

The Transgressive Mouth in Live Art and its Relationship to the Audience

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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January 2009

Abstract

The relationship between audience, site and artwork has been explored through this thesis, which analyses the effect of my performances on the audience. These performances, which provide the empirical research, identify ways in which the behaviour of the human mouth appears transgressive and abject when viewed at close proximity. Specifically, this is enacted through a series of considerations concerned with the performer and their presence, and orality. Orality is used here to define the significant role the mouth plays in the categorisation of acceptable and unacceptable human behaviour in this research.

The condensed oral experiments that constituted the ritual of this practice, included acts such as spitting, licking and sucking. These situated my performing body as 'woman', as 'transgressor', and as one positioned as 'other' to the audience by her actions. Through an examination of the effect of these performances, this thesis explains and analyses the connections between performer and activity, between performer and audience, between animal and human, and the context of site and social relations. It articulates and accounts for the performance methodology by critically addressing the concerns they are engaged with.

The artworks discussed are acts that set up spaces of transgression, interrogation and reflection, aiming, thereby, to subvert the observer's benign

neutrality. The thesis concludes by claiming that evaluative observation of the performing self and her effect on her observers is made explicit and understandable as a dynamic part of these performances. It acknowledges the role of the audience, when placed close to it, as integral and implicit to the work. The conclusions drawn develop the debate and understanding of the relationship between audience, site and artwork in live art practice that includes female and animal bodies, and this gives it significance.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to everyone associated with this research. I especially want to thank Katharine Meynell, Claire Pajaczkowska and Barry Curtis for their ongoing support and enthusiasm for this work. I am indebted to them for their time, commitment and inspiration. I would also like to thank my husband, Douglas Gittens, for his tireless and unyielding encouragement and patience throughout this process. This has been invaluable. I also give great thanks to the many institutions and individuals that have helped facilitate this work. This extensive list includes friends, colleagues, and various gallery administration staff. From this list I would specifically like to thank Hester Parr, Chris Philo, Steven Lowe, Adrian Marshall, Manick Govinda, Manuela Antoniu, Gary Jones, Hilary Jones, Theresa Rainbird, Lisa Crockett, Lisa Simmons, Medina Hammad, Tommy Tang, Antonio Juárez Caudillo, Adrian Rifkin, Artsadmin, Papabubble, Middlesex University, and University of Lincoln. Last but by no means least I would like to give thanks to Woofers, Sully, Kipper and Arbor for their contribution, without which certain elements of this work would have been impossible.

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Introduction

Relationships connect the inner world of self with the outer, spatial world. They bind individuality and differing opinion around a common purpose to allow disparities to co-exist. Consequently, whatever their function and purpose, they can be difficult to fathom and connections with art are no exception. The function of art is to enable spectators to consider their relationship to meaning and this makes any artwork definable as a 'relational object.'¹ Positioned as spectacle, the artwork is established as distinct and 'other' to the viewer; a spectatorial space is established between observers and observed that allows this to happen. Meaning and understanding reside in the spectatorial space between the 'encoded eye and reflexive knowledge'² and it is in this middle ground that intent is ideally communicated.

*There is something that tastes foul in my mouth
- I feel a compulsion to spit*

The work of performance necessarily makes us aware that the association of observer to observed, of self to other is always temporal, ephemeral and historical. This thesis explores the meaning of understanding art and its observers as participants in relation to one another. It reflects on the unspoken rules that govern a spectator's connection to spectacle.³ Specifically, it looks at the body placed as spectacle and its spectator and the situational cause and

effect they create. This introduction aims to explore the concepts necessary for the discussion that takes place within the main body of the text, and to offer an insight into the performative nature of this research.

The performing body has been significant for this research in order to create the art practice to which this thesis relates. The primary reason for this is the body's ability to establish connections with others. Human, and therefore physically similar to the viewer's body, it allows the performer to communicate directly. It is simultaneously a visible spectacle and a point of corporeal reference. The viewer is presented with an opportunity to observe it directly, and take a position to it. The performing body engages our prior experiential knowledge of what it is to be alive. We know from experience what it is to taste something offensive for example, and we can sympathise with the discomfort of another because of this. By enacting ritual on the body, the performer reminds us of personal experiences associated with that ritual.

*My mouth starts to salivate in response
- Saliva collects in my mouth*

The principal concepts at play throughout my research have been transgression, the abject and performativity. In terms of the first of these, transgression is concerned with infringement and going beyond acceptable physical, psychological, conventional or moral bounds. Acts of transgression concern a breach of the boundary that maintains the acceptable social or personal norm. In doing this, and by breaking convention, these acts are marked as unacceptable and anti-social. A transgression has been made if one gets uncomfortably close to another in a relationship for example, particularly if

that act is unwanted, as their sense of physical and psychological self would be compromised. Unusual public bodily displays also make social infringement as they give spectacle to that which is considered inappropriate. Essentially, transgression, and acts of transgression remind us what we consider to be right by showing us what we know to be wrong. This study considers the effect of transgression on the normal and conventional distance established between the viewer and artwork that incorporates anti-social acts. Specifically I am concerned with two types of transgression in this study: the effect of positioning the viewer uncomfortably close to my performing body, and how the performance of anti-social actions, such as spitting, impact on this situation. In exploring unbounded territory as a consequence of these transgressions, a discussion of the conventional and connected subjectivities, ideas and opinions of art and its actions becomes possible.

*The saliva passes over my tongue
- I taste it*

The effect of transgression on the space between art and viewer has been a primary concern in my research, and I have specifically looked at how the transgressive performing body can impose itself upon its spectator. The situation of performance is informed by how bodies relate and are distinct; transgression can make positions indistinct. The viewer attempts to be distinct and distant from art, as it allows them to feel self-assured of their position. Art invites the gaze of the audience in this situation and wears the effect on its surface. But the experience can be altered if the distance between observer and observed is denied or transgressed; for 'between places' are vulnerable to

transgression. This research has explored how distance is necessary to establish a sense of self to other and the effect of its denial.

The basic conventions of culture for Michel Foucault are those governing 'perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values.'⁴ For Foucault, and for this study, 'exchange' is of significance when considering transgression. My art practice has taken the idea of transgression to construct performance actions. The imposition of these actions aimed to make the experience feel more immediate and personal for the audience. In effect, I imposed my body on the spectator by meeting them in the spectatorial space. My live performance body got physically close to others; it met and returned the viewer's gaze. The effect of this type of action bridges what Günther Brus termed the 'art/life gap.'⁵ The sensorial experience of this situation is discussed in the main body of this thesis.

*My lips press together ready to spit
- They part in anticipation*

Exploration of the art/life gap, however, brings consequences, and this has been significant to this study, for it brings an encounter with the abject. The abject is defined by the anthropologist Mary Douglas as a 'state halfway between solid and liquid...a cross-section in a process of change.'⁶ In essence, it is like a spit waiting to happen. By taking Douglas's definition, it is possible to see how the abject is a potential consequence of exploring the art/life gap. Julia Kristeva regarded the abject as the terminal 'in-between' and viscous. Being 'in-between' art and life would, by Kristeva's definition, result in a direct confrontation with the abject. Barbara Creed supports this notion by suggesting

that the abject creates an experience where ‘the subject, and by extension the viewer, is caught up.’⁷ The abject impacts on the distance between reflectively and relationally engaged bodies as this occurs, to make the experience momentarily intimate. The performing body in this situation allows the observer to ‘feel’ the experience directly. It does this by exposing them to the effects of the abject through performative engagement.

*I pause momentarily
- I hold my breath*

Abjection, and the abject, is concerned with ambiguity and uncertainty of social position, circumstance or values. Essentially, it exists between the boundaries that demarcate roles and positions within relationships, whether with another or oneself, which provide our sense of being. Abjection occurs as a consequence of infringement, and between relational values, and is therefore linked to transgression. It flourishes in situations and spaces that represent a breach of some kind, the in-between places such as the human mouth. For mouths are open punctures to the bodies surface, and as such, they are spaces where inner self and outer world become confused. The actions and fluids of the mouth are made inherently abject as a result of this conflict. Anti-social acts such as spitting and vomiting are also considered abject for the ambiguous confrontation they bring to considerations of mainstream society. As spitting would not necessarily be regarded as conventional, appropriate or acceptable in traditional patterns of behaviour it comes to represent the uncertain character of the perpetrator. Typically, this marks the situation or individual as out-of-step with acceptable society who is then considered as wretched,

hopeless or despicable. The abject nature of the human mouth, both as intermediate bodily zone, and as inappropriate performance action-maker, is relevant to this study as it brings consideration to the nature and purpose of the performance. The situation is enhanced as a consequence of performing anti-social oral behaviour in close proximity to the audience, for a breach, a transgression, is made by denying conventional distances between art and audience. This two-fold experience of the abject created by the anti-social actions of the human mouth, and the infringement that is made on the audience positioned close to their performance, informs the overall dynamic. A sense of their role in the work is given by this encounter, and this makes abjection important to this research.

*My head pulls back
- My chest swells*

Performativity is defined as a ritual that establishes an act through repetition, and is typically used to maintain and legislate systems and orders. Originally concerned with the pragmatics of language as developed through the theory of J. L. Austin, it is essentially a proposition that constitutes the act to which it refers. Typically, it has a basis in speech-act utterances that create a 'law' or rule, for example when one is charged by the police with a crime. Performativity is the enactment of two locutionary actions: illocution, which creates cause, such as a promise or threat and perlocution, which is the effect of an illocutionary act, such as being frightened or engaged.

Performativity, recognised as ritual cause and effect, is critical to understanding how others engage with the performing body. As such, performativity, and

being performative, has been a crucial component of this research. Judith Butler's development of Austin's theory of performativity to include gender power structures, locates it with the creation of phenomena that is regulated and constrained by a process of reiteration. Butler's interpretation is useful for this research that analyses the repetitive performance acts of a woman behaving anti-socially and inappropriately. The reiteration and repetition of oral rituals in this study discusses their illocutionary 'cause' and their perlocutionary 'effect' in terms of how they are understood in relation to the female performer. I may cause my mouth to salivate in the hope that the audience will believe that they are about to see me spit or dribble in the performance for example, and in doing this I anticipate that they will call on prior knowledge in order to formulate a response and effect. The envisaged outcome may be that the viewer is made uncomfortable or curious, depending on the situation created by the action and their physical distance from it. The performance makes an impact on the viewer, and perceptions of the female performer and her actions can be established as a result.

*I feel the tension in my jaw
- My mouth contorts*

The mouth has been the focus for performativity and the primary corporeal site of experimentation in this research. The practice used the mouth as an empirical construction to generate and test acts of transgression. There was a reason for this. As it performs actions that are necessary for bodily preservation and interaction, the mouth is a paradoxical site of the articulate and the bestial. It is an orifice that confronts us with a relational conflict of self to other. The mouth may be regarded as unruly, inappropriate and impolite when thought to

be misbehaving. Misbehaviour, and perceptions of misbehaviour are of significance to this study.

The role of saliva in oral actions has also been of primary concern. Oral actions have been used to inform how the mouth might be seen to misbehave. This is specific to the experience of the abject which Kristeva related to 'a boundary and, more particularly, [an] object jettisoned out of that boundary.'⁸ The ejected object or thing is made 'other'⁹ for Kristeva by the abject. This has significance for saliva. Ejected from the mouth by spitting, for example, it becomes abject and 'other' to it. Spitting makes the mouth a potential space from which to question the relationship of self to other by this definition. For a study concerned with spectatorial relations, this has made saliva and the ways in which it is displaced from the mouth of critical interest.

*My tongue curls
- I press it between my lips*

Art practice has been my primary methodology in this research. In writing this thesis, theory has predominantly been used to inform and reflect on the ongoing production of artwork. The empirical nature of practice in this research has meant that the majority of artwork discussed in the thesis is my own. The practice and theory of this study have been profiled internationally (see appendix 1) through exhibition, event and conference participation. The exhibition 'Five Years' concluded the practice of this research, and included the live work 'Tonguing' and video work 'Licking Dogs'. These works are described and discussed through the main body of the thesis.

The performative nature of the practice has allowed me to test spectatorial relationships directly. For my research as an artist is a series of condensed, controlled experiments in communicating meaning to others. The practice was made as a series of ritual oral actions explored through performance and performance to video. The performances were staged in spaces that are perhaps unusual for encounters with art, such as toilets and corridors. In effect, they were placed as site-specific interventions concerned with transgression. Work produced as performance to video looks at the complex relationship that exists between humans and animals. Specific to the mouth, it looks at appropriate relations and touch between humans and dogs. Gender has also been significant in how propriety is constructed in this practice, and is a consideration for this thesis. The performative effect of female gender and anti-social behaviour on the practice of this study¹⁰ is described and discussed through the body of the text. I would also like to point out that the performing body is predominantly referred to as the live art body throughout this thesis. This makes a distinction between bodies engaged in theatrical performance and those engaged in the production of visual art.

*I throw my head forward
- I spit with force*

The shared, but disavowed experience of live performance is one that is often overlooked. Disavowal is the process of denying knowledge of, and connection with a situation or experience. Where conventional rules of engagement with art are possible this can be easy to put in place. A safe and comfortable distance from art allows the viewer to be as involved or uninvolved, and as visibly pleased or displeased by the work as they wish. Disavowal is a

response that is typically given to performance and one in which the audience may present, or 'act out' their role as viewer. Visible as another body in the space of performance, it may become important for some viewers to appear unmoved by, and removed from the situation by the process of disavowal. They may wish to look passive to, and unfazed by, the action the performer is engaged with. In fact, they may wish to ignore its effect on them entirely, as this process means that they can maintain their separation from the performing body and the work's content. Audience disavowal has been important for me as a performer in this research, as it has allowed experimentation with the effect of transgressive acts delivered at close proximity. An analysis of levels of engagement and reception and the effect of making transgression 'close' has been possible as a result.

*My mouth is agape
- The experience physical*

Involved with audience dynamics and what this can bring to understanding, the shared experience of performance is important for my work. Therefore, disavowal plays no part in *my* role as the performer, as I am actively and intently engaged with all elements of the experience, but to how the audience relate to the work. Disavowal in this research relates to the experience of the audience alone, and one in which I accept that they can, and often will, partake.

The experiments within the practice have been used to inform this thesis, which reflects on and discusses the importance of the experience of performance in this research. This is particular to performative actions that test behaviour, for

transgression may not be considered to have a place in art. It may feel too uncomfortable to discuss, too anti-social and boundless. This means practice of this kind is often avoided. But acts of transgression are also acts of interrogation and reflection, and this gives them value. Inappropriate behaviour is considered transgressive as it defies social levels of acceptability. A reflection can be made on humanity through the public portrayal of acts considered 'in-human' and anti-social. For by positioning the inappropriate as spectacle they allow questions to be asked of humanity. Consideration can be given to why an act is perceived as correct or incorrect behaviour. The situation allows the viewer to take a subjective position to the nature of the act. It allows an assertion of the act as human or in-human behaviour based on their perception and judgment. The process of performance allows this to be made visible and understandable. For by making transgression a dynamic part of the art of performance, the transgressive is made 'explicit' through this process of shared experience. This process allows a reassertion of self in defiance of that considered transgressive and this gives it value and merit. Effectively, it makes this research worthwhile.

*The spit lands on the ground
- Displaced, it looks ambiguous, its origin appears uncertain*

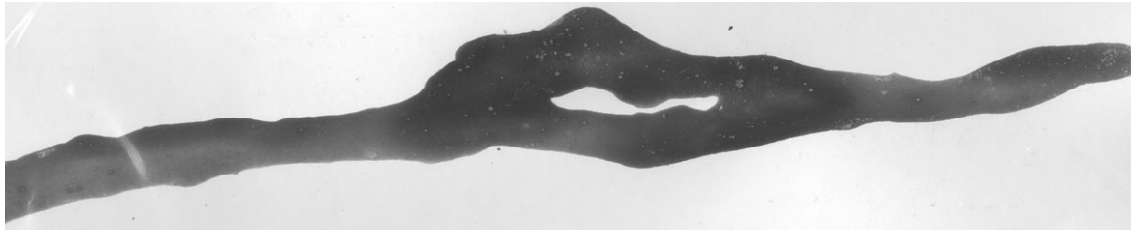
The three chapters of this thesis consider unruly behaviour of the human mouth, the relationship of art and its viewer, and the spectatorial space between art and audience. Chapter one specifically looks at the immediate improprieties of the mouth that make it appear unruly and dysfunctional. This includes the gendered use of spit and saliva in the performances of this study. The dynamics of the gaze and the public effects of the performing live art body

are discussed in chapter two. My ritual performances in toilets, and the public's responses to them are included in this discussion. The relational influence of site and body, whether human or animal, are the focus of chapter three. This discusses specific performative sites, the relationship between women and animals and the effect of working with dogs in art practice. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the effect of making the implicit gaze explicit through embodied, gendered art practice. This explores the concept and construction of the abject in art practice, and the effect this has on the contract between artist and spectator. The conclusion also discusses and reflects on the process of this study in relation to its construction as theory and practice. My contribution to knowledge is to further the debate and understanding of the relationship of audience, site and artwork in live art practice and the effect of including female and animal bodies.

*My lips are still moist
- They feel cold and damp*

To inform this research on the relationship between live art practice and its audience I have primarily used theories on, and associated with the performing body as a potential site of contravention. These are incorporated to inform how boundless and bounded conditions legislate appropriate conduct specific to two intermediate points: the corporeal mouth, and the divide that separates art and its viewer. The immediate and social implications for the performer of 'inappropriate' oral action are discussed through references that include the abject and unruly mouth, feminism and the notion of woman as potential social transgressor, human and animal associations, how audiences engage with artworks, observing and being observed, and the use of specific art spaces.

The description of spitting punctuating this introduction aimed to situate the type of transgressive oral behaviour used in my art practice in direct relation to the text. It also intended to offer an insight into the performative experiences that have been integral to this research.



The spit.

Notes to the introduction

¹ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, Trans. Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods, (Dijon, Les Presses Du Reel, 2002), p. 26.

² Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2002), p. xxii.

³ Spectacle is considered in this study as an object, or body positioned for observation.

⁴ Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2002), p. xxii.

⁵ Günther Brus discussed in O'Dell, Kathy. *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970's*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p.7.

⁶ Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 47.

⁷ Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 154.

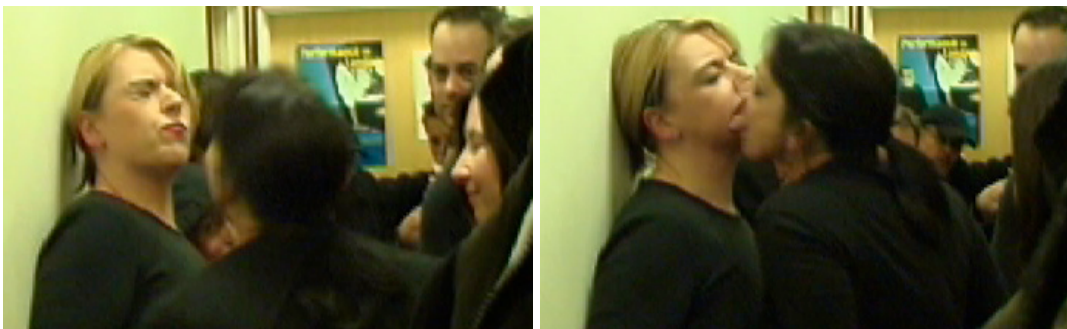
⁸ Oliver, Kelly, (Ed.). *The Portable Kristeva*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 259.

⁹ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London, Routledge, 1999), p. 169.

¹⁰ I would like to state that the artist, participants or audience sustained no injuries. Care and duty were afforded to self and others throughout this exploration of transgression and the abject.

1. An unruly orifice: the human mouth and ways in which it misbehaves

In 2003 I performed a live work 'Spit and Lick' (illustrations 1 and 2) at *East End Collaborations*, Queen Mary University, London, and in 2004 at *Sensitive Skin*, Future Factory, Nottingham. 'Spit and Lick' considered the effects of action, site and audience upon each other, and was used to develop the praxis of this research. This chapter aims to contextualise this and other work, within a wider social and critical frame, and to expose the subtexts the research is addressing. In specifically addressing the relevance of how the mouth functions, this chapter lays the foundations for the rest of the thesis.



1, 2. Angela Bartram, *Spit and Lick*, 2003 (performance documentation; event and venue: East End Collaborations, Queen Mary University, London).

Body boundaries

In *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation*, Steve Baker referred to Julia Kristeva's discussion of abjection in *Powers of Horror* as 'being characterised principally as a threat to the certainty of self's identity.'¹ This 'threat' relates to the 'physical' boundary of the body and the socially constructed self. When thinking about how the body comes to be understood as abject, notions of 'legislation' are significant for the social body is at times both acceptable and conformist, or unacceptable and dangerous.

The transgression of boundaries is culturally significant. Transgression 'reinforces the order being transgressed'² and serves to maintain social categorisation and hierarchy. When there are closed and secure boundaries, the body is safe and protected. Bodily substances that are closed in and contained should not contaminate, offend, or disrupt their surroundings. However, the body has openings that permeate its border and this may cause localised sites of anxiety. Contamination anxiety, or a 'feeling of uneasy suspense'³ can be rife at these breaches, as they offer internal bodily matter the potential for release. Judith Butler stated that the 'construction of stable bodily contours relies upon fixed sites of corporeal permeability and impermeability.'⁴ As unlocked places, orifices exemplify ways in which bodily boundaries are penetrable. Danger is given space to grow when the 'membrane separating self from self and self from world becomes permeable.'⁵ For, as the body's porosity has no laws as to what substance belongs where, external matter is as likely to be taken in, as internal matter to seep out. Mary Douglas informed us that 'we should expect the orifices of the body to

symbolise its especially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind.’⁶

The mouth

The facial orifice of the body is a significant and visible site. Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu found the mouth so important for describing the human condition that he used references for it to preach an entire sermon. ‘Teeth fall, tongue remain,’⁷ was Lao Tzu’s message to explain that humans should ‘go with the flow’ through life. In using the biological mouth to reference the sociological self, Lau Tzu succinctly communicated the Taoist rationale for existence. It perhaps becomes easier to see his idea by considering the function and physicality of the human mouth. Humans use the mouth to breathe, ingest, take in and partake in the desirable, expel that which is foul, and to enunciate and communicate to others. We are social beings articulated and positioned around the actions of the mouth, yet this is also a bodily site that reminds us of our animal drives through the oral demands of instinct and need. Such a conflict serves as a reminder of the instability of the body’s outer defences, and comes to represent the dichotomy of inner perception and outer manifestation.

How the mouth is perceived can be of interest to the visual artist who is curious about fears and anxieties relating to social behaviour. As a highly visible and social aperture of the body, the mouth is both public and private. Vast powers are given to this space that inform how social placement is categorised. The corporeal and cultural complexities of this site inform a definition of

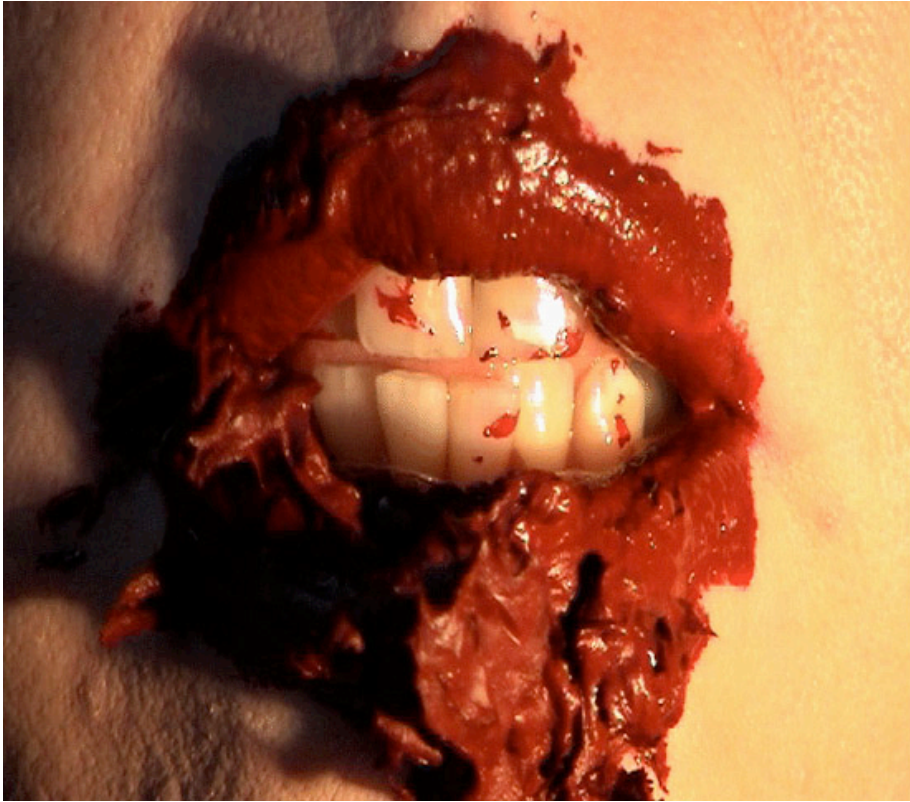
transgression based on how it operates. For Sigmund Freud, a closed mouth 'provides protection against unpleasurable experiences and the threat of them.'⁸ In concurrence with this, Georges Bataille stated that 'a closed mouth, [is] as beautiful as a safe.'⁹ But, if the closed mouth is contained and 'safe', what happens to perceptions of it when 'open'? If we are to take Freud's definition of the closed mouth as providing protection from 'unpleasant experiences', it may be reasonable to assume that the open mouth would negate this effect. The opposite may be true: in fact, the open mouth may present disagreeable experiences. When the mouth is open we are potentially exposed to its actions and behaviour in a way that we are not when it is closed, and this an attributable reason for this perception. We are confronted with the mouth spitting, vomiting, or cursing only when it is open. Such actions can make the mouth appear impolite, dangerous, disruptive, and discursive and comparable to an animal maw. So this 'vulnerable orifice'¹⁰ is inconsistent: when closed it may be considered refined, mannered, and tasteful; when open it may be considered vulgar, obscene, and disgusting. Because of these types of perceptions (based on how it operates and how it opens and closes), the mouth is embedded with cultural significance and socially inscribed etiquette to perceptually mark it as uncertain from the outset. This is typified in Samuel Beckett's short theatrical piece 'Not I'¹¹ (illustration 3). In this work, Beckett centrally positioned the female mouth of Billie Whitelaw to be the only thing visible amidst dense theatrical blackness that surrounded it. The effect on Whitelaw's often insanely narrating mouth in 'Not I' was that it appeared ambiguous and indiscernible on the surrounding stage.¹² Without the rest of the face to frame it, its function and physicality became of paramount visual significance. As she mouthed a fragmented and often jumbled monologue,

Whitelaw's spot-lit mouth became strange and exaggerated, seeming to lose human similarity in its estrangement from her face. With all other visual facial distraction removed, the mouth seemed to become increasingly alienated from its corporeal origins. It appeared as if it could suck the audience in, chew them about, and spit them out. The power of the mouth to infuse fear and anxiety has been well used in the 'horror' genre of literature and film. The most notable example is the vampire; a being that lives off the blood of others. The mouth is the vampire's tool and it is at this bodily hole where apprehension resides¹³ as it opens, bites and drinks. Through the focused visibility brought by Beckett's staging of 'Not I', Whitelaw's mouth seemed hypnotic and dangerous, a suffocating vision reminiscent of the vampiric *vagina dentata*, the 'mouth of hell.'¹⁴



3. Samuel Beckett, *Not I*, 1972 (stage play documentation).

In 2002 I made a three-minute video work entitled 'If'¹⁵ (illustration 4 and see appendix 2.a. for a description of this work). Similar to the isolation of Whitelaw's mouth in Beckett's 'Not I', this work centrally positioned my mouth to occupy the visual field. The intention of this piece was to prioritise the mouth as an open point of potential excess. 'If' focused on the lips for the significance they bring to the face in terms of how we relate to others. The lips are seductive avatars so entrenched in British and American culture that cosmetic counters have shelves devoted to beauty products¹⁶ designed to increase the visibility of the mouth by making them appear bigger, fuller and plumper. Greater lip volume equals greater visibility and alluring capabilities in this scenario. By making words and sounds they allow us to orally communicate and be 'social'; they are involved in affectionate or passionate acts of kissing; they separate the inner and outer body; they are exposed to both oral taste sensations of pleasure and disgust; in making primary visual presentation of any displaced oral matter to others, overindulgence is often made apparent at this bodily site. The lips, therefore, have a dichotomous existence that often sees them made responsible for the primary representation of oral acts that provoke anxiety or pleasure in self and others. It was this dichotomy that the work 'If' aimed to explore.



