

"...the bridge between the self and the other does not mean similarity, but difference. What connects us is not a bridge, but an abyss. The human being is plural: human beings..." — Octavio Paz

Something is always happening to us. Either through actions we carry out – coupled with corresponding reflections – or because we are drawn into situations that exert power over us. To put it in Luhmannian terms, I am interested in the second-order observer position, namely: how do I operate as an observer with the question of how something happens? But also: what happens to my existence? How do I allow images to emerge through my own language? What do I experience in the process? These are the questions that interest me in performance, and by working through them I attempt to find answers.

What also fascinates me about performance art – in contrast to other artistic genres – is that it lives in the here and now, that it possesses an ephemeral character, that it is unique, and that it has a certain permeability. I move within a split between two worlds, between deconstruction and simulation, between the union of the space and time of the past and the present. I move within a binary system – privacy and publicness, life and death, Mexico and Switzerland, ecstasy and depression. This duality travels with me and reminds me where I come from, but also where I find myself – here and now. The past constantly returns, because it is a hidden present, as Octavio Paz used to say.

The confrontation between past and present thus marks an obsession with these two worlds in my performance work, grounded in dialogue with new media, which I use as working tools, such as video and computer technology. By "past" I do not necessarily mean past time itself, but rather, metaphorically, my Mexican origin. I mean everything that shaped me during my childhood and youth, when I still lived in Mexico, and which I carry within me. Experiences and memories, family and friends, customs and traditions, my mother tongue, etc., are elements that remain alive within me and through which I am repeatedly confronted, in one way or another, with my present reality.

I was often asked why I do this or that in a certain way, and my answer was always: "I am Mexican." As a hybrid being of Spanish-Mexican origin,

floating between my own culture and language and those of this place, it became increasingly clear to me that – even if I adapted to the conditions here – I would never become Swiss or European. The rift between my Mexicanness and life here would eventually grow larger, so I began reflecting on it. I try to translate these thoughts – in which the microcosm of my own history unfolds and simultaneously contains the macrocosm – into my artistic work.

I attempt to depict the present as I experience it now, namely in a time in which our reality has become an elastic concept. This means that we move simultaneously within different realities, perceptions, and worlds, so that actual reality merges with other realities. Reality slowly dissolves, and the boundaries toward other intangible realities disappear. Human beings are capable of representing themselves within the interplay between identity and difference. We are the interface through which our respective worldviews are generated, and we construct our image of the world as mediators.

Starting from this thought, the body – usually my own body – forms an important element in my work, whether in video, performance, or photography. As an artist I operate between cognition and communication, between self-observation and difference, and attempt to create an intercontextuality within many media.

With the help of various objects, as well as – as already mentioned – through the use of video, whether live transmissions or clips that I repeatedly employ, I attempt to operate within this difference between past and present. Among the objects I use in performance are sofas or armchairs, wigs, photographs and a Polaroid camera, mini tape recorders, diaries, and radios. Why this selection? On the one hand, it is closely connected to my own history, but also to personal preferences. On the other hand, it is connected to considerations of self-representation.

In my opinion, video constitutes – in this case – a very suitable tool for this, because through it I can create another, intensified dimension of self-staging as well as a displacement of time and perception. Thus I become my own observer. Observer of the observer of the observed self.

In one work, I approached the subject with the help of two semicircular plastic sheets that I slowly pulled apart and which lay on the floor. On them lay a doll, a bottle of wine, photographs from my youth (the only photographs I still have from that period), four candles, two glasses, a shell, and a small bell. Throughout the entire performance I am barefoot. On one side of the sheet I sit; opposite me sits the doll. Slowly I pull the two sheets apart, and likewise the doll and I slowly move away from one another. I take a photograph from my youth and burn it. I watch as it slowly burns. Again we drink wine and toast to it. The rift grows larger, so large that both can only see each other from afar. I sit behind the doll as if I were seeing through its eyes what it sees – namely the rift that already exists between the two. I stand up and take another photograph lying on the plastic sheet on my side and burn it as well. The doll and I now sit at opposite extremes of the room. I take the shell, raise it toward the doll, and drink wine from it one last time. The performance ends.

In doing so, I celebrate not only the memories that remain from past times, but also distance, closeness, and time itself. Time is movement and movement is transformation. The rift separating the doll and me is a symbol of this time. In a ritualistic manner I wish to celebrate the presence – an omnipresence – of my Mexicanness, which is an important reference point in this work. Thus the Mexican doll functions as a metaphor for my childhood, for my student years, and for everything I experienced in Mexico while I still lived there. With it, a part of my history is connected and has disappeared. It remains only in my memory. In my celebration.

In another work I hold a small black handbag and a Polaroid camera in my hands. Inside the handbag I had certain objects and I decided to work only with them. That day I had a teddy bear, my diary, a pocketknife, chewing gum, a pink wig, and a small wreath with a cross.

I stand on the left side of the room and begin, kneeling on the floor, to cut up the teddy bear with the pocketknife until it is almost destroyed. Then I go to the right side of the room and read aloud from my diary, both in Spanish and in German.

