, ambiance, space, individuality, and sociality. In marking the moment of each step, the drum stroke causes a pause in the flow of time – a gap where time as experienced and time as represented occur simultaneously within a single stroke. The drum stroke resonates and disrupts the way of being present. It is an open gesture that resists interpretation and meaning. Located in between the foot and the ground, it marks the intersection of subjectivity and objectivity in a single step that is always a personal sensation and a public manifestation of presence. It marks the margin between automatism and consciousness of walking. It inscribes the ground and transforms the ambiance with its sonic presence. It manifests as an act of surveillance and attention.

Always being on the margin and in the intersection, the drum stroke plays the beat of yet another invisible and imperceptible rhythm. Each stroke creates possibility for a shift of awareness by rendering the semi-automatic as conscious, the personal as social, continuous flow as discrete events, by making the silent observation audible, and in assuming a position of surveillance or attention. A series of drum strokes therefore beat a rhythm of disruptions that grasp the walker, the bystanders, and the place, making them oscillate between subjectivity and objectivity, experience and representation, self and other, and inside and outside.

Following steps like a score or a text, a sequence of drum strokes enunciates the rhythm of walking. But the immediate sonic doubling of the steps in the place of their occurrence makes the drum stroke bounce back towards the walker – not conceptually or intellectually, but affectively and totally. Following the walker, the

drum stroke demands, it wants something from them, but it does not reveal what exactly. It manifests as a concrete and firm instruction, a command, a suggestion that remains oblique and obscure; its demands are unclear. It is irrational, ungraspable, and challenging. It provokes uncertainty. Perhaps it pushes the walker into the present, into the contemporary – perhaps it opens up the void of the lived present, that we endure but do not really “live”, a condition Agamben refers to when he writes:

The present is nothing other than this unlived element in everything that is lived. That which impedes access to the present is precisely the mass of what for some reason (its traumatic character, its excessive nearness) we have not managed to live. The attention to this “unlived” is the life of the contemporary. And to be contemporary means in this sense to return to a present where we have never been.⁹

Perhaps the drum strokes drum into the place this “unlived element in everything that is lived”, which is the void of the present itself. Pausing the flow of time, the drum strokes therefore push the situation into the void of “the now”.

All of these procedures make the walking bodies central to the intervention: they are the source, the context, and the “audience” of the action. They are brought to the fore; the rhythms of their steps are captured and given voice. They are followed, addressed, instructed, affected, transformed, and offered the power to become agents.

This gesture towards the walking bodies is unexpected un-curated, un-moderated, un-translated, and unexplained, but rather direct, immediate, and physical disruption. This disruption destabilizes the usual relations and flow of life, transforming and charging a place with intensity that creates a possibility for attention, activation, and transformation.

Reading stanley brouwn



Reading stanley brouwn, installation view, +MSUM | Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana, November 2015. Photo: Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec

Reading stanley brouwn (2015–2016)

Book by stanley brouwn, *my steps 12.12.2005 - 1.1.2009*,¹⁰ modified metronome, table, 21 days

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/178716570>

The following text on *Reading stanley brouwn* was written in 2016 as a first-person account of being engaged with this work to reflect on a relationality it embodies in establishing a direct bodily and personal relation with stanley brouwn's work. I introduce the project, and its premise, followed by four sections that delve into stanley brouwn, his book, a process of reading his book, and contemplating its embodiment, which materialized in my installation.

Introduction

Reading stanley brouwn explores everyday walking, measuring, archiving, reading, and rhythmic temporality. By way of reading the artists' book *my steps 12.12.2005 - 1.1.2006*, the project establishes a relationship with the Suriname-born, Netherlands-based conceptual artist stanley brouwn's work, which addresses the (im)measurability and materiality of the distances and their archiving by counting and writing down the numbers of one's own steps. I question the understanding of the written documentation-archive of everyday activity as something tied exclusively to the past, and through this process of re-enactment suggest a reading of this archive as an instruction. This gesture transposes the archive outside the passing of time, giving it a double temporal orientation into the past and simultaneously into the future. My project contains three elements – the book *my steps 12.12.2005 – 1.1.2006*, my action of “reading” the book, and an installation that repositions the book and the action “in the now” as an unclear and elusive rhythmical instruction, suggestion, norm or support for movement, reflection, or mode of listening.

my steps 12.12.2005 – 1.1.2006 consists of twenty-one pages, each with the date and number of steps printed on it. The title, the form and the contents of this book suggest that it contains an archive of the amounts of steps that stanley brouwn took on each marked day, this forming an archive of brown's steps. I read this archive so that each day for a period of twenty-one days (01.–21.02.16) I took the prescribed number of steps, simultaneously recording their rhythms. The installation consists of

the book and a modified metronome that ticks the recorded rhythm of my steps. Each metronome tick occurs at the exact time of the day a step was taken.

Through inscribing the text into my own body, I inhabit brouwn's archive with my own presence. The measured-out walk makes concrete the printed number of steps by bringing them back into the everyday in which they originated. If brouwn's archive points to a walked distance and thus invites the reader to imagine this distance – of which the measuring unit is an unknown variable, brouwn's steps – then my reading transposes this (un)defined distance into the qualitative dimension of time: rhythm and duration.

The recorded time of the steps constitutes a new invisible digital archive of rhythms whose variations echo my walked path, intentions, as spatial and social bearings. Like brouwn's, this archive is imperfect, abstract, directionless, ambiguous, and open.

Who Is stanley brouwn?

I have decided to answer this question twice; the first answer is a quotation from an attempt at a short biography found online on the occasion of an exhibition. The second takes into consideration brouwn's resistance and refusal of biography. Based on this, the answer rather attempts to outline brouwn's absent presence as it manifests throughout his works.

Answer #1

Stanley Brouwn, one of the most important representatives of the Fluxus movement and Conceptual Art, is, in the truest sense of the word, one of the most forceful and inaccessible artist personalities. He does not want his art written about, neither does he want any photographs taken of himself. What is known about him is that he was born in 1935 in Surinam, has lived in Amsterdam since 1957, and for many years taught as a professor at the Kunstakademie Hamburg.

Since 1960, his work has been shown at nearly all of the important exhibitions, e.g., documenta 5 in 1972, documenta 6 in 1977, documenta 7 in 1982, and most recently at documenta 11 in 2002, at the MACBA in Barcelona in 2005, and at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2006. Since the

seventies, an integral part of Stanley Brouwn's artistic work has been the publication of books. His conceptual works deal with distances, measurements, or spaces between two points, persons, and places, but also, in line with his most well known artist's book *This Way Brouwn*, with paths. For his layout sketches, he asked passers-by he accidentally met on the street to make a sketch from memory of certain distances they had covered. Indeed, for Stanley Brouwn, motion, dealing with distances in space and time are the primary material for his artistic activity. He examines this fundamental human activity in ever new contexts and measures distances according to his own units of measure, such as the Brouwn cubit, the Brouwn foot, or the Brouwn step. In 1976 he published his artist's book *1m 1step*, which consists of two lines – one the length of a (his) step, the other one metre long. Thus his own, subjective unit of measurement (the sb foot, the sb cubit, the sb step) is in opposition to a generally acknowledged, universal metric system or an – outdated – local unit of measurement.

Stanley Brouwn's works are situated in the field of tension between the abstract and the generally valid and could be summed up under the postulate: people walking on the planet Earth.¹¹

Answer #2

A record of measures, distances, lengths, directions, steps, crossings, encounters, relations, measurings. The record of a living body that doesn't want to be seen, that wants to stay absent and detached from its own archived records and resists capture. This is to perhaps point attention towards the liminal zone in which concrete and abstract bodies converge, touch, coexist, or cross – where biological life and a life of concepts inscribe each other. One could say that it is possible then to know brouwn partially and absolutely at the same time.

The Way of Reading stanley brouwn

The publications are long lasting exhibitions.

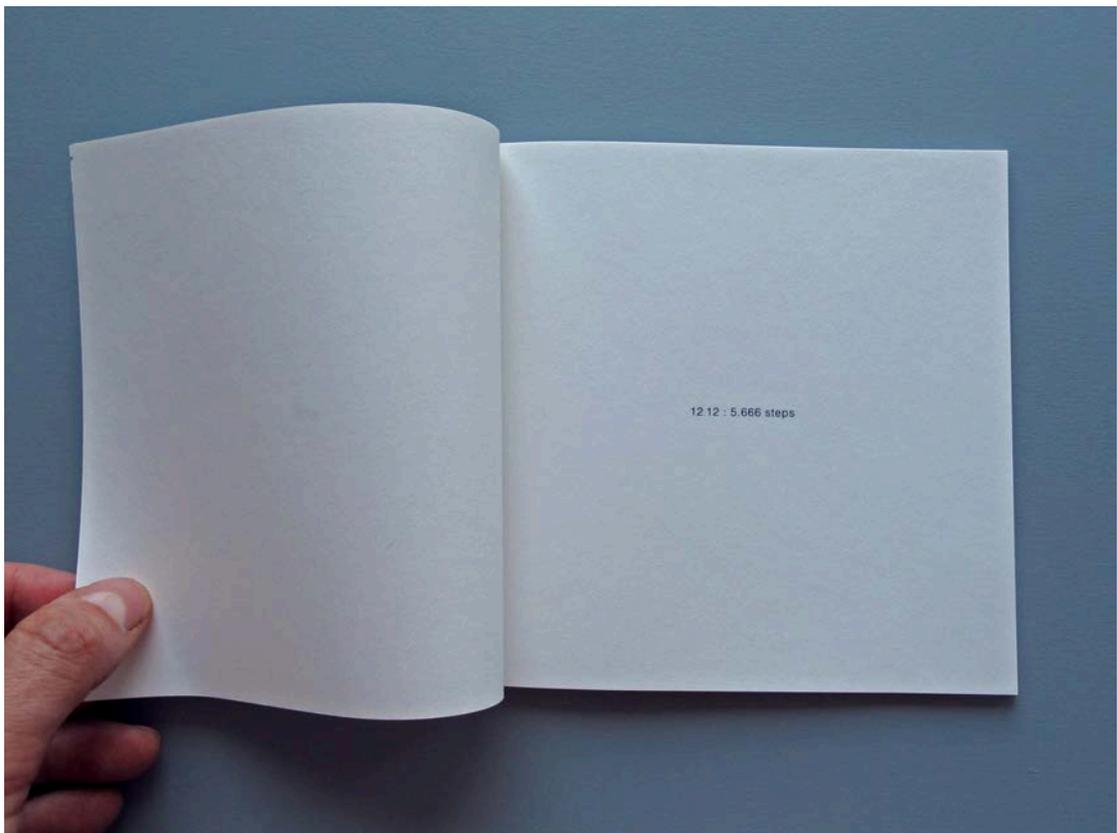
stanley brouwn

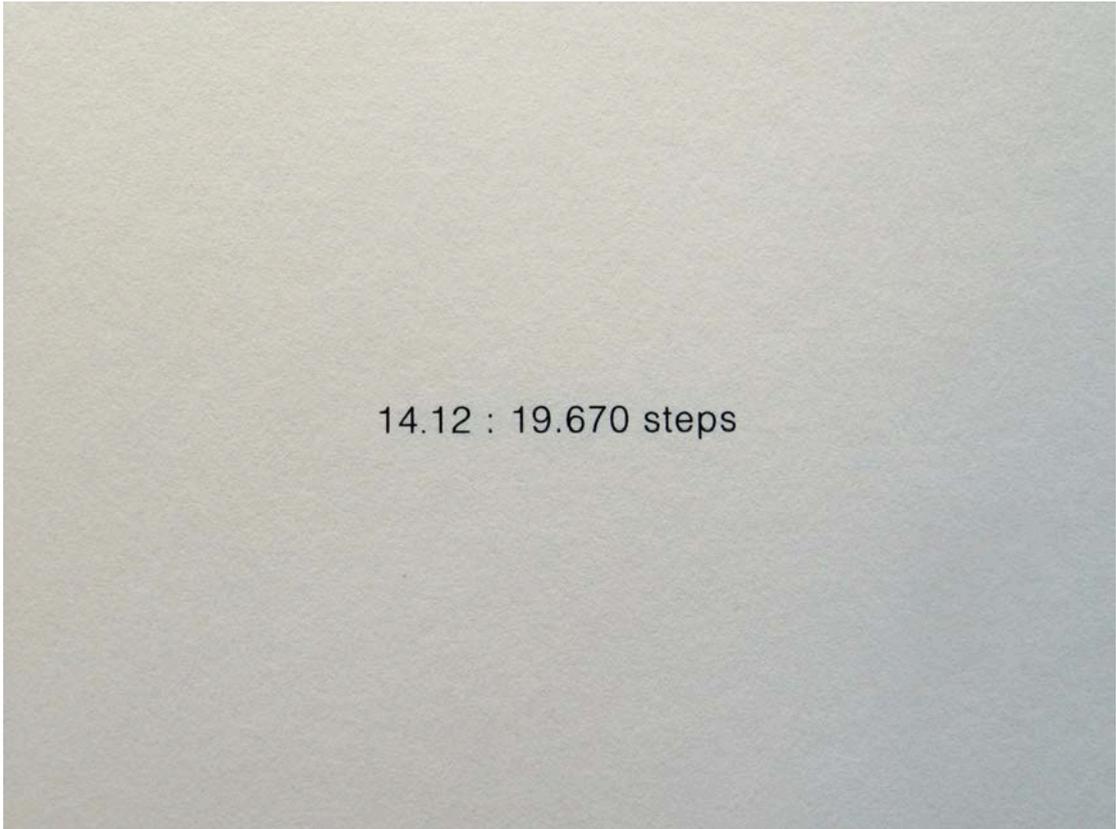
The Book

The book *my steps 12.12.2005 – 1.1.2006* consists of twenty-one pages, each with the date and number of steps printed on it. The title, the form and the contents of this book suggest that it contains an archive of the amounts of steps that stanley brouwn took on each marked day, forming an archive of brown's steps.