4. Angela Bartram, *If*, 2002 (video still).

A subtle shift in meaning occurred over the duration of 'If' that saw any seductive, and pleasurable potential for the lips deteriorate. The work began with the lipstick being brushed onto my open lips in a quantity that was standard for everyday wear. That the mouth was open during application made the gesture appear somewhat sexually provocative. But this initial sexual reference transformed to one of ambiguity as the lipstick accumulated on the lips. The lipstick's materiality became increasingly less obvious through this excess, as its usual reference had been denied. The removal of any sexual connotation transformed the mouth into a site of potential anxiety for others: effectively, it became difficult to know how to relate to it. The increasingly

abundant volume of lipstick transformed the mouth from accepted social site, and one that possessed values that made it potentially desirable. For in becoming 'excessive' and different the mouth in 'If' became uncertain. In fact, the mouth and the lipstick underwent a simultaneous deterioration of visual reference that left both perceptibly uncertain as the work progressed. The mouth began to appear, perhaps, as a strange and inhospitable zone; the lipstick took on qualities visually akin in some ways to finely blended offal. By removing standard references and the capacity for an experience of pleasure, the work confronted the viewer with a bodily site that became increasingly socially different. The work distanced the increasingly lipstick-laden mouth from normal social representation. For excess and increased unfamiliarity bring on a sense of alienation in others and this is irrespective of whether corporeal references are initially acknowledged or not.

The restricted visibility of the mouth in 'If' saw how this could operate as a pivotal space from which to consider the abject, as that which is corporeally in-between and uncertain. The mouths in Beckett's 'Not I' and my own 'If' referenced a dislocated body 'part' rather than being representational of the whole woman. In optical isolation, they only gave partial visualisation; they could only hint at the possessing body's full physiognomy.

Tongues

A practice that is based on actions made at the site that generates speech implies communication and the spoken word. The mouth formulates language

that links individuals across space that is a no-man's-land, a void between spectator and spectacle, forever fused together by the possibility that speech will intrude, if only momentarily. The promise of this formulates a momentary relationship in the space where words could, or should, meet.

Instrumental to the mouth's varying applications is an integral moving object known as the tongue. Resembling the actions of a muscular invertebrate, like an engorged slug or sea creature, the tongue is a shape-shifting and mutable mass of living tissue laden with sensory receptors. Ergonomically formed to facilitate speech and aid the digestion of food, the tongue is a muscle that is powerful both in physicality and ability. Its inherent strength and pliability potentially make it a desirable implement for the artist, who may find other uses for it beyond talking and mastication. To utilise it as a 'tool' is to align it with the inorganic and mechanical, but as Kathy O'Dell discussed in *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970's*, this is often how the body is considered. Although O'Dell specifically talks about this in terms of the attention brought to the visibility of the skin and corporeal self by the performer's presence, the fact that the tongue can be used to manipulate, or suggest form, means this has bearing in this context. Just as sculptors use modelling equipment, such as chisels, rasps, and planes to configure art objects, the tongue can manipulate malleable materials into different forms. By considering how a substance, such as an ice-lolly, changes and diminishes when licked and sucked, this perhaps becomes easier to see. In this instance the tongue acts like a ceramicist's hands eroding and re-shaping the ice-lolly's form in pursuit of satiety.

The inverse of erosion also has potential appeal, for, as the tongue is a mass of tissue, it is possible to take a cast from it. But, if this is taken directly from the artist concerned, how might this be understood? The process of casting the tongue forces a temporary auto-silence on the recipient. It represents self-immolation of speech when performed by the artist upon himself or herself. By denying (even in the short-term) the capacity for speech, the individual can be seen to be enforcing a self-induced reduction of their humanising power. Self-silencing is an evocative act, and one that can be used to symbolise protest. For example, the Cuban artist Jeanette Chávez bound her tongue with black cord as a political demonstration in her short video work 'Autocensura/Self-Censorship' of 2006 (illustration 5). Chávez could be seen in this work to simply, but visibly, limit her powers of verbal self-expression. As her tongue becomes discoloured over the three-minute duration of the video, a suggestion is made regarding the power of verbal communication, and what its removal might imply. By silencing her tongue, Chávez was actively denying her right to communicate her prowess as an articulate human. In effect, she was rendering herself more animal-like, and less human. Although the process of casting one's own tongue can be seen to be similar to the work of Chávez, it also represents an intimate act with the self, to be experienced by the self. Unlike the work of Chávez, it is not performed as a public protest, but as a mechanism necessary to produce an artefact. Casting is, in most cases, a process used to make art rather than being the art itself: the process is in fact a means to an end. The process of casting one's own tongue allows a private, more personal experience, and the cast artefact comes to symbolise the relationship between the maker and the made. For, as the tongue's free-moving capabilities become momentarily immobilised by the vice-like grip of the cast as it sets, this self-

imposed muting sees the artist physically experience constraint. During this process the tongue may feel suffocated, imprisoned, and trapped. The eventual positive produced from the cast serves as a reminder to the artist of the speechless exploit that was necessary for his or her creation. The object may look as if it has been surgically sliced from its origins, to be a static memory of the artist's temporary forced silence.



5. Jeanette Chávez, *Autocensura/Self-Censorship*, 2006 (video still).

A tongue implies speech as it is essential for its production, but when severed it also stands for its denial. A severed tongue is useless to articulation yet still serves to remind us of its intended purpose. For despite the fact that we know language is impossible from a tongue displaced from its site of origin, its physicality still reminds of its intended role in human communication. As such, it becomes a troublesome entity with unnerving qualities when the power for

oral communication is disengaged. A severed tongue appears less body specific in fact its animal derivation can appear indiscernible. This can often raise a question as to whether it is a human tongue or not. To understand and negate this effect, the spectator must engage in a process of discovery with the anatomically displaced lump in order to fathom its ambiguity and mystery. If we consider this idea further, to include the consequences of visually isolating the still attached and living tongue, uncertainty may become pronounced. The animate licking and slurping tongue confronts individual sensibilities when visibility is localised. Taking into account its actions and deeds, apprehension is created around issues of conduct and behaviour when focus is given to what the live tongue is in terms of a body part or 'thing'. It is here that the live tongue, as speaking implement of the civilised, begins to appear unstable, ambiguous and dangerous.

The indistinctness the tongue inherits through this process of displacement is confounded when its everyday affairs are thrust into public consciousness. In offering the actions of the tongue to visibility, questions can be raised by the witnessing public about the status of the individual concerned. In order to ascertain if disability, mental health or deviance might be responsible for such behaviour, the consciousness of the deed becomes valid for interrogation. The display becomes abhorrent and distasteful when it is made clear that the cause is not due to ill health. But why is it considered inappropriate to be seen to use the tongue to lick another's skin, or another's tongue, or an object? To lick and be licked is a promise in an intimate relationship of other encounters, of what might be, might happen. Because licking makes reference to the private and clandestine scenarios of the bedroom, this can make public viewing

uncomfortable. This intimate action may produce embarrassment in the viewer when exposed; they may consider that it should remain private and discreet. This type of response could be seen in audience negotiations of the live work 'Mouthings', which I performed at the *National Review of Live Art*, The Arches, Glasgow, in 2005. In one of three parts that constituted 'Mouthings' (illustration 6), I licked a corridor wall in front of audience members waiting to enter a theatre space to see a seated event. The other two actions that made up this work were washing my mouth out with soap in both sets of gendered toilets, and spitting into a glass in the café bar. In terms of time and place, the three actions were unspecified in the schedule, and happened over two consecutive twelve-hour weekend slots. The performances were also unannounced to the audience, and were 'chanced' upon instead. Lack of announcement meant that the audience did not 'expect' to see the performance that was about to happen. The 'unsuspecting' audience at the National Review of Live Art was potentially challenged by all three parts of this work because they had not been formally told that they were part of a performance. This made their encounter with this work uncertain from the outset: in effect they did not know whether it was art or not. The challenge this presented concerned their sense of 'self' and how they should be 'seen' to respond at an event of ambiguous status. Because this occurred in a venue devoted to an international live art platform, an assumption could be made that it was, in fact, an artwork, yet its lack of 'announcement' as performance presented relational difficulty. Reactions of embarrassment and uncertainty were particular to the part that involved licking the corridor wall, as the audience, drawn in close proximity, negotiated what the action meant. Consideration to their role as part of the event tested individual sensibilities,

and this saw them look uncomfortable. Eventually they moved away and watched from a distance.

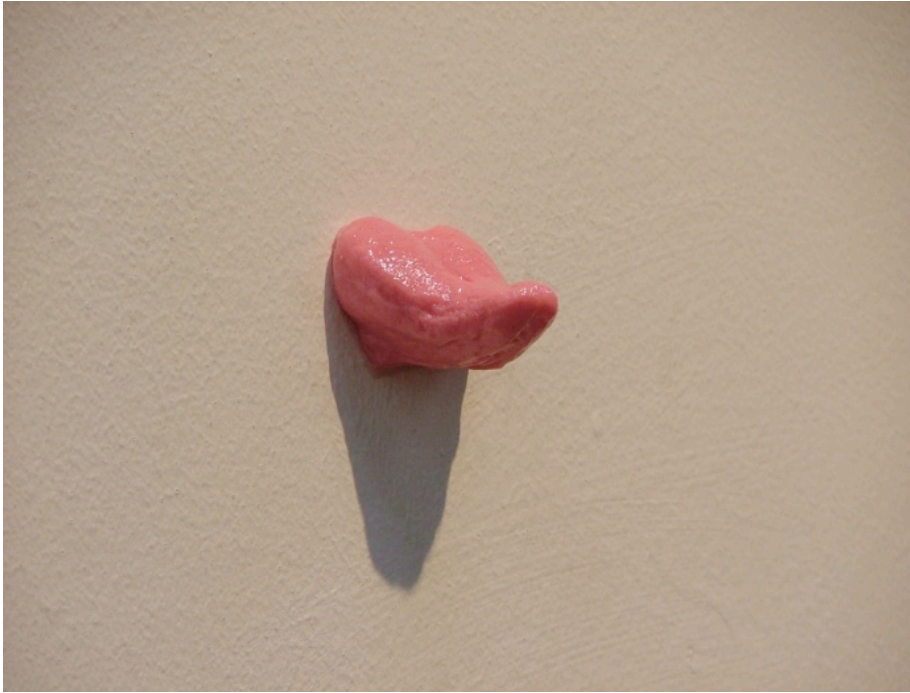
As it travelled across the 'imagined' unclean wall of the communal corridor, the tongue potentially emerged as a concentrated point of anxiety on my body for the audience. This was produced from their uncertainty of, and potential embarrassment at seeing the event. Not being 'told' that this was a performance raised questions pertaining to my conduct; embarrassment was the potential result of not being given permission to relate to the performance as performance for the audience. Being seen to be 'watching' in this situation increased the probability of this occurring as it made engagement with the inappropriate visible. Effectively watching, and being seen to watch the action brought a level of visibility to the viewer created from engagement and any embarrassment produced from that engagement. Because of this, the action was used to symbolise the inappropriate and anti-social for the audience. The effect of this saw the work's meaning and context expose possibilities for the tongue to communicate what it is to be socially awkward for the viewer without uttering a word.



6. Angela Bartram, *Mouthings*, 2005 (performance documentation; event and venue: National Review of Live Art, The Arches, Glasgow).

'Tonguing'

Tonguing, as term or action, has many connotations and variants: the verb defines a tongue in movement, French kissing, or rolling words; being tongue-tied is to stumble to verbalise; musicians tongue wind instruments to generate sound; to tongue is to lick. The many references inferred by this term were brought to the live art piece 'Tonguing', which included a wall-mounted replica of my tongue made in British seaside rock candy that I licked and sucked throughout the performance (illustration 7 and see appendix 2.b. for a description of this work).



7. Angela Bartram, *Tonguing*, 2006 (performance documentation; event and venue: Body Parts 2, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh).

The title 'Tonguing' suggested that something would, or should happen: an incident of some description. Perhaps the title was actually a ruse used to arouse anticipation of a happening taking place, and maybe the audience would feel let down or disgruntled if an artist never showed. Of course it was possible that the title was in fact a direct invitation to the audience, one in which they were asked to initiate the experience by taking part. A possible outcome of this, if this was in fact the case, could see the audience themselves being tempted to tongue the object directly. This happened at the performance of 'Tonguing' at the Arnolfini gallery in Bristol where a viewer informed me he had licked the rock tongue upon seeing it on the wall. He said he was 'tempted' by its smell and sight; he wondered if it would taste like sugar candy; he thought the title was an invitation to do so.

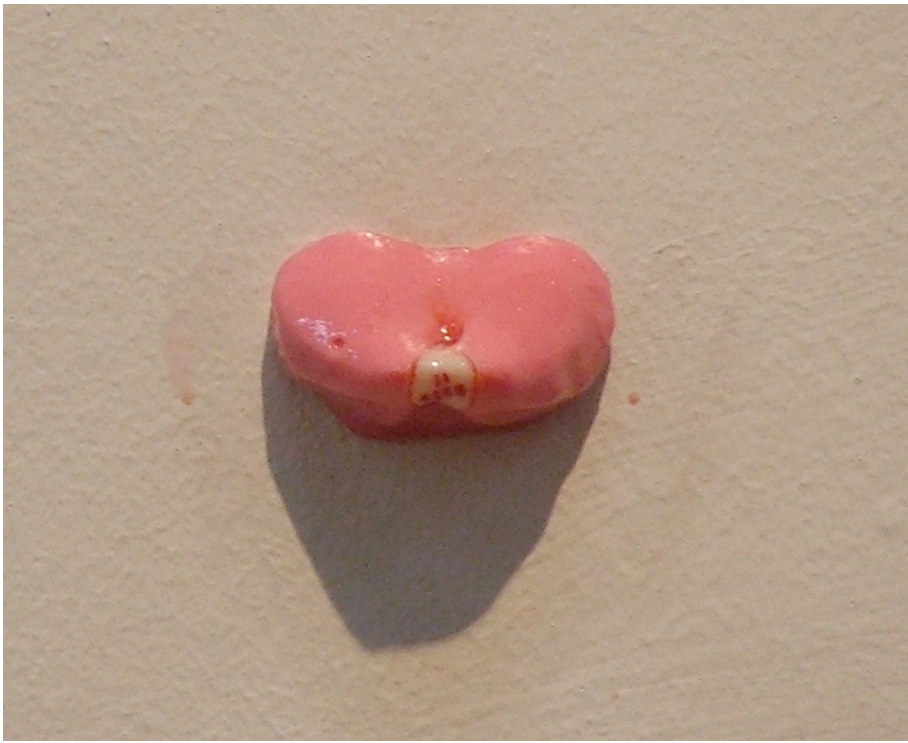
Coupled with the implications of the title, the object itself promised varying nuances to do with context and site. In situ and stuck to the wall, the rock tongue appeared somewhat like a hunter's trophy after a kill, flesh-like and reminiscent of a body, but inanimate and out-of-place; pink, shiny, and slightly moist-looking, it jutted out as if showing a childish rebuff to the viewer; like a showcased glistening spectacle it appeared as if waiting in anticipation of sexual exchange to bring suggestion of another (male) bodily protuberance: the penis. Additionally, means beyond the visual were used to facilitate meaning and understanding, for the tongue also bore a subtle aroma of strawberries. This impacted on the overall viewing experience, for when combined with sight and touch, smell is a sense often used to instruct us as to what might be foul or pleasant to taste by helping the eyes 'label the other as other.'¹⁷ What the smell of strawberries did was present the onlooker with an invitation to lean in and transcend the space between their viewing bodies and the object on the wall. In further disobedience of the rules that designate this space, the live action of 'Tonguing' began when I approached the tongue on the wall to get close, too close perhaps, to slowly stick my live tongue out at it. At this point a rebuff was made again, but this time not *by* the object, but *to* it. It was at this point that the event was sanctioned as happening, and until this took place the rock candy tongue existed as an objectifiable art object. Alan Read stated that 'the spectator's eye is watchful for an entrance, to their place'¹⁸ in the event, which remains unclear until the action begins. Using Read's idea, it becomes possible to understand how the body can convert an experience to be understood as performative. An object becomes part of a performance when it is touched: the body that touches the object is responsible for making this happen. The performing body makes the object performative property and part of an event.

When this occurs, the spectator is given assurances that the event *is* an event. They settle into their relationship with what they are witnessing at this point, safe in the knowledge of the nature of the activity and their relationship to it.

A comparison could be made to the bodily act of a man pissing against a wall, or urinal through the performance, as I faced the wall to suck the candy tongue stuck to it at head-height. Of course, this wasn't the only sexual resonance in this work, as the act of sucking references eroticism in name, deed, and suggestion, and oral undertakings are often given double meanings that imply the innocent, but also the sexual. The mouth is after all an orifice used in sexual exchange, and to suck a pink protuberance on a wall is suggestive of many acts beyond art. Utilising the primal oral instinct of sucking also brings references of the animal, the bestial, the base, and the sexual to the fore. What it is to 'eat' is a question to do with the sexual and the innocent, as they collide around individual sensibilities of how to negotiate non-verbal oral operations. In this situation, orality was placed at the heart of intimacy with self, and with the reference of self to others. This presented a relational confrontation to the audience who had to negotiate how to respond to the sexual connotations the work presented. Should they be visually engaged with another person's sexually suggestive intimacy? Was it right for them to be seen to be watching a woman sucking and licking a pink tongue sticking out of a wall? Were they not acting voyeuristically by doing this? For even if this is a 'performance' there is an impact on the viewer's sense of self that raises questions about personal levels of propriety and conduct. But the fact that a performance *is* a performance allows voyeuristic tendencies to be engaged with little social

remorse. The audience know they are invited to watch, and this allows an intimacy to develop between performer and activity. Even with emergent sexual connotations clearly referenced, the performance 'action' invites the viewer into an ocular engagement with intimacy. They feel they are allowed to approach the experience voyeuristically as a consequence.

The performance of 'Tonguing' presented a dual meaning: the object physically referenced the living tongue from which it was cast; and it used the living tongue as an instrument to erode and transform the cast replica. Until the 'suck it' text, which ran through the centre of the tongue, was exposed through the act of sucking exerted through the performance, any promise of speech that the mounted tongue implied was temporarily denied (illustration 8). The performative interaction imposed upon the candy tongue by its living, mirror image transformed it into a mutated reference of the actions of the event. The physical human likeness it originally possessed before the performance was supplanted by the words that could be read in its stunted remains.



8. Angela Bartram, *Tonguing*, 2006 (performance documentation; event and venue: Body Parts 2, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh).

The significance of saliva

When we consider abjection, we encounter rejection strategies constructed around dirt, pollution and boundaries. Rules that establish what does, and does not, get rejected from the immediate body are important to considerations of how the mouth functions. With the focus of this study being set around the performative and active mouth, the discussion now inevitably turns to discuss the relational values of saliva.

Saliva's residence in the mouth tells us that the body's interior and exterior are connected. This place of refuge does this each time it opens, as it exposes the inner body to others' visibility. Although it is produced by and resides in the mouth, it also slips into and out of the body. Public prominence is given to the

saliva of others as they speak, drink, and eat. Situation and the manner of the exchange inform how saliva is perceived, and this makes it one of the more socially legislated bodily fluids.

Saliva's ejection from the body sees it characteristically transformed into a waste substance. The anthropologist Mary Douglas defined waste as 'matter out of place.'¹⁹ Waste is important for Douglas, for it is used to establish systems, constructs, and rules set around the body, and for society. When a substance is considered as waste, its contaminating potential is unknown. In effect it becomes indistinct, horrible, and potentially dangerous. Its removal from the body makes it ambiguous. It is considered as foreign, a distanced and unfamiliar object matter.

Re-ingestion of saliva presents the generating body with a potential crisis. In his book of 1955, *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality*, Gordon Allport gave a descriptive account to allow us to consider why we should come to perceive our own displaced bodily fluids in this way. He asked that we think 'first of swallowing the saliva...then imagine expectorating it into a tumbler and drinking it! What seemed natural and 'mine' suddenly becomes disgusting and alien.'²⁰ You 'can't drink, even though it was just in your mouth.'²¹

If thoughts of re-ingestion affront our sensibilities to the degree that Allport suggests, then surely ingesting somebody else's saliva is unfeasible. But in the pursuit of warmth, intimacy, and pleasure with another body we find ourselves willingly opting for situations where this will happen. Beyond the status of all

mammals being warm-blooded creatures, to be warm is to be alive, emotive, and essentially human. Participation in intimate acts with another helps us establish our sense of humanity: we assert our human prowess as sociable, intellectual beings by being seen to forge close relationships with others.

To kiss, or orally touch another, is generally believed to be a pleasurable and affectionate response to denote greeting, congeniality, harmony, or love. In attributing a sense of *warmth* to the manner of the action, the inherent abject nature of saliva can be reconsidered. In fact we take this one step further, for by taking part in kissing we accept that saliva will merge together, and be moved between participants. We accept this as part of the experience, suspend the innate reflex to feel disgusted, and think nothing more of it.

Familiarity between bodies would be impossible without this. The *warmth* of the exchange is partially responsible for the suspension of disgust. In fact, any sense of warmth makes saliva appear less problematic as a bodily substance *despite* the individual's outer bodily defences having been breached by another. This ultimately renders the inherent abject nature of saliva impotent for the duration of intimacy.

Not all mouth-to-mouth touch is acceptable and pleasurable, and in such a situation the exchange of saliva becomes unwanted, uncomfortable, and potentially gruelling. When we mark another's saliva as *cold* and different, we rightly assert it as *other* to our immediate self. In such unwanted physical acts we are reminded that 'saliva is clearly contaminating and disgust evoking.'²² The wet and cold of saliva in this circumstance becomes the focus for any

consequential discomfort. A 'wet kiss' is reason to recoil with disgust, and its *wetness* becomes the marker for the experience.

Spitting

The manner in which saliva is expelled from the body is important for how it is perceived in society. The inherent fluidity and viscosity of saliva can arouse problems for others' negotiations of implied disease, pollutants, and the abject when it escapes through spitting or overly exaggerated eating. Science is, in part, responsible for this, as it has made us aware that some diseases (such as tuberculosis and influenza, that produce an overflow of phlegmatic substance) are spread through coughing, sneezing, and breathing. However, despite being anatomically necessary for healthy existence, seeing saliva and phlegm being propelled can present a repulsive sight. The aftermath of a 'Docker's hankie'²³ for example (where snot is snorted out from each nostril and left on the ground), can produce horrific sensations in those witnessing this act. The result is that the event develops the potential to become photographed onto the memory to be a residual copy of the abject scene. The impact this banishment has on others sees *saliva* undergo a name change to become *spit*; the biological term supplanted by the social.

Spitting can be considered a social act and, consequently, being seen to spit can be used as a construct to establish individuality. Indeed, there are fears built around how spitting is performed by certain social groups that inevitably contributes to how they are perceived. In Britain we generally regard spitting as distasteful, and bind it into a construct of inappropriateness within social

relationships. We may recoil in disgust and feel nauseous when faced with another's spitting. As an example of how this act has been used to categorise the inappropriate, anti-social terms such as 'yob' and 'yobbish' are applied to those seen spitting and the act itself. Punk Rock music's inception in the 1970s made use of this idea in order to form a polarity within British culture based on acceptability and outrage. Punk posited spitting as a fundamental, reactionary construct for their 'in-your-face' response to mainstream British society. However, this gave visibility not only to the self-located inappropriate other, but also to the conventions of society that they wished to oppose. This was an inevitable conclusion perhaps, for as Rebecca Schneider stated, 'transgression, or the inappropriate, certainly props the appropriate.'²⁴ Yet despite this, spitting has an assured association with rebellion and anti-social behaviour. Spitting, and being spat at provide a rite of passage, a badge of belonging that moves the perpetrator from acceptable to anarchic. As much a part of Punk as sugar-spiked hair, to spit was to display a sense of camaraderie and identification within peer groups.