After reading aloud I take a packet of chewing gum and chew all of it. I play with it for a while. In, out, in, out of my mouth.

I go back to the teddy bear and finish it off. Back again to the diary. Sitting on the floor, I read another passage aloud.

I stand up and take the potato out of the handbag. I eat it while walking through the room.

Sitting again on the floor, I take the wig and put it on. During the whole time I had been wearing blue glasses. I take them off once I have the wig on.

I stand up and walk to the frame door and remain there for a while. Then I take the wreath and burn it. While it burns, I take the Polaroid camera and photograph my face.

I watch as the wreath burns and extinguish the fire with my foot – I am barefoot the entire time.

Holding the Polaroid in my hand, I walk past the audience and repeat over and over the sentence:

“I’m not that girl, I’m not that girl, I’m not that girl.”

In this work I sat on the floor almost the entire time, although I continually moved back and forth from one point of the room to another.

The fact that I am barefoot means for me not losing contact with the present. The floor functions as a metaphor that places me within immediate reality, but it also means being able to feel something solid beneath my feet in the present moment, in the present condition of my existence.

In this difference I try to take on the form of different images. For example, with the help of the pink wig and the blue glasses, which again lead me into the present – one that is not my completely real reality, but a simulated one.

I am my own simulacrum and therefore I recite:

“I’m not that girl.”

It is less a question of identity than of experimenting, trying things out, even playing and experiencing the many possibilities of self-

representation within the interplay between intimacy and the public sphere.

I make my heartbreak, my dreams, my emotional state public by reading from my diary to the audience and exposing them.

The intimate passes over into the everyday, ordinary life through chewing gum or eating peanuts.

Intimate and public, being oneself and self-staging, reality and fiction.

In my last work, for example, I staged a kind of living room with an armchair and diffuse orange light. From six mini recorders scattered across the floor, my voice could be heard repeating various sentences such as "I'm a hybrid child," "my memory is not my enemy," "I'm not that girl," together with different sounds and noises.

A book about Mexico and a small radio lay on the sofa and on the floor respectively. On the left side of the room there was a video projection showing me during the performance, transmitted with a time delay in relation to what one saw live.

At the beginning of the performance one could hear throughout the entire room the sounds of children playing on the beach.

I enter the room and place the armchair very close to the wall. I take the small radio in my hand and listen to it. After a while I place it back on the floor beside me.

Sitting in the armchair, I chew gum and then move the chair somewhere else, close to the spotlight. I continue chewing gum and take the book about Mexico and read silently to myself.

I select several photographs from the book, tear them out, and throw them onto the floor to my left and right. I read a passage from the book aloud. Then I stand up and take two mini recorders into my hands, listen to the sentences coming from them, and place them far apart from one another on the floor.

I take the Polaroid camera, stand against the wall, and make a self-portrait. Again I take two mini recorders, listen to them as well, and

scatter them across the floor. I sit down once more in the armchair and continue chewing gum.

Then I open the jacket I am wearing, take the book into my hands again, choose several photographs from it, look at them, and throw them onto the floor. Then I change my glasses and place the glasses I had been wearing until then onto the floor.

Again I place the armchair against the wall.

Again I take the Polaroid camera and stand beside the door with it in my hand and take a photograph of myself. I pick up the small radio, turn up the volume, and one hears bells ringing. While listening, I sit in the armchair and make the radio even louder.

Then I place the radio on the floor and, sitting down, I take five Polaroid photographs of myself. I wait until they come into focus and hold them all together in the same hand. I stand up and walk through the room.

With my foot I activate the small mini recorders, one after another, so that all of them can be heard together one final time.

After activating the last one, I say and repeat the sentence:

"I am that girl, I'm that girl,"

and in this way I leave the room, continuing to repeat the sentence until I am outside. The performance is over.

With this work, and through the selection of these objects, I want to create a space in which I can zap, as if watching television. Zapping between times – between the past and the present.

That is why I chose an armchair that is easy to carry and which I can move anywhere. For me it represents something like having a home. Being at home, where I feel comfortable and protected. I can sit or lie down according to how I feel. On it I can eat, think, read, play, reflect, stretch myself, even think while standing, and simply be myself.

It transports me to another level of my own reality – whether past or present – because despite that past I sit in the present:

"I sit where I once was."

Since the invention of photography, it has been expected to reproduce reality, to document it.

A documentation of my self with the help of the Polaroid camera interests me, on the one hand, precisely because within a few seconds I can reflect my own reality, even if it too remains fragmentary, only partial.

On the other hand, because it raises for me the question of the experience of the self – a reflection I already pursue in my photographic work. They are mirrors of my self.

Both the Polaroid photographs and the pictures are miniatures of my own world.

“To collect photographs is to collect the world,” wrote Susan Sontag. I rewrite the sentence and claim instead:

my photographic accumulation means collecting my own history.

Photographs are fragile, delicate objects. I can easily tear them apart or misplace them.

I repeatedly use the sentences “I’m a hybrid child,” “my memory is not my enemy,” and “I’m not that girl” in my work – separately or all at once.

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