This archive of steps omits directions, pace, place, or any other geographical references of their occurrences. We only know the quantities of steps brouwn took on each specific day. One could say that the content of this book consists of statistically archived quantities of steps as used-up potentialities of movement. Following this line of thinking a bit further, one could claim that the archived steps are those brouwn used out of infinite possible steps. In any case, the archived steps point towards a record of presence of a particular body alive at a particular time. This stepping body wrote the archive.

Considering its title and numerical, temporal, and durational aspects, a hidden structure constitutes the book that situates it in an ephemeral and perhaps even a sculptural dimension. If one looks carefully at the dates and the number of days of archived steps (12.12.2005–01.01.2006) the digits that mark the days are combinations of "1" and "2". Furthermore, the number of days within the specified period is 21, partly reiterated in my chosen dates for reading the book, 01.–21.02.16.





14.12 : 19.670 steps

stanley brouwn: *my steps* 12.12.2005 – 1.1.2006, 2014

How to Read stanley brouwn's *my steps* 12.12.2005 – 1.1.2006

The empirical precision, numeric clarity and documentational approach with which this book was written lays the groundwork for this book as an archive of steps. The abstraction of concrete steps, their detachment from the body that took them, the missing narrative: this blankness, clearing, void, points towards everything that is left out of the archive, which in turn gains presence as an absent contingency that has nevertheless already taken place. Provoked and intrigued by this suggestive and inaccessible contingency, I read the openness as an invitation to activate myself, and to read the archive as an instruction, thus inhabiting the void, or clearing, the absence of body with my own body and with being. As stated above, the gesture transposes the archive outside of the passing of time, giving it a double temporal orientation, into the past and simultaneously into the future.

Besides the shift in temporal orientation that results in reading it as an instruction, the relationship between the archive and the reader is reconfigured. Unlike the archive as evidentiary record to assess, the instruction points back at the reader making them central and demanding immediate activation. Reading it as an

instruction and score, I recorded the rhythms of my steps over the 21 days, on each day walking the precisely prescribed number of steps, and applying these to a modified metronome.

The Act of Reading

What happens when I inhabit and embody the brouwn's archive? What relations between steps, bodies, presence and absence, and temporalities and geographies, come into play in the process of *Reading stanley brouwn*? By sticking to his rationed amounts of steps, I became a host for this archive. With my body as vessel for brouwn's steps, the steps come to life through my walking. The abstract steps are actualized and brought back into everyday reality – displaced from their everyday reality into mine. I read, host, embody, incarnate, and perhaps also steal brouwn's steps. Herewith an excerpt from my notes during the twenty-one days I read brouwn:

5.2.2016

15.765 steps

12:41

[...] the steps found a body to incarnate them again, with a long delay, they vibrate, they set my body in motion, make me go walking, so that they become actual again, back in motion, back on the street, at home in my body, along my everyday reality. They found a body to inhabit.

Through the gesture of hosting, I become an intersection, a crossing, a site of negotiation between the rhythm of my everyday life and the hosted rhythm of brouwn's steps. My body becomes a shared body, where I myself walk and I "walk the other". Stepping through these two realities, actual time, or the temporality of my steps becomes unclear and ambiguous. Each step is temporally threefold: a delayed echo of an archived step made by brouwn; a straightforward everyday step made in the present; and a performative step manifest by the metronome's tick in a future installation. I inhabit these three temporalities that pass through me as I read brouwn – they interfere with each other, unsettle my temporal situatedness, and generate an inaudible and invisible rhythm of my being that oscillates in between the echo of the past, the actual present, and the performative future.

Where Are These Steps Taking Me?

06.02.2016

19.241 steps

17:00

I am walking through the city, through the streets, buildings, shops, cafes, in my house, but these circumstances only partially affect my walk – since, what determines my path, my rhythm, is another invisible entity that I am inhabiting and following. As constellations of streets are designed to rhythm and steer our movement and our public and private daily schedules, at this given moment, my movement is not defined by these structures. Even though I am following a concrete path, my path is somewhere else ... my steps are detached from the ground they are stepping on. My desire to walk and to move does not come from the city and it has no geographical location.

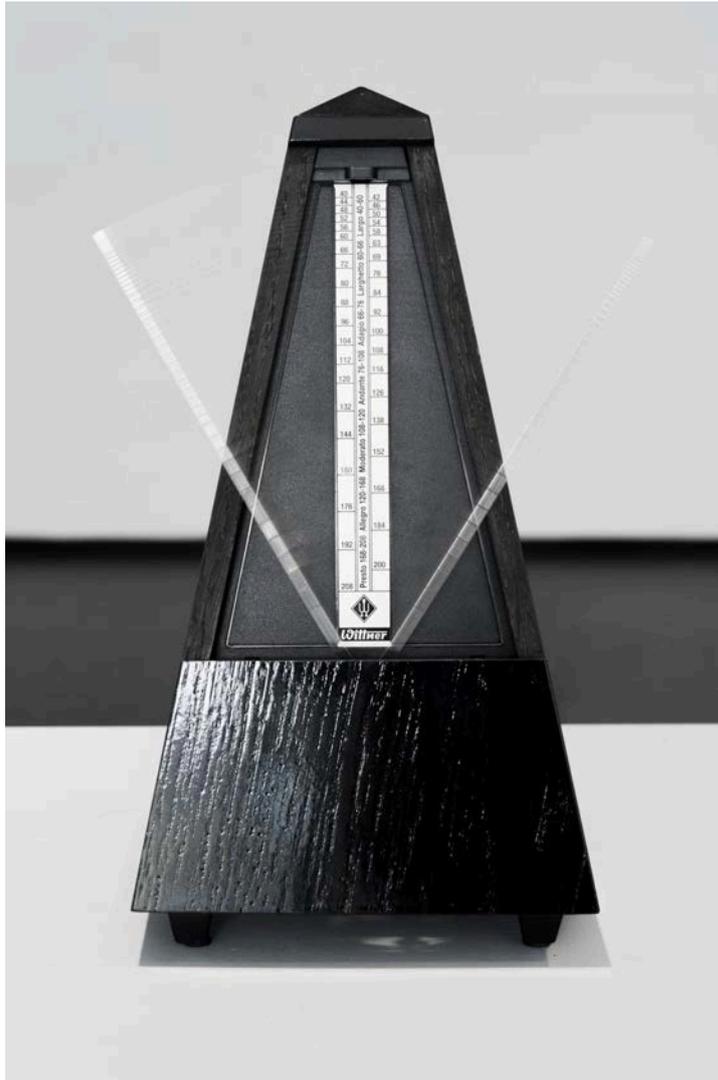
19.02.2016

17.740 steps

16:09

But nevertheless – where am I walking when walking the steps of sb? What am I doing with these steps? Nothing extraordinary – I noticed that I stick to known routes that I usually walk in the city, I wander the streets, visit museums and galleries, stores and supermarkets, bookstores, cafes. Eating lunch outside. Having French fries on the street. Choosing a path that is not too windy. So, nothing in particular, nothing out of ordinary. Quotidian walks. A journey into my own everyday life.

By reading brouwn's archive, I write a new invisible archive, that consists of rhythm. I could say that through this undertaking I walk towards rhythm.



Reading stanley brown, 2016, installation view, detail, Lydgalleriet, Bergen. Photo: Jane Sverdrupsen

My Writing: The Tact of the Metronome

26.02.2016

15:21

Metronome

A body always weighs; it lets itself weigh, be weighed. A body does not have a weight, it is a weight.¹² Could it be formulated similarly, and say that the steps are, and make the rhythm ... they are not rhythmical or a-rhythmical, but they are rhythm, pace and measure all together... . They are the infra-rhythm that makes any other rhythm possible. ... which is in this sense ultimately qualitative.

The metronome ticks the rhythms of my recorded steps, actualizing their temporal qualities. My reading transposes brouwn's book from a quantitative archive into a qualitative dimension of time – into rhythm and duration, that again entail a double temporal orientation – delayed echoes of my steps, and through their embodiment as metronome ticks they call for activity that the metronome wants to support. There is a tension in this embodiment of rhythms in the metronome:

02.02.2016

17.828 steps

22:37

The metronome is indifferent to the present situation. In this sense, it is not here to perform (for the visitors). ... It rather enacts a past itinerary that is passing by, embodying the utterly other. The one that doesn't see you, the one that doesn't know you, and that doesn't know you are paying attention.

Nevertheless, the ticking of the metronome is present affectively “in the now”, addressing the visitor as it calls for action. In this sense the metronome ticks resist being in the present as much as they insist on being in the present. This again unsettles the temporal situatedness of the whole project. As much as the archived numbers of brouwn's steps are detached from his body, and the rhythm of my steps is detached from my body, the metronome ticks are out of time, ticking the pace of the infinite in between.

In this sense the project institutes the present moment through constant resistance to stable temporality. It instead establishes a “temporal void” that gives time for a multitude of individual and singular present times to unfold. One could say that the project unfolds as a continuous insistence to stay in the temporality of becoming while resisting representation. From brouwn’s steps to the ticks of the metronome, the project evades interpretation, articulating the presence of an absent body as a possibility to activate and rhythm other bodies with its presence, into their own.

Rhythms of Presence



Rhythms of Presence, 2016, installation view, ŠKUC Gallery, Ljubljana.

Photo: Dejan Habicht

Rhythms of Presence (2015)

Sensfloor, software, hardware, knocking floor

Variable dimensions

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/202962979>

Introduction

This reflection on *Rhythms of Presence*, an installation central to this artistic research project, is based on experiencing the installation on three separate occasions from 2015 through 2016 in Berlin, Bergen, and Ljubljana. I likewise discuss its theoretical underpinnings, found in the work of primarily Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, and Karen Barad. I do so in order to compare an experiential as well as a research-based approach towards artistic practice, and to test whether together they might inform our contemporary condition in everyday life and related theories. This writing is not based on quantitative evidence or qualitative research (a sociological approach), but situated in the intersection of artistic practice, embodied experience, and theoretical engagement. My focus on three key areas of interest – body, space, and temporality – is preceded by a short description of the installation.



Rhythms of Presence, 2015, installation view, Errant Bodies, Berlin. Photo: Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec



Rhythms of Presence, 2016, installation view, Rom 8, Bergen. Photo: Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec

Description

Rhythms of Presence is comprised of two twenty-square-metre floor surfaces: one is discretely installed in an undisclosed location; the other is in the exhibition space. They are identical in size and shape. The surface at the undisclosed location can sense human steps, transmitting their temporal and spatial information to the exhibition space, where a grid of mechanical knockers invisibly taps out the rhythms of the remotely detected steps and follows their paths from below the floor surface.

Focused only on rhythms and paths of everyday walking, the work aims to capture the invisible aspects of walking and investigate how they help constitute presence, temporality, and spatiality. Displacing and superimposing the rhythms and paths of one place to those of another, the installation creates a hybrid and asymmetrical space where two simultaneous present times and presences interfere with each other. A floor that becomes unknowingly performative and a floor that echoes steps from an unknown origin together form an open *unsitely* space that is both here and somewhere else, and at the same instance nowhere and in between. Stepping in this space one inhabits a concrete, yet un-mappable and disorientated territory.