The boundary of gender

The gendered body makes an impact on knowledge and understanding when made visible as a construct of art. The artist must take on board the gender specific complexities bestowed upon the body if they are to fully understand what its visibility communicates to others. Art that uses food and sex, for example, is thought to provide 'an investigation of aspects of the abject which have been specifically identified with the female body and its appetites.'²⁵ But

why does this occur? As women have the capacity to become pregnant and breastfeed children, they are considered more biological than intellectual, and this ultimately 'set[s] them apart from men.'²⁶ Femininity and masculinity are the polarised gendered by-products in this relationship where 'identity is perceptible only through a relation to an other.'²⁷

The 'ways in which women experience their own bodies is largely a product of social and political processes'²⁸ to do with how the female negotiates self in her role as posited 'other'. For Jacques Lacan, socialisation is necessary for maintenance of the symbolic order so that any potential biological danger the woman may inherently present can be rendered impotent. This process sees the woman reined into submission, suppressed and marginalised. Although she can never shake off her biology (for she cannot naturally remove that which she is born with), the effect of socialisation sees her invalidated as a physical being and as a person. This transformation where 'one is not born a woman – [but] one becomes one'²⁹ sees her become the identifiable social other to man. This effectively sees women become regarded as synonymous with their socialised bodies: for the woman specifically, it sees her become 'the object of social control.'³⁰

Visibility and being visible are key components in the relationship that comprises man and his other. Beyond the necessity of holding the anatomical workings of the body in place, the skin, our immediate boundary, determines our visibility and translates what we are to others. Similarity and difference are marked on the skin, the conspicuous outer defense of the body. In effect, it

wears what we represent as individuals and collective human beings on its surface. In the formulation of this, the skin can be seen to have many purposes: it is the veneer on which gender, age, race and physical markings³¹ are worn; it is the veil to the inner psychological self; it presents self to the outside world; it indelibly marks the distinguishable other. The skin is a public cloak on which representation is worn. This sees it established as a location where tension related to the individual's perception of self resides. In stating that *skin* and *shame* share 'the same Indo-Germanic root, which means to cover,'³² Claudia Benthien refers us to its etymological development. In emphasising the association between emotional anxiety and public prominence, Benthien equates the function of the bodily outer cloak directly with how the individual may come to experience distress. The impact this has on the woman, who already exists as other to her dominant male counterpart, is that she appears hidden by her gendered garment. The social invisibility this creates is maintained by the potential for shame. This is, of course, until she is ready to become publicly visible. For example, if a woman actively takes part in anti-social and inappropriate behaviour, she is propelled out beyond the shadows and into the public spotlight. In this situation the suddenly visible woman, who is marked as perpetrator, is subjected to public contempt. But, the effects of public prominence are difficult, so what effect does this have on the female body made intentionally visible through art practice? The female live artist is visible as a woman from the outset: by stepping into visibility she removes her gendered social veil to become 'both signifier and that which is signified.'³³ Her politically repressed, and possessed body becomes a site of intervention and encounter where the reception and acknowledgment of the 'gaze of others' sees her marked as transgressor. But, as Judith Butler

suggested, 'the gendered body is [always] performative'³⁴ so perhaps this is an inevitable fate.

Spitting women and 'Spit and Lick'

The question of gender specificity is important in considerations of spitting as a performative and perceptible action. Anti-social behaviour has different readings across genders, and how we understand the act of spitting is no different in this respect. Esther Addley discussed this³⁵ in her work on the general implications of spitting amongst celebrities, footballers, and various members of the public. When a woman is seen to publicly spit she appears to be committing social betrayal to her gender, which is perhaps expected to exhibit greater levels of decorum. In defying her sex in this way, the act becomes considered as abhorrent. To offer an explanation of this phenomenon, Addley pointed to the work of the sociologist Ross Coomber.³⁶ Coomber's work included observations of a group of girls hurling phlegm at each other and passers-by in the street and this, he suggested, saw them operating outside the boundaries of their sex. Addley quoted Coomber by stating, 'it hit home that that would be something that you wouldn't normally expect to see, among young women at least.'³⁷ Of course spitting can be considered inappropriate in Britain regardless of gender, but this action perhaps has greater significance when performed by a woman. As Coomber suggests, women are not expected to behave in this way. A man is marked inappropriate if caught spitting in the wrong place, but his position of dominance in the patriarchal order means that his actions are redemptive.

Already positioned as 'other', the woman struggles to find salvation and be saved in the same way - in fact, such actions serve to marginalise her further. The spitting woman becomes a greater danger than her conformist alter ego by being visibly unbound by the social constraints that define acceptability. By being seen to spit, the offending woman self-marks her otherness through inappropriately performing the unexpected. This gives her an abject social, and communal presence through self-imposed visibility.

The many infringements that spitting brings to considerations of correct gender behaviour has been an integral part of my art practice. The live work 'Spit and Lick', which was performed at *East End Collaborations*, Queen Mary University, London, in 2003, and *Sensitive Skin*, Future Factory, Nottingham in 2004, is perhaps the most direct example of this, as it involved two women spitting in each other's face during a live performance. In addition to this, the work looked at how the propulsion and re-ingestion of saliva could be seen to affect social conditions for the artists and audience members concerned. For once the spitting was over, we licked our own saliva back off each other's faces (see appendix 2.c. for a description of this work).

The performance of 'Spit and Lick' drew varying connotations, as there was aggression delivered through the spitting and forceful 'care' through the licking. The spitting resembled a choreographed boxing match, or dance of two pack animals engaged in swapping insults; the licking bore a resemblance to actions of preening, as if we were non-human mammalian mothers cleaning our young. Being licked also resonates with memories of having one's face wiped with a

spittle-laden grandmother's handkerchief, that abject scene burned into recollections of childhood, or of the joy that is derived from being affectionately licked by an excited puppy dog. But site was also important to how this work was perceived. To draw the audience up close to the actuality of the event, the site chosen in both instances was small and confined: when this was performed as part of *East End Collaborations*, the chosen site was a corridor (illustration 9); for *Sensitive Skin* this was a lockable prison cell at Nottingham's Galleries of Justice (illustration 10). The confinements of the site in both cases necessitated that the audience were close to the performance from the outset; in fact they were within spitting distance. This presented them with a threat of bodily exchange and of being stained, or marked by another's unwanted expulsion. The audience, up close, standing right next to the performers in tight spaces were unable to move away from the scene or the performing bodies.



9. Angela Bartram, *Spit and Lick*, 2003 (performance documentation; event and venue: East End Collaborations, Queen Mary University, London).



10. Angela Bartram, *Spit and Lick*, 2004 (performance documentation; event and venue: Sensitive Skin, Future Factory, Nottingham).

It was hoped 'Spit and Lick' would make several ideas related to the abject mouth prominent. Reactions to the re-ingestion of spit in 'Spit and Lick' could be seen to be similar to that referred to by Allport. The saliva that was taken back into the body in this piece became abject *because* it had been spat beyond the initial and immediate confines of the originating body. Certainly for the artists performing, and perhaps for the audience generally, contemplation of the re-ingestion of the once familiar and warm salivary fluid reinforced its abject status: its propulsion had transformed it from feeling warm to cold, and displaced onto another's face it was infused with their residual smells, skin cosmetics, and sweat.

There was an overall sensation that suggested our deeds were socially disruptive. Positioned as both spitting women and spitting humans, our behaviour became questionable. The anti-social nature of the demonstration saw both positions impact upon how the other was understood within the misdemeanor. The fact that we followed protracted, and repetitive spitting by licking each other's faces saw the effect of this etched deeper. That we chose to take our saliva back into our bodies saw us become more troubling and questionable in character. What were our values as artists and as women? What did we consider acceptable for an audience to witness? Perhaps we could be seen to be disgusting violators of gender-specific codes. For as spitting women we had overstepped a cultural boundary and by getting close to others we had transgressed a British code of conduct. The projecting and devouring semi-autonomous interaction in 'Spit and Lick' showed that we were visibly, and *anti*-socially accepting our otherness as women and as potential transgressors. It made us visibly contentious and problematic women and human beings.

The disgust of '(dis)Placed'

When fluid and matter is delivered to disrupt the coherence of the body it becomes waste. In this state, excretions bombard the senses with varying intensities of visibility and smell with the result that they become abject and disgusting. This confrontation happens because 'no society sees bodily excreta as clean.'³⁸ Waste raises the question, 'what am I, as against the world...where is the edge of me?'³⁹ The physical removal of waste by-products allows us to

initially recognise that it is 'of me', then as 'removed from me'. Confusion arises from the fact that waste is seen as 'both me and not me.'⁴⁰ But, this recognition leaves us with a problem of how to regard waste in relation to self. For in considering waste as disconnected from us we psychologically consider it as abject; but we are still left with the knowledge that it came from our own body. In this process we induce a conversation between body and mind as to our perceptions of self as disgust-making entities. This idea can be difficult to come to terms with, irrespective of whether the disgust is the result of necessary biological function or not.

In quoting Charles Darwin's claims that disgust 'in its simplest sense, means something offensive to the taste'⁴¹ the psychologists Paul Rozin and April Fallon specifically located disgust with oral function. In using the notion of 'bad taste'⁴² to principally define disgust, vomiting should be considered, as the act that removes unwanted digestive matter that tastes, or is *bad*, or unhealthy for the body. Of course it is acknowledged that there are conceptual references to bad taste, as used in socio-cultural discourse and the branch of aesthetics popularised by Kant and others, but my focus here is on the physical body. Digestive by-products⁴³ are consistently evocative in sight, smell and impression. They carry the acquired bile- and bacteria-laden smells of the digestive process; they are reminiscent of foodstuffs previously eaten. Intensely malodorous and unpleasant to look at, vomit has the capacity to produce unfavorable and intense responses in those who experience it. Its visual and olfactory properties make it repellent. With this in mind, and when seen in conjunction with Rozin and Fallon's definition of disgust, it becomes more apparent why vomiting can be considered as a specific oral reaction to the

abject and disgusting. For as we predominantly taste through smell,⁴⁴ a doubly potent experience is manifested where disgust may be the result: for foul, as well as pleasurable encounters may be prevalent consequences of this phenomenon. In understanding this it is feasible to comprehend the demands that oral regurgitation specifically may make upon the layered application of taste. For, as vomit is delivered via the place where our knowledge of taste is located, it offers an opportunity to *re-taste*. But any resonance of pleasure in the initial ingestion is overcome by what the substance now represents. Mixed with acrid bile, chewed up, and un-definable, the once referential foodstuff's transformation means its re-encounter is potentially vile. The acrid smell of bile in vomit is often responsible for eliciting reactions in others exposed to it. Our sensory capacities are bombarded and debased by the overall experience. In fact, purging presents the onlooker's equilibrium with a challenge. During this, they may undergo an empathetic physical and psychological reaction, as if they have been infected by the actions, sounds, and acrid smells of the retching taking place before them. This response increases as the scene of visual and olfactory unpleasantness unfolds, adding experiential layers to the increasingly uncomfortable episode. The result is that responses often begin to mirror the mannerisms and constructs of the activity being witnessed itself.

To avoid offending others, the sights and smells of regurgitation are perhaps best kept private. The same can perhaps be said of its alimentary inverse, eating, as the two actions are undeniably linked. Although we consider eating as an acceptable and welcome construct of social behaviour, we still assign rules and regulations to its visibility. We consider how our own mouths, and the mouths of others, operate in everyday situations and circumstances, and this

makes their physical and social conditions, smells and excesses become paramount for ideas on socialisation. Although eating is normal behaviour, the act subjects the individual to regulations that prescribe etiquette and cultural deportment regarding how they do this in public. In fact, 'table manners' are often used as to assign status to the individual. For example, eating with one's mouth open, and speaking whilst eating are often considered unacceptable actions that can evoke disgust and horror in others. By acting as the central focus for social debasement in this scenario, the open, chewing mouth can be held accountable for any degradation that the individual responsible may receive. The result of others' judgements in this way sees the experience become one of inferiority and rejection.

If the mechanics of eating and vomiting present such a socio-cultural challenge, greater pejorative regard may be given to art that uses them as a public focus. Regardless of deliberation, art practice that puts the mouth in the spotlight explores how its actions are perceived. When impolite eating is evident, the mouth potentially becomes a site of violation and outrage. Consequently, it becomes a focal point for the disgust and abhorrence of others. The ensuing effect for the openly masticating, vomiting, and spitting mouth sees it marked as an anti-social space that eventually comes to stand for the morality of its housing body. These underlying principles, coupled with the site and situation of the academic conference *Interdisciplinary Landscapes: Post-feminist Practices in the Arts* in 2004, informed the live work '(dis)Placed'. Performed as part of the conference at the University of Northampton (illustrations 11 and 12), '(dis)Placed' involved the suggestion that ten lipsticks were repeatedly consumed and regurgitated along with standard lunchtime

buffet food (see appendix 2.d. for a description of this work). I had chosen to work with lipsticks because they are standard wear for the lips of western women; a woman regularly consumes lipstick through wearing it, and eating and drinking through it. Indeed, it is believed that the average woman ingests four pounds of lipstick in her life.⁴⁵





11, 12. Angela Bartram, *(dis)Placed*, 2004 (performance documentation; event and venue: Interdisciplinary Landscapes: Post-feminist Practices in the Arts conference, University of Northampton).

The conference drew a mixed range of delegates interested in feminist studies in the arts. Performed during the lunch hour on the final day of the conference, it was hoped '(dis)Placed' would appear to be incidental to the main academic proceedings, and be visible to as many of these delegates as possible. I had also given a paper at this conference prior to the performance, so there was awareness of the subject matter I was engaged with (see appendix 4 for conference abstract). Over the time that I sat amidst the delegates performing at the main lunch table, I was aware that I was becoming increasingly less welcome. Initially I had been invited to take part in conversations regarding individual papers whilst in the queue for the buffet selection, but as I started to perform, the mood towards me changed. As the crowd around me

reconsidered the polite and queue-abiding individual who was now actively disturbing their lunch, perceptions of me notably altered. The buffet plate I had selected, some sandwich quarters and a pizza, became a site of questioning once the lipsticks were laid out upon it. This response became more palpable when the lipstick bullets were removed from their casings and eaten. In fact, this was made more noticeable because the delegates, who were now speaking in hushed tones, had made a distanced space around me. Disapproving sideways glances were observed on the whole. Only a few drew near to the table to eat. Fewer still dared to watch.

Disgruntled hostility was felt throughout the duration of the work, with only disdainful cursory glances being given by the majority of the delegates. Seemingly disgusted by what they were seeing, they appeared as if they longed for the affront to be over. As the repeated consumption and faked regurgitation took place, anxieties to do with the actions impacted on the scene. Fears and horrors to do with anticipated smells, sounds, and specifically sights were represented here. The eating and purging actions became confrontational because they were being made public property. This intentionally placed display became a difficult experience *because* it brought to the fore anxieties associated with eating, the open mouth, and vomiting. In fact, because the actions had specifically been placed as art to be looked at, responses seemed more pronounced. It seemed that the actions status as art made it more degrading and confrontational than when encountered in an everyday situation. That there is perhaps a generalised belief that culture should present the viewer with pleasurable experiences may be accountable for this phenomenon. Objectionable and challenging content can be difficult to

understand as a result. It is also possible to keep a distance from vomiting, and other anti-social bodily acts in everyday situations. Although they still present a challenge to individual sensibilities it is always possible to move away. Artwork that uses these types of performative actions confronts the audience with the nature of the action directly, and this was part of this work. Even though performance viewers can, of course, move away at any time, the site chosen for '(dis)Placed' meant that avoidance was almost impossible. Certainly, this was the case if lunch was to be had by the delegates who constituted my audience, as the buffet was situated behind me. They had to encounter my work if they were to eat. This potentially contributed to how these actions became deliberated as significantly more problematic and less acceptable. For by placing lipstick eating and regurgitation in close visual proximity to the buffet, I made a direct impact on their personal experience of lunch. Effectively, by engaging in disagreeable oral acts I reduced the capacity for them to experience pleasure from eating their food. My actions affected their enjoyment of lunch: their pleasure was affected because of the performance. Yet despite this, as the piece seemed to be coming to an end (my plate was nearly empty), one of the conference organisers actively intervened to extend the process. She selected a meringue from the buffet and added it to my plate. But by giving a 'desert' she introduced tradition into the performance as the 'meal' was given convention by being concluded in this way. By introducing an element of normality her action challenged reactions: in effect, an opportunity to re-consider the performance was given. Disgusted and uncomfortable, her action potentially provoked a re-think toward the event in respect of its traditional structure. For conventional eating patterns are social constructs considered appropriate, and this impacted onto the scene of regurgitation being performed.

In effect, the introduction of a desert made the entire performance a little more conventional. Even though slight, it felt more akin to traditional experience despite the nature of the activity. But in doing this, she also made the performance longer. That the experience would be prolonged seemed to have informed her desire to interact in this way. In fact, she told me later that she was enjoying the effect the work was having on others. After she had given me the desert, she began to demonstrate her enjoyment at having taken part by laughing loudly. Her co-conference organiser, who had encouraged her to intervene, joined her in frivolity. Their intervention, in one giving the meringue and both demonstrably relishing in their part, set another conflict in motion for others: why were the organisers were behaving in this way? Perhaps they were left with the sensation that they may have opted to take part in a conference that was fundamentally behaviorally flawed. But in scheduling my work the organisers had displayed their intent from the outset, despite the fact this perhaps only became apparent through their intervention, and enjoyment of that intervention. The conference intended to question social values and levels of engagement for women specifically and '(dis)Placed' offered a perspective on that. By being confrontational in performative action and context the work challenged the delegates, who were predominantly female, directly; it asked that they consider their relationship to anti-social spectacle. We feel safe when we have the option of avoidance, of being able to walk away regardless of gender and responses to the anti-social nature of this work reflected this. As avoidance of the action was denied, to some degree, hostility was the general response from the delegates who wanted lunch. Unable not to avoid the performative action they felt affronted by my presence. In effect, they resented my body's direct confrontation upon their sensibilities.

I intended '(dis)Placed' to raise questions about levels of propriety and value for women. However, it could perhaps be said that appropriate conduct is necessary for society regardless of gender and context and site, and that anti-social behaviour has a specific and limited place. Audience gender may, in fact, be irrelevant where inappropriate behaviour is concerned and this was seen with this work. But as most humans are socialised into acceptable and conformist behaviour to be part of civilisation this is, perhaps, an inevitable conclusion.

Notes to chapter 1

- ¹ Baker, Steve. *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation*, (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 113.
- ² Shaviro, Steven. *The Cinematic Body*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 6.
- ³ Rachman, Stanley. *Anxiety*, 2nd ed., (Hove, Psychology Press Ltd, 2004), p. 3.
- ⁴ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London, Routledge, 1999), p. 169.
- ⁵ Stam, Robert. *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*, (London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 157.
- ⁶ Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 150.
- ⁷ Brown, Sue. Mad About Mandarin (Chinese Study), World Wide Web, <http://www.amoymagic.com/madmandarin.htm>, (accessed 13 July 2007).
- ⁸ Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Trans. David McLintock, (London, Penguin, 2002), p. 6.
- ⁹ Stoekl, Allan, (Ed.). *Georges Bataille: Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, Theory and History of Literature Vol. 14, Trans. Allan Stoekl, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 60.
- ¹⁰ Miller, William I. *The Anatomy of Disgust*, (London, Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 88.
- ¹¹ *Not I*. Auth. & Dir. Beckett, Samuel, Billie Whitelaw, (Forum Theatre of the Lincoln Centre, New York, 1972; Royal Court Theatre, London, 1973).
- ¹² Beckett used no mechanical scale magnification devices to increase the visibility of Whitelaw on stage.
- ¹³ The metaphor of architectural door as a 'mouth' can be seen in horror genre films such as *Amityville Horror*. The façade of the haunted house resembles that of a human face in this film: windows reference the eyes, the door the mouth, and so on. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* also aligned doors to human mouths. At the door of Dracula's castle in Transylvania, the character Jonathan Harker is invited to enter of his own free will. Upon doing this, Harker becomes edible property. It is as if he has freely entered into a contract with another's body, by stepping into its architectural representation. Although there are hints at its recurrence throughout the novel, this is the most distinct reference to mouth/doorway parallels.
- ¹⁴ Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 106.
- ¹⁵ Rudyard Kipling also wrote 'If' in 1895, which went on to be named the poem of the twentieth century.
- ¹⁶ The product 'Lip Plump' has become the cosmetic must-have of the twenty-first century. The brand 'Lip Plump' is made by the cosmetic company Benefit. Other companies produce variations.
- ¹⁷ Benthien, Claudia. *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World*, Trans. Thomas Dunlap, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2002), p.158.
- ¹⁸ Read, Alan. *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 95.
- ¹⁹ Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 44.
- ²⁰ Allport, Gordon W. *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality*, (London, Yale University Press, 1955), p. 43.
- ²¹ Dir. Gary Johnstone. Ex. Prod. Simon Andreae. *Anatomy of Disgust: Programme 3, Art*, (Video), (London, Channel 4 Television, 29 August 2000).
- ²² Miller, William I. *The Anatomy of Disgust*, (London, Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 96.
- ²³ Michael Thompson saw a 'Docker's hankie' as a rude act of peasantry (source: Thompson, Michael. *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 3.
- ²⁴ Schneider, Rebecca. *The Explicit Body in Performance*, (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 4.
- ²⁵ Betterton, Rosemary. *An Intimate Distance: Women Artists and the Body*, (London, Routledge, 1996), p. 138.
- ²⁶ Thesander, Marianne. *The Feminine Ideal*, (London, Reaktion Books, 1997), p. 7.
- ²⁷ Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 13.

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- ²⁸ Wolff, Janet. *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture*, (Oxford, Polity, 1990), p. 133.
- ²⁹ Thesander, Marianne. *The Feminine Ideal*, (London, Reaktion Books, 1997), p. 8.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ³¹ Examples would be moles, birthmarks, scars, tattoos, and so on.
- ³² Benthien, Claudia. *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World*, Trans. Thomas Dunlap, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 100.
- ³³ Kent, Sarah & Morreau, Jacqueline, (Eds.). *Women's Images of Men*, (London, Writers and Readers Publishing, 1985), p. 164.
- ³⁴ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London, Routledge, 1999), 173.
- ³⁵ Adley, Esther. 'Here's One In the Eye', *G2 supplement: Guardian Newspaper*, 06 November 2003, p.3.
- ³⁶ Dr. Ross Coomber is a sociologist based at the University of Plymouth, UK. His research interests include the socialised nature of spitting as seen in young British people.
- ³⁷ Adley, Esther. 'Here's One In the Eye', *G2 supplement: Guardian Newspaper*, 06 November 2003, p. 3.
- ³⁸ Dir. Gary Johnstone. Ex. Prod. Simon Andreae. *Anatomy of Disgust: Programme 1, Science*, (Video), (London, Channel 4 Television, 15 August 2000).
- ³⁹ Lenneberg, Eric H., (Ed.). *New Directions in the Study of Language*, (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1964), p. 38.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ Rozin, Paul & Fallon, April E. 'A Perspective on Disgust', *Psychological Review*, 94, 1, (1987), p. 23.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ The Monell Centre, Philadelphia, has carried out control group tests to establish the most disgusting smell. This was considered to be anal excrement. These concluding test results were gathered by exposing human subjects to the artificial faecal smell *Scatol*. All human subjects used in this study were seen to experience disgust as a response to this substance.
- ⁴⁴ Only salt, sour, bitter and sweet are actually tasted as a pure sensation by the mouth. All other 'tastes' are smelled.
- ⁴⁵ Source: Copperwiki. Lipstick, <http://www.copperwiki.org/index.php/Lipstick>, (accessed 29 April 2008).

2. The relationship between art and observer: distance, experience and ritual

The 'perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and experience.'¹ To consider how others perceive and understand art practice it is necessary to be aware of the various strategies that inform this. This chapter considers the constitutional effect in the relationship of looking that is established between art and its audience. It discusses how bodies are made observable property through the constructs and permutations that determine how art is observed.

The distance between site, object and viewer

If we are to be able to understand the dynamics that define how we mediate the observable body, it is important that we are first aware of the constructs that inform our relationships with art objects. There are established spectatorial guidelines for this encounter, which, if followed correctly, assist our perception and understanding of what objects mean.

The suggestion is that there is an accepted and typical distance established between artwork and viewer. This distance is both physical and conceptual: a physical distance is necessary to view the object correctly; a conceptual distance is established by the recognition that the work is distinct from, and unlike, the viewing self. The idea is that an awareness of this 'complexity of difference'² puts the audience in a better critical place to understand the artwork's significance and intent. Through the identifiable discrepancy that becomes apparent in this situation, the distanced artwork is revealed as the polarised spectatorial 'other'. Labelling in this way is important in order to establish what we are, and are not, for identity is 'perceptible only through a relation to an other.'³ The art object can be seen in this way if we take on Sartre's idea that the other is 'revealed to us in a spatial world.'⁴

To follow guidelines correctly we must be equipped with the necessary facilities to do so. The experience of viewing art is informed by the architectural properties of the space and how they accommodate the display of objects. For the art object, the space and situation within which it is placed allows it to become established as cultural product and 'other'. In *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Jean-Paul Sartre stated that objects 'occupy a determined place'⁵ which I am using in this instance to describe the exhibition space. Galleries and museums are specifically designed to show art and artefacts. Their existence is concerned with ocular and sensorial engagement with culture. It is preferable that exhibition spaces are designed to perform in a certain way to achieve this.

The 'typically deadening effect of galleries and museums, in which the viewer is always passive'⁶ informs how exhibition spaces are expected to inform cultural negotiations. They should provide sufficient opportunity to view artworks without fear of extraneous visual confusion where possible: ideally they should give the object room to exist. Whether others are present or not, this gives the viewer adequate distance to experience the art object in relative contemplative isolation. This is perhaps the ideal scenario, as we become passively introspective in our response to art in these places. The thoughts of Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggest this to be the case when he stated: 'I consider my perceptions as simple sensations, they are private.'⁷ Merleau-Ponty's proposition puts forward the idea that there is good reason for viewing experiences to be solitary and self-concerned. This is still the case even if the individual is part of a larger audience mass. But the dialogue between spatial dynamics and mediation in this situation sees the maintenance of correct proximal distance become a necessity. When correctly observed, an invisible, but resisting, space between artwork and viewer is created where meaning can be established, solitude can be found, and the object positioned as 'other' can be maintained as 'other'. This becomes a limiting and prohibitive viewing space that effectively feels potent, impenetrable, and (as it is unknown terrain) slightly dangerous to enter. The space imbues the experience with meaning in this situation: for the role the audience play in their encounter with the 'other', and for how they are seen responding to it.

Exhibition schedules can also make an impact on the way material is perceived and understood. The viewer is given the opportunity to experience work repeatedly, if they wish, by the duration of an exhibition: they know they have a

certain (finite) time⁸ to visit the exhibition and see the work. Despite 'obvious material impossibilities (museum closing times, geographical remoteness)'⁹ there are, mostly, procedures in place for public accessibility. Of course this is not always the case, as some exhibitions limit viewing opportunities despite having a schedule for opening to the public. The work may also be complex, or reliant on the viewer's prior experience of art to be understood. Circumstances beyond the control of the gallery may affect how an exhibition operates. An exhibition may rely on intervention by the artist, for example, such as one that is modified through performance. Scheduling is often challenged by technology, and limited viewing opportunity may be presented if the work, or equipment necessary to show the work, breaks down. But understanding is more achievable on the whole, when adequate time is given to observation and contemplation - it can render the spectacle more accessible. In an ideal situation the visitor is given the opportunity to spend hours looking at work in a gallery. They can also revisit the exhibition again and again until they have gathered all the information they need to help their understanding of the work's meaning. The work's context may disentangle over time in the mind of the viewer who takes up this opportunity; signification can be unraveled to become more apparent and comprehensible. Historic, well-known, and extensively shown art works are an example of how this can occur. Whether through repeated display, being published as reproduction, or being explained on gallery information panels, the exhibition piece is made 'available'. Content unravels in the mind of the viewer through this convention: it allows them to discover why it exists.

The dynamics of looking

The significance of why, and how we view art is key if we are to understand its purpose. The often complex and undulating relationship between artist, objects and audience is bound together by many variables that impact on how culture is communicated and understood. Despite personal backgrounds and political allegiances, we enter into a contractual process that instructs how we respond, and behave in this situation. To quote Kathy O'Dell, this contract is essentially concerned with 'the highly complex dynamic between artist and the audience.'¹⁰ This is informed by site and context and constructed around want and need, give and take, consideration and acknowledgement. Even though this contract is unwritten, it is nevertheless present: it puts in place mechanisms that dictate how we observe and are observed. It is concerned with responsibility and recognition, as established through relations between individuals and themselves, individuals and others, and individuals and intellectual taste. The audience are offered a culturally edifying and gratifying opportunity as recompense for taking part.

The individual's inherent interest and desire to examine the abilities of mankind allows this contract to exist. For without this, culture would lay unrepresented: there simply would be no need for it. In her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey cited Freud when she named the desire to look 'scopophilia'. Using Mulvey's suggestion that 'looking itself is a source of pleasure'¹¹ we can begin to understand why audiences choose to take part. There is satisfaction to be had in the 'omnipotence of the gaze'¹² that informs the scopophilic dynamic. Vision brings a type of hypnotic fascination: the spectator's desire to take part, and to be seen to take part in enrichment draws

them into the moment. In fact, *being seen* to take part can be as important to the person concerned as the one-way pursuit of scopophilia. A doubly pleasurable situation is offered: as acknowledgement is made that we have taken part, the immediate and self-possessing gratification of observing culture becomes more pronounced. If we take Martin Jay's idea that 'one of the most extraordinary aspects of vision...is the experience of being the object of the look'¹³ into account, we can perhaps see why this might be important to the culture-absorbing individual. The derived 'pleasure in being looked at'¹⁴ comes to be understood. The enjoyment gained heightens the power of the gaze in the reciprocal moment of voyeuristic exchange. This effectively recognises the partaking individual as being in possession of value and 'good taste'. This dynamic retains its significance whether the cultural experience is perceived as pleasurable or not. Indeed, in being seen to recognise and understand the variety of effects and sensations on offer, the individual demonstrates their level of cultural experience. They potentially show that they have acquired sufficient skills to be able to understand visual complexity and discord with clarity.

Not all cultural pursuits are offered as pleasurable encounters, and the opposite circumstance must also be considered. Whether agreeable or not, the culture-seeking individual is likely to come across work that tests their sensibilities and values on many levels. The experienced observer can gather gratification from being exposed to uncomfortable work for there is 'pleasure [to be had] in flinching.'¹⁵ Regardless of whether the result feels perverse or unsettling, when a person opts for a sensorial relationship with an art object, or art body, they make complicit their investment in the moment of the exchange.

However, there is always the option to walk away from something found to be too uncomfortable; this self-empowerment ultimately defends against any imposed harm being received against their will. The work begins to operate as a site of questioning if this rejection is made public.

Art communities and denunciation

'If something pollutes, it doesn't fit; if it doesn't pollute, it does fit.'¹⁶

To consider how an art audience might exist as a community, it is important to be aware of how majority consensus operates generally. Throughout history marginalised individuals and groups have fought for survival in societies and communities who mark them as 'other' or 'outcast'. In the dichotomy of difference that is established as 'them' versus 'us', communities use abjection and disgust as instruments of power to polarise those who are considered in possession of dubious social values. The result is that notions of correctness and propriety are used to assign and categorise individuals and societies into *types*.

For Michel Foucault, in every culture 'there is the pure experience of order and its modes of being'¹⁷ that designates where, and if, individuals belong. The group that comes together to be an art audience and exist as an art audience is no exception. The idea of community is 'potent in its own right to control or to stir men to action,'¹⁸ with the solidarity of the morally right seeking opportunity for their combined strength to be used as a weapon of purification. Art practice

deemed inappropriate or distasteful may receive majority audience condemnation in this situation. In publicly snubbing 'offensive art', a sense of moral magnitude becomes evident. Combined morality effectively proclaims the perpetrator to be exiled and marked as 'other'.

Using the exhibition *Disparities and Deformations: Our Grotesque*¹⁹ as an example, it becomes possible to see how art-viewing publics can become hostile when they believe a situation to not have their best interests in mind. This exhibition at SITE Santa Fe gallery included an exploded paper body sculpture by Tom Friedman, a candle made of beeswax and human hair by Robert Gober, Tony Oursler's video-sculpture 'Softy' of 2003, and the 1997 photograph 'Monster' by Douglas Gordon. It also included works by other well-known artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley, Sherrie Levine, Bruce Nauman and Jenny Saville. Somewhat akin to the effect of a familiar zombie movie, the exhibition had an overall feel of horror without actually being too horrific to look at. Just as if a scab had been scratched off the surface of pleasantness to reveal a grotesque and uncanny centre, the general sentiment was more 'sticky' than disturbing. Freud defined the uncanny as recollection of a familiar experience that is 'hidden and dangerous'²⁰ and this seemed an unsuitable response to this show. But despite the overall effect being quite mild, some members of the public still considered the show to be offensive; so offensive in fact that it provoked a campaign of protest. Hostility and outrage can often be the response to 'art [that] attempts to disrupt and transgress,'²¹ so perhaps this was always possible. The author of a letter to SITE Santa Fe gallery's board of trustees publicly asserted his right to speak out when he wrote 'the world does not need this exhibit...start focusing on art

and the environment and beauty.²² He wrote as the self-appointed voice of the membership of SITE Santa Fe gallery, believing there was a general sense of being besieged and affronted by the 'visual degradation' of the artworks on display in *Disparities and Deformations: Our Grottesque*. His letter was a vitriolic assault on the operations of the board of the gallery and its responsibility to the public, and as a SITE Santa Fe 'member' he believed this to be his right. Beyond subscription-bound gallery membership, there is often talk and public clamour founded on how taxpayers' monies are seemingly misspent on art. Acting as if they have sponsored the funded work directly from their wallets, the unified *right* in this situation publicly challenge what they see as viable use of 'their' money.

Being visibly other

Cultural structures that enlighten social interaction are assembled around knowledge, identity, and belonging. The artist opens up the opportunity for communal dialogue to do with the way of the world: the perceived essence of their job is to deliver stimulating material to the senses. But if they choose to question the socio-human condition through their work, the artist self-positions himself or herself as 'outside-other'.²³ They come to tangibly represent the visibly subversive. For Alan Read this is an inevitable result, for 'innovation is always contingent upon a boundary waiting to be transgressed'.²⁴

When an artist accepts that they are different²⁵ and 'other' they effectively opt into being visible by making and exhibiting work. For artwork is placed in the public domain for others to see, and the artist's name is associated with their

visual statement. The impact of this is variable, depending on the type of work the artist makes. The artist's reception may be informed by their conceptual and practical dexterity. If the work is celebrated as skilled, for example, it may be quite enjoyable for the artist to be considered as visible and 'other'. But if the contrary is true, the conspicuous individual may come to be selective about where, and effectively to whom, they show their work. In order to be productive in this situation the artist must make a commitment to their practice. The artist is better equipped to manage the social effects of the presupposition of difference by investing in their creativity. In effect, they are better placed to sustain their work if they accept this difference. If the artist struggles to come to terms with this, they may become self-conscious about their conspicuous status. The effect of this may see them begin to suppress creative output in order to negate any considerations of otherness. But there are also gender-specific considerations to take into account. For, having been positioned as other from birth, the decision a woman makes to be a conspicuous artist may appear rather puzzling. When it is recognised that the cultural other follows an often lonely and highly exposed path, this becomes even more so. The female artist is propelled into public consciousness to effectively intensify her marginalised status as woman. In short, it places her at the heart of mediation to become part of the spectacle. This does, however, allow stereotyped notions of woman as spectacle to be played with, for the female artist's visibility reminds us that women have a history of being observed.

Experiencing the live art body

The body presents a place where questions of subjectivity come to reside, and this sees it inform the spectatorial relationship forged between existing, living beings. Used to physically conduct our social presence, the body is the most proximate feature of the self, and for Michel Foucault this made it 'the inscribed surface of events.'²⁶ But occasions where another's body may be engaged in openly engaged ocular fascination do not present themselves too often in everyday life; live events, however, present us with the possibility of objectifying another person's body free of social constraint. Of course, when an artist positions their body as art, remorseless observation is perhaps an inevitable consequence, but restrictions on time to examine the work often makes this appear rather ruthless. For by being observable, and 'live', the body clearly states that the work is durational: a live body cannot lay, sit, stand, or make actions continuously and without a break for years at a time.

The very nature of the body being observable in performance sees a different type of encounter to that of viewing an inanimate art object potentially created. Unlike the object that is made available to the viewer through exhibition scheduling, the performing body may only be viewable at specific times. For live events that are 'scheduled' and programmed to happen at a certain time and in a given venue this is certainly the case. In contrast to the conventional exhibition or durational performance (which may last months or years) specific scheduling has a tendency to restrict viewing possibilities for this type of event. This ultimately limits how the work's content is made apparent. In effect the performance is marked by its 'non-availability.'²⁷ Deliberation and opportunities

for understanding become scheduled under the pressure of this constraint. The audience needs to recognise and acknowledge that the experience is momentary. Whether they are attentive to the short-lived experience or not, the realisation that they might not see the work again informs its perception. The encounter becomes bound around limitations in visibility. Even if the viewer attempts to see the body as an object, its presentation ultimately denies the usual conditions of visual exchange. It remains live despite any attempts to deal with it as if it were an inanimate art object.

Emotional responses to the experience of live art

The live spectacle tends to see the body devoured as an object, with little or no regard being given to what the performer is as an individual. Placed as an object, they are treated as an object. The audience's desire to view art is necessary to substantiate the practice as 'art', and the artist's body is necessary to make the contract in the viewing relationship possible. Yet despite this, there are circumstances where, perhaps not surprisingly, sympathetic audience responses can be seen to evidence compassion and a desire to care. We may hope to situate the body as an object, but as we can never fully remove the physical reference to ourselves, sympathy can often be an unexpected response to its situation. Recognition means that we are able to relate to the event: by imagining what it might be like to be looked at in this way we can understand the demands of the situation. The live art body represents the knowable and tangible. The fact that it is physically recognisable as similar to us sees it present an image of the potential existence of what it is to be

other. We relate to it on a more personal level; in turn this makes it possible to understand what it feels like to be socially outcast and different. Even if this sensation exists for only a moment, it gives an insight into what it is to be perceived as inferior, sub-human, and essentially animal.

Events where the body is subjected to physical duress, such as by being cut or encouraged to bleed, give an example of the potential dilemma performance work can present. The work of UK-based artists Ron Athey, Dominic Johnson (illustration 13), and Kira O'Reilly are examples of this type of live practice (illustration 14). Each of these artists undergoes protracted self-inflicted 'wounding'²⁸ in events where they may typically be seen cutting their flesh. These artists present their audience with a palpable dilemma: they have to wrestle with how any compassionate urges intersect (or in some cases interfere) with their desire to watch. Yet despite this type of outcome, the very fact that the event is 'art' sees this impact on the relationship it forges with the audience. The audience may stay in their seats, watching, devouring, and contemplating the art experience that is produced. A co-delegate and I discussed this peculiarity at a conference²⁹ hosted by New York University in 2007. In our conversation, she candidly talked of the upset she felt at witnessing Athey and Johnson's collaboration of 2007, *Incorruptible Flesh (Perpetual Wound)*. As she watched the cutting and bleeding take place, a desire to tend and care for the artists was elicited in her. Her contribution to the discussion was tempered by humour, as if she felt compelled to excuse her sympathetic response to the performance. She also offered a description of another audience member's response to counter that of her own. In doing this she recalled the differences in reaction she witnessed at points where one

might typically flinch, or feel uncomfortable. This seemed particularly pronounced at a point where one of the performers self-inflicted a long incision on his body. Expecting to have the difficulty of watching Johnson cut into his leg acknowledged, she looked to the woman beside her. But, instead of seeing a comparative reaction to the situation, the other woman looked unmoved. In acknowledging this difference, she felt isolated. Her emotional response to the event singled her out in her own mind from the rest of the audience.



13. Ron Athey & Dominic Johnson, *Incorruptible Flesh (Perpetual Wound)*, 2008 (performance documentation).



14. Kira O'Reilly, *Succour*, 2001 (performance documentation).

To consider why it might be an evocative site from which to produce art, it is useful to remember that 'everything symbolises the body, and so it is equally true that the body symbolises everything else.'³⁰ A range of responses can be seen in response to the symbolic body, varying between active and passive observation. But as the desire to care conflicts with the need to partake in

culture, the bleeding, dissected body appears as, and often remains as, a spectacle. In effect, this type of event is 'reduced to the strategy of a show.'³¹ This, however, is perhaps an inevitable conclusion as spectacle is considered 'carnival pleasure.'³²

The response to Athey and Johnson's work is perhaps typical of how audiences might be expected to behave. After all, an audience is made of individuals with different sensibilities and life knowledge that impacts on how they receive and process information. But, what the audience brings to the work can make an impact to such a degree that it becomes possible to witness a spectrum of reactions. Included in this, of course, are occasions where sympathy is supplanted by empathy, but this is often as the result of seeing less painful actions. Empathetic reactions to my performance 'Tonguing' (which is discussed in the previous chapter and described in appendix 2.b.) are evidence of this effect, as this work is capable of generating an involuntary reflex in the audience to mimic the action being seen and heard. An observer³³ of 'Tonguing' at the 2007 exhibition *Five Years* commented that she had been intuitively mirroring the performative sucking throughout. She went on to say that it was only at the point where an assistant handed her a sweet that she became aware of her empathetic engagement in the work. But, as all infant mammalian mouths are 'sympathetically triggered'³⁴ to suckle as a reflex, this is perhaps not too surprising. The sucking in 'Tonguing' seemed to re-awaken a primal impulse to suckle in the commenting observer, that intuitive mammalian trait that reminds us of our inherent animality.

Cleansing rituals

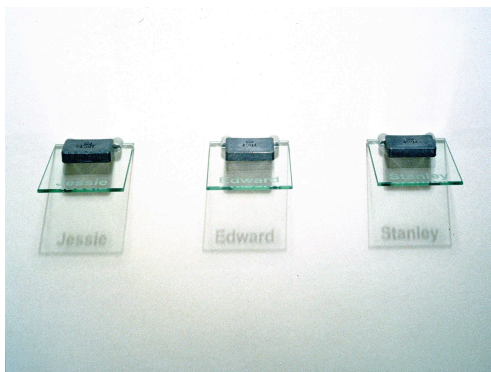
The body communicates what it is to be human and, when marked out on the body, rituals become symbolic of this reality. The customs we act out on a daily basis inform how we understand and relate to others. A dialogue is effectively established between self and other that is recognisable as *performative*.

*Performativity*³⁵ is defined as lawful cause and effect used for order, systems, and ideals: by being repeated, actions become performative. If we take Foucault's idea that representation is 'posited as a form of repetition,'³⁶ it becomes possible to see how performative actions make an impact on identity by being familiar. In this respect repetitive, performative rituals provide useful guidelines that assist how we negotiate our daily lives. Known, understood and lived from a personal perspective, they contribute to how we draw similarity from another's sense of physicality. The artist's body becomes usable as a site for performative dialogue precisely because it reflects what it is to *be* performative and alive. The live art body invites spectatorial engagement via the delivery and mediation of bodily rituals made public. Upon seeing a body act out a performative ritual, the viewer is potentially exposed to sympathetic or empathetic effect: the witness *feels* the experience because of marked corporeal knowledge of what it is to be alive.

Rituals are not only important for the regulation of self, but also of society. By the very fact that they legislate how the body performs in everyday situations, they can be used to inform correct behaviour. As 'squalor of any kind seems to us incompatible with civilisation,'³⁷ social demands to do with cleanliness are significant for rules that define inclusion. Because of this 'we are not surprised

if someone actually proposes the use of soap as a criterion of civilisation.’³⁸

Bearing this in mind it is perhaps not too surprising that some artists choose to incorporate the idea of cleansing, and what it is to be *seen* cleansing, into their work. Two examples of artists who have used the indelible link of soap to purification rituals are Patricia McKinnon-Day³⁹ (illustration 15) and Janine Antoni⁴⁰ (illustration 16). *Sovereign Gift*, by McKinnon-Day comprised one hundred cast soap bars produced in lead. Each bar was placed on a glass engraved soap ‘dish’. Antoni’s *Lick and Lather* consists of seven soap- and seven chocolate self-portraits, which are licked and lathered respectively throughout exhibition official openings.



15. Patricia McKinnon Day, *Sovereign Gift*, 2001.



16. Janine Antoni, *Lick and Lather*, 1993.

Washing the body is essentially seen as a purification ritual enacted onto the skin. Identity is worn on, and made visible to others via, the skin: we encounter representation at this surface. That encounters with others are informed and determined on the skin makes it a logical residence for any anxiety about

cleanliness. Consequently, it is possible to judge and be judged by how clean the skin appears through its sight and smell. There are, however, other occasions where washing is performed on the body to get rid of other types of 'dirt'. How the mouth becomes perceived as polite and clean, or impolite and filthy, from the way it speaks exemplifies this type of abstraction. Demonstrable as blasphemy and cursing, being 'foul-mouthed' can result in the threat of oral ritual cleansing. The result for the offending individual in this situation is that they may be offered a punishment of having their mouths literally washed out with soap. By cleaning the mouth of its verbal obscenities the implication is that the sensibilities of the individual will undergo the same fate. The idea of this happening is often enough to shock most violating mouths into obedience; fear of what it would be like to go through this experience curbs any desire to re-offend. The situation becomes potentially nightmarish as it appears as 'both a threat and a promise'.⁴¹ This strategy has proven particularly popular in the socialisation of children. As personal anecdote, I remember my grandmother would hold up a large pink block of gnarled, and cracked carboric soap⁴² as a warning that I would be punished if I dared utter what she considered profanity or bad language. This threat was an attempt to make civil the child she considered verbally unruly, but what it actually did was develop psychological anxiety associated with speech-acts and ritualistic punishment. It did not help that I saw her inflict this on an unfortunate cousin, who was traumatised into being polite as a result. That this experience was traumatic is perhaps no surprise, for a foreign object thrust into the body in this way not only *cleans*, but also *violates*. Penetration performed against the individual's will is problematic regardless of the type of orifice it is concerned with. In this situation the ritual becomes paradoxical: it serves as a purification technique for the perpetrator of

the action; it could be considered to represent a verbal rape by the individual inflicted by it. The result is that the deed becomes forever associated with the individual's mouth being subjected to infringement and torment. The torture inflicted to realign the wayward mouth becomes both violent and harmful. The recipient is left with a residual uncanny memory of the physical and psychological damage of the experience that evokes 'fear and dread.'⁴³

My public mouth washings

The result of 'symbolic patterns [being] worked out and publicly displayed'⁴⁴ on the body, sees ritual infrastructures being etched deeper. Laws that 'extend the demand for cleanliness to the human body'⁴⁵ attempt to tarnish the guilty with social embarrassment. Even if this is due to a momentary lapse in conduct, subject to their position,⁴⁶ the individual may be left feeling disgraced and vilified. Suffering is prolonged as the public wrongdoing consequently subjects the perpetrator to mockery and contempt. Whether they deserve it or not, fear and anxiety perpetuate and multiply around this type of individual, with the result that their increased stigmatisation marks them as exile.

Mouth washing is usually a private concern usually enforced as a punishment behind closed doors. The ritual ensures the individual who has their mouth washed feels humiliated: either at the self-realisation that they have done wrong, or as a consequence of the treatment they receive for it. But the ritual's resonance can be made visible and public when adopted as a construct of art

practice; the private conditions that inform enactment and reception are exposed to allow commentary on the inappropriateness of the action itself. The ritual begins to reference abjection as the boundary of the mouth is breached in a seemingly violent and jeopardising way. Confusion regarding demarcation between the inner and outer body allows this to fester according to the act's duration. Significance proliferates through the durational properties of the experience. The deed becomes questionable by being made observable, and in effect it becomes the antithesis of what it intended. In the end, meaning is transformed, as envisioned purification ultimately gives way to contravention.

The live art pieces 'Wash Your Mouth Out' (illustration 17) and 'Mouthings' (illustration 18) were constructed to make the provocatively anxious reality of oral cleansing visible and public through performance (see appendices 2.e. and 2.f. for descriptions of these works). However, they were performed in intimate settings in order to reference the private nature of this punishment inflicted on the verbally unruly and inappropriate mouth. The chosen sites were public toilets: paradoxical spaces where we publicly engage in private and personal activities. Public toilets are personal yet shared venues that see the individual confronted by their own physicality and inherent animality. We are aware of the public nature of these spaces, and that others can see and hear us when we use them. Subsequently, bodily deliveries become reserved, quiet, and essentially as private an experience as is manageable. Indeed, being seen to display correct human behaviour in these repositories for digestive waste often becomes of paramount importance to the potentially apprehensive user. If we take Ricky Emanuel's idea that anxiety is a 'response to some as yet unrecognised factor, either in the environment or in the self'⁴⁷ it is possible to

comprehend why doubt and disquiet arise. The uncertainty of not knowing what lies beyond, or outside proven circumstances can make the experience uncanny and concomitantly fearful. Once infected by anxiety it is often difficult to be rid of its burden.



17. Angela Bartram, *Wash Your Mouth Out*, 2004 (performance documentation; venue: 291 Gallery, London).



18. Angela Bartram, *Mouthings*, 2005 (performance documentation; event and venue: National Review of Live Art, The Arches, Glasgow).

The function of public toilets (and the fact that they are 'public') makes the already tense situation for users all the greater when they are used as a place for live art. This occurs by building on existing user apprehension levels, and by reflecting and impacting on how others interact and relate when performing their own private acts in communal areas. Finding an artist in such a space may also raise questions about their status and raise considerations regarding how they and their work should be perceived. In both 'Wash Your Mouth Out' and 'Mouthings', the audience were confronted with a woman undergoing self-inflicted public mouth washing. Here, the unsuspecting audience were not only faced with the rather unusual action of a woman washing her mouth out with soap in the sink area of the public toilets, but they were also made potentially more aware of their own physicality and concerned behaviour because of this

occurrence. The fact that I could see them in the mirror as they used the sinks compounded their apprehension further. The awareness of their own visibility heightened their response to the event and laid siege to their sensibilities: they were acknowledged as complicit by meeting my reflection in the mirror. For by giving improper consideration to the awkwardness of this delivery, the audience unwittingly (and perhaps unwillingly) took part in the event. An effect was produced in these works by the nature of the site and its intended use, and from the watchful, and increasingly more self-aware co-user. The private was made public through site and deed: as they wrestled with their own anxiety, behaviour, and visible social status, the conflict for the audience was to do with being in the right place at the wrong time.

The chosen site essentially left a question as to the absolute nature of the event. Several factors contributed to the perception of both works as live art: both were scheduled in spaces adjacent to traditional exhibition, or live art spaces; for 'Wash Your Mouth Out' an Australian man clearly narrated the event as it was happening, suggesting the audience could leave when "she says it's over"; the large public toilets at the National Review of Live Art allowed a crowd to gather to witness 'Mouthings' - in fact some sat on chairs as if watching a theatrical play. But the ambiguity of the use of the space essentially manifested disbelief in those that encountered the event beyond the confines of the actual happening. Essentially, hearsay and aftermath became the information from which to extract judgment.

The performance of 'Mouthings' at the National Review of Live Art in 2005 brought forth a range of responses regarding the perception of artwork in public spaces. The work took place in both sets of gendered toilets in the performance venue; yet despite being 'scheduled' to happen in a venue devoted in its entirety to a live art platform, problems arose over my use of the men's toilets. Although the venue's management was aware of the work's content and installation properties, they had neglected to inform those handling the day-to-day running of the event. This resulted in one mouth washing being stopped by a cloakroom attendant, and a janitor initiating a 'clean-up' of what they considered to be performance detritus. The site's obligation to the public as a convenience for the delivery of bodily matter seemed to make its use as an art site rather bewildering, and without seeing the performance in action, this was impossible to abate.

The toilet also became a site of protest for a cleaner at the National Review of Live Art who cleared the space of what she considered to be art debris. In fact, it was only when she saw a belated email giving instructions to leave certain things in place that she became aware of her error. The fact that she had merely cleared away mess produced through general use of the toilets, and not through the performance, was lost on her until this was made apparent. Confusion was created because she was not aware of what had, and had not been used in the performance. Uncertain, she assumed that the mess in the toilet was part of the work. But what her vigilance effectively did was see her vicariously take part in the event long after it was over. The consequence of this saw her involvement become newsworthy public property⁴⁸, which included exposure in the UK's Independent newspaper⁴⁹ (illustration 19). In initiating this

coverage, the cleaner created the potential for vicarious response to the work by making it available for comprehension and visualisation in the minds of others. From the outset misrepresentation was made in the press, and this effectively changed the rendition and meaning of the work for those encountering it second-hand. Informed by their versions, any chance of understanding the original intention was rendered impotent. It could only be fathomed and visualised at this point through imagination and a projected sense of what did, or perhaps should have happened. But, inevitably, this saw the work reach individuals who had never met me performing in a toilet space. The breadth of the audience was expanded considerably through this involvement. Through the eyes of the press and the cleaner, readers became distantly involved in how the work would be remembered.