Rhythms of Presence, 2015, installation view, Errant Bodies, Berlin. Photo: Brandon LaBelle

Upon entry one finds oneself in a situation that is uncanny, disorientating, confusing, unfixated, and unadaptable. In this bright and seemingly empty room, there is nothing to hold onto besides a short text on a piece of paper describing the proceeding taking place in the installation. There seems to be no body of work, no narrative, no structure to anchor the visitor. It is not clear where this work is taking place; it has no beginning and no end, no dramaturgical or compositional structure, and not much physical presence. As such, this work has no single topographical site; there is no centre. It exists in several places; it is real and imaginary at the same time. The exhibition space is not the central place of representation where one can grasp the work in its entirety. It rather operates as an evasive and unstable crossing, a place of interference between sites (some known, some unknown, some visible, some invisible), bodies, presences, and absences that appear and disappear without compositional structure or comprehensible order.

Contrary to this topographical dispersion, the work possesses a temporal unity that comes into being through the synchronicity of the shared event of a step that touches, sounds, echoes, resonates, vibrates, and re-sounds across all the sites simultaneously. This procedure embodies the activity of listening to a fragment of the hidden rhythms of everyday life. The work doesn't aim towards analysis, understanding, interpretation, and representation of these rhythms, or to signify these uncovered rhythms. It is conceived as a place that accommodates these rhythms, so they might appear in their unexpected and illegible otherness as sonic, tactile, and spatial figures. This allows for an investigation into the bodily presence, spatiality, and temporality they might produce within the setting of this installation, and how these inform contemporary conditions of networked reality.

I. Body

I now turn my focus to rhythm as a bodily force and how it manifests and complicates the notion of bodily presence in the given context of this installation. I contemplate how bodily presence might manifest via the rhythms of steps and furthermore what kind of bodies might be constituted and imagined through such reduced manifestations of presence. Taking the installation as departure point, I speculate on broader contexts that might shape these rhythms, but that remain hidden and illegible, and on the rhythms of steps as somatic utterances of such possible bodies.

Knocks Heard as Decontextualized Rhythms of Everyday Steps

The process of capture, transduction, displacement, mediation, and kinetic re-embodiment of the moments and points of contact between the foot and the ground involves extracting the steps from the bodies and the ground that brought them into being. The decontextualization and abstraction of these rhythms erases much of what they express and articulate when perceived in context, hiding the identities of bodies, visual appearance, and spatial context in terms of location, position, and sociality. This procedure opens up the space in between the foot and the ground, making the transduced steps appear bodiless and groundless, yet not other-worldly. Invisibly tapping below the floor, they signal anonymous presences in search of the bodies and places they inhabit. Here I examine how through appearing, the rhythms of steps constitute bodily presence and the body as such. What are the forces that might rhythm these bodies into motion and how?

There is more than one answer. The plurality of suggestions opens up possibilities for what these concrete bodies might be, which I explore from three different points of understanding – body as mass, rhythmized body, and body as rhythm – concluding with a comment on rhythms of steps as hidden involuntary somatic utterances of a body in motion.

I. Body as Mass

In his essay *Corpus* Jean-Luc Nancy defines body as follows:

Bodies are first masses, masses offered without anything to articulate, without anything to discourse about, without anything to add to them. Discharges of writing, rather than surfaces to be covered by writings.

Discharges, abandonments, retreats. No “written bodies,” no writing on the body

For indeed, the body is not a focus of writing. No doubt one writes, but it is absolutely not where one writes, nor is it what one writes – it is always what writing excribes. In all writing, a body is traced, is the tracing and the trace – is the letter, yet never the letter, a literality or rather a lettericity that is no longer legible. A body is what cannot be read in writing.¹³

In the context of the installation at stake, the rhythms that invisibly punctuate the floor in the exhibition space might evoke the illegible weighted bodies Nancy writes about. The bodies appear as masses that step through the space somewhere, while sensed through the knocking as bodies that populate and excribe this place with their own presence in their becoming. Their presences are sensed and felt as they resist identification and inscription with meaning. These bodies do not leave traces; their excriptions are transient, marking their presence in the present moment.

Nancy continues the above thinking in considering the relation of this resisting body to its representation within institutions of knowledge and philosophy:

The body does not know; but it is not ignorant either. Quite simply, it is elsewhere. It is from elsewhere, another place, another regime, another register, which is not even that of an “obscure” knowledge, or a “pre-conceptual” knowledge, or a “global”, “immanent,” or “immediate” knowledge. The philosophical objection to what philosophy calls “body” presupposes the determination of something like an authority of “immediate knowledge” – a contradiction in terms, which inevitably becomes “mediated”; (as “sensation,” “perception,” synaesthesia, and as immense reconstitutions of a presupposed “representation”). But what if one could presuppose nothing of the kind?

What if the body was simply there, given, abandoned, without presumptions, simply posited, weighed, weighty?¹⁴

In his effort to emancipate the body from being defined through philosophy and therefore from being reduced to the limitations of what various philosophical discourses are capable of conveying, Nancy writes about the body that exists outside

of philosophy, outside of discourse that signifies it, as he puts it: “Quite simply, it is elsewhere.” For Nancy a body is something that is in constant becoming, that weighs, that is weight, and that manifests itself as such. It is a body that is always more than its definition, more than the discourse about it.

Nevertheless, as he points towards the body that exists outside of philosophical discourse, Nancy’s project presents us with a general question as to whether it is possible to use written language and theory to emancipate the body from their own definitions, representations, conceptualizations, and reifications. Thinking from the relation between body, knowledge, and language, just the fact that written language is used to liberate the body from the writing is a challenge if not a problem – certainly a contradiction.

A passage by Christof Migone (thinker, reader, and writer rooted in critical and conceptual sound practice) briefly, vehemently, and bluntly summarizes this complex relation between written language, representation, and body, tracing it back through history of philosophy. He asks if we are:

[S]tuck in, with and within methods of representation? We might, but from Plato’s chora, to Benjamin’s auratic, to Barthes’s punctum, to Proust’s *mémoire involontaire*, to Freud’s uncanny, to Bataille’s formless, to Derrida and Artaud’s subjectile, to Kristeva’s abject there seems to be a continual drive to incorporate (political) strategies with the very process they choke on. In other words, one cannot deploy these strategies for they are inextricably accidental. They function as foreigners; they are only, as Kristeva would say, “present in abeyance – Not belonging to any place, any time, any love. A lost origin, the impossibility to take root, a rummaging memory, the present in abeyance.”¹⁵

In this sense, methods of representation such as written language, discourse, and knowledge present themselves as the foreigners, in relation to the body.

Coming back to the installation, I explore manifestations of bodily presence outside of language and written discourse. Could the way in which bodily presences appear, through invisible tapping, be these illegible bodies, outside of discourse and knowledge, resisting representation, assessment, classification, and recognition? Through decontextualization, abstraction, and the excription of bodily weight, could

this installation convey the presence of these bodies as the ungraspable Other? Their immediate and sensible manifestation of presence, and their spatial dislocation, acknowledges that their condition is that of “always simply being somewhere else”. The work does not try to bring them “over-here” or understand them, translate them into language, or contextualize them. They are left ungraspable, outside of writing as they appear hidden and invisible passing by in their becoming. Can we then sense their presence without naming them, as sonic, rhythmical, and spatial figures?

As such, rather than trying to define body in relation to language and knowledge, this project establishes an immaterial body that is outlined and sensed in terms of weight, rhythm, movement, sound, and space.

II. Rhythmed Body

In hearing the illegible rhythms of steps produced by the body as mass, I contemplate the forces that might rhythm this body into motion. I use term “to rhythm” as a verb in order to emphasize the influence of material and immaterial entities that set the body into particular modalities of movement. For example, a weekly working hour rhythms the body into a certain scheduled movement; the way the city is planned rhythms the bodily movements of its inhabitants.

This is not to make formative forces legible, or to identify and name the rhythmed bodies. It is rather to outline the complexity and plurality of these forces and their interferences as they pass through the body rhythming it into presence. This further underscores the impossibility that such bodily presence could be legible, one that is manifest as rhythmical, immaterial, and spatial.

Culturalized Body: Body as a Public Space

The rhythm of everyday steps signals movement that seems to be non-performative in its purposeful and somatic activity. Yet there are external immaterial forces shaping the modalities of everyday bodily movements and gestures. These forces are cultural inscriptions on the body that silently perform through its movement. They do not convey direct meaning, but rather radiate a tone, a modality of movement, akin to the way a word’s utterance contributes to its meaning. These modalities of movement are not enacted or perceived consciously as performative; they are internalized through

culturalization. The rhythms of steps might intone some of this hidden culturalization that performs through purposeful everyday bodily movements.

In “Techniques of the body” (1934) Marcel Mauss analyses the culturalization of everyday bodily movements, or “physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions”,¹⁶ walking among them. His understanding of the situated modalities of everyday bodily movements is clear in the following:

I was ill in New York. I wondered where previously I had seen girls walking as my nurses walked. ... Returning to France, I noticed how common this gait was, especially in Paris; the girls were French and they too were walking in this way.¹⁷

These “habits” do not just vary with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges. In them we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties.¹⁸

To sum up, there is perhaps no “natural way” for the adult.¹⁹

[...] [W]e are dealing with techniques of the body. The body is man’s first and most natural instrument.²⁰

Mauss suggests that the body is a technical object. Technical means that is being dressaged (to use Lefebvre’s term) into a certain modus governing everyday movement dependent on nationality, gender, and social class as well as the physiology, psychology, and biology of the body. Culture is always in negotiation with the individual body. Through appropriating the master’s position, it finally subordinates individual bodily behaviour through techniques of imitation, drill, and repetition. The “modes and tonuses of life” thus speak silently of a culturalized bodily presence.

Along the same lines Lefebvre similarly observes the misnomer of “natural” bodily movement and behaviour. He elaborates on the difference – and sometimes even confusion – between this notion in biological versus cultural and sociological terms when he writes:

What does one mean when one says of a boy or girl that he or she is fully natural? That his or her movements and gestures are expressive or gradous? etc. Whence comes the effect? Where is the cause?

Nature can serve as a reference point. But one that is rather hidden. If one could “know” from outside the beatings of the heart of such and such a person (the speaker), one would learn much about the exact meaning of his words. [...] The heart remains hidden, like other organs, each of which, we know, has a rhythm.

Gestures cannot be attributed to nature. Proof: they change according to societies, eras. ... These gestures, these manners, are acquired, are learned. The representation of the natural falsifies situations. Something passes as natural precisely when it conforms perfectly and without apparent effort to accepted models, to the habits valorized by a tradition (sometimes recent, but in force).²¹

To paraphrase the above: the expression “natural behaviour” signifies the exact opposite in biological versus cultural terms. While in biological terms, it means sometimes hidden, consciously uncontrolled somatic activity, in cultural terms it stands for smooth and conforming consensual behaviour that is, due to its being honed to perfection, appear as “natural”.

Mauss and Lefebvre point towards forces culturalization that shape everyday bodily movement into modalities that are to an extent transparent, articulating a body that is not only immersed in, but also populated by, or even contaminated with, culture. Both theorists write of a single culture, class, or gender that governs a body. We know today that the situation is more complex. Following their thinking, the bodily presence that announces itself through movement points towards a body as vessel, host in which multiple cultures, genders, classes, and nationalities reside. This multitude of external forces that govern the body from within could be said to constitute a body as a public space.

Rhythmed Body

Let me return to the installation under consideration in this section. If the heard rhythms of the steps originate from remote bodies, long periods of listening can allow

one to discern what I would call “temporal assemblages” of stepping bodies appearing and disappearing. Densities of rhythms in time and in terms of numbers of bodies vary in a day, week, and month. Some recur regularly, others do not, the temporal patterns of these densities, and the qualities of the rhythms reveal how bodies sometimes walk together and gather and disperse, effectively signalling how they are rhythmmed into presence.

In this installation we cannot know the identities of these bodies, their interpersonal relations, and the contexts from which they originate. We can, however, consider the underlying forces and contexts that might rhythm the bodies, pushing them towards forming spatio-temporal assemblages. We could then hear the tapping of remote rhythms of steps, as those of a body being rhythmmed by various urban constellations of schedules, social relations, work, and other obligations, entangled in “The anarchy of the chiaroscuro of the everyday”.²² This rhythming of the body differs from the culturalization described above: it is not internalized; it influences and defines the body through external interaction. The process of the body being rhythmmed could be enacted from the position of governance, as well as through *a practice of everyday life* that originates from the inevitable necessity and condition of inhabiting and living socially. Lefebvre writes:

Political power knows how to utilise and manipulate time, dates, time-tables. It combines the unfurlings [deployements] of those that it employs (individuals, groups, entire societies), and rhythms them.²³

Superimposed upon natural cosmic temporality that manifests as cycles of days and years, is the organization of time that schedules production, consumption, leisure, “quality” time, and so on. This temporal structure for activities, rhythms the passing of everyday life. This life includes daily schedules moving among home, places of work and consumption, resulting in fluctuations in movement density. Just consider the movement of pedestrians during the morning rush and at lunch breaks, or on calm Sunday afternoons. Furthermore how cities are planned, built, destroyed, and re-built, and how its buildings – function, appearance, location, and symbolic signification – attract or repel bodies, influence and rhythm bodies into motion. There are places of passing, places of staying, those that are accessible and those that are inaccessible,

and where power is concentrated and where knowledge is shared, there are closed and open places.

These spatio-temporal situations rhythm bodies into motion, directing them from one place to another at certain times by fulfilling their needs, evoking desires, giving refuge, or exerting force. The degree of the movement in return validates and empowers a hidden topography of sociopolitical power relations continuously inscribed in the urban tissue.

As the stepping bodies are rhythmized into this larger spatio-temporal regime, they also make use of the structures that rhythm them with which they are in constant negotiation. They use, abuse, misuse, and bend forms of control. They appropriate these so they co-exist – as the double and the shadow – yet inhabiting them. enacting what Michel de Certeau calls “spatial practices” whereby they appropriate the space of habitation that is also the space of control. As De Certeau writes:

The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be: it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them (social models, cultural mores, personal factors). Within them it is itself the effect of successive encounters and occasions that constantly alter it and make it the other’s blazon.²⁴

The stepping body extends its interacting not only to other bodies, but also to the material and immaterial structures that rhythm it. What emerges from this relation is not only “*the long poem of walking*”, but also the syncopated ongoing dance of walking. The stepping bodies appropriate external governing rhythms, and use them as the groove to which they dance their illegible singular becomings into presence.

III. Body as Rhythm

Rhythm’s manifestation of bodily presence relies on concomitant forces that complicate notions of fixity, singularity, and identity. In the context of this installation, these manifestations could indeed be considered ongoing relational processes between various internal and external forces. In the following paragraphs I

lay out possibilities for how these concomitant and sometimes excluding and contradictory forces might constitute a body.

Body as a Site of Passing, Body as Passing

Thinking about the body in terms of rhythm analysis, Lefebvre and Régulier imagine multiple rhythms that coexist in a living body:

[T]he living body can and must consider itself as an interaction of organs situated inside it, where each organ has its own rhythm but is subject to a spatial-temporal whole [globalite]. Furthermore, this human body is the site and place of interaction between the biological, the physiological (nature) and the social (often called the cultural), where each of these levels, each of these dimensions, has its own specificity, therefore its space-time: its rhythm. Whence the inevitable shocks (stresses), disruptions and disturbances in this ensemble whose stability is absolutely never guaranteed.²⁵

Lefebvre and Régulier identify the plurality of forces that affect and effect the living body, each possessing and manifesting as a singular rhythm. They also note the ambiguity of a body, a “body ... as an interaction” and as “the site and the place of interaction”. The last of these unfixes the notion of body as one-dimensional. The interaction between the internal rhythms that form the body, and the external rhythms that pass through it generate “inevitable shocks, disruptions and disturbances”, as opposed to the “normal” stability of the ensemble of these same rhythms.

I would like to propose that contrary to Lefebvre and Régulier’s conclusion, what they rightly call “inevitable shocks (stresses), disruptions and disturbances”, are central to establishing a *body as an interaction* and *as a place of interaction* simultaneously. It is not only harmonious coexistence between rhythms that establish a body. I assert that it is also – and mainly – frictions among internal and external rhythms, which are not only asynchronous but also belong to different dimensions and functionalities. Perhaps what makes body is a continuity of disruptions, shocks, and disturbances destabilizing it into ambiguity, so it is not so much a place of interaction, but of interference, and interference itself. Where does this locate a body?

Body as (a Site of) Interference

A short passage from *Éloge de l'amour* [In Praise of Love] by Jean-Luc Godard is useful in bringing the body as interference to the fore, featuring a dialogue between the characters of a film director and of a young actress auditioning for a film role:

Director: So what will you play?

Actress: I think I'll play the young girl.

Director: I'm thinking of something.
 His name is Perceval.
 And her name will be Eglantine.

Actress: I'm Eglantine.

Director: Do you understand it's not Eglantine's story, but a moment in
 history...
 History moving through Eglantine?
 The moment of youth.²⁶

One could read this dialogue, the last three sentences in particular, as a poetical unravelling of an intricate interdependency between the anonymous flow of history and the intimate and lived subjectivity, which through their interference establish a body. Disavowing Eglantine of the singularity and uniqueness of her "moment of youth" and instead characterizing her as a medium for that moment to manifest, creates tension between the overwhelmingly intense lived experience of youth and its de-subjectivization. It is reinterpreted as a flow that exists independently, outside of subjectivity, as an underlying external flux. However, this external flux can only be realized in being embodied and lived as Eglantine's very own flux. This interdependency is an opportunity to overcome the duality of interior and exterior forces, and to understand a body as interference between them with friction, synergy, resonance, conflict, and so on.

The external anonymous flow of history passes through the body, manifested and being lived as a subjective and intimate life. This external flow at the same time precedes and exceeds human expression. It is plural and it can exist outside of a body only as a possibility. There, it is anonymous in its plurality of its possibilities of which only one can flow through a certain body and is by that being realized into actuality. Reciprocally, that body can only become itself as a host/channel/medium for this particular anonymous flow. In the case of Godard's film, this is the interference that constitutes a body in the moment of youth.

Taking into consideration the body as interference enables us to imagine a body as processual multitude – a body as crossing, membrane, public space, mass, passing, social, and relational. The interference somehow accommodates all of these appearances simultaneously, and suggests their temporality, in not understanding the body as a definite fixed entity, but as that which changes over time.

Body as Intra-action

What might constitute a body is evocative of what Karen Barad defined as intra-action:

The usual notion of interaction assumes that there are individual independently existing entities or agents that preexist their acting upon one another. By contrast, the notion of “intra-action” queers the familiar sense of causality ..., and more generally unsettles the metaphysics of individualism “[I]ndividuals” do not preexist as such but rather materialize in intra-action. That is, intra-action goes to the question of the making of differences, of “individuals,” rather than assuming their independent or prior existence. “Individuals” do not exist, but are not individually determinate. Rather, “individuals” only exist within phenomena (particular materialized/materializing relations) in their ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring.²⁷

Individuals (be)come into being through the intra-activity of forces, and are not only active or only passive agents, but both of these. Their activity, relationality, and passivity makes them as they interfere with the world. Barad outpaces the metaphor of body as vessel and body as flux in understanding “vessel” as constituted by flux

and vice versa. She asserts: “there is no prior existence.” The existence is always in making, in contingent becoming. For Barad the opposition between individuality and flux is rendered null, in making the individual’s temporality, contextuality, and situatedness part of its formation. The individual is then a site and a process that defines and is defined through iterative processes of circulation, interference, relation, and inner desire.

In response to opening the question of how the rhythms of steps, through their appearance, constitute bodily presence, and what that body might be, the tapping rhythms beneath the floor could be said to evoke the presence of remote stepping bodies. And further, that these are formed as ongoing intra-actions, interferences, resonances, and frictions between their variants of being, continually constituted and reconstituted. These processes set the bodies in motion; their interactions with the environment and other bodies contribute to forming relational situations. As much as these bodies radiate presence, they can also appear opaque, non-representable, illegible, and evasive in their abstracted invisibility.

Perhaps the very mode of presence through which they manifest in this situation – through beating rhythms – amplify the bodies themselves as vibrating and alternating between public and intimate, legible and illegible. These alternations entangle the bodies in yet another hidden rhythm that contributes to their presence – always in becoming and present in their contingency.

Contemplating the rhythms of steps as constituting bodily presence, I now turn my attention to what these rhythms convey as an “expressive” bodily function.

IV. Rhythms of Steps as Hidden Involuntary Somatic Utterances of Bodies in Motion

Hearing the rhythms of everyday steps as they move across the floor in the installation, one listens to usually hidden temporal qualities of purposeful, non-performative, everyday, infra-ordinary activity captured, transduced, and re-articulated. This staging might direct the way in which we listen so that we hear them as somatic utterances, generating expectation in terms of what they might convey, while likewise amplifying their opacity. The relation between the initial non-performativity of the rhythms of steps and their staging that suggests the opposite amplifies the inherent tension and further complicates their position and role in

relation to bodily self-expression and articulation of self-presence and meaning. I investigate these intricate relationships to situate rhythms of steps in relation to somatic, voluntary, involuntary, conscious, purposeful, meaningful, and meaningless bodily expressions and utterances and uncover possibilities they might have in expressing bodily presence inexpressible in language.

As I noted previously, the rhythms of steps mark moments of contact between the body and the ground. They are temporal manifestations of touch between these two entities. In this sense the rhythms originate from a continuous negotiation between the body and space. Understanding the body itself as a complex plurality of intra-actions between forces originating from within, and externally, the rhythms manifest as interference between two synchronous processes of negotiations, a plurality of interiors and exteriors: one that forms the body and the other situating it in space. These two processes unfold at various speeds, in different material and immaterial dimensions, temporal scales and contexts, forming their own intensities, resonances, frictions, durations, and appearances from the biological to cultural, individual, socio-political, psychological, physical, practical, and more. They unfurl in parallel and are by no means linear, nor comprise a dialectic. They coincide with or oppose each other, amplify or annihilate one another's doings, encompass or are encompassed by one another as they flow separately, or, as one, flux in continuous process of becoming.

Throughout these motions and possibilities, with each step they bounce in synchrony. The moment of touch between the foot and ground marks a concrete moment of grounding, a point in time when all the acting forces and processes, no matter how diverse, or different in dimension, temporality, or origin, touch a margin as they bounce against it – shaking the inside and outside. Each of these forces is subjected to its own gravitational pull as it bounces off a margin specific to it. These synchronous moments of touch outline and materialize the margins, the boundaries of a stepping body as a *be-in in-between*.

As we cannot grasp or know entirely the plurality and relational complexity of all the interfering processes and forces as they form a body, subjecthood, and subjectivity, we can sense and perceive the pace of their becomings through the rhythms of steps as a sonic figure. The rhythms are somatic utterances that signal the contingent process of becoming of subjecthood and subjectivity. They do not signify,

represent, or show this subjectivity. Such utterances are incomprehensible and illegible in that they do not convey meaning, while still signalling presence. It is the perceivable but non-representable, untranslatable utterance of irreducible bodily presence with all its complexities.

Perhaps through staging this tension between ungraspability/illegibility and signalling of presence (between silence and noise), the rhythms of steps as somatic utterances articulate exactly the impossibility of the representation of irreducible and illegible bodily presence in space, while pronouncing its existence besides, below, outside, before, and after signification and representation. They bypass signification while announcing the presence of illegible meanings in becoming. They are neither meaningful nor meaningless, they are “neither silence nor speech”.²⁸

Scream

In an attempt to write about this vague and inaccessible manifestation of bodily presence outside of signification and representation, which the rhythms of steps might evoke in this installation, I revisit Migone’s examination of voice as somatic utterance:

When fully somatized, the voice is unassimilable and unnamable. The inevitable entwining of the sacred and the profane generates the noise of the mouth and the viscosity of screams. As Allen S. Weiss postulates: “The scream is the desublimation of speech into the body, in opposition to the sublimation of the body into meaningful speech.” The scream epitomizes the somatic voice, its drama is that it unfurls the body onto the soundscape, it exteriorizes the viscera.²⁹

The scream transforms the voice from meaningful into somatic utterance. Through the effort of screaming, the body is activated into intense physical activity, which amplifies its self-experience of being a body. At the same time the scream affects the body through vibration, resonance, intensity, and loudness heard from within (bones) and without (ears). Its extremeness amplifies the body’s situatedness as a margin between inside and outside. The voice’s liminality as a medium for communication and somatic utterance evolves as a continuous friction, a tension between the two,

leaving the voice a highly contested phenomenon and site, always negotiating between its meaningfulness and its somatic utterance.