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Thursday 17 February 2005

Artist's lavatorial display does not wash with gallery's cleaner

ARTISTS OFTEN complain of being misunderstood but few have had to suffer the indignity of having their work scrubbed from the face of the earth before they had finished it.

Angela Bartram's attempts to force her audience into contact with the "dysfunctional and impolite uses of the mouth" were lost on the cleaning staff of one of Glasgow's exhibition galleries.

For hours the Nottingham artist spat, dribbled, licked, choked and chewed soap in front of a live audience in a series of bizarre rituals intended to "play on personal parameters of what is safe and comfortable".

Unfortunately, when the cleaners at the Arches - an exhibition space beneath Central Station in Glasgow - arrived for work last Friday they were less than impressed.

Furious to discover the mess the women's toilets had been left in following

BY PAUL KELBIE
Scotland Correspondent

the previous night's National Review of Live Art (NRLA) events, nobody noticed it was a work of art in progress.

There was soap stuck to the walls and sink counters, tissue paper pulled out and scattered about the floor and stickers all over the walls and cubicles.

Only after an hour and a half's work was the space looking passable again and the head cleaner, enraged, sat down at her computer to let her boss know exactly what had been going on.

Unfortunately for Georgie Fowler, the cleaning and services manager, the first e-mail she opened was from a member of staff on behalf of the NRLA, asking her politely not to remove the artwork in the toilets.

"I was really shocked, I just thought 'what have I done!'", said Mrs Fowler, who has worked at the

Arches for four years.

As part of the NRLA, Europe's longest-running festival of live art, Bartram had wanted to perform her work in the Arches venue itself but concerns for health and safety meant that she was relocated to the toilets.

Bartram, whose previous work has involved her kissing an Alsatian dog on the mouth - titled *For Kiss* - and an inverted toy bird called *Inside Out Parrot*, says she draws influences from the human figure, emotions and comedy.

Her website says her work "utilises notions of feminine, cultural and physical transgressions".

Kirstin Innes, spokeswoman for the Arches, said the cleaner had simply made an honest mistake.

"Fortunately everybody has seen the funny side and Angela has said it was an interesting show and that there was no harm done."

Ms Innes said the incident was in no way an indication of the Arches' attitude towards the work or the artist.

"I thought it was a joke or something. I didn't think it was art - so I threw it in the bin," said Mrs Fowler.

This is not the first time an artist has suffered the indignity of having their work mistaken for garbage. A bag of rubbish which formed part of a Gustav Metzger work which was said to demonstrate the "finite existence" of art was thrown away by a cleaner at Tate Britain in London last year while in 2001 a Damien Hirst installation was mistaken for trash by a cleaner at London's Eyestorm Gallery.

Yesterday, Gillian McCormack, a spokeswoman for the NRLA's organisers, said the artist had not complained.

"The installation was due to be cleaned up the next day anyway so it's not as if a permanent exhibit has been destroyed," she said.



Georgie Fowler was shocked when she realised that she and the cleaners had thrown the artwork in the bin

19. Kelbie, Paul. 'Artist's Lavatorial Display Does Not Wash With Gallery's Cleaner', *The Independent*, 17 February 2005, p. 22.

Notes to chapter 2

- ¹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception*, (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 13.
- ² O'Dell, Kathy. *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970's*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 33.
- ³ Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 13.
- ⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (London, Methuen, 1958), p. 231.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 321.
- ⁶ Baker, Steve. *The Postmodern Animal*, (London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 2000), p. 9.
- ⁷ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception*, (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 17.
- ⁸ As a guide I refer to the standard municipal timeframe of an average of four-six weeks.
- ⁹ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, Trans. Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods, (Dijon, Les Presses Du Reel, 2002), p. 29.
- ¹⁰ O'Dell, Kathy. *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970's*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 2.
- ¹¹ Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989), P. 8.
- ¹² Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Trans. Gillian C. Gill, (Ithaca New York, Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 47.
- ¹³ Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*, (London, University of California Press, 1994), p. 11.
- ¹⁴ Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989), p. 8.
- ¹⁵ Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (London, Penguin, 2003), p. 37.
- ¹⁶ Miller, William I. *The Anatomy of Disgust*, (London, Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 44.
- ¹⁷ Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2002), p. xxiii.
- ¹⁸ Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 141.
- ¹⁹ The exhibition 'Disparities and Deformations: Our Grotesque' curated by Robert Storr was held at SITE Santa Fe Gallery, New Mexico, 18th July 2004 to 09th January 2005.
- ²⁰ Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*, Trans. David McLintock, (London, Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), p. 134.
- ²¹ Erickson, Jon. *The Fate of the Object*, (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 12.
- ²² Executive Director Charles A. Stainback received an anonymous letter that contained this protestation from a board member of SITE Santa Fe. The quote is taken from his introductory text to the accompanying catalogue (source: King, Sarah S, (Ed.)). *Disparities and Deformations: Our Grotesque*, (Santa Fe, SITE Santa Fe, 2004), p. 7.).
- ²³ Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996), p. 177.
- ²⁴ Read, Alan. *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 6.
- ²⁵ Difference in this situation pertains to art and audience relations, and not physical, racial or socio-economic status.
- ²⁶ Foucault, Michel. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, (Ithaca New York, Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 148.
- ²⁷ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, Trans. Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods, (Dijon, Les Presses Du Reel, 2002), p. 29.
- ²⁸ In an informal conversation that took place between us on 22nd June 2008, Dominic Johnson used the term 'wounding' to describe the body cutting that takes place in his work. In this context, the term is used in relation to how

these artists perceive their work. Although any religious connotation of the term is acknowledged, it is not the objective for its use in this research.

²⁹ The conference was *PSI#13: Happening/Performance/Event*. I gave a paper entitled 'Working With the Mouth: Art, abjection, and working on thresholds' as part of the conference.

³⁰ Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 151.

³¹ Watkins, Jonathan & Kermode, Deborah, (Eds.). *Oleg Kulik: Art Animal*, (Manchester, Cornerhouse Publications, 2001), p. 8.

³² Stoekl, Allan, (Ed.). *Georges Bataille: Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, Theory and History of Literature Vol. 14, Trans. Allan Stoekl, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 53.

³³ Clair Chinnery (of Oxford Brookes University) informally gave this verbal comment.

³⁴ Miller, William I. *The Anatomy of Disgust*, (London, Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 81.

³⁵ Despite the heritage of performativity being in speech/act utterances (as typically used by the theorists John. L. Austin and Judith Butler), the term is used in this thesis in relation to cause and effect on the body. As such, it is more in line with Peggy Phelan's bodily-based theories of performativity in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, (London, Routledge, 1993).

³⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2002), p. 19.

³⁷ Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Trans. David McLintock, (London, Penguin, 2002), p. 30.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ McKinnon-Day, Patricia. *Naked Spaces*, (Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham). 'Sovereign Gift' was shown in the exhibition *Naked Spaces* at Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, between 8th September and 24th October 2001. The piece was originally commissioned by Oriel Mostyn Gallery, Wales.

⁴⁰ Antoni, Janine. *Lick and Lather*, (Luhring Augustine, New York).

⁴¹ Hurley, Kelly. *The Gothic Body*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 4.

⁴² Carboloc was a hard, low-cost household soap that contained carboloc acid. It was used extensively in hospitals and places where hygiene was considered paramount, and was also considered an antiseptic. Readily available from hardware stores, it was also commonly used in the mid-twentieth century house. Uses included washing the body, the hair, clothing, and the home. Carboloc is still available through mail order (source: Carboloc Soap Co. World Wide Web, <http://www.carbolocsoap.com/>, (accessed 28 June 2006)).

⁴³ Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*, Trans. David McLintock, (London, Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), p. 123.

⁴⁴ Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 3.

⁴⁵ Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Trans. David McLintock, (London, Penguin, 2002), p. 30.

⁴⁶ It is acknowledged that this may be a perfectly acceptable, and potentially enjoyable situation for some.

⁴⁷ Emanuel, Ricky. *Ideas in Psychoanalysis: Anxiety*, (Cambridge, Icon Books Ltd, 2000), p. 6.

⁴⁸ Over five days the newsworthy status of this story grew in impetus. Initially, a journalist working for the Scotsman newspaper contacted me (appendix 6). Interest in the story grew to national level, despite the fact I had made no comment.

⁴⁹ Kelbie, Paul. 'Artist's Lavatorial Display Does Not Wash With Gallery's Cleaner', *The Independent*, 17 February 2005, p. 22.

3. Between art and audience: the impact of site and body

Our relationship to the artist's body is informed by the conventions of the site, and its proximity to others within that site. For some sites allow sufficient space to be created between viewed, and viewing bodies. This space separates and demarcates the observer from the observed: it acknowledges both positions, and keeps them apart. But this viewing dynamic can be made to feel unstable when small, confined or transitory sites are used for performance. By locating work in different, unusual spaces like these, the viewer's experience has the potential to feel more intimate and involved. This may make them feel as if they have participated in the event. This chapter looks at the potential impact of such an experience.

The impact of site

It is important to be aware of the significance an exhibition site can bring if we are to contemplate responses to visual material effectively. The inherent features provided by a site impact on how we receive and process information

placed within it. It is possible to see how this might work by taking the model of the museum, or gallery exhibition space as an example. Inscribed with conventions that facilitate viewing, these types of spaces allow the viewer to focus on the artwork. They may discover the work's meaning with greater ease as a result. These spaces are organised by conventions that allow 'pondering' time, and this helps meaning to unravel and evolve in the mind of the viewer. When it is considered that these spaces are specifically built to facilitate viewing, it becomes possible to see how alternative spaces might function differently. For the prescribed use of a space will impact on how objects, or bodies exist within it. In considering how a corridor functions for example, it is possible to understand the impact site makes on artwork. As corridors are not essentially built for reflection, but movement, the viewer may feel awkward about being seen to inhabit this type of site for too long. It simply might not feel appropriate to be seen looking at art for too long in this type of unconventional exhibition space. They may feel uncomfortable looking at artwork sited there as a result. As observation is made awkward by the denial of reflective 'space' this example demonstrates how site can destabilise relational values. Artistic creation that denies reflection becomes, for the philosopher Alain Badiou, immediate and 'inaesthetic'.¹ Knowledge, for Badiou, is gained from the moment of non-reflective immediacy; the integral situation and site is implicated in how this is received and determined. When the constraints of the site deny the opportunity to reflect on the artwork's intent in relative isolation, viewing dynamics can become unsteady. The identity of the space in this instance is specific to our comprehension.

The validity of site-specific work relies upon inherent spatial identities and properties being recognised, known and understood. The accumulated social, economic, and political investments of the space are brought to bear upon the context of visual work that integrates its architectural physicality. The architecture brings its many-layered histories to the intent and mediation of the artwork, with which it has entered into a dialectical relationship. This brings such purpose to knowledge formulation that deliberation must be given to any probable influence. Ultimately, this means that site-specific work cannot be shown in any location. In quoting Susan Hapgood's *Remaking Art History*, Miwon Kwon suggested by way of explaining this that the term site-specific means 'moveable under the right circumstances.'² But, if location is such an authoritative influence on how site-specific work is understood, what reciprocal effect might its placement have on the actual building or place? In his essay *Taking Place*, Andrew Quick discussed how site-specificity 'insinuates a performative disruption into particular architectural and visual formations'³ to necessitate a temporary destabilisation of the context of the site being used. Quick's 'performative disruption' is the result of expectations of the traditional and expected being altered through our recognition, and negotiation of difference. For Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, difference is an essential determinant in the development of spatial identities. Lefebvre's idea infuses the non-traditional space with value, for 'a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences.'⁴ What these diverse and *new* venues elicit is a 're (dis)covery of minor places'⁵ initiated by the attention the art spectacle commands; for the time the site is used as a specific space for spectacle its status and value are changed. But the distinction of the space feeling 'new' may be lost if it continued to show artwork. The inevitable

outcome of this would see it accepted into conventional, and mainstream systems. All venues require interrogation, irrespective of whether they are considered 'old' or 'new', and transition to mainstream frameworks is made smoother because of this similarity.

Considering the idea of 'new' places further, it is plausible to imagine that they may also appear 'wrong': by giving attention to spectacle, the site may feel 'wrong' because it is different. The experience for the viewer may become infused with questions of proximity, worth, and association; they may begin to question the value of work placed there. The challenge this can present to any acquisition of knowledge may lead to the experience feeling unpleasant but, 'whether we enjoy it or not, we are culturally and economically rewarded for enduring the wrong place.'⁶

Relating to the site-specific live art body

The transformation and reconfiguration that specific sites bring to an artwork can often present an uneasy encounter for even the most experienced art viewer. When the architectural properties of the exhibition site are used as an integral construction of the artwork to render it site-specific, mediation and comprehension can be disrupted and challenged. This effect is intensified when a live body is introduced into the configuration.

To position a body in a given space is to specify when, and how, an event should be witnessed. The observation is defined by time and place. For the moment of delivery the live, site-specific body impacts on the concrete and stable boundaries of the architectural environment. In this situation structural parameters can be considered moveable and re-definable. They become (in the short term) unfixed and indeterminate. Spatial existence may become briefly distorted by the introduction of live physicality; the environment may feel charged in the moment that the live body is positioned for analysis. This effect can create palpable consequences for the audience. Drawn into immediacy and intimacy with the live body, thoughts are agitated when sensory relations are known and acknowledged. The living, breathing art body placed as spectacle can necessitate a momentary interruption into spatial and viewing dynamics. This may disarm the audience as 'being live displaces, if only for an instant, the constellations that bind knowledge and representation together.'⁷ In recognising physical representation as alike to self in this situation, the gaze of the viewer may become arrested. The result can see the audience held captive in the moment.

Spectatorial engagement with the live art body can see audiences made visible. Live art is essentially characterised as a medium 'in which the artist's body is intimately implicated in the scene and in which the spectator bears a present complicity in the act.'⁸ The visual exchange, and acknowledgement of that exchange, may solicit the spectator into the core praxis of the work. Their involvement becomes potent: their presence necessary. For Antonin Artaud this means a 'direct communication will be established between the spectator and the spectacle.'⁹ The result may only be transitory, but nevertheless it is an

encounter where the 'performing' and 'viewing' live bodies can concede each other's physicality through visual interpolation. Relational uncertainty may result from the energised nature of this spectacle: roles and rules are potentially made indeterminate if the viewer, even if only briefly, becomes involved. The space may be made to feel temporarily distinct by the energy of the reciprocal acknowledgement it contains. If the space in question is a gallery or museum, this, in turn, allows the viewer to believe that the event might be art. The conventions of the site allow the event to be situated in this way, for we know that we are likely to encounter art in galleries and museums. Conversely, if the space is an unusual, or unexpected art site, temporary significance may be bestowed upon it by the impact this acknowledgement creates.

Being in the wrong place at the right time

The echoes between space and action are vital components for the subtle interrogation of how the performative body operates, as site-specific codes inform the relationship of subjective boundaries. Place and situation inform the sensorial conversation between live action, or intervention, and viewer. There are potential implications for the audience who have encountered art in a space they perceive as 'wrong'. The live work in this study has been situated in gallery doorways, toilets, cafes, and corridors: 'wrong places', adjacent to the main exhibiting framework, but just outside of it. Portals used to get from one place to another, from one position to another, or in the case of public toilets, from one bodily state to another.

'In-between' spaces are congested zones imbued with behavioral rules and meaning. In spite of their derivation, they are transitional gateways to another encounter or sense of being. In defining the margins of other spaces, a threshold 'can take on no certain character of its own.'¹⁰ Simultaneous points of departure and entry, corridors and thresholds are considered passing, 'forgotten'¹¹ places.

Halfway points are by their nature designed to facilitate movement and transition. When considered as gateways, and between places, a potential is created for the human mouth and architectural doorway to appear cross-referential. Agape and open, doorways reference the mouth both in physicality and suggestion: they can be regarded as a breach in a boundary; they are simultaneously access and exit points. Corridors are thin, 'veined' channels where bodily interaction with others becomes possible. The structural design and scale of doorways and corridors means they are capable of necessitating (even if fleetingly) close contact with others. By their design they deny comfortable stasis: built to facilitate movement they may make the individual who dwells too long feel awkward. The usual long and thin layout of corridors, and the 'hole-in-the-wall' nature of doorways means that they are not built as spaces for reflective contemplation. As such, their spatial configurations contradict the mechanisms that are perhaps perceived as normal for comfortable cultural encounters. In short, they are not built that way. An intermediary state may be directly imposed on visual practice placed in such sites because of this; their integral physicality becomes a reference within the work.

The viewer may feel apprehensive about how to negotiate a place they consider as 'wrong' or 'new'. Unsure of their negotiable position, the viewer may experience disquieted confusion in such sites. Perhaps negotiable trepidation is fathomable if the relational proximities given to traditional exhibits are taken into account; potential anxiety can often be alleviated if the viewer is given adequate space in which to establish their relationship to art. A greater objectification of the sensorial experience can be delivered through maintained personal space, but physically confined architecture often denies the opportunity for this; confined spaces often necessitate that we enter into close physical contact with others. Even if only temporarily. In reducing the prescribed viewing distance and spatial position to others necessary to perhaps feel secure, small and transitory spaces can produce anxiety in those who linger too long. The result may be that a situation is created where individuals become unsure of how to relate to, and negotiate from, the scene before them, and beside them. A negotiation of self to others, as well as of the overall art experience, becomes necessary for the individual confronted with their own physicality in relation to the event. Reminiscent perhaps of travelling on a packed tube train or bus with strangers, any manifestation of unease is informed by how we negotiate other bodies close by. The fear is often associated with the fact that they appear so close that they might touch, or encroach upon the self.

The individual who lingers in confined or transitory spaces for too long may begin to feel self-aware and conspicuous as a consequence. They may begin to appear unsure of their own physicality and visibility in relation to others around them. This encounter may essentially feel uncomfortable. In this

situation, unrest may infect the individual to such a degree that they begin to exhibit effects akin to mild claustrophobia: they may appear slightly stifled, or heated by their disagreeable experience. It is this momentary transformation of audience experience that temporarily modifies perceptions of what the space is. This dialectical relation between audience, artwork and place creates, in Lefebvre's sense, a new place by making difference visible and knowable. It does this unconsciously and without calculation, hence the visceral nature of the response.

Meeting in the space of observation

Occasionally stepping into unfamiliar cultural territory is perhaps important for self-development. This idea is relevant to spaces and bodies alike, because for a new perception of place or cultural position to emerge, challenges to existing preconceptions need to be made. For contravention of familiar orders and systems gives ungoverned access to other possibilities and ways of being. Culture is as receptive to this as any other existing structure or mode of being, and is developed through the transgressions it encounters. In challenging what is an acceptable space, action, or context, artists create initiatives that ensure culture continues to progress.

The contract that exists between art and its viewer dwells in the space where mediation occurs and knowledge is acquired. The space of mediation resides between the polarities of observer and observed, and is kept intact by

prohibitive resistance. Resistance makes this space feel like a virtual no-man's-land: known positions are enforced in the relationship between art and its viewer when this divide is maintained. The polarised spectatorial relationship may collapse if either party steps into this space. Even if only for a moment, this effects a change in how observer and observed relate to one another. A process that shifts sensibilities from 'artist to audience, from object to process, from production to reception'¹² is set in motion. The rules that normally constitute the viewing contract can be rendered destabilised and uncertain as a consequence. The impact of this may see spectatorial relations left momentarily unknown. The viewer may develop the potential to feel anxious in this situation, as they negotiate how to respond and behave.

When polarised relations collide 'nothing stands between spectator and performer.'¹³ A new 'halfway' zone is the result of this collision, where previous relational opposites publicly meet. It appears as if magnetic polarities have become confused, and lost their sense of oppositional place. This makes previously accepted roles and rules irrelevant. Disintegration of the spatial conditions in place for spectatorship allows 'an interlacing of the visible and invisible'¹⁴ to be made evident. The spectator, now placed at the core of the experience by being made visible, is 'engulfed and physically affected'¹⁵ by it. The instability of this situation produces what Foucault referred to as the 'arrested gesture'¹⁶ of the gaze. They come to realise that they are not only a partaker of the experience, but that they are *integral* to it.

The viewer has the opportunity to reassess the situation in the moment they recognise they have been included in the artwork. This reassessment allows them to establish what their new role is. For when they are placed in the visual foreground their role is made active: they are (re) engaged, (re) sensitised, and (re) positioned by their acknowledgment that they have been made visible. It is the point at which meaning can feel at its most potent. This effect can become intensified if the artwork includes a live body. The physical presence of the live body in art sees this acknowledgement reciprocated: both parties are aware that the other is now involved. This can effectively inform the overall experience and become an integral part of the event. When the gaze is met and returned between viewing and viewed bodies, the exchange may constitute momentary interaction. The acceptance that both parties see and are seen by their 'relational other' informs how intense, and tense, this situation ultimately feels.

There are other devices beyond the use of the live body that can be employed to create a situation that involves the viewer. The artist may issue an invitation for the viewer to trespass the spectatorial space, the 'no-man's-land' that separates self and art. But, for this to work effectively, the artist must use directed and strategic techniques as part of their work. The previously discussed live work 'Tonguing' in this study is an example of how this can operate. This work issued an invitation for the audience to suck. Assistants, who passed among the audience during the performance, made this invitation on my behalf; they did this by offering them 'suck it' inscribed sweets from palm-sized, white, circular bowls.¹⁷ This action created an opportunity for the audience to recognise their part in the event, for by sucking, and consuming the sweets, they engaged in unspoken and communal dialogue with the work.

Acceptance of this offer effectively presented an opportunity for the audience to be involved. From the moment they delved into the sweet bowl, they became compliant with and complicit in the event. This had a direct impact on the spectatorial space between observer and observed, and the relational experience within that space. The spectatorial space between the work and the audience temporarily dissolved in the moment of communal sucking. The memory of past tonguing pleasures was perhaps brought to the fore for the audience, of childhood days at the seaside getting sticky from sucking on rock candy, of the pleasures of the oral long since reined in by age and etiquette. Comments supporting this theory have been written in texts submitted by witnesses who have documented this work. The audible and visible contribution of 'group sucking and tonguing'¹⁸ has been supplied as evidence of how the audience have communally engaged. Group sucking allowed, if only for a moment, all parties in the space to perform simultaneously.

The sense of being a (temporary) community brought on by group sucking was potentially heightened through the demands of the sites chosen for the work. 'Tonguing' has been performed in highly trafficked public areas such as gallery corridors,¹⁹ foyers,²⁰ and gateways to other exhibition areas.²¹ The layout and use of these spaces meant that users were placed in close proximity to others from the outset. The audience were put in a position where they had to get close to the performance and other audience members in order to see the action. Tight restrictions, and others moving through the space in order to get to and from one place to another, meant contact was often inevitable. This had to be accepted if the performance was to be watched in these spaces; acceptance gave the potential for inclusion and being complicit. By watching

the work in spaces that conceivably felt awkward, the audience, perhaps unwittingly, accepted their role within its construction.

Watching and being watched

Having spent several years working as a gallery invigilator I became curious about how others respond to art, and what they say about it as a consequence. Gallery invigilation is an oddly dichotomous role that requires the individual to be visibly passive whilst simultaneously watchfully active. The passive policing of invigilation works on the idea that 'absence is a structure of being-there.'²² Performed correctly, it helps prevent artworks being touched, in whatever way this may be, by members of the public. But to do this effectively, the invigilator must inhabit a kind of *non*-state, as they must observe without impacting on the experience of others. In doing this, however passively, their presence is placed in relation to the artwork. Situated in the shadows of the artwork on display, the invigilator vicariously takes part in the experience without (ideally) leaving an impression upon it.

The mechanisms that formulate the *non*-state that the invigilator ideally inhabits are potential strategies for the artist to investigate when considering how to involve the audience in their work. They present great interest if used as methods to gain knowledge of how work communicates to others, as they allow observations to be made discretely. Yet, however curious the artist may be, it is rarely the intention that they will seek to become the observer of others viewing their artwork. It is necessary to be objective and honest about others'

observations for this to be effective. This process may make the personally invested artist anxious about the results. Negative and positive responses may be witnessed through this process, and the former can often disarm and debilitate the individual concerned. But however insufferable the situation may feel, it can prove profitable to inhabit this *non*-state: for it is from this point that developments in criticality can be built. To use this method successfully, the artist must become desensitised and detached; this allows the artist to potentially be both objective and protected against personal upset.

The benefits of watching how others view work can bring inspiration and understanding for the artist. There is, however, the potential for this to go wrong if the viewer realises they are being watched. On discovering that they are unwittingly (and perhaps unwillingly) caught up in the moment as a focus for observation, the viewer may feel unsettled. A difficult and rather uncomfortable experience may arise from the acknowledgement that they are being watched, with the result that visibility can transform into vulnerability. Their body, now the subject of another's ocular fascination, may consequently suffer shame and embarrassment. Brought on by a reaction to scopophilia, as that concerned with seeing and being seen, shame 'realises an intimate relation of myself to myself.'²³ At the moment that visual reciprocity is witnessed, any pleasure derived from looking is essentially negated by the fear of being 'looked at'. Scopophilia is here supplanted by scopophobia through the experience of shame. Scopophobia may then incite a reflex in the vulnerable individual to flee the situation responsible, but this can be difficult to achieve once caught up in the dynamic. Scopophobia can bind the individual to the scene they find uncomfortable by inducing what Bataille called 'impotent

horror.'²⁴ When this is in effect, the individual may feel as if they are unable to move to safety. Therefore, they are left to suffer as a captive of their despair.

The sensibilities of artist and audience are both challenged in the situation where scopophilia gives way to scopophobia, and this presents a challenge to both parties. The artist as 'polluter becomes the doubly wicked object of reprobation, first because he crossed the line and second because he endangered others.'²⁵ The spectator becomes arrested and disabled by the power of the moment. Despite their individual positions within the spectatorial relationship, both may believe that their experiences are alike: the artist who invites the viewer into a scopophobic relationship asks for their intent to be felt; the viewer who agrees to partake of the experience is given the opportunity to understand that intent. This situation sees relational boundaries between subject and viewer breached. Even though momentary, the effect of this sees individual contributions to the situation potentially rendered uncertain. When this occurs, the subject and the viewer are enmeshed in the spectatorial 'no-man's-land' created between action and sense. For the audience there is no reward other than the pleasure of the experience. The aftermath of scopophobia, however, may result in anger for which the artist is held responsible. For daring to subject their audience to a reciprocal gaze, the artist's polluting potential becomes realised and actualised. They are potentially left with susceptibility as a result of their accountability.