For a voice to become somatic, the scream has to erupt at an extraordinary intensity. A scream is in this sense ecstatic or traumatic, a destabilizing rupture, a disorder, always shouted, heard, and experienced as transgressive in relation to speech and its assertive promise to articulate meaning. A scream appears as a transitory moment of exception that eventually fades out into the normality of speech-voice. It comes in uncontrollable flashes, bursting/surfacing at extreme moments of crisis or ecstasy. If somatic, what kind of bodily presence does it utter?

Following Migone's investigation into situating origins of somatic voice through listening to the screams of H  l  ne Cixous, Antonin Artaud, and Martin Kersels, one encounters articulations of and about the scream as uttering:

the I in its barest conception ... naked, prior to subjecthood ...",³⁰ "the scream (that) is always already beyond understanding", the "articulation of the inarticulate",³¹ the "outside of thought", "(resisting) any move which subsumes excess and noise into a system or dictionary", the "series of faults and fissures", the "indigestibility of the scream ... in rational discourse".³²

These articulations perhaps echo the bodily presence of the ungraspable body heard through the rhythms of the steps – a body as a be-in in-between.

However, even though the scream erupts from this body, as uncontrolled rupture, fissure, devoid of meaning, the drama it embodies and performs does not articulate the presence of this body that exists outside of meaning, from the *naked "I", prior to subjecthood, outside of thought*. The scream is not a somatic utterance originating from this ungraspable body. It is the collapse of rhythm. The dramatic intensity inherent and explicit in the utterance of a scream originates from the inner tension of the contested voice itself – from the friction between forces that want to signify, communicate, and make sense, and those that desire to be a somatic utterance, pronouncing the ungraspable body as be-in in-between, as the *"I" that is prior to subjecthood and outside of thought*. The scream can be heard as articulating the drama of the voice, convulsing as these forces pull it apart in the moment when they all want to speak through it simultaneously. The intensity of this friction in the voice, manifesting as a scream, overpowers the articulation of meaningful speech and the

ungraspable utterance of the body that exists outside of signification, both struggling to manifest themselves. Since the scream appears as the opposite of meaningful articulation, it is often perceived as a somatic utterance expressing this body, this “*I that is prior to subjecthood*”. I would like to suggest that it actually expresses the drama of the territoriality of the voice as a site itself. It embodies the energy, burst, and conflict of this struggle of the voice to undo its meaningfulness. The scream actually silences the somatic utterance of the ungraspable body, while amplifying the noise of the territorial struggle taking place within the voice.

The attempt to make a somatic utterance through voice is therefore a dramatic, heroic, and futile act. It takes place within the territory of the voice, dominated by the promise and expectation of meaningfulness, signification, and communication. The ungraspable body cannot manifest its somatic presence that exists *outside of thought* through voice directly. It can do so only through the evidence of being silenced by the dramatic scream, pointing towards the presence of this opaque and ungraspable body wanting to express itself in the territory dominated by meaning. Perhaps Artaud senses this when he writes:

A man possesses himself in flashes, and even when he possesses himself, he does not reach himself completely.³³

Bringing the point of attention from the mouth down to the feet and heightening sensibility, after being exposed to the drama of the scream, I return to the rhythms of steps as somatic utterances, to examine how they appear and what their utterance might convey through their physicality, ungraspability, and semantic silence in that they are human sounds that carry no meaning.

Rhythms of Steps as Somatic Utterance of the Body as the Be-In In-Between

Down below the torso, between the foot and the ground, this utterance is not contested by the fierce combat between the meaning and non-meaning, sense and non-sense, as with voice. The somatic utterance of bodily presence exists besides discourse, subjecthood, and subjectivity. Bypassing meaning, it is non-dramatic and non-heroic, as compared to the voice in its attempt to become somatic. It is an ongoing, uneventful, and ubiquitous utterance. Any tension and friction in the rhythms of steps as somatic utterance is between purposefulness and unintended

expressiveness of the non-performative self that might radiate through it. Originating from the relation between body and ground, this utterance is ambiguous regarding its origin. Does it come from a body wilfully and intentionally taking steps in a certain direction at a certain pace, or a body that is being rhythmmed, pushed, and pulled by internal and external forces and environment? This somatic utterance rests at the margin between intentionality and noise, activity and passivity, always liminal. One could characterize it as that which sounds, but which has no voice, or is “sonic but speechless”,³⁴ or to borrow a sentence from Barad “a speaking silence that is neither silence nor speech, but the conditions of im/possibility for non/existence”.³⁵ This ubiquitous and inexpressive somatic utterance is:

the noise one can hear in silence, and the silence one can sense in noise;
the noise one can hear in speech and the speech one can hear in noise;
that which spills out of the body, while it remains contained within;
the inner bodily noise and the external murmur of the ambiance;
the meaningless element that resides in the inner self and in the exteriority;
that is shared between the body and the exterior;
the impersonal within the personal and the personal within the impersonal;
the public within the intimate and the intimate within the public;
the din of the other that we all are and that we all share.

The rhythms of steps might be uttering “elemental life that is experienced as inhuman”, as suggested by Barad in the following paragraphs as she quotes Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg’s book *The Murmuring Deep*:

[T]he murmur is the message: the background hum of life – desolate, excessive, neither language nor silence – is what links us to one another. What can be shared, for example, with the dying? ... [R]ather than transmitting clear meanings, the encounter rests on an acknowledgement of an elemental otherness that is related to our own.³⁶

In their noisy silence, rhythms of steps utter our bodily and spatial situatedness in the world, while giving a pace to the presence of this non-representable, ungraspable, in-between body in passing. They utter movement, circulation, temporality, unrepresentability, ungraspability, transiency, pacing, weight, touch, and encounter.

They tap the omnipresent ungraspability of the fragmentary existence in passing. Or they embody the following words in Allen Ginsberg's poem written after learning the bus he had just missed later crashed, leaving no survivors: "Get used to your body, forget you were born. Suddenly, you've got to get out!"³⁷

An Utterance that Doesn't Know Itself, an Utterance that Forgets Itself

In their omnipresent and ongoing low intensity, rhythms of steps are so ubiquitous that they operate below the threshold of experience and memory. They are *unrememberable*. They are enacted, uttered, and endured, yet at the edge of being experienced or lived. They instantly and constantly fall into oblivion, like the fading of the sound they make. They tap the rhythms of their un-lived self-oblivion, uttering the constant passing of the present. This utterance echoes Agamben when he writes:

The present is nothing other than this un-lived element in everything that is lived. That which impedes access to the present is precisely the mass of what for some reason (its traumatic character, its excessive nearness) we have not managed to live. The attention to this "un-lived" is the life of the contemporary. And to be contemporary means in this sense to return to a present where we have never been.³⁸

The rhythms of steps are the un-lived element in everything that is lived. Their non-experience and constant amnesia impede access to them as lived. And yet, the same non-experience and amnesia enable them to utter the constant "passing of the present". This cannot be experienced nor remembered in its transient presentness. The rhythms utter the contradictory duality of non-experience and oblivion of the contemporary. They announce the contemporary as the impossibility "to return to a present where we have never been". They utter the contemporary as attention to the impossibility of experience, and the continuous oblivion of the "passing of the present" to which we cannot return not for having never been there but because it is not a place – it is not a "there". It is something that passes through.

The tone with which the rhythms of steps as somatic utterances express this condition is un-dramatic, un-heroic, infra-ordinary, and impersonal – imperceptibly in the foreground, impermanent, uneven, oblivious, weak, unfixed, transient, unstable, ungraspable, and invisible. It is the tone of the infra-ordinary. The "constant passing

of the present” that the rhythms of steps utter precedes and exceeds subjecthood and subjectivity, outside of meaning and experience. It is the other that resides within the self.

II. Space

The distributed body of the installation creates a particular space. The use of technologies of connectivity and remote transduction, while resisting *locatability*, allowed for a notion of disjunctive-connective space to come into being. Such spatiality relates to the theoretical proposition of *Unsitely Aesthetics*, unfolded below. Here I propose that the established space is a site in which the phenomenon of passing by remotely occurs, and explore the possibilities of this in reconsidering the relations between lived and unlived passing of the present as problematized by Agamben.

Hearing the Distributed Body of the Installation Between Some-there and Over-here

While each knock below the floor in the exhibition space might be perceived as signalling the presence of an anonymous stepping body at an unknown location, it can also be heard as manifesting the presence of another body that is invisibly yet concretely populating both installation sites. This distributed body of the installation consists of floor surfaces, sensors, wires, electronic circuits, computers, network connections, and mechanical knockers. The body that establishes the relation between the two remote places:

is some-there, over-here and in between;

senses and touches;

is hidden and invisible;

is mechanical;

doesn't entirely know where it is;

is a surface body that hosts, accommodates, supports, and carries;

is infra-structural;

is blind body;

is populated and populating;

is composite, heterogeneous;

does not so much signal its own presence, as it establishes particular connective-disjunctive space. This space comes into being through several procedures in which the distributed body of the installation engages.

The way this body operates is as follows: the steps at the undisclosed location are sensed as a change of capacitance of the sensor surface beneath the floor at the moment of a contact between the capacitance of the sensor and that of a foot. The spatio-temporal information of this change is digitally captured and transferred through a network to a computer-controlled grid of knockers (solenoid actuators) installed under the floor surface in the exhibition space. There, a corresponding knocker is actuated (its position and time correspond to those detected by the sensor surface in the remote space), hitting the floor surface from below. This results in the event of a knock. The process is one of remote transduction where one type of energy (change of capacitance) is transformed into another (kinetic), resulting in transduction of tactility.

Point of Sensing

The hidden sensor at the undisclosed location senses bodily presence in space solely through the tactility of steps. Related to human perception, sense detection is at floor level, decentralized from a single point of subjective perception spread across a two-dimensional plane. In sensing only touch, it is devoid of greater depth of perception.

The place where sensing is activated remains undetectable and unexperienced as such by the stepping bodies there. Capturing the rhythms of non-performative everyday steps, it does not announce its presence. Stepping bodies whose rhythms of steps are remotely sensed and transduced unknowingly (over)step into a performative and public sphere unfolding in the exhibition space where the rhythms are transformed into an invisible choreography. The connective-disjunctive space of the installation establishes a suspended relation between the two places, a point of blind contact, so that visitors can be in touch with a fragment of infra-ordinary rhythmical occurrences of everyday life otherwise hidden. De Certeau articulates this as a “chorus of idle footsteps”³⁹ “below the thresholds at which visibility begins”,⁴⁰ “escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye”,⁴¹ unfurling beyond “the shores of legibility”.⁴²

Resisting Locatability

I use the term locatability to indicate the condition of being geographically located, or geographically locating a place or a person. The distributed body of the installation is engaged in remote sensing and transduction of tactility from one place to another. Simultaneously it does not reveal the location and the characteristics of the space it senses. Resisting locatability is a rupture that makes it impossible for the transduced rhythms of steps to represent the stepping bodies and their origin, while the transduction of tactility enhances and encourages attention on the evolving illegible anonymous and contingent actuality. It is not a space of representation, but one that invites listening and attention, indefinitely postponing recognition and identification.

While these synchronous operations establish a concrete place for a contradictory relation between remoteness and proximity, they also produce an ambiguous sense of distance. Being in the exhibition space and not knowing the location of the other place in which the sensing is taking place, creates a distance that is all the more intense for its undefined remoteness, but still less than the “non-distance” or “beyond-distance” unperceived by those unaware their steps are being sensed. Refuting the usual expectations of purposeful connectivity and bypassing the economy of usership, this space is not instrumental, but active and asymmetrical, ambiguous and resistant, suspended in between the process of transmission.

Unsitely Aesthetics

This established connective disruptive spatiality strongly resonates with Maria Miranda’s project *Unsitely Aesthetics*, which examines the art practice that addresses dispersed spatiality that comes into being within networked culture. Based on the understanding of the digital network as a “junction and disjunction of here and there, you and I, social and individuated”⁴³ that “functions as the crucial operand in dispersing and contouring perception, art practice and aesthetics”,⁴⁴ Miranda states: “The focus of unsitely aesthetics is on the paradoxical situatedness and multi-sitiedness of artwork as well as the restored significance of place in general.”⁴⁵

In attending to the intricate and complex relations between virtual, mediated, dispersed, and physical places in the context of networked culture, she proposes:

Rather than thinking of networked culture as creating a condition of “placelessness” with people existing in a “space of flows” with an “authentic”

sense of place being lost in the process, I think it would be more productive to remind ourselves of the complex understandings of place already in place.⁴⁶

She then outlines the possibility of the *unsitely* space as follows:

In the new networked world that we now inhabit it is not only our relations to people that are affected but also our sense of place and especially being in one place at one time that is disrupted. Although site suggests a fixed place and fixed temporality, I am using *unsitely* to unhinge this fixity and to suggest a troubling and opening of not only the place of the work of art but the “place” of the audience’s aesthetic experience as well. Hence *unsitely* evokes a space of tension, ambiguity and potential for both artwork and audience.⁴⁷

Such an understanding of *unsitely* spatiality can serve as a conceptual framework for situating the space produced by the installation discussed here.