Others who watch: witnesses and documentation beyond the camera

Recording another's mediatory experience can be difficult to get right beyond the immediacy of the eye. The accounts of witnesses can be beneficial to the artist who wishes to understand the true effect of their work because of this. Image capture equipment (such as video and still cameras) tends to invade the experience of mediation by visibly demonstrating to the audience that they are being recorded and watched. The problem may be to do with the fact that as audiences become aware of their visibility in front of the camera they begin to publicly act out social anxiety.²⁶ Defined by Stanley Rachman as 'the apprehensiveness that people feel when entering novel or troublesome social situations,'²⁷ social anxiety is typically noticeable 'as a reluctance or inability to speak in public, stage fright, an inability to write or eat in public, excessive blushing, sweating or trembling in public.'²⁸ When made aware of their visibility in front of the camera, the audience may suppress the manifestations of social anxiety in order to control the experience and maintain how they appear socially. Managing the situation in this way allows them to *perform* a neutral and indifferent self to the camera. But this type of reaction is not necessarily conducive to providing a true reflection of what is taking place. This is when it is useful to consider other options for documenting an event.

The viewer may feel cautious about continuing their engagement with spectatorship if they become aware that they are being observed. When the viewer realises that this is happening, by seeing a camera pointed at them or by meeting the gaze of the artist, they can become hostile to the situation. In fact, the viewer may feel that their relationship with the artwork concerned has been made restrictive and untrustworthy as a consequence. The besieged

audience may feel that the artist has acted irresponsibly by subjecting them to exposure, and that they have been lured into a trap. So how might an artist observe their observers without this happening? There are other, less obvious individuals than the artist concerned who can be used to inhabit a watchful position. These individuals can act like an inconspicuous observational eye on proceedings. When placed as an integral part of the audience they appear as one of them, and their presence can be ignored. Even though the artist may have asked them to witness proceedings, their status as audience member places them in an ideal position to absorb the effect of the work on others. Similar to adopting the sense of *non*-state inhabited by an invigilator, these 'witnesses' can be positioned to wander freely between observational points. Because of their relationship to other audience members and to the artist who has placed them there, witnesses are ideally placed to make commentary on the full spectrum of an artwork, from production to reception.

Janet Wolff described the flâneur (from the perspective of Walter Benjamin) as an individual that typically moves about 'observing and being observed.'²⁹ The acknowledged likeness, both physically and, perhaps, socially of the human body to others in this situation presents the flâneur with the possibility of making clear and unencumbered observations. An event witness can adopt the sensibilities of the flâneur when placed as part of the audience; they become an intermediary capable of using unobtrusive documentary tactics to gather event specifics. The live performances of 'Tonguing' (and its adaptation 'Tonguings', which was performed to an audience of one) demonstrates how this approach can operate, as witnessing individuals were used to document all aspects of the work from performative action to audience understanding. Asked

to exist like flâneurs in this undertaking, they moved between their roles as artist's documenter and audience member. The passive, unassuming nature they portrayed to other audience members in this state allowed them to see how the work was actually being perceived and understood. Placed at the work's subjective core, flâneurian sensibilities permitted them to observe others directly. They could also reflect on their own perspective as a by-product of this experience. A subsequent documentary text was then produced as a document of 'Tonguing'. Of course witnesses unavoidably bring their own investment to documentary texts produced in this way, but this often gives a richer, more personable viewpoint. The event's memory is given depth by multiple texts being produced by different witnesses; the work's eventual documentary existence is given breadth through a variety of interpretations. But there are other elements to take into account with this type of document. Influential factors, such as the individual's understanding of, and proximity to the event, their association to the artist, their personal background, and to what they are being asked to do,³⁰ potentially inform the documentary product. Witnesses used for 'Tonguing' were chosen *because* of these factors: being close personal friends of mine they had a greater investment in the event than the rest of the audience, and this gave them an insight into the viewing space which I was asking them to observe. The various relational complexities (built around their sensibilities to me, to the event, and to the other audience members) they encountered meant they were given the means to produce dense, experiential accounts. In fact, as they were so close to the event, they were invested with a multiplicity of sensations, thrills and anxieties from the start. Their prior knowledge of my intentions offered them a share in the adventure; in being given access to intermediary visual ground, they were

consciously included in the work; they were made anxious by their role, and most individuals self-imposed a need to get the document right. Their position meant that anticipation and potential excitement could infect their experience. In addition, the potential for shock, or discomfort was eradicated to some degree by the fact that they knew what I would do, and of the assumed nature of the event. In being given prior knowledge of my intentions, they could take an objective position in relation to the work.

The documents that record 'Tonguing' are highly personal observations that discuss feelings, pleasure or displeasure in others, the bodily movements and noises of others, spatial distances that were enforced by the audience, and responses to site (see appendices 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). They summarise how the artist/object, and they, as *actual* audience members, engage through ethnographic and (often) geographic spatial proximity to be effectively 'stuck in a kind of no-man's-land.'³¹ This reference suggests what the sensation of being included in the proximity of the performance may feel like for the audience. Intentionally placed in close range of the performance by the artist's chosen site, this reference suggests that the audience may come to feel as if they are integral to the event. This is an experience that documenting witnesses can comment on with understanding, as their closeness to the event places them as an integral part of it from the outset.

Animals and animal behaviour

Social and biological aspects of the human body permits it to align other, similar bodies close to it. The known, and understood physicality of the body may be subjected to an incongruous dilemma when it becomes performative. In this instance it becomes observable, essentially other and different. Near enough to be almost touching, it is observed and considered as both similar *and* different. In the essay *Half Wild and Unwritten*, Brian Catling talked about the 'strange beast of performance.'³² In using this terminology, Catling suggested the live, performing body is synonymous with animality: not only by physicality, but also by implication. The performative body not only alludes to other humans by recognised physical similarity, but it may also be considered to reference a more inferior animal through its self-situated position as spectacle. It comes to symbolise a 'body' and 'anybody'. Like an animal in a zoo, its placement as spectacle may see it regarded as objectifiable, and possessable. It may be objectified and animalised as 'other'. Catling's analogy is made plausible by the body's interpolation in the space of performance in which it potentially becomes a simultaneously human and animal referent.

The similarity drawn between the performative body and the animal is a point of relevance in the exploration of what it is to be human. Recognition of this momentarily fuses human and animal worlds to make the experience appear somewhat anthropomorphic. Determined through art practice, anthropomorphic activity becomes perceptible and discernible: what it is to be animal is made potentially knowable. Artworks that include animal physicality or behaviour (whether acted or real) embed this process deeper. This can be seen in the

work of artists Oleg Kulik and Marcus Coates. An interwoven aspect for both artists concerns what it is to be *acted* animal and *actual* human. Coates does this by embracing anthropomorphism to illustrate the similarity between humans and animals. Whether by performing in deer fur (illustration 20), or enticing the public to engage in bird song,³³ Coates takes an often humorous approach to question the status of animals. In doing this, Coates initiates a performative dialogue between humans and animals. In acting out and getting others to act out animal behaviour, Coates presents the audience with a possibility to experience animality. Whether this occurs vicariously, as a result of watching his actions, or by taking part in the experience, Coates essentially asks the audience to confront animality. By making the work potentially humorous, however slightly, he poses a question regarding what is being laughed at. Are we laughing at the animal representation, or the human making that representation? Whatever the outcome, there is perhaps another question to be asked: why do we find the idea of being animal humorous? Perhaps the answer lies in how we perceive animals, as humans generally regard animals as inferior. Animals, and particularly mammals, represent an unsophisticated version of humans: they demonstrate how we could be considered without the prowess of intelligence; they are a potential point of scorn when regarded as sub-human in this way. The work of artist Oleg Kulik considers the principle of animal. Kulik temporarily transports his visible humanity onto the persona of a dominant male, biting, barking dog (illustration 21). In order to question the constructs of humanity and animality, and where these may differ, Kulik performs as an aggressive and dangerous dog. He essentially asks what it is to be displaced as an animal 'other'. Kulik has taken his role as aggressor seriously, as the audience of 'Dog House'³⁴ could testify. Despite warning signs

being evident that stated the performer was 'dangerous', a man was bitten as a consequence of getting too close to Kulik. Perhaps the performer's human physicality allowed the spectator to believe that humanity would prevail in the man, who, after all, was only *acting* animal. Trust in human sense gave the potential for this to happen; as the performer was human and not an actual dog, the spectator probably thought he would be safe from harm. But Kulik makes no attempt to hide his naked 'humanness' with fur or other animal apparel beyond a collar and leash, so perhaps the spectator cannot be judged too harshly for accepting the *act* to be just that. He was primarily confronted with a human representation of an animal, constructed by rational logic; he may have believed that the performer's human traits would ultimately overcome the desire to act as an animal to the extent where he would be bitten. The spectator's misplaced trust in Kulik's physically referenced sense essentially made him vulnerable to performed animal confrontation.



20. Marcus Coates, *Journey to the Lower World*, 2004
(video still).



21. Oleg Kulik, *Dog House*, 1996
(performance documentation).

In taking on semi-animal identities, the artists Coates and Kulik raise a palpable question of what it is that constitutes the human/animal divide. To understand *humanity* we must acknowledge and know what *animality* is, but 'a return ticket'³⁵ must be kept if the experience is to be influential on the development of civilisation. For as Keith Thomas suggested in *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*, 'it was as a comment on human nature that the concept of 'animality' was devised.'³⁶

Animality is a term that is used to categorise animal, or 'bad', behaviour. Essentially, the category *animal* is used as a binding agent for those thought to be in possession of animality: it encompasses actual animals and humans that demonstrate animal traits. Subjects potentially share the same social fate when included in the category of inferior and 'other', regardless of their biological derivation. To be considered *animal* is to be derogatorily described and classified as an unsophisticated and uncivilised human. To follow Freud's idea, 'the word "civilisation" designates the sum total of those achievements and institutions that distinguish our life from that of our animal ancestors.'³⁷ In respect of this, the term *animal* appears important for society. The 'civilised' seek no justification for imposing authority on those marked *animal* in their attempts to control those deemed inferior. Control may be judged as necessary for the protection of civilisation when *animality* is believed to exist.

To understand why *animality* might be considered as problematic behaviour for humans to exhibit, it is necessary to look at perceptions of non-human animals. Henceforth reference to 'animals' will relate to non-human animals. There is,

perhaps, a general human perception that animals (as supposed 'inferior' beings) possess restricted capacity for conscious thought and emotion. This idea is based on the (questionable) belief that animals experience little sense or feeling beyond immediate pleasure and pain. Jacques Derrida appeared to support this theory in *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)* when he stated that animals have no 'consciousness of good or evil.'³⁸ Additionally, the Bible would have us believe that animals were put on the earth for man's use. A distance can be established between humans and animals based on perceived cognitive difference, and inferiority. Maybe a general agreement with these theories accounts for our imposed superiority over animals; they make our dominance feel more justifiable. Any guilt felt by the conscious and articulate human perpetrator is potentially appeased through this belief. In fact, self-assurance may be given that control and dominance is necessary for the animal's wellbeing. We may feel it is necessary for the greater good of the animals. But the notion that 'goodwill' is the primary motive is arguable. In truth, humans often convince themselves that their governance protects and saves animals from harm: but this is often done at the expense of the animal concerned.³⁹ Our control over animals has made an impact on their history. Farmed, captured, caged, slaughtered, fried up, abused, and vivisected, animals have suffered through human domination.⁴⁰

Women and animals

There is cultural, political, and academic interest⁴¹ in the provocative discourse that is the human/animal relationship. Human curiosity is informed by the

similarities that mark animals as being 'before me, there close to me, there in front of me.'⁴² Levels of resemblance are, however, gender specific. The biological function of the body is used to inform the similarity between humans and animals: gender-specific actions allow considerations to be given as to how close the human is to being animal. As biological bodies that give birth and suckle, women have come to represent a 'personification of the animal-human continuity.'⁴³ Women are considered more animal than men because of this innate biological capacity, despite being 'unique human beings, not men with something missing.'⁴⁴

The way the body operates and behaves in particular circumstances, such as the loss of social inhibition that results from childbirth, has informed the alignment of women with animals. Physical contortions, screaming, and crying out are traits common to mammalian mothers experiencing the pain of giving birth (although some mammals do, of course, experience more pain than others). The comparison between female human and animal bodies is also informed by breastfeeding. It represents raw survival: sustainability derived from the body of another. Animality is brought to the fore by the performance of this 'natural' and primal act. This has contributed to the perception of breastfeeding as potentially inappropriate when performed in public. The result of living in a body capable of reproduction means women present the potential to be considered as more contiguous human relative of non-human species. This biological difference has historically set women apart from men. Non-birthing, and therefore less animal, men have achieved a higher social status than women. Their lack of biologically informed social animality has allowed their humanity to be made visible. The potential to be seen as 'human' and

'social' is more attainable for men than women because of this. There are, of course, circumstances where man is comparable to other animals, yet this situation is often elected into rather than being reliant on gender specific histories. Displaying 'bad' behaviour, being animalistic, and acting 'animal' are ways in which this can occur. There are also those who assertively and consciously adopt an animal way of life such as the self-proclaimed 'Wolf Man', Shaun Ellis.⁴⁵ Since 2004, Ellis, an animal researcher, has made a conscious decision to live with a pack of wolves in Coombe Martin Wildlife Park, in North Devon. However, by co-opting into being an animal, the actions of Ellis were cognitive and cerebral, rather than biological. The cerebral, male animality of Ellis differed to that, perhaps, generally experienced by women. Intellectually motivated animality is socially elevated beyond the biological to be given greater human credibility.

The supposed closeness of women to animals can often lead to confusion. This can make distinctions between species appear a little foggy. A woman essentially reminds humanity of its close genetic similarity to other animal bodies. Conjoined by their difference, the non-human animal and the human woman share intimacy of what it is to be considered as 'other'. Artwork that incorporates animal and female human physiognomy can potentially be constructed to question this effect. However, the woman's character may become tarnished by her exploration of this subject. Her motives may be treated with caution as a result. The artwork might be perceived as sexual, and bestial if it includes inter-species, physical touch. It perhaps becomes easier to question propriety, if a question of intent exists already. The female artist in this situation crosses a social boundary that exists to divide humans and animals.

The supposed biological similarity between humans and animals becomes visible in the moment they touch. The woman's visibility in this situation may see her character called into question: she may be considered as problematic human for making her similarity to animals apparent in her artwork. The problem may be concerned with her motives and what they imply about her character. But this situation potentially presents rich subject matter for the artist questioning the constructs of humanity; by being seen to touch animals it is possible to question the constructs that make us human. Carolee Schneeman and Michelle Williams are two artists who have used this idea in their work. *Infinity Kisses* (illustration 22) sees Carolee Schneeman 'kissing' her cat on the mouth. The video work *Sunday Afternoon* (illustration 23) shows Michelle Williams rolling on the floor with a large dog, held in a tight embrace. The similarity between the woman and animal in both works is exposed by physical contact. Schneeman and Williams pull the animal into physical closeness to impact on the immediate visibility of both parties. A relationship is established between human and animal by touch. But the intimacy of the acts makes them appear sexual, uncomfortable to look at, and potentially primal. Close, physical embrace and kissing are, on the whole, acceptable displays between humans, but when an animal is involved the nature of the relationship becomes questionable. This type of touch between species feels inappropriate. Implicated as a direct reference to intimate, sexual acts between bodies, the connection feels as if it may have been taken too far.



22. Carolee Schneeman, *Infinity Kisses*, 1981-88.



23. Michelle Williams, *Sunday Afternoon*, 2001 (video still).

Domestic Pets

In natural habitats and with safeguards in place, 'wild' animals can generally be kept at a distance. The wildness of animality is rendered safe as long as it does not impinge on society. Animal behaviour can remain wild, and animal, in this situation. Animal behaviour, however, may start to be of concern when the animal is transplanted from its natural habitat into an existence that is alien. The response may be fear and unease when this concerns humans directly. The potential for this response must be eradicated, or at the least diminished, if we are to live in close proximity to animals. The animal is subjected to a process of control to suppress its inherent behaviour. Through this, the animal's potential to create fear is reduced. Whether acting characteristically or not, animal behaviour becomes the central consideration if this process is thought to have gone wrong. Their conduct serves to remind us that they are fundamentally animal and not human in this situation; it becomes the reason they are classed as animal, anti-social and different.

Generally, we believe the presence of animals is significant for human existence. Whether we like or dislike animals, they provide us with a relational other to ourselves. Their presence is necessary to remind us of our intellectual difference and superiority. They provide us with a sense of being beyond humanity, and this is so significant that we invite them into our homes to share our lives. The relationship of domestic *pet* and its *caregiver* is the result, which John Berger suggested is 'different from any offered by human exchange.'⁴⁶ The existence of animals in this social construct was important for Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Society, for Deleuze and Guattari is 'bound up with the relations between man and animal, man and woman, man and child.'⁴⁷ Following this idea, human/animal relations appear an integral part of civilisation. The reconstructed animal *pet* provides an example of the connection between human and animal worlds: the animal's transformation to be *pet* means it has been humanised and controlled.

The companionable association of human and pet represents 'an inter-subjective world that is about meeting the other in all the fleshly detail of a mortal relationship.'⁴⁸ By following Donna Haraway's notion that 'there cannot be just one companion species; there have to be at least two to make one,'⁴⁹ it becomes apparent that equal involvement is necessary. To be able to live together in domesticity, Haraway implies that human and pet cohabitation needs both parties to partake in companionship, and I agree with this. Cohabitation ideally requires that both parties are patient, are willing to negotiate, are mutually respectful, and responsive to rules. There are, however, differences evident between single and mixed species cohabitation. Cohabitation between humans ideally operates on equality. Although, of

course, dynamics between personalities mean that this is not always the case - there is often a general perception of this. Cohabitation between the same species of animal can be seen to be similar. When species are integrated, however, the dominant species constructs the rules of cohabitation. The human/pet relationship is an example of this, as it is constructed on hierarchy. The human exerts supremacy to control the animal pet. A chain of command is established which makes the association suitable for human purpose. Dominance over the animal alters the relational dynamic by giving the human power. Humans often proclaim their position to be that of 'owner', which suggests that this may be important.

Effectively, domestication makes the animal safer, more controllable and more manageable; being stripped of its animality it becomes tamed, touchable, and possessable. Expectations of this relationship may include that the *pet* should come to understand (amongst other things) basic human verbal language, be able to respond to command, and not defecate or urinate in the house. But, surely, living with animals is essentially enjoyable *because* they are animals? For without animal characteristics being evident, would pets not be pointless? To keep an essence of the animal, agreeable characteristics are selected for the pet to keep: despite the impact of this being diminished, the pet is essentially allowed to remain an animal. Palatable, and live-able traits (such as controlled dog barking and cat purring) are selected. What this process does is ultimately transform the animal into a humanised, hybridised and mutated being. Re-trained, re-socialised, de-animalised and tamed, the pet becomes a *companionable* indication of what the bestial human self might be. It is transformed into a quasi-human/animal hybrid; a creature that physically

resembles its species, but who possesses affected, controlled mannerisms.

The domestic pet is an animal displaced from its bestial heritage: it is a human mimic, a near-animal, a halfway being. The *pet* is an in-between creature, a confused entity placed between human and animal taxonomies.

Relations with dogs

With a long history of living in close familial proximity to humans, dogs have played a part in the development and progression of Western society. The relationship has been established for so long that the dog has come to be considered as 'the oldest domesticated animal.'⁵⁰ Indeed, the relationship is so closely entwined that dogs arguably represent the most humanised pet. They are reliant on their companions for food, shelter, warmth, play and general wellbeing. Domestic dogs have come to *need* human contact as a result of our control over them. On the other hand, domesticity has meant that they can be employed into workable situations to the benefit of society. In this situation we may typically expect dogs to live with us, guard us, see for us, hear for us, pick things up for us and protect us. In return, they receive our care and favour.

Dogs and humans generally get on in the Western world. Although there are those who dislike dogs, their close association with humans is generally accepted. Inherently pack animals, they enjoy the ordered group dynamic provided by domesticity. The well trained (and therefore successfully controlled) knows its correct place in the household is at the bottom of its

adoptive pack hierarchy. This allows relational harmony to exist. The dog becomes part of the family. Their humanisation often means that we regard them as humans: in fact, we might begin to compare their mannerisms in relation to our own. They become subjected to personification and humanisation as a result of their living conditions. 'Doggy Snaps',⁵¹ a website devoted to images of dogs uploaded by enthusiastic canine 'owners', is an example of how this can become demonstrably exaggerated. Owners personify their dogs by 'speaking' on their behalf on this website. They create narrative accounts acting as their dogs; they 'talk' to other dogs (or their owners) via message boards and photograph comments.

There is perhaps a belief held by most owners that their dog is intelligent. We project a sense of being human upon them by this belief. This, and the fact that the dog has undergone humanisation, often leads the owner to an assumption that their pet can 'speak'. Successful domestic co-existence is credited as being responsible: the human companion may believe it is their effective management of the relationship that has allowed the dog's intelligence to attain such prowess. Yet, despite acknowledging their dog's oral capabilities, the owner assertively maintains their relational position. In most situations⁵² human sensibilities inevitably recognise that dog 'language' is not as accomplished as our own. Although their capabilities for articulation are accredited with signs of intelligence, dogs are generally seen to be orally, conceptually and intellectually inferior. This acknowledgement keeps the intelligent dog dominated by the more intelligent human.

Preservation of human superiority keeps the relationship symbiotically happy and fruitful. Domestic happiness is maintained, on the whole, until natural instincts arise in the pet dog to bring their animality into the fore. In the moment that their animality is made apparent, they relinquish the title of pet to be treated as an animal once more. Certain dog breeds are more susceptible to this kind of treatment than others. Society is often quick to condemn so-called dangerous breeds, such as German shepherd dogs and Rottweilers. With a history of being employed as dogs that guard and protect, these breeds are often considered with caution. Their history sees them often treated with trepidation when perceived as a *pet*. It is as if their history has indelibly marked them as aggressor, and the status of pet only temporarily allows them to be considered in a more affectionate way. Perhaps like a burglar who declares he has 'gone straight', there is an expectation that dogs with this type of pedigree will inevitably slip up, and revert to their old, breed-specific ways. Of course, there are occasions when perceived danger informs the owner's choice of dog. Whether this is because they are looking for a deterrent against burglary, or a status symbol, some breeds are fostered *because* they imply danger. But, in asking that they be both aggressor and household companion in this situation, the dog's socially imposed role appears confused. By considering situations where dogs, notwithstanding breed, are encouraged to be aggressive, it perhaps becomes easier to understand the dog's perception. The allowance they are given to bark, snarl, and be hostile towards others may instill the thought that they potentially could, and should, act further. Indeed, they may believe it is expected. It is perhaps unfair to ask this type of dog to be both animal and pet; confused between socialised pet and animal aggressor, it may be too contradictory a proposition. In circumstances where this confusion

becomes too great, the dog may react adversely to transgress the role of pet; its suppressed animality may be regarded as having returned to prominence. If this animality feels too dominant, the dog is re-acknowledged as *animal* and pushed away from society. Transgression not only serves to condemn here, but it also re-brands the dog that is cast out of domesticity and marked as *animal* once more.

Touch between humans and animals

Full recognition of similarity between species for Walter Benjamin arises through physical contact. Benjamin believed that touch is responsible for relational problems between man and other animals. Touch presents 'fear of being recognised by them'⁵³ whereby the 'other' is given the opportunity to be acknowledged as kin. It presents an opportunity for human and animal to realise that, as mammals, they are essentially not that different. This can be responsible for producing an aversion to touching an animal in some people. For in not wanting, or daring, to fully admit their own animality, humans often respond to animals with fear. The animal may ultimately be pushed away from society as a result, so that the human may remain untouched and safe in their sense of self.

There are, of course, circumstances where we do touch animals. We do this, for example, as a display of fondness and care in the human/pet relationship. Stroking, cuddling, and grooming animal pets are acceptable parts of the relationship's daily routine. These are acceptable ways of making physical

contact and, if adhered to, legislate the relationship as behaviorally correct. But bodily exchanges with animals are always potentially problematic, and it can be easy to misjudge what is correct and incorrect behaviour. In the inter-species relationship, whether between human and pet, or human and non-pet, *how* we touch is of the utmost importance. It must be right for circumstance and interrelation: any breach of conformity may be seen as dysfunctional and potentially treacherous to society.

Inappropriate touch between humans and animals is debatable behaviour that creates 'critical uneasiness.'⁵⁴ With this in mind, perhaps inter-species touch should remain in the safe, and appropriate, province of the human/pet relationship. For, when properly maintained, it makes inter-species touch possible. However, when it is believed that the relationship has become dysfunctional, the situation can begin to feel unsettled. A challenge can be presented to public sensibilities when over-familiarity and touch beyond general care becomes evident. The human being considered too close for comfort⁵⁵ becomes a repository for inter-species anxieties. The closeness they have created may then present a fearful, social horror. As a result of destabilising the human/pet status quo, the perpetrating human may see their behaviour and intent called into question. Purposefully breaking the conventions of touch between humans and animals in art practice may seem like an odd decision, when this is taken into account. The artist may be exposed to hostility and condemnation by purposefully exposing the fragility of this relationship through making 'inappropriate' touch visible. By incorporating potential improper social actions, their personal character and sensibility may become vulnerable to public scrutiny.

Visual interaction with an animal, however, gives the artist an opportunity to explore the dynamics of humanity. In considering the idea put forward by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari that 'society and the state need animal characteristics to use for classifying people'⁵⁶ this, perhaps, becomes understandable. For, if animal characteristics are necessary to inform how we perceive and relate to others, their use in art may allow us to understand this. Visibility brings the potential to understand a position and make judgment on it. Therefore, art presents the visible potential for perceptions of acceptable human behaviour to be challenged. When that art violates social codes that govern inter-species touch, it is possible for the artist to posit a question of what is considered correct behaviour for humanity.⁵⁷ The work of American performance artist Holly Hughes is an example of how this can function, as she uses dog control techniques to 'teach the come' command.⁵⁸ By daring to be sexually implicated with an animal (even if only evident in descriptive terminology and suggestion), Hughes opens up human/animal relationships to public examination. The artist may be subjected to principles that govern whether such actions are perceivable as right or wrong. This has certainly been the case for Hughes, who has found herself in positions where she has found it necessary to publicly defend her work against those who consider her actions and ideas to be socially reprehensible.