Passing by Remotely

As the networked space, through connectivity, transmits presence, and enables contact and communication, it similarly and simultaneously establishes shared zones of absence, passivity, and non-contact, perhaps mediating indifference. Facilitating active communication and intentional transmission of information, it also pushes places and people into mediated proximity that is not intentional on their part. One could say that in the latter case, the networked space instigates a situation in which one is connected involuntarily and unknowingly, sometimes randomly. One’s presence is displaced and put into proximity with another’s, passing by each other and occasionally forming involuntary temporary assemblages.

Such a situation is enacted in this installation in which stepping bodies simultaneously traverse two places: the distributed body pushes them into mediated proximity. The space gives rise to a situation in which these bodies remotely pass each other. An uncanny relation takes place between them – a relation of non-relation. Stepping on the floor, the visitor is touched by the connective-disruptive body of the installation. Sensing the presence of the anonymous bodies in the unknown place, the visitor is somehow present and in proximity to the other stepping bodies, as an

invisible witness. Yet, they can only be present there imperceptibly, not knowing where their presence looms, anonymous, hidden, and invisible.

It is a kind of sharing and doubling of the unawareness between the bodies stepping through two remote places, both unaware of each other in ways that are not reciprocal. The sensed bodies do not know that they are being sensed, and influential; the listening bodies do not know where and who they listen to. Nevertheless, they are all pushed into mediated proximity, “brushing” against each other. If these bodies share anything besides being in remote proximity, it is the condition of their mutual unawareness of each other as they remotely pass by each other. As they engage in the non-event of passing by remotely, they enter into a relation of non-relation.

I would like to revisit Agamben’s query “What is the Contemporary?”:

That which impedes access to the present is precisely the mass of what for some reason ... we have not managed to live. The attention to this “unlived” is the life of the contemporary. And to be contemporary means in this sense to return to a present where we have never been.⁴⁸

In the context of Agamben’s argument, passing by remotely might be an opportunity for the relations between the lived and unlived passing of the present, experience, and individuality to be reconsidered in spatial displacement and re-situating. This process suggests a possibility for unaware sharing of one’s own unlived present with strangers that one has never met and will perhaps never meet.

Othering Self

As the visitor is exposed to the rhythms and paths of the anonymous steps, they partly experience the passing of the present of the remote other, that the other cannot *manage to live*. In so doing, they somewhat *live* the *unlived* present of the other and through that become a remote consciousness for that *unlived* of the other. Not by making sense, knowing, or understanding, but in being experientially exposed to that which is experientially inaccessible to the other who enacts it. This process of “othering self” makes available the realization that the *unlived* element in everything that is lived might be the familiar and ungraspable otherness we all share. Pre-personal and existing outside of culture, it is always already there. It appears to be inaccessible through self-awareness, identification, knowledge, and representation; it

is accessible to a body that suspends its subjectivity and individuality, its desire for knowing, interpretation, and meaning, too close to see and too far to know, for a body that moves and is moved, that can be touched – a body ready to “dance” with the other, recognizing itself as the other.

3. Temporality

We live in the present; we comprehend in the perfect.⁴⁹

– Erwin Straus

How do the above procedures of the distributed body of the installation situate the work in regards to temporality? I propose that the site of the installation in the exhibition space acts as an intervention into the performative temporality of that space by operating within the non-performative temporality of becoming. Referring to George Perec’s investigation into (im)possibility of classification and Barad’s proposition of *Agential Realism*, I situate a temporality of becoming in relation to the processes of representation, concluding with speculations on how the visitors and the distributed body of an installation engage in intra-action and through that engagement interfere with each other’s temporalities of becoming.

Crossing of the Passings of the Present Times

In the beginning of this text I note that the installation in the exhibition space:

does not act as the central place of representation, but rather as the crossing and interference between sites, bodies, presences and absences that are appearing and disappearing without comprehensible order or a compositional structure, but that are all sharing a temporal unity that comes into being through the synchronicity of a shared event of a step that touches, sounds, echoes, resonates, vibrates and re-sounds across all these sites simultaneously.

I later argue that the rhythms of steps utter the passing of the present that eludes being “lived” due to its continuous and transitory presentness and *unrememberability*. The installation offers itself as a place in which this passing can be lived through the process of “othering self” by being experientially exposed to the unlive rhythms of

steps of the unknown other. I would like to further investigate the temporal situatedness of the installation in proposing that through the workings of the distributed body of the installation, the setting in the exhibition space is a crossing of the passings of the present times – those of the anonymous stepping bodies at the unknown location and those of the visitors in the exhibition space. As they surface in the exhibition space, they are intercepted fragments of unknown and contingent lifelong durations. The temporalities of these fragments are not composed or structured. They are not dramaturgically shaped or compressed into narratives encompassing durations other than those of their passings: such as is the case with most music, theatre, literature, film, and time-based fine art, as well as images and objects that establish their own temporalities, usually compressing, cutting, and editing the passing of the real-time into a narrative of perceptively manageable complete, repeatable, and reproducible durations. Contrary to the constitution of performative temporalities of representation, the two intercepted temporalities stay with the unstructured passing of the present, and in this sense are non-performative. The installation intervenes in the temporality of the exhibition space by foregrounding non-performative temporality in a location of performative temporality.

Temporality of Becoming

Such non-performative temporalities of the passing of the present materialized and signalled by the rhythms of everyday steps, embody temporalities of becoming that precede and exceed temporalities of classification, signification, and representation. In order to situate temporalities of becoming I examine a short paragraph by Perec titled “How I classify” from *Think/Classify*. While it might come across as some literary musing, it encompasses significant realizations related to connections between the temporality, process of signification, and notion of situated knowledge pertinent to this installation:

My problem with classifications is that they don't last; hardly have I finished putting things into an order before that order is obsolete. Like everyone else, I presume, I am sometimes seized by a mania for arranging things. The sheer number of the things needing to be arranged and the near-impossibility of distributing them accordingly to any truly satisfactory criteria mean that I

never finally manage it, that the arguments I end up with are temporary and vague, and hardly any more effective than the original anarchy.

The outcome of all this leads to truly strange categories. A folder full of miscellaneous papers, for example, on which is written ‘To be classified’; or a drawer labelled ‘Urgent 1’ with nothing in it (in the drawer ‘Urgent 2’ there are a few old photographs, in ‘Urgent 3’ some new exercise-books). In short, I muddle along.⁵⁰

If we read these paragraphs carefully, we can recognize that Perec presents the “problem with classification” as a temporal problem – he notes that classifications “don’t last”, that they are “temporary” and therefore “never finally manageable”. This realization makes it impossible for Perec to classify, particularly something that he finds of immediate importance and urgency. In terms of his drawer system, this leaves his drawer classified as “Urgent 1” always empty.

This emptiness can be read as a realization that really urgent instances happen and change too fast to be classified (and stored in the drawer). They resist classification and signification, demanding immediate attention and action. Musicians, acrobats, dancers, fighters, and pilots know this. Curiously enough, the drawer “Urgent 2” contains photographs – frozen moments evoking past times, while drawer “Urgent 3” contains future-orientated exercise books. Potential miscellaneous present urgencies remain unclassified in the folder “To be classified”, holding Perec’s attention, requiring endless classifying and re-classifying. The process does not result in obtaining an overview and stable order, but rather confronts Perec with his own changing position in relation to that which he feels the urge to classify. Perec could be said to be describing the contingent temporality of becoming.

As noted above, this temporality resists classification, signification, and representation. This, however, is not due to the instability of “things” that are “to be classified”, but due to the fluid and temporally unstable nature of the relation between the one who classifies and the “things to be classified”. This rests on the understanding that classification is not an objective process; it is singular and subjective and as such time sensitive. Any classification that leads to signification and representation depends on the identity, desire, objective, and situatedness of the classifier as much as on that being classified. Perec hints at this interdependence in

the title “How I classify”, suggesting there is always an “I” that classifies, implying the “I” is part of that being classified and prevents any definite classification. The temporality of becoming is a temporality of a continuous present of forming and re-forming relations between the “I” and the “things to be classified”, deeply entangled as agencies of becoming a phenomenon specific to their intra-action.

To further investigate the qualitative nature of this temporality of becoming that operates through the installation, I relate Perec’s realizations to Barad’s proposition of agential realism in her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. The above instances Perec articulates point towards “embodied knowledge” and the temporary and relational nature of classification – ideas that strongly correspond with Barad’s proposition that any separation between observing subject and observed object, “agencies of observation”, and an object, that makes observation initially possible, is a “constructed cut” and not a preexisting given factuality. Such an arbitrary “constructed cut” only temporarily, partially, and contextually defines the observed phenomenon as a “non-dualistic whole” in encompassing the relation between the “agencies of observation” and the observed object as both part of one whole. Referring to the process of scientific measurement, Barad writes:

[A]lthough no inherent distinction [between an “object” and the “agencies of observation”] exists, every measurement involves a particular choice of apparatus, providing the condition necessary to give definition to a particular set of classical variables, at the exclusion of other essential variables, and thereby placing a particular constructed cut delineating the “object” from the “agencies of observation”. This particular construct resolves ambiguities only for a given context; it marks off and is part of a particular instance of wholeness, that is, a particular phenomenon. [...]

Therefore, the measurement of unambiguously defined quantities is possible through the introduction of a constructed cut which serves to define “object and agencies of observation” in a particular context.⁵¹

Barad expands on the observed notions of the process of scientific measurement to find footing for an ontology of agential realism:

The nature-culture and object-subject dualisms are constructed cuts passed off as inherent and fixed in the service of this [Enlightenment] legacy.

Agential realism makes other moves: shifting and destabilizing boundaries. Here knowledge comes from the “between” of nature-culture, object-subject, matter-meaning. The Cartesian split between the agencies of observation and the object is a classical illusion. Agency cannot be designated as residing in one or the other in isolation. The observer does not have total agency over passive matter – not any representation of reality will do – since not any result one can think of is possible: the world “kicks back”.⁵²

This “*kick*” leads Barad to conclude:

Meaning and matter are more like interacting excitations of non-linear fields – a dynamic, shifting dance we call science.⁵³

Returning to the temporality of becoming in the context of the installation, Barad’s dancing proposition is helpful in trying to articulate the possible poetic act that comes into being through its workings.

Becoming of the Audience Through the Act of Intra-action

Evolving in real-time and through various procedures, the distributed body of the installation does not identify, signify, and represent actual bodily presences of anonymous and remote stepping bodies, but signals the process of their becoming as be-ins in-between. Materializing in rhythms and paths of steps, these manifestations strongly relate to and resonate with the bodily presence and spatial situatedness of the exhibition visitors that result in an address that is not symbolic, conceptual, or representational, but bodily, temporal, spatial, and territorial.

Recalling the notion that body is both a site and a process of becoming, the installation establishes a place of interference between the two contingent processes and temporalities of becoming that interfere with one another, prior and posterior to their being established as a situated subject – the visitor, and as performative signifying object – the artistic work, respectively. The interference that the installation accommodates is not following the processes of their individual becomings/configurings; it inserts itself as an integral intra-active agency in the processes and temporalities of their becoming, recalling Barad’s notion of intra-action:

“[I]ndividuals” do not preexist as such but rather materialize in intra-action. That is, ... “individuals” only exist within phenomena (particular materialized/materializing relations) in their ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring.⁵⁴

Staying within this framework, I suggest that the specific setting of this installation acts as a “constructed cut” that undoes preconceived and expected subject-object relation between the visitor and artwork. This intervention allows for visitors and the distributed body of the installation to engage in the intra-action as mutually formative agencies in their becoming subjective individualities and performative signifiers, materializing each other “in their ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring” evolving within the temporality of becoming.

The agencies of the distributed body of the installation configure the visitor as an attentive stepping body that senses, listens, thinks, guesses, imagines, and contemplates. It is a displaced body in passing, an anonymous body that touches and is touched, though not addressed. This continuous intra-action pushes the visitor into the state of being the illegible “I” that exists outside of subjectivity, evoking Hélène Cixous’ “I in its barest conception ... [that is] naked, prior to subjecthood”,⁵⁵ Nancy’s *illegible body as mass*, and Perec’s “I” that cannot classify, and is therefore *muddling along through an anarchy of things to be classified*.

Through continuous intra-action between the distributed body of the installation and the visitor, the latter’s subjectivity is destabilized. It is pushed into the state that is preceding and exceeding subjecthood. There, its rhythms and paths of steps interfere and mix with the remotely transduced rhythms and paths of the anonymous steps. The border between presence and absence, between the inner self-presence and external noise of the unknown other is blurred. The inner rhythms of self-presence and external rhythms of the unknown other’s presence are both part of the otherness that we all share.

At the same time, intra-action situates the visitor as the locus for continuously evolving signification, representation, classification, and interpretation of the distributed body of the installation. The visitor configures the distributed body of the installation from a singular and situated “point of being”,⁵⁶ assigning it a singular meaning out of a plurality of potentialities that it might be. Stemming from a plurality

of visitors and by that “constructed cuts”, this renders the plurality of situated and embodied representations that signify the distributed body of the installation an artwork. The setting does not offer one configuration as an accomplished representation to be read, interpreted, translated, and related to. It is suspended in the continuous temporality of becoming that never resolves into a fixed and unified temporality of representation. It rather establishes a place and time for being with and for passing by (remotely), the ongoing temporality of becoming of the other, recognizing itself as the other. The setting acts as a place of be-in(g) in-between, a making sense of the ongoing temporality of becoming the other passing by.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Looking back over the process of my research project, there are many topics that emerged and developments that took place. Trying to identify “the event” of the project is difficult. In general terms it is a shift in attention grounded in my engagement with the act of listening to something very familiar from a point of unfamiliarity. The project attends to the opaque within the visible, the hidden in plain sight, and the inaudible within the audible in focusing on human bodily presence as it manifests outside of and beside subjectivity, sociality, identity, and meaning as a rhythmical expression. It thereby engages in listening to human bodily presence from a non-human point of listening, uncovering the otherness embedded and hidden within the self and articulating it as series of rhythmical, sonic, and spatial situations. These situations embody the otherness we all share as a possibility to reconfigure the relations between the self, other, and world not defined through classification, signification, and representation of the other, but acted out as relations of “being with” and “passing by” the other, recognizing itself as the other.

Appendix

Appendix

The appendix consists of short descriptions and visual documentation of the artworks that are part of this artistic research project, but not addressed in the preceding reflection. This is followed by two commissioned texts written by Salomé Voegelin and Vladimir Vidmar on the occasion of an exhibition at ŠKUC Gallery, Ljubljana in November 2016.

Works

With a Passerby



With a Passerby, 2017, installation view, detail, Thetis Garden, Venice.
Photo: Karolina Sobel



With a Passerby, 2017, installation view, Thetis Garden, Venice.
Photo: Karolina Sobel

With a Passerby (2016)

Two crosswalk loudspeakers, sound, variable dimensions, 18:20 min. (loop)

Sound documentation: <https://soundcloud.com/user-624592705/withapasserby>

In the installation *With a Passerby*, two crosswalk loudspeakers air rhythms that I recorded during a walk through the city. One speaker plays back the rhythms of my steps, while the other plays back the rhythms of steps of people passing by who I observed, marking them with my voice and recording. The installation brings to the fore the hidden rhythmical relation of the steps of two strangers walking by each other on a street in an urban environment, articulating and highlighting this moment of encounter without contact as a rhythmical non-event.

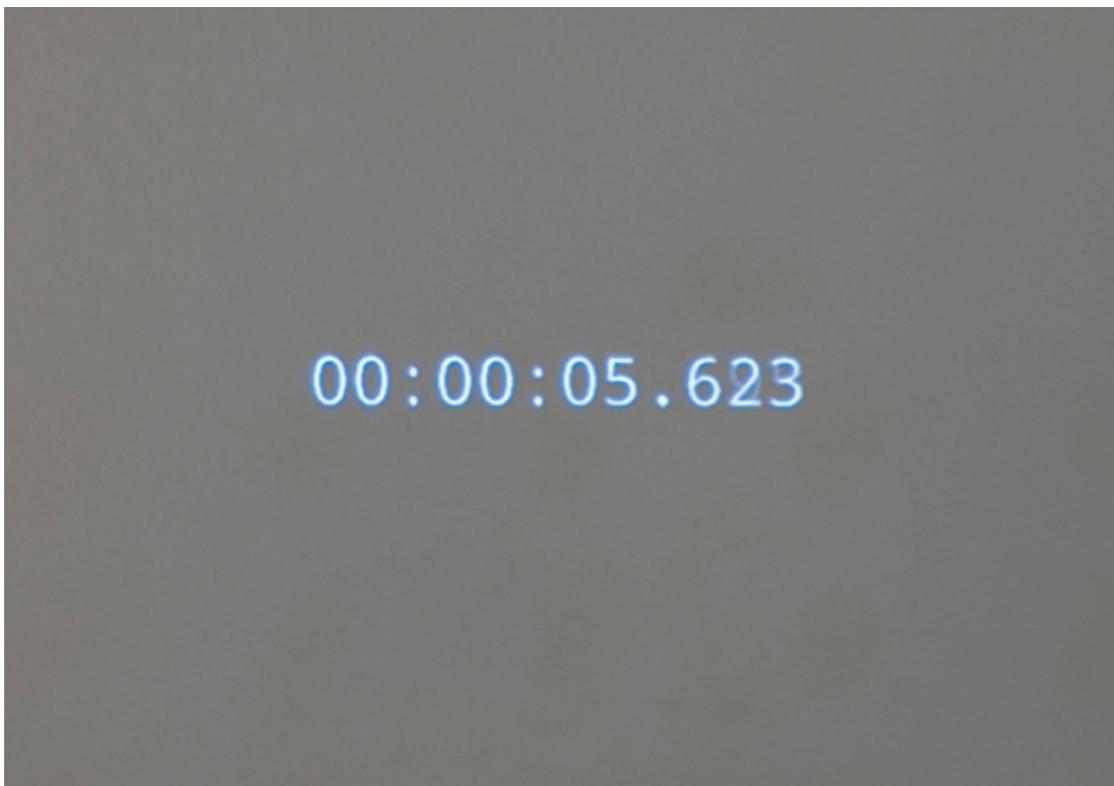
Combining the elements of aimless walking, observing strangers, and random encounters, this project alludes to the figure of the flaneur as epitomized in Charles Baudelaire's poem "To a Passerby" (1875) in which the poet describes falling in love with a passer-by he will never see again. It is a dramatized and affective random encounter, what Walter Benjamin describes as "love – not at first sight, but at last sight".⁵⁷ By contrast, this project does not seek emotional investment in and relation with a random passer-by, but rather focuses on listening to the hidden rhythms that occur during usually unnoticed and unexperienced encounters that take place in everyday situations on the street. Airing these uncoordinated rhythms, the installation amplifies moments of passing by as occurrences of non-contact, non-attention, non-communication, and non-synchronization.

Unheard



Unheard, 2016, installation view, ŠKUC Gallery, Ljubljana.

Photo: Dejan Habicht



Unheard, 2016, installation view, detail, ŠKUC Gallery, Ljubljana.

Photo: Dejan Habicht

Unheard (2016)

Microphone, clock, software, variable dimensions

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/203477657>

<https://vimeo.com/204040907>

The installation *Unheard* consists of a microphone, a clock, and custom-made software that resets the clock to zero every time it detects a sudden peak in loudness in the sonic ambiance where it is installed. Listening to the ambient sound and displaying the passing of clocked time between occurring auditory events, the installation articulates the relation between measured time and the time it is experienced. This setting invites visitors to focus on listening along and to explore their own margins of audibility and attention, while suggesting a shadow temporality unfolding in the intertwining zone between the representation and experience of the passing of time. This zone is lucidly outlined by Giorgio Agamben in his essay “The Time That Is Left” (2000):

... if we represent time as a straight line and its end as a last point on it, then we have something perfectly representable, but absolutely unthinkable. On the other hand, if we try to grasp our living experience of time, then we have something thinkable, but strictly non-representable.⁵⁸

Commissioned Texts

The Politics of Rhythm

Salomé Voegelin

If it is through rhythm that we get the sense that we have to undo ourselves, as everything around us starts to undo itself, and if in approaching this sensation of the movement of everything we ourselves are a part of this movement, it is because rhythm renovates the meaning of things.

– Henri Meschonnic, “A Rhythm Party Manifesto”, 2 November 1999)

Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec’s works perform the invisible possibility of architecture, of text, and of a city, inviting us to experience the visible through its invisible and mobile temporality. The works are at once highly conceptual, providing outlines, ideas and a frame of presence rather than its experience, while inviting experience as an imaginary engagement in what presence might be.

The timing of this show forces upon its title *Rhythms of Presence* and thus upon its work, inevitably and unavoidably a political dimension. This dimension is not literally the tapping sound of invisible feet or the count of a manipulated metronome, but is the imaginary capacity created by the rhythms of absence and presence, the heard and the unheard, and its reception within a concurrent political actuality of counting and dis-counting, and the consequent fear of not being able to make oneself count.

His works’ allusion to measure and meter appears like a magician’s trick, creating an illusion of the real as if I was equipped with a faulty ruler but asked to measure it still. And through this task I experience the chasm between what is measurable and what is possible, and I deny neither the meter nor possibility but come to question their divide.

Rhythm becomes a *Zeitgeist*, a poltergeist of a current political drift that encroaches upon the empty room that is Vrhovec Sambolec’s piece *Rhythms of Presence* from which the show takes its name. This empty room, its surface and form, is animated and inhabited by the sounds of footsteps recorded elsewhere and transformed into temporal and spatial information played out here as taps and knocks to provide an invisible measure of a present circumstance.

The piece pursues the possibility of measure and measurement and confirms the transformative potential of incommensurability. However, in the current political context the incommensurable becomes forced into the presence of an immeasurable absolute: the empty room that invites the imagination of another is tied down to the vision of the only one that seems possible now; and the invisible mobility of sound sees its plural footsteps drowned in the singularity of a marching beat. What might have sounded as opportunity, as spaces opening up for new connections and a serendipitous, “postrhythmic” beat when the work was first shown in Berlin last year, is now directed by the amplification of political absolutes and the exclusion of other meters, triggering a re-reading of the work that invites the darkest expectations.⁵⁹

This Zeitgeist as the phantom of the homogeneity and divisiveness of a current political ideology is an invisible force that lingers also between the collective and compassionate humanity reverberating in Vrhovec Sambolec’s *With a Passerby*. The work, a sonic texture of private rhythms woven between the artist’s own footsteps and the movement of people passing by, performs the social encounters that produce a sense of communality and prepare the ground for its denunciation. Walking with a stranger tests the limits of community and holds the potential for the “fetishized figure” of an us, reduced to absolute homogeneity, to articulate the “idealized hatred” for the other, the unseen Passerby.⁶⁰ This political spectre answers the syncopation of plural footsteps with a mythical absolute that smothers possibility in the expectation of an unquestionable real that consolidates sentiments of marginalisation in slogans for a perversely exclusive belonging in a false past, where the stranger is not in the rhythm of my presence but absolutely absent.

Vrhovec Sambolec’s works make this present political reality tangible through incommensurable rhythms that force themselves into my imagination and make me sense how space is taken and the unheard silenced in the amplification of the dominant. However his works do not rest on this absolute singularity but persevere on the side of real possibility to expose the ghost of the Right and prepare the articulation of its rejection. It is through his rhythms that we get the sense of our own movement, and get to understand “that we have to undo ourselves, as everything around us starts to undo itself”.

Rhythms of Presence

Vladimir Vidmar

The four projects by Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec, presented in the exhibition *Rhythms of Presence*, approach the visitor in their immediacy and closeness, although they raise a number of gnoseological questions that have been engaging us since the very beginnings of thinking about human condition. The projects use rhythm to consider how our lived experience is presented, that is, how it is experienced, and they open up these issues through an exploration of the space in between (physical) presence and absence, the material and ephemeral, contact and trace. The fierce technological development of the past decades and the universal acceleration of human existence force us to pose these old questions from new perspectives. *Rhythms of Presence* proceed from the moment of transformation of the individual in his or her physical and mental existence as well as the society and the relations defining it. The diminishing of the distances between the extremes of the old metaphysical dichotomies through the triumph of technology seems to be experienced directly as the irreversible transformation of our perceptive and cognitive faculties as well as of the noumenal world. This transformative potential, which Sambolec considers in parallel in the fields of technology and art, is the actual subject of this exhibition.