When human and canine mouths meet

Whether they are human or not, mouths are abject spaces invested with social problems and anxieties that present a conflict at the surface of the body. As a

consequence there are problems that can arise when oral touch between species is made visible. Performing both personal and public functions, they represent a paradox; in being used to articulate and masticate, mouths simultaneously represent the human *and* animal body. This thesis has previously discussed how the mouth exists as immediate and social space, and I will now consider its relevance as a construct of human/canine contact.

The preconceptions that dogs face on a daily basis are a direct reflection of how humanity sees itself in regard to others. The problems that can arise from our negotiations with dogs are not solely about their potential to breach civility, but also about human anxiety. They say as much about the animality of the human as of the animal itself. Animal mouths are considered to be primitive, and the mouths of dogs are no exception. Considered as dirty,⁵⁹ foul smelling,⁶⁰ and dangerous, canine mouths represent a bodily space to be avoided. We may ignore this when the dog in question is a personal pet, as their domesticated status is capable of negating adverse reactions. But whether the mouth in question belongs to a pet dog or not, their physical appearance reminds us that they are potentially harmful. We know from the size of their mouths, and by looking into them, that their jaws are powerful and that their teeth can bite. Their mouths are, in part, responsible for their potential to be regarded as aggressive and fearful beasts, and the reason why 'from the military to private security, real dogs continue to be enlisted to police racial, national and class boundaries.'⁶¹

When canine and human mouths interact, animality and humanity collide. The nature of the exchange sees questions arise regarding appropriate and

acceptable behaviour between species. The inherent complexities in this were used to formulate 'Fur Kiss' (illustration 24), a short video work made in 2003. Made as a one-minute monitor-based video, 'Fur Kiss' shows my pet German shepherd dog and me reciprocally licking each other's faces. The touch appears like mutual preening and grooming between human and dog (see appendix 2.g. for further description of this work).



24. Angela Bartram, *Fur Kiss*, 2003 (video still).

The premise of 'Fur Kiss' was to ask why it might be wrong to lick, or be licked by a dog, and the video 'Licking Dogs' was made in 2007 to explore the complexities of oral touch between humans and dogs further (see appendix 2.h. for a description of this work). There were also developments in 'Licking Dogs' to do with breed, temperament and sexuality that responded to the

status of the male German shepherd dog in 'Fur Kiss'.⁶² His breed had marked him as aggressor and as potentially dangerous from the outset, and in licking a woman his touch, as a male dog, could be regarded as sexual. The four dogs in 'Licking Dogs' were chosen according to specific criteria to question breed apprehensions and sexualised touch further: all were neutered males, from a considered dangerous breed, had the potential to drool, or had a questionable socialised character. The resulting participants were my pet German shepherd Woofers (illustrations 25), a Rottweiler (illustrations 26), a Patterdale Terrier (illustrations 27), and a St. Bernard (illustrations 28).



25, 26. Angela Bartram, *Licking Dogs*, 2007 (video still).



27, 28. Angela Bartram, *Licking Dogs*, 2007 (video still).

The anxiety that each breed of dog was capable of producing was potentially exaggerated when size, perceived danger, and function of their mouths was also taken into consideration. A mouth that leaks and dribbles is considered abject, and this is, perhaps, appropriate in considerations of dogs as animals and potential pets. Danger is often implied, or negated, by how the generating human body contains or lets out matter, and the mouth is marked as excessive and abundant by expelling fluid and mush that is considered more social and polite if kept inside. A superfluous and over-productive mouth can be called 'wet' to imply excessive drooling, dribbling or salivating. In fact, the actions of the mouth are often used to describe breeds of dogs that are prone to excessive salivary production. The thought of gun dogs, St. Bernards, and Bloodhounds (amongst others) excessive mouths dribbling and leaking can elicit nervousness in some people. Exuding excessive quantities of saliva from their reservoir-like jowls, these types of dogs are capable of aggravating the human subconscious. The expansive mouth of the St. Bernard used in 'Licking Dogs' had the potential to engage these preconceptions in others; it presented a double provocation set around its exaggerated size (that potentially implied danger and harm) and salivary excess.

Historical breed employment and socialisation make assumptions of a dog's individual temperament possible. German shepherd and Rottweiler dogs are subjected to discrimination because of their breeds' perceived hostility. Whether true or not, their pedigree can result in individual dogs being labelled as untrustworthy and volatile.⁶³ This is possibly the case for German shepherd dogs because they are still identified as a breed used as a 'special kind of weapon that defends dominant political systems with brute force.'⁶⁴ Their

association to Adolph Hitler (who favoured them as pets) has perhaps not helped breed-specific anxieties.⁶⁵ The Patterdale Terrier is a determined and tough hunter. Part of the mastiff group, their quickness to respond to adrenalin-fuelled situations means that this breed perpetually suggests danger. Despite being small dogs, they are arguably un-trainable and 'not to be trusted with non-canine pets.'⁶⁶

Male dogs can be sexually suggestive, and gender-specific codes exist to do with breed and physicality. Large dogs appear strong and physical; small dogs, such as Chihuahuas, are often treated like fashion accessories appearing 'feminised' as a consequence. In fact, when dressed in glitter-encrusted jackets and matching collars, Chihuahuas can resemble a childhood doll, and one that is considered by the owner as an extension of her feminine self. This is possible because dogs and women share common ground: they both reside at the margins of a culture that privileges the dominant and the civilised. The woman and the dog are both marked as cultural others: near to, but not close enough to be afforded the same status as men, it is possible to believe they possess an unwritten and invisible affinity. Colloquial terminology also makes comparison. A woman may be called a 'dog' as an insult; dogs are 'man's best friend.'⁶⁷ As a 'best friend' they are positioned at the side of man to inhabit a similar social position to women. The comparison between women and dogs was so important for Donna Haraway that she considered 'dog writing to be a branch of feminist theory, or the other way around.'⁶⁸ Both 'Fur Kiss' and 'Licking Dogs' intended to question this coalition through making that comparison visible.

A concern for 'Fur Kiss' and 'Licking Dogs' was that inter-species oral touch could be perceived as sexual. To negate this effect it was necessary for the dogs to be neutered, desexualised males for, despite being male, they had been stripped of the capacity to be *sexually* male. Furthermore, it is possible to consider the neutered male dog as a close relative of women (who are recognised as more animal than man); with their testicles removed they are rendered *sub*-male. Women are also perhaps seen as inadequate humans; neutered dogs represent the inadequate male animal. Essentially, neutering makes the dog anatomically more female. Neutering is also used as a control measure against aggression and 'bad' behaviour; it is believed that dogs are pacified by the removal of the glands that produce male hormones. As testosterone is thought to be responsible for elements of male aggression, there is perhaps logic in removing a dog's testes in order to make it more sociable and less animal. By working with neutered dogs in 'Licking Dogs', questions to do with their supposed aggression could be invalidated.

Regardless of breed, it was hoped that their threat would be alleviated because they were neutered (and therefore more controlled). In spite of the status of the dogs concerned, however, it is accepted that 'Licking Dogs' undeniably retained some sexual referents. Similar to the effects of 'Infinity Kisses' by Carolee Schneeman, as previously discussed, it is perhaps difficult for a woman and animal to lick each other's mouths without this becoming apparent. For, as it is an orifice used in sexual exchange, it is perhaps impossible to regard the mouth without sexual association when it is seen to touch another.

The action itself implied a sense of closeness between woman and dog, for licking is thought to be an important social act for dogs, and a way of showing

affection. It is also believed by some that this is a sign of submission, and that dogs lick those that are dominant in their social group.⁶⁹ Using this theory, it becomes possible for hierarchical positions in the human/dog relationship to be negated if this act is made reciprocal: the mutual nature of the action creates the potential for both parties to experience a sense of equality. As a sense of equality between participants was important to show the social alignment of human female and male neutered dog, this act was significant. The dog participants were also given equal rights in how the work was constructed. Dogs have 'the right to demand respect, attention and response'⁷⁰ and a duty of care was afforded through the process of making this work. Any dominant behaviour would have destabilised the relationship, so it was important that I remained neutral to each dog's position. By not issuing demands, or by displaying dominant characteristics it was also possible to effect, and maintain, an ethical approach in the construction of the work.⁷¹ The dogs were not ordered to perform and, in fact, were not required to take part beyond their comfort and interest zone. For beyond initial performative suggestion (I licked them), they were allowed to direct their own involvement.

The contiguous relationship forged between humans and domestic dogs is demonstrably blurred and unclear. They are so close to us that they are capable of standing in for other humans, but perhaps they are not quite close enough for humanity to admit full recognition of this. Dogs, however near we draw them to us, are ultimately marginalised on the verge of humanity. By closely positioning dog and human in the visual frame, 'Licking Dogs' gave anxiety potential. Its production concerned the 'correct' and 'right' distance to be maintained between humans and animals. Humour is often produced as a

response to anxiety and horror, and this became apparent through this work. The laughter that this work has often provoked may have been constructed as a response to anxiety. Of course, it may have been that they simply found the idea of a woman and dog licking each other's faces surreal, and humorous. But intimacy between species was evident in this work. Whether this was perceived as unsettling or not, a question could be asked about what constitutes acceptable human behaviour. For as Bataille suggested, when man perceives 'the animality in himself [he/she] regards it as a defect.'⁷² The consequence of this experience may be worry and apprehension. As we begin to analyse the potential defect in ourselves through the removal of correct and appropriate distance, the experience can be made to feel unsettling. Recognition that the video 'kiss' would have unavoidably resulted in human and dog bodily fluids being exchanged potentially added to this concern; in sharing saliva in the moment of intimate oral touch, the inner human body had been seen to become momentarily confused with that of another species. The recognised abject human mouth potentially became layered with conflict and implication for the viewer: for it offered the possibility for reflection on their own state of being, and what it is to be potentially considered animal. Therefore, in raising considerations of what it is to be animal, touch performed across human and dog mouths asks what it is to be human.

Notes to chapter 3

- ¹ Badiou, Alain. *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, Trans. Alberto Toscano, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005) pp. 9-11.
- ² Kwon, Miwon. *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, (London, MIT Press, 2004), p. 38.
- ³ Heathfield, Adrian, (Ed.). *Live: Art and Performance*, (London, Tate Publishing, 2004), p. 93.
- ⁴ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1991), p. 52.
- ⁵ Kwon, Miwon. *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, (London, MIT Press, 2004), p. 53.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.
- ⁷ Heathfield, Adrian, (Ed.). *Live: Art and Performance*, (London, Tate Publishing, 2004), p. 93.
- ⁸ Shaviro, Steven. *The Cinematic Body*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p.141.
- ⁹ Artaud, Antonin. *The Theater and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards, (New York, Grove Press, 1958), p. 96.
- ¹⁰ Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1992), p. 184.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Kwon, Miwon. *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, (London, MIT Press, 2004), p. 106.
- ¹³ Kent, Sarah & Morreau, Jacqueline, (Eds.). *Women's Images of Men*, (London, Writers and Readers Publishing, 1985), p. 164. I would like to acknowledge here that in situations where more traditional contractual relations operate, the spectator's experience (amongst other things) might come between the spectator and performer. But for this to happen, adequate distance must be placed between performer and viewer.
- ¹⁴ Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*, (London, University of California Press, 1994), p. 397.
- ¹⁵ Artaud, Antonin. *The Theater and Its Double*, Trans. Mary Caroline Richards, (New York, Grove Press, 1958), p. 96.
- ¹⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2002), p. 3.
- ¹⁷ It was hoped the circular shape of the bowls would be reminiscent of an open mouth when seen as part of the work.
- ¹⁸ Source: documentation by Douglas Gittens, July 2007 (appendix 14).
- ¹⁹ Artsadmin, London, 2007.
- ²⁰ Arnolfini, Bristol, 2007.
- ²¹ Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, 2006; Ex Teresa Arte Actual, Mexico City, 2006.
- ²² Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (London, Methuen, 1958), p. 342.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- ²⁴ Bataille, Georges. *Theory of Religion*, Trans. Robert Hurley, (New York, Zone Books, 2006), p. 36.
- ²⁵ Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 172.
- ²⁶ The impact of a visible camera on audience engagement has been observed in documentation of the 2003 performance of 'Spit and Lick' at East End Collaborations. Staged twice, the first performance was filmed with a visible camera, and the second with a secret camera hidden behind a smoke detector. A physically passive audience appeared in the footage from the visible camera. They seemed highly aware of their bodies and expressions. In contrast, the footage from the secret camera saw marked physical movement in the audience. They appeared to be focused on the action rather than their own bodies.
- ²⁷ Rachman, Stanley. *Anxiety*, 2nd ed., (Hove, Psychology Press Ltd, 2004), p. 147.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ Wolff, Janet. *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture*, (Oxford, Polity, 1990), p. 39.

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- ³⁰ Documenters of 'Tonguing' are predominantly academics working within the wider humanities. To reflect on their experience for the documentary texts they are asked to draw on their academic specialism. Previous documenters have included human geographers, architects, and psychologists.
- ³¹ Source: documentation by Gary Jones, July 2007 (appendix 15).
- ³² Heathfield, Adrian, (Ed.). *Live: Art and Performance*, (London, Tate Publishing, 2004), p. 47.
- ³³ Coates had nineteen Bristol-based singers recreate birdsong in their 'natural habitats' for the video *Dawn Chorus* in 2006. The human-specific habitats included a shed, an underground car park, and an osteopathy clinic.
- ³⁴ 'Dog House' was performed in 1996 at Fargfabriken, Stockholm.
- ³⁵ Heathfield, Adrian, (Ed.). *Live: Art and Performance*, (London, Tate Publishing, 2004), p. 56.
- ³⁶ Thomas, Keith. *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*, (London, Allen Lane, 1983), p. 41.
- ³⁷ Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Trans. David McLintock, (London, Penguin, 2002), p. 27.
- ³⁸ Derrida, Jacques. 'The Animal That Therefore I Am (More To Follow)', Trans. David Wills, *Critical Inquiry*, Winter 2002, 28, 2, (2002), p. 373.
- ³⁹ A relationship such as that between pet and human companion, whereby the human legislates the animal's life through domestication, is an example of this. This is covered in greater detail in the section on domestic pets later in this chapter.
- ⁴⁰ This cannot, of course, be taken as a generalisation, as political conviction and personal regard inform how animals are relationally treated. Harming animals is, in fact, unthinkable for those who care about their welfare.
- ⁴¹ Human/animal coexistence is such an inquisitive subject that texts and discussion groups, such as 'The British Animals Studies Network' (co-funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Middlesex University), have been produced to help us understand it better.
- ⁴² Derrida, Jacques. 'The Animal That Therefore I Am (More To Follow)', Trans. David Wills, *Critical Inquiry*, Winter 2002, 28, 2, (2002), p. 380.
- ⁴³ Noske, Barbara. *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*, (London, Black Rose Books, 1997), p. 102.
- ⁴⁴ Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*, (London, Penguin, 1963), p. 128.
- ⁴⁵ Ellis believed he could operate equally within both human and wolf communities, although the result was a little different. He effectively became a self-positioned human/wolf hybrid, and appeared as neither one nor the other (source: Mirror.co.uk. The Wolf Man, Pick of the Day Television, World Wide Web, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/showbiz/tv/todaystv/2007/05/18/the-wolfman-89520-19124329/>, (accessed 25 May 2007)).
- ⁴⁶ Berger, John. *About Looking*, (New York, Vintage Books, 1991), p. 6.
- ⁴⁷ Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. Brian Massumi, (London, Continuum, 2002), p. 235.
- ⁴⁸ Haraway, Donna. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, 3rd ed., (Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2005), p. 34.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ⁵⁰ Noske, Barbara. *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*, (London, Black Rose Books, 1997), p. 5.
- ⁵¹ Dogs Trust. Doggy Snaps, <http://www.doggysnaps.com/>, (accessed 21 December 2006).
- ⁵² This is given as a general guideline. It is acknowledged that there are humans who believe that their dog is as intelligent as they are, and can communicate to the same extent as they do, but these cases are isolated and extreme.
- ⁵³ Benjamin, Walter. *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, Trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, (London, Verso Books, 1997), p. 50.
- ⁵⁴ Baker, Steve. *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation*, (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. xxii.
- ⁵⁵ Examples of when humans are considered too close to animals are seen in obsessive behaviour and overt admiration.
- ⁵⁶ Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. Brian Massumi, (London, Continuum, 2002), p. 239.

⁵⁷ A paper discussing this issue was given at the 4th *Hawaii International Conference on Arts & Humanities*, Honolulu, 2006. The paper was called *Canine Collaboration: objects, actions, and morality* (appendix 5).

⁵⁸ The performance artist Holly Hughes and I discussed our work with animals via email correspondence. Information is taken from these emails (source: Hughes, Holly. Re: 'Animals', Email to A. Bartram, ang.bartram@ntlworld.com, (12 April 2005)).

⁵⁹ This is an interesting debate, as the bacteria in a dog's mouth are species-specific; they therefore pose no harm to humans (source: ABC News. Myth: Dogs Have Cleaner Mouths Than Humans, World Wide Web, <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/Health/story?id=1213870>, (accessed 30 January 2007)). However, if one takes into account the fact that dogs eat scrap foods, intimately lick their own and other dogs' bodies, kill vermin, and so on, the thought of touching their mouths might seem rather unappealing.

⁶⁰ I would like to offer that the four dog participants in 'Licking Dogs' had clean, odour-free mouths.

⁶¹ McHugh, Susan. *Dog*, (London, Reaktion, 2004), p. 122.

⁶² There have been varied reactions to 'Fur Kiss'. These have been informed by individual feelings towards dogs, and in relation to social and cultural values. As an example, a large proportion of dogs live on the street in Mexico City, and they are (generally) considered dirty animals as a consequence. When 'Fur Kiss' was exhibited in Mexico City, I was told that it had made all but one of the gallery's curatorial team queasy. Their belief that dogs are dirty impacted on their relationship to the work to the point where the action was personally inconceivable. In comparison, I was asked what it was like to 'taste dog' when this piece was exhibited in Belfast by an attendee of the private view for *Britney's Smears*, an exhibition that included this work in 2004 at Catalyst Arts. Three conference delegates in mainland USA commented that the video was charming and 'cute' after it was presented in 2005 at the conference *PS#11: Becoming Uncomfortable*, Brown University, Rhode Island. The love and fondness Americans generally have for dogs often results in public displays of affection and 'kissing', and perhaps this is not a million miles away from the action in 'Fur Kiss'. It is therefore plausible this informed their response to the work. It may be that they perceived it to be appropriate behaviour as a consequence.

⁶³ Dublin City Council banned eleven breeds of dogs from its premises in July 2007. The list of banned dogs included German shepherds and Rottweilers, and was based on perceived dangers to do with breed. The legislation meant that none of the banned dogs would be allowed in council-owned rented property (source: Irish Dogs. Dublin City Dog Ban, World Wide Web, <http://www.irishdogs.ie/Dublin%20City%20Dog%20Ban.htm>, (accessed 28 September 2007)). The charitable organisation Dogs Trust successfully negotiated that existing pets should be exempt from the ban.

⁶⁴ McHugh, Susan. *Dog*, (London, Reaktion, 2004), p. 119.

⁶⁵ Hitler had several German shepherd dogs, his favourite being Blondie. Hitler appeared with Blondie in several photographs.

⁶⁶ Source: Dog Breeder Info Centre. Patterdale Terrier, World Wide Web, <http://www.dogbreedinfo.com/patterdaleterrier.html>, (accessed 07 February 2007).

⁶⁷ Of course the term 'man's best friend' is a gendered take on how the dog relates to its human companion. It implies that dominance is inevitably given to the human male in human/pet relationships. Women and dogs also share a problematic kinship. The woman represents problematic human; the pet dog is problematic because it is a hybrid, animal-human.

⁶⁸ Haraway, Donna. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, 3rd ed., (Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2005), p.3.

⁶⁹ Although there is no real scientific evidence that licking is an act of submission, it is a belief held by some in the dog owning community. Source: Best Friends Petcare.com. Pet Library: Pet FAQ Section, World Wide Web, http://www.bestfriendspetcare.com/Pet_FAQs/doglicking.cfm, (accessed 31 October 2008).

⁷⁰ Haraway, Donna. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, 3rd ed., (Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2005), p. 53.

⁷¹ The Royal Society for the Prevention of Animals policy on the ethical treatment of performing animals states an opposition to circumstances where distress or suffering is likely to be caused in the production of entertainment. Circuses and travelling menageries are highlighted as examples that breach this in *RSPCA Policies on Animal Welfare* dated 2003.

⁷² Bataille, Georges. *Theory of Religion*, Trans. Robert Hurley, (New York, Zone Books, 2006), p.39.

Conclusion

Whether to do with the body, the social, or the cultural, a notion of the abject concerns a relational boundary violation of some kind or other. Art relationships, and the production of the abject between positions within art relationships, have been this study's main concern. This has been specific to two boundaries where it (naturally or unnaturally) exists: the mouth (as hole in the boundary of the body), and the cultural divide that exists between art and its observer. My art practice has produced the empirical foundation for the research and for this thesis.

There is an unwritten contract that exists to regulate relations between art and audience. This study has looked at the evaluative effect of the performer's presence on the unwritten contract. To do this it placed performing and viewing bodies in close proximity in sites such as corridors; it looked at the effect of gender on contravention in, for example, works that involved spitting; it looked at human/animal relations in my artwork with dogs. These relational constructs allowed me to examine the effect of the abject in my art practice. Significantly, they created the potential for the audience to become momentarily involved in

the process of the work by exposure to the abject. For in becoming a participant they could experience the abject and liminal situation directly by being integral to it. Though only temporarily created in the moment of the event, this meant the viewer's experience could be changed as a consequence.

The effect of the abject on the space between observers and observed was what I aimed to explore through my artwork. The reason that the abject was significant to this study was based on its existence at intermediate locations that are informed by relational dynamics. Relations can be challenged as a consequence of intermediate boundaries being breached, for they bring exposure to the abject as a consequence. The effect of this makes it difficult to know how to behave in a relationship that has 'troubled' boundaries. Art practice that exposes the viewer to the abject can make the experience feel troubling as a result.

Working with the mouth

Body-specific theories used to inform the research led me to make performative work with the orifice that is the most visible boundary breach of the body: the mouth. The mouth was important to this research for several reasons: its location on the face ensures its actions are highly visible, knowable and experiential to others; as a permanent opening and halfway space of the body the mouth is a natural home for the abject. I directly confronted the

audience with my own abject mouth by using it to make performative actions. This brought considerations regarding propriety, for the anti-social and inappropriate can be easily aligned to the visible, already abject mouth. Consequently, the mouth is useful to determine good and bad social behaviour, and how oral substances, such as saliva and vomit, are contained or expelled informs this perception. Out of place, oral bodily matter appears ambiguous, as its derivation and compound is unclear. Its ambiguity makes it abject. Therefore saliva and other oral matter can be regarded as abject on two counts: by being produced from an abject space and by the ambiguity brought by its displacement from the body.

As I intended to create the potential for the viewer to experience the abject, this made saliva a primary material for the performative actions that constituted the practice of this study. Whether used directly through spitting or sucking, saliva played a critical role in determining the way the audience related to the work. For it allowed them to come within range of a substance derived from my body whose contaminating potential was unknown. They were placed within reach of a substance that could touch them as I spat, for example, and one that may carry disease. As they were unaware of my body and its state of health, this potentially made the experience both psychologically and biologically worrying. In effect, they were unsure of what my mouth could be exposing them to.

Experiencing subjectivity

The experience of subjectivity is as likely to challenge an artist's self-confidence as any other person's. The effect of making an experience of art potentially anxious for the viewer brings consequences for the artist. For the audience will inevitably have an opinion on whether it is acceptable for art to initiate anxiety, and the artist has to be hardy to withstand its impact. This is obviously pertinent to this research, as the primary method of making art practice has included the performing body. But why might consequences be considered greater for the performer? The reason for this is that the performer is potentially made publicly vulnerable on two counts: by externalised visualisation of their thought and opinion, and by using their own body to make this visible. Even though the artist's body may only be observable and objectifiable for a limited time, their actions are still seen as a statement of intent. Inevitably, the performer makes their subject visible by using their body in public acts. This allows access to artistic thought in much the same way as a displayed, inanimate object would, except the performing artist wears it publicly on his or her skin. They portray thought publicly and visibly through corporeality. The live body represents finite resolution and opinion: it states I think this, and I wear the banner of these thoughts on my externalised self. The experience of producing live art can be rather daunting as a result. Especially when that research is concerned with concepts of transgression as in this research. For it not only makes the performer's body objectifiable, but it also exposes it to subjectification.

Transgression effectively informs the relational debate by posing questions concerning individual roles. The transgressive performer visibly asserts relational questions, and their actions are valuable for society to establish what is and is not correct behaviour. But the artist must take responsibility for the work's effect on its audience, which may include outrage, upset and hostility. For artwork that challenges social conduct and propriety is as likely to enrage as provoke discussion. The artist who 'posits himself [or herself] as object [has to be] conscious of the process in which he [or she] is involved.'¹ They have to be aware of *how* the transgression will communicate and be understood. This was important to this study, and can be seen particularly in responses to my practice with dogs. For in licking and being licked by dogs' tongues I visibly and publicly crossed the boundary between human and animal, and between the appropriate and the inappropriate. The result for some was that this social transgression was too uncomfortable to watch. I had to be aware of this possibility and take responsibility for it. But how did I do this? Theoretical knowledge of human/animal relationships provided the foundation from which to take responsibility. I had to be knowledgeable of human/animal dynamics in order to understand this specific transgression. In fact, theory provided the artwork with the means to make a 'responsible' response; it gave breadth of knowledge of the subject form which to formulate that response. This was important for this study concerned with relationships, as 'the bond with others is only made as responsibility.'²

The significance of site

By looking at body- and space-specific theories on the abject, I was led into an investigation concerning the effect of reducing inter-relational space. To understand the implications of art practice considered abject and transgressive, the impact of site on the body is significant. For art is placed in the public domain, and perception is informed by how it is positioned.

Observer and observed usually move around the outskirts of the spectatorial space in opposition to each other; this space usually resists inhabitation. The observer naturally creates this space, and they find a position to observe within it that feels secure. Consequently, the spectatorial distance is a threshold seldom breached by the viewer. But if site and circumstance are controlled effectively, this dynamic can be altered. Site impacts on the experience, as it determines what observational range is available. Limited spatial dimensions prescribe the spectator's proximity to the work and this reduces the viewer's capacity to adopt a comfortable position. The site in this situation assists a relational confrontation between art and viewer.