The rhythms of the everyday, which Vrhovec Sambolec uses as the entry point for his reflection on the present moment, especially the phenomenon of human movement, become the subject of translation into acoustic traces, rhythmic patterns, establishing a parallelism of separate spatial fields, while the distance between them is erased by the convergence of their temporalities, secured by technological mediation. The work *Rhythms of Presence*, which gives title to the show, is thus composed of two identical surfaces: the floor in an undisclosed public location registers human steps, which are then fed into the system of knockers beneath the gallery floor. The percussion conveys the human steps as rhythmic stomping emanating from beneath the gallery floor and establishing the invisible presence of passers-by. The work *Reading stanley brown* appears to reverse the process. Here, Sambolec uses as his starting point the art book by the Fluxus member stanley brown, *my steps 12.12.2005 – 1.1.2006*, which comprises 21 pages each featuring the number of steps made by the artist on that day. Sambolec revives these “abstract” steps and he

commits his movement for 21 days to the concretisation of brouwn's work, that is, to the changing of the numbers back into live steps. In so doing, his body becomes a concretisation of the record, reflecting the relation between the everyday in its invisible ordinariness, and its capture (and signification) through mediation and record. The reflection on this problematic relation is the age-old preoccupation of art. How to establish a relation between immediate experience and its presentation, its capture, how to transpose the experience into meaning, without depriving it of its constitutive liveness? In this context, Sambolec's insistence on rhythm as a live, dynamic record, a phenomenon in between the concrete and the abstract, becomes a new point of fixating of this tension: Sambolec's "making-present" of brouwn's steps is rhythmically ticked by the metronome. Temporality is the field that captures in the most ontological manner the issues of the relation between direct experience and its structuring; hence, it is the axis of Sambolec's explorations. *Unheard* attempts to bridge in a Sisyphean manner the non-coincidence of the registers of time flow and its presentation; in this work, the clock is reset every time the microphone registers a sudden change in the sound ambient. By trying to "measure" our experience of time, the clock points out to the impossible parallelism between the lived and the measured time in all its radicalness. The impossible symmetry of these "encounters" is summed up metaphorically by the work *With a Passerby*, in which two loudspeakers juxtapose the rhythms of the artist's steps and the steps of the passers-by in a random composition described by the author himself as a "rhythmic non-event", a peculiar audio-landscape of social life.

In the new conditions of the primacy of the mediatised, the exhibition *Rhythms of Presence* with renewed strength and from a different point of view formulates the question of the relation between formalisation, regularity, mastering, and the immediate, everyday experience. By rendering audible the unregistered everydayness of the flow of events, it creates a poetic heroicness of sorts, whose source is not a romantic neo-conceptual fascination with the spontaneity of life, but rather precisely our obsession with mediation. Vrhovec Sambolec reformulates this as a question of how the lived reality can be experienced through a work of art. In parallel with the transformative effect of technology on humans, Sambolec also explores art can be transformative for this context. In this light, the metaphysical binaries of

present/absent, concrete/abstract, primary/secondary dissolve in Vrhovec Sambolec's reflection of the body as a point of their radically asymmetrical overlapping.

Bibliography:

- Agamben, Giorgio. *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Artaud, Antonin. "Correspondence with Jacques Rivière (1923–24)". In *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*. Edited by Susan Sontag. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973.
- Alÿs, Francis. *Pacing*. Madrid: Ivorypress, 2014.
- Barad, Karen. *Intra-actions*. Interview by Adam Kleinman in *Mousse Magazine* 34. Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2012, 76–81.
- Barad, Karen. "What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice". In *100 Notes - 100 Thoughts/ 100 Notizen - 100 Gedanken, No.099*. Kassel: documenta und Museum Fridericianum Veranstaltungs-GmbH, 2012.
- — — "On Touching — The Inhuman That Therefore I Am (V.1.1)". In *Power of Material/Politics of Materiality*. Edited by Susanne Witzgall and Kerstin Stakemeier. Zürich: Diaphanes, 2014.
- — — "Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism without Contradiction". In *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science. Synthese Library (Studies in Epistemology, Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science), vol. 256*. Edited by L.H. Nelson and J. Nelson. Dordrecht: Springer, 1996.
- brouwn, stanley. *my steps 12.12.2005 - 1.1.2006*. Milano: A&Mbookstore Edizioni, 2014.
- Cage, John. *Ryoanji*. New York: Edition Peters, 1983–85.
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.
- De Kerckhove, Derrick and Cristina Miranda de Almeida (eds.). *The Point of Being*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- Careri, Francesco. *Walkscapes – Walking as an aesthetic practice*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2002.
- Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

- LaBelle, Brandon. *Acoustic Territories – Sound Culture and Everyday Life*. London: Continuum, 2010.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *Dressage in Rhythmanalysis – Space, Time and Everyday Life*. London: Continuum, 2004
- Mauss, Marcel. “Techniques of the body”. *Economy and Society*, volume 2, number 1 (1973):70–88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03085147300000003>
- Migone, Christof. *Sonic Somatic: Performances of the Unsound Body*. Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2012.
- Miranda, Maria. *Unsitely Aesthetics – Uncertain Practices in Contemporary Art*. Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2013.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Birth to Presence*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Perec, Georges. *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997.
- Straus, Erwin. “Forms of Spatiality”. In *Phenomenological Psychology*. New York: Basic Books, 1966.
- Thibaud, Jean-Paul. “A Sonic Paradigm of Urban Ambiances?” *Journal of Sonic Studies*, volume 1, number 1 (October 2011).
<http://journal.sonicstudies.org/vol01/nr01/a02>
- Walser, Robert. *The Walk*. New York: New Directions, 2012.
- Walser, Robert. *Microscripts*. New York: New Directions, 2012.

Filmography:

- Taylor, Astra (dir.). *Examined Life*. Toronto: Sphinx Productions, 2008.
- Godard, Jean-Luc (dir.). *In Praise of Love*, 2001.

Endnotes:

Abstract

¹ Artist stanley brouwn insists his name is spelled in lower case, therefore his name is spelled in lower case in this entire text, except in the quoted text (29).

¹ Artist stanley brouwn insists his name is spelled in lower case, therefore his name is spelled in lower case in this entire text, except in the quoted text (29).

² Geroges Percec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (New York: Penguin Books,

Introduction

² Geroges Percec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 188.

³ Astra Taylor (dir.), *Examined Life* (Toronto: Sphinx Productions, 2008).

Works

Heredrum

⁴ Giorgio Agamben, “What Is Contemporary?”, in *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 51–52.

⁵ Erwin Straus, *Forms of Spatiality in Phenomenological Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 29.

⁶ This is a quote from John Cage’s performance instructions for the percussionist for the piece *Ryoanji*, John Cage, *Ryoanji* (New York: Edition Peters, 1983–85).

⁷ Jean-Paul Thibaud, “A Sonic Paradigm of Urban Ambiances?”, *Journal of Sonic Studies* 1, no. 1 (October 2011), <http://journal.sonicstudies.org/vol01/nr01/a02>.

⁸ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in The City”, in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 97.

⁹ Agamben, “What Is Contemporary?”, op. cit., 51–52.

Reading stanley brouwn

¹⁰ stanely brouwn, *my steps 12.12.2005 – 1.1.2006* (Milano: A&Mbookstore Edizioni, 2014).

¹¹ See <http://www.weserburg.de/index.php?id=237&L=1>.

¹² Jean-Luc Nancy, “Corpus”, in *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 198.

Rhythms of Presence

¹³ Nancy, “Corpus”, 197–98.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁵ Christof Migone, *Sonic Somatic: Performances of the Unsound Body* (Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2012), 54.

¹⁶ Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the body”, *Economy and Society* 2, no. 1 (1973), 85, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03085147300000003>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

²¹ Henri Lefebvre, “Dressage”, in *Rhythmanalysis – Space, Time and Everyday Life*, (London: Continuum, 2004), 38–39.

²² De Certeau, “Indeterminate”, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., 199.

²³ Henri Lefebvre, “Conclusions”, in *Rhythmanalysis*, op. cit., 68–69.

²⁴ De Certeau, “Walking in The City”, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., 101.

²⁵ Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier, *The Rhythmanalytical Project*, in *Rhythmanalysis*, op. cit., 81.

²⁶ Jean-Luc Godard (dir.), *In Praise of Love*, 2001.

²⁷ Karen Barad interviewed by Adam Kleinman, *Mousse Magazine* 34, 77.

²⁸ Karen Barad, “What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice”, in *100 Notes - 100 Thoughts*, No.099 (Kassel: documenta und Museum Fridericianum Veranstaltungs-GmbH, 2012), 12.

²⁹ Christof Migone, *Sonic Somatic: Performances of the Unsound Body* (Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2012), 69.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

³² *Ibid.*, 72.

³³ Antonin Artaud, “Correspondence with Jacques Rivière (1923–24)”, in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 43.

-
- ³⁴ Migone, *op. cit.*, 53.
- ³⁵ Barad, *What Is the Measure of Nothingness?*, *op. cit.*, 12.
- ³⁶ Karen Barad, “On Touching — The Inhuman That Therefore I Am (V.1.1)”, in *Power of Material/Politics of Materiality*, ed. Susanne Witzgall and Kerstin Stakemeier (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2014), 163.
- ³⁷ As remembered from hearing Allen Ginsberg recite the poem sometime between 1994–1995 in Trondheim, Norway.
- ³⁸ Agamben, “What Is Contemporary?”, *op. cit.*, 51–52.
- ³⁹ De Certeau, “Walking in the City”, *op. cit.*, 97.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 97.
- ⁴³ Lisa Gye, Anna Munster, Ingrid Richardson, ed., “Editorial”, *Fiberculture Journal, Issue 7: Distributed Aesthetics* (2005), <http://seven.fibreculturejournal.org>.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Maria Miranda, *Unsitely Aesthetics – Uncertain Practices in Contemporary Art*, (Berlin and Los Angeles: Errant Bodies Press, 2013), 43.
- ⁴⁶ Maria Miranda, “Networked Culture and Mediated Public Space”, in *Unsitely Aesthetics*, *op. cit.*, 51.
- ⁴⁷ Miranda, “Site of Unsitely”, in *Unsitely Aesthetics*, *op. cit.*, 70.
- ⁴⁸ Agamben, “What Is Contemporary?”, 51–52.
- ⁴⁹ Erwin Straus, “Lived Movement”, in *Phenomenological Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), 57.
- ⁵⁰ Geroges Perec, “Think/Classify”, in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 196.
- ⁵¹ Karen Barad, “Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism without Contradiction”, in *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science: Synthese Library (Studies in Epistemology, Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science)*, vol 256, ed. L. H. Nelson and J. Nelson (Dordrecht: Springer, 1996), 171.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 188.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ Barad, *Intra-actions*, *op. cit.*, 77.
- ⁵⁵ Migone, *Sonic Somatic: Performances of the Unsound Body*, *op. cit.*, 70.

⁵⁶ The “point of being” is a concept developed by Derrick de Kerckhove, where touch is rediscovered as significant within the advent of networked culture:

The Point of Being (PB) describes a sensory relationship with the world and to others that is grounded in touch. PB is the feeling of one’s presence in one’s own life. It is a multisensory and predominantly tactile experience of the world, of self and of others. (10)

Today, because electricity in its digital evolution puts everything in touch with everything else, artists, scholars and psychologists are rediscovering the senses as a whole and in this process the sense of touch has an insidiously dominant role. Touch is directly connected to the configuration of self-in-the-world as it can be considered a tool for thinking “with” the body, allowing for the displacement of consciousness from brain to body and instructing people about what cannot be grasped by the eyes. (14)

Derrick de Kerckhove, *The Point of Being*, in *The Point of Being*, ed. Derrick de Kerckhove and Cristina Miranda de Almeida (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 10, 14.

Appendix

Works

⁵⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyrical Poet In The Eara of High Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 124–125.

⁵⁸ Giorgio Agamben, “The Time That is Left”, *Epoché* 7, no. 1 (2002):4.

Commissioned Texts

The Politics of Rhythm

⁵⁹ The piece from which the show takes its title was first exhibited at *Errant Bodies* in Berlin, November–December 2015.

⁶⁰ This interpretation is inspired by Étienne Balibar's public lectures at the Critical Theory Institute, University of California in 1996 published as *Violence and Civility* by Columbia University Press in 2015.