My work sited in corridors and transitory spaces is an example of the effect of site on art practice. Adequate distance is necessary between art and viewer if positions are to remain distinct. Reducing that distance, by placing work in spaces such as corridors, effectively makes relations indistinct. But why might this happen? The dimensions of small, confined spaces effectively remove the viewer's decision to keep a distance from the work. As the 'objective world is...permeated with bodily subjectivity,'³ being close to the artwork makes the

audience potentially aware of their scopic relationship to it. This creates a situation where the audience is made aware that they may become part of the art itself. This consideration was significant in my decision to site performances in small, confined or transitory spaces, as the space forced the viewer into a direct encounter with my performing body. They effectively 'felt' the effects of the performance by being close to it and this presented the potential for awareness of self-visibility to be initiated. For in being close to my body, their bodies were positioned in the visual frame of the performance. They were effectively made visible by standing close to spectacle. An embodied relationship of viewing and performing bodies was effectively engaged by close physical proximity. An oscillatory objective/subjective relationship was forged between observing and performing bodies when the audience acknowledged their visibility. This temporarily lured the viewer into the work to become part of it, and it was in the moment that this occurred that meaning, for me at least, was at its most potent. For the experience felt boundless, unregulated and open to possibility.

Not all viewers related to the work in this way, but those who acknowledged and understood that they were visible in the space of performance created the situation. Lack of surety of self, of self to others, and of self to the situation was made active and fertile by the conventions the space imposed on the viewer who felt this. The dimensions of the space presented the potential for the audience to become aware of their involvement. Even if only for the moment of acknowledgement, a meeting place came into existence where entities converged. At this point the spectatorial 'exchange' became performative. For as Rebecca Schneider suggested, 'audience members are active participants

in the reciprocity or complicity that is performative exchange.’⁴ Interpolative tension exposed those aware to a ‘dematerialising impulse and a materialising impulse.’⁵ The spectator was potentially seized by their reciprocal acknowledgment of self to other, and this encoded the situation with what Foucault called ‘reflexive knowledge,’⁶ for visibility was now mutual. Here, the scopic range became a generating loop in which the audience and I were temporarily held hostage. Relational confusion momentarily made it difficult to comprehend where the work ended and self began. This potentially formed a narcissistic dilemma for the audience as they became aware of their role in the art process. Placed as part of the spectacle how they were seen to behave and perform became of potential interest to their ideas of self.

Encountering the live art body in confined spaces

As it can provoke the anxious situation of self-visibility, the performing body placed in close relational distance to the audience presents a potential confrontation. Audiences prefer to ‘anticipate their own experience’⁷ and any unexpected element can make the situation disconcerting. We anticipate, perhaps, that we will be given enough space from art in order to observe it, and the encounter is affected when this is lacking. For this brings the viewer into a direct relationship with the work. When this includes a performer, the audience are put into a situation where they not only have to navigate the work’s artistic content and their response to it here, but also the immediacy of another body in close proximity. Tension is infected into the scopic dynamic of their endorsed visibility as it is engaged with that of another. Vibrancy is created between

bodies through action and consequence. But why does this happen? The face-to-face nature of the encounter holds the spectator at the work's core. They remain there until they are released by the artist's look, or until the artist leaves the performance space. Over the duration of the exchange the spectator and spectated undergo a kind of performative choreography as positions oscillate. Hovering expectantly in the space, reciprocal looks skip over the contractual boundaries between artefact and consumer.

A reason that this outcome is created is concerned with the audience recognising that they are an integral part of the work's construction. The experience of self-visibility becomes more symbolically immediate for the audience when a live body is incorporated. Bilateral similarity is easier to recognise between breathing, animate beings when they are close. The situation is charged by the immediate tension created by forcing art and viewing bodies into close proximity. Positions are altered and re-worked to be mutually symbolic at the moment this happens. They begin to referentially rub against each other in physicality and sensibility. When the audience is invited to come a little closer, within reach of the artist's breath, positions can be shaken so much that they lose distinction. They become almost unrecognisable. The live art body both creates and senses the effect of temporarily transplanting the audience into the work. As the see-er becomes the seen, that which is usually overlooked is made known. Visibility in this situation creates the potential for audience inclusion through their (often unwitting) complicity. This can be a rather uncomfortable procedure for the audience, but one that is charged with the vibrancy of the moment. For me, and for the practice in this study, this is where the essence of the work resides.

There are implications that the performing body brings to encounters in confined, transitory spaces as seen in the practice of this study. The thresholds of body and site were instrumental to reduce the distance between observers and observed. The actions of the mouth were made potentially confrontational and spectatorial through site-specific placement of my body in the artworks of this study. By situating the live body in confined spaces, and through exploring the parameters of orality, I have sought ways to draw others into the reality of the practice through the very dynamics I have discussed. Faced with a licking or sucking mouth in close proximity, the audience was unable to retreat from the situation, or from others placed close by. The site bound the audience into the proximity of the action through its physical limitations. In effect, the actions were performed close enough for others to sense and feel them directly. Ritual repetition potentially heightened the effect: repetition created the possibility for the action to be scored onto the subconscious to make it feel present, immediate and in a state of process. Both site and deed layered the experience with temporality and immediacy. The reflexive constraints of site, process and proximity allowed experiences to feel temporally present.

The potential for sympathy or empathy to be produced in response to my performances has also played a part in achieving this. It seems work constructed on oral actions, particularly those driven by primal, non-linguistic urges (such as sucking and licking), can elicit empathic response from its audience. It potentially possesses such evocative power because 'taste and smell can only be triggered by a real experience of the same smell or taste.'⁸ Preconceived bodily experience informs empathy in this situation: knowing what it is like to suck in the primal sense brings out a response of sucking. In

being visible, smell-able and experience-able, any preconceived rules that govern relationships to spectacle are denied by the body engaged in such actions. Through watching the actions of another, empathy drives the decision to take part, whether wanted or not. In watching another suck and lick, an innate urge to suckle can be initiated. This was specifically seen in response to the live work 'Tonguing' and, as discussed through the main body of the thesis, a direct comment was made in respect of this.

Oral women and dogs

Considering the potentially 'wild' nature of transgression, it is perhaps pertinent that I came to work with animals. Animals are seen as un-socialised beings that possess different cognitive capabilities and behavioral sensibilities than humans. But 'the separation between human and animal diminished from an absolute biological distinction to an increasingly delicate web of ecological, social, and personal relationships.'⁹ Working with animals became relevant in addressing human acts of violation and transgression. I aimed to question how 'delicate' and interwoven our relationship with animals had become. This informed my choice of animal, and domestic dogs became of specific interest to this study for their status as 'pet'. The term *pet* positions dogs as 'nearly' humans. Pets have a close relationship with humans, and one that has significance for notions of gender difference. This is because there are socially generated and bound similarities between animals and human women, as discussed in chapter three. When a woman looks at this contiguous relationship through art practice, her animality is potentially made visible and

public. Using the mouth as a site of interaction between human and animal can enhance this. For this gateway into the body is a site of human dexterity: its communicable powers state that the human is more than an animal.

Consequently, a contestable and questionable state of affairs can be produced when human and canine mouths are seen to touch. Mixing fluids with another is relationally subjective in most circumstances, but this gains significance when the exchange involves a woman and a dog. The mouth is made visible and contentious as a result.

My artwork with dogs has raised a series of anxieties for others. Associated referents to do with sexual exchange, prowess of articulation, and cross-species contamination proliferated for some. The complex relationship between human and animals was predominantly responsible for this. Anxieties were produced in response to the rules of engagement between species, which are based on the belief that non-human animals are inferior. As the work involved me licking and being licked by dogs' tongues, questions could be asked of the sexual nature of the action, and what the result would be of mixing humanity and animality in this way. With the German shepherd and the Rottweiler dogs being breeds that are considered 'dangerous', my personal safety was also a potential point of anxiety for others. In effect, a question regarding why I would make myself physically and socially vulnerable was opened for discussion. This potentially concerned the effect of inter-species touch for me personally, and for humanity; questions could be asked of my personal 'human' boundaries, my personability, and my sociability. I have been asked *how* I can do this, and *why* I would want to. Caution and trepidation is often noticeable in the expressions of others who try to fathom this out. Of course there are some who are left

untroubled by the process, but who are still aware of the effect it can have on others. Those wary of what I might represent as a 'human' are often cautious, as if they fear any intellectual and physical contamination I might possess as a result of making the work. For when a woman becomes socially conspicuous and objectifiable through this type of work, *her* humanity and animality is open for discussion. This is because women are locked into a pattern of animal referents that it seems impossible to escape. In acting inappropriately, she becomes visibly animal and a dangerous human. The heritage of animality cannot be shaken off. Her behaviour is explainable *because* of her status as a woman. My work with dogs aimed to question humanity; by positioning human and animals as equals it aimed to question acceptable levels of human behaviour; by making the dog and woman visibly equal in action and visual frame it aimed to ask why this is considered unacceptable. Effectively, it reflected on human/animal difference and the problems that are produced for the artist when this is explored. For regardless of its role in artwork, the animal will remain just that: an animal acting as an animal. But by daring to perform actions with an animal the human appears more animal-like, and less human. Human status is affected by working with animals. It reflects the animality it embraces.

The relationship of theory and practice

The research initiated various relationships in its exploration of the effect of the object in art practice on the viewer. This included the relationship between art and site, and between art and performing body. How art is approached and

comes to be considered or seen is an association founded on these positional values, but there was another significant relationship in this research: that of theory and practice.

Theory and practice are intertwined, co-informants of the abstract and the tangible. Theory considers and informs practice; practice reifies, enriches, and influences theory. For relations between theory and practice to be effective, they should ideally be equally influential. Synergy between making and thinking is necessary for ideas to progress. There are, however, difficulties in simultaneity. Because theory and practice are founded and manifested on differing precepts and expectations, they often become rather uncomfortable companions when asked to co-exist.

I intended to find a way of making this happen for my work. Reliant on theory for influence and suggestion, the practice would inevitably benefit from its smooth integration. In principle, theory and practice should follow the same thought- and decision-making process; as both are enquiring and questioning pursuits, they suggest similarities in methodology. However, their methods tend to differ. A comparison of art practice and theory illustrates how methods may appear dissimilar. Art practice makes thought visible, and uses appropriate methods to do this. The artist exposes his or her thoughts, strategies and opinions by making artworks and exhibiting them to the public. By making viewpoints and ideals tangible and knowable, their individual sensibilities become evident. The artwork wears the artist's interests on its surface; it contains them in its mass. It exposes thought to the opinions of others by being

visible. In comparison, there can be relative safety to be found in theory. Its involvement in abstraction means that positions may never really be seen as concrete and finalised; an element of 'what if' is allowed to persist. The process of theorised thought means that questions do not necessarily have to be answered in full: an idea can be concluded or *un*-concluded with equal resolve. In fact, a question is as likely to be born of a question as a concluding answer being given. Effectively, the methods of theory can be used to produce more theory: it is never considered as finished. Even if produced as published material, theory allows for change in a way that practice perhaps does not. For however concluding published theory may appear, it still allows some opportunity for speculation. In posing questions it opens the possibility of discussion and dialogue, and allows the reader to speculate what the author intends for the subject. The reader, the public, may effectively feel that they can investigate the idea presented by theory further. In contrast, an audience may perceive an artwork as a metaphorical full stop. Art practice is, on the whole, a 'thing', a substance, or a mass to be looked at; it makes thought visually discoverable. The public performance of art as art makes it objectifiable, and the audience may feel they are experiencing a 'statement' rather than discourse and questioning.

However it is not always necessarily the case that practice makes this type of statement, as it may be staged as speculative or incomplete. But, even if the artist considers the process of making as similar to that of theory, thought can appear more concluded, more resolved, and less question-driven when produced as art. Whatever the intent, the thought behind the work can still be subjected to objectification. Indeed the artist may be hoping for reflective and

speculative relations with the audience and their work, but the public nature of practice can affect this. But despite the level of completion, artwork is produced as an externalisation of the artist's thoughts. It makes their thoughts 'solid'. For, as visual spectacle, art is placed to be looked at, to be objectified. This allows the viewer to believe that what they are 'seeing' and experiencing as visual material is a full stop, a statement.

The methodological differences of theory and practice, however slight or insignificant, can make the relationship difficult. This can be the case even if they are concerned with the same subject, such as in this study. Because they 'behave' differently they need to be approached differently, and this can make it difficult to work with both simultaneously. Oscillating from one position to another, from one way of working to another, can create confusion for the researcher. It can be hard to get 'in-between' these methods, and attempts to do so can feel frustrating. Consequently, as the research progresses, the differences in the relationship become more pronounced. This can make methods appear increasingly disconnected and dislocated from each other. A preference is often made in favour of one method; this results in the researcher assigning theory and practice with primary and secondary roles. The researcher optimises their potential results by primarily working with the more productive method. This allows negotiable knowledge to accumulate. In effect, it provides an experiential toolkit. Primary methodology has the opportunity to become robust as a result. Secondary methodology can then be used to support and progress the research and this was certainly the case for this study. Practice became the necessary, primary methodology supported and informed by theory. It was perhaps expected that practice would be the

favoured approach for this research, as I have a history of working as an artist. I see my primary 'job' as a researcher to 'make' work informed by theory. This relationship provided a supportive infrastructure for the research to prosper. Experientially and relationally orientated, the study needed practice to experiment with ideas directly. I found it necessary to make artwork in order to observe and relate to others' observations of it. In order to observe and confront the observations of the viewer directly, it was also necessary that the work be made as performance. I needed to be physically present as part of the artwork in order to watch, relate to, and engage with others' observations. For this allowed me to directly relate to their observations across the embodied space of performance. The effect of this saw the 'implicit', often overlooked relational gaze between artwork and audience made 'explicit'. This happened at the moment that observation became an exchange between art and audience. In effect, when the viewer recognised and acknowledged their gaze as reciprocated, its effect became relationally significant. The effect of both parties being engaged in the embodied 'act' of looking saw the effect of the gaze become a part of the process. In this way it became relationally explicit.

Summary

In summary, the 'in-between', whether in site, body, or circumstance, is potentially considered abject. The relational significance of this in my art practice has been of primary concern to this research. The investigation was predominantly led by the destabilisation of viewing conditions produced through the influence of orality. Orality was given significance because it demarcates

and prescribes the human and non-human through physical action and social behaviour. In effect it foregrounds the abject. The impact of witnessing orality in artwork was increased for viewers by the integration of a performing live body. For the physicality of the performer's body allowed it to get close to others to inhabit the space between observers and observed where spectatorship normally resides. The physicality of the performer's body means that it can meet, and confront the gaze of others who are looking at it as spectacle. The performing body enacts an ocular and physical infringement on the spectator by this act of transgression. The performing body exposes self and observer to the abject by exploring relational and spectatorial middle ground. For the abject resides between relational values. The experience of the embodied space of objectivity temporarily exposes the relationship to the abject. Transgression makes this happen. Consequently, the performing body was important for the practice of this study. Placed at the core of the spatial dynamic created by site-specificity and action, it allowed a more immediate and consummate experience for the viewer. For as observing and observed bodies met each other's gaze, the potency of the exchange set the conditions for the work's relational encounter. In this way, the live body effected and affected interaction; it 'infected' the viewing experience by being placed close to spectators.

Notes to the conclusion

¹ O'Dell, Kathy. *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970's*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 9.

² Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, Trans. Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods, (Dijon, Les Presses Du Reel, 2002), p. 23.

³ Jones, Amelia. *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject*, (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 9.

⁴ Schneider, Rebecca. *The Explicit Body in Performance*, (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 9.

⁵ Erickson, Jon. *The Fate of the Object*, (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 129.

⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2002), p. xxii.

⁷ Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (London, Penguin, 2003), p. 98.

⁸ Miller, William I. *The Anatomy of Disgust*, (London, Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 77.

⁹ Thompson, Nato, (Ed.). *Becoming Animal: Contemporary Art in the Animal Kingdom*, (North Adams Massachusetts, MASS MoCa Publications, 2005), p. 8.

Appendix 1: public outlets for the work from this study

Exhibitions:

East International 2009, Norwich University College of the Arts, 2009

Animalism, National Media Museum, Bradford, 2009

The Animal Gaze, Unit 2 Gallery, London, 2008 and Peninsula Arts Gallery, Plymouth, 2009

The Future Can Wait, Old Truman Brewery, London, 2008 and Galerie Schuster, Berlin, 2009

Five Years, Artsadmin, London, 2007

Il Giardino Segreto, Primo Piano Livingallery, Lecce, Italy, 2007

Le Carnival des Animaux, The Embassy, Edinburgh, 2007

Beauty and the Beast, Fieldgate Gallery, London, 2006

Piggyback Live, Gallery North, Newcastle, 2006

Artconcept, Art Laboratories and Dostoyevsky Museum, St. Petersburg, 2005

Hands Frees Series, Dorchester Arts Centre, 2005

Britney's Smears, Catalyst Arts, Belfast, 2004

Field of Vision: New York, The Lab Gallery, New York, 2004

Performances:

The Future Can Wait, Old Truman Brewery, London, 2008

Five Years, Artsadmin, London, 2007

I Am Your Worst Nightmare, Arnolfini, Bristol, 2007

12th International Sample of Performance Art(s), Ex Teresa Arte Actual, Mexico City, 2006

Sensitive Skin, Future Factory, Nottingham, 2006

Body Parts 2, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, 2006

National Review of Live Art, The Arches, Glasgow, 2005

Sensitive Skin, Future Factory, Nottingham, 2004

Britney's Smears, Catalyst Arts, Belfast, 2004

Performance Evening, 291 Gallery, London, 2004

Interdisciplinary Landscapes: Post Feminist Practices in the Arts, University College Northampton, 2004

East End Collaborations, Queen Mary University London, 2003

Intimate Spaces, Showroom, Powerhouse, Nottingham, 2003

Video screenings:

B-Sides, Upgrade! International, Paris, Montreal, Vancouver, Oklahoma City, Skopje, Belgrade, Vancouver, Boston, 2006-08, (touring)

SSA on Screen, Scottish Society of Artists, Edinburgh, 2006

Independent Exposure, Microcinema International, San Francisco, Houston, Nacogdoches, Seattle, Phoenix, Singapore, 2005-07, (touring)

Action – Performance to Camera, Side Cinema, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2005

Evaporation 1 video shorts, Speaker Palace, London, 2005

Inport: International Performance and Video, Von Krahl, Tallinn, 2004

Lonfest Film Festival, London, 2004

Escape Gallery, London, 2004

Candid Projection Room, Candid Arts Trust, London, 2003 and 2004

Brief Interludes, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, 2003

Cubicle, The Cube, Bristol, 2003

Max 5 Video, Cafe Gallery Projects, London, 2003

Curatorial projects:

Grottos, Candid Projection Rooms, London, 2004

Conference and symposium presentation:

PSI#14: Interregnum conference, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 2008

Intimacy symposium, Goldsmith's College, London, 2007

PSI#13: Happening/Performance/Event conference, New York University, New York, 2007

Talking Margins symposium, Artsadmin, London, 2007 (organizer, speaker and proceedings editor: ISBN; 1860502156)

Re-Sensitized symposium, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, 2007

4th Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities conference, Honolulu, 2006

PSI#11: Becoming Uncomfortable conference, Brown University, Rhode Island, 2005

Annual Centre for Continuing Education conference, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, 2005

Interdisciplinary Landscapes: Post Feminist Practices in the Arts conference, University of Northampton, Northampton, 2004

Research projects:

Ethics and Contemporary Art Practice, funded by Centre for Educational Research and Development (Fund for Educational Development), University of Lincoln, Lincoln, 2008

Appendix 2: descriptions of the art practice produced as part of this study and referred to in this thesis

2.a. 'If':

'If' is a three-minute monitor-based video work made in 2002 that shows my mouth being subjected to excessive lipstick application. In 'If', red lipstick was applied to my lips with a painter's palette knife until it was falling down, and off, my face. The mouth was increasingly opened and lower lip pulled down by the weight of the mass that had accumulated at its surface over the duration of the video. The action was performed to the song 'If' written by David Gates in 1971 and recorded by Telly Savalas in 1975. This work was first shown in 2003 as part of the show *Brief Interludes* at Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham.

2.b. 'Tonguing':

'Tonguing' was a live performance that included a wall-mounted replica of my tongue made in British seaside rock candy. This fleshy pink object mounted at head-height, and which smelled and tasted of strawberries, was licked and sucked over the thirty-minutes duration of the performance. In order to permit a non-confrontational opportunity to gaze at the action that was taking place, my back faced the audience during the performance, which concluded when the text that ran through the candy tongue's core was exposed. The repeated licking and sucking of this object revealed the words 'suck it' and after the performance it was left stunted on the wall. This work was performed in 2006 as part of *Body Parts 2*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, and *12th International Sample of Performance Art*, Ex Teresa Arte Actual, Mexico City. Subsequent performances took place at the Arnolfini gallery, Bristol, in 2007, and at the exhibition *Five Years* based at Artsadmin, London, in 2007. An adaption of this work, entitled 'Tonguings', was also performed for an audience of one as part of *Sensitive Skin*, Future Factory, Nottingham, in 2006.

It was possible to recognise the similarity between the 'made' tongue and the 'live' tongue from the outset in this work. Initially they pointed at each other, and from this moment they became visible as mirror reflections, as the live curved and pointed tongue could be seen to be mimicking the shape of the made. The object on display was, in fact, identifiable as a self-portrait by this action and the relationship between made and maker became re-established at the moment when the tongues touched. Subtle licks and slurps followed, and after a time exaggerated sucking became audibly and visually evident.

In antithesis to the usual residency of British seaside place names such as Skegness or Margate, the text in the candy tongue made direct reference to the event. During the performance assistants handed out small sweets to the audience, that also bore the words 'suck it' at their centre, from palm-sized, white, circular bowls. The text was important: it referenced the event and connected it to the audience directly. It invited the audience into a relationship with the candy tongue and sweets, as they had to read the text to gain an insight into the work's meaning and their position to it. The audience also became relationally involved with the performative action for the time they were following the sweets instructions. As they sucked the sweets they had been given they became part of the performance; a connection was established between performer and viewer by mutual sucking action. This non-verbal communication created an undeniable link between observers and observed that saw individual positions momentarily merge. The audience became an integral element of the performance through their temporary connection with the work's oral activity. They became intimately involved with the performative activity through taking part.

2.c. 'Spit and Lick':

'Spit and Lick' involved two women spitting in each other's face and then licking back that spit during a live performance. This was performed in a corridor in 2003 as part of *East End Collaborations*, and in a lockable prison cell at Nottingham's Galleries of Justice for *Sensitive Skin* in 2004. These small and confined sites ensured the audience was in close proximity to the performance.

I, and another female were initially placed as part of the audience, emerging from it shortly after entering the performance space. I then took the position of performer, by moving forward from the audience to spit in the other woman's face. This activated the reciprocal process of face spitting between us, which lasted three-minutes. Once the spitting was over, and after a short pause, we licked our own spit off each other's faces. I lead the way out of the space followed by the other performer when this act was concluded. The audience was left behind to contemplate and evaluate their relationship to the experience. The work was performed for five-minutes in total. 'Spit and Lick' was performed at *East End Collaborations*, Queen Mary University, London, in 2003, and *Sensitive Skin*, Future Factory, Nottingham in 2004.

2.d. '(dis)Placed':

The academic conference *Interdisciplinary Landscapes: Post-feminist Practices in the Arts* in 2004, informed the live work '(dis)Placed'. This work involved the suggestion that ten lipsticks were repeatedly consumed, regurgitated and re-consumed along with standard buffet food over the lunch hour of the final day of this conference at the University of Northampton. The performance lasted twenty-five minutes and was concluded when all the food and lipstick had been removed from the plate.

The consumption of the lipsticks and buffet food took place gradually, but gathered momentum throughout the duration of the performance. As it was not necessary to actually vomit the substance up after it had been swallowed, I faked regurgitation. The sight and labour of the action seemed adequate to entice the audience into the belief that they were watching me vomit. This method also gave the possibility for the action to be protracted over a long period of time. For I did not feel the effect of the action on my body as I was not 'actually' being sick.

I had preceded the performance of '(dis)Placed' at the conference by giving an academic paper. Titled 'Am I The Art: an Analysis of the Relationship of the Live Artist to the Event', this paper discussed how my practice was received, and used to inform others' views of my personality. A version of this paper was also given in 2005 at the *PSI#11: Becoming*

Uncomfortable conference held at Brown University, Rhode Island, USA. This performatively delivered paper (at points in the talk I spat on the paper from which I was reading) had specifically discussed how the female live artist is considered when she is seen to publicly engage in displays of inappropriate, or anti-social behaviour. The pivotal address of the paper referred to how the female artist becomes synonymous with the practice she makes when it is regarded as inappropriate and disgusting. It may be considered that she is in possession of questionable personal values as a result of this behaviour, and may subsequently be treated with hesitation and caution. The idea was that the paper would act as a prequel to the performance of '(dis)Placed'. It was intended that the live work would sit within references that the paper had addressed, and so be fed by the dialogue and critical framework within that discussion.

2.e. 'Wash Your Mouth Out':

'Wash Your Mouth Out' involved me washing my mouth out with white bar soap in the mirrored sink area of public toilets. This performance was delivered through chance encounter and was initiated when someone entered the main toilet space before going into a cubicle or standing at a urinal. The action produced retching as the bar was pushed into, and around my open mouth. This was particularly noticeable when the bar was passed over my tongue and towards the back of my throat. To conclude the performance I rinsed my mouth out with water and dried it on a white hand towel placed on the edge of the sink. I then left the toilets leaving the used bar and towel in situ. 'Wash Your Mouth Out' was performed five times, and for five-minutes each, in the male and female toilets of 291 Gallery, London in 2004 as part of an evening of performance.

2.f. 'Mouthings':

'Mouthings' comprised three components and was performed at the *National Review of Live Art* at The Arches, Glasgow in 2005. The work was listed in the festival's brochure by title alone, and the exact time and place of when and where the three actions would occur was

unspecified. The actions were performed in turn every hour over two consecutive twelve-hour weekend slots, and for five-minutes each.

In one of three parts that constituted 'Mouthings', I licked a corridor wall at head-height in front of audience members waiting to see a theatre-based performance. The other two actions that made up this work were spitting into a glass in the café bar and drinking it back, and washing my mouth out with soap in both sets of gendered toilets. The mouth washing part of the performance generally followed the same pattern as that of 'Wash Your Mouth Out' (described in 2.e.), except that it used liquid instead of bar soap. Stickers that read 'now wash your mouth' were affixed to the dispensers that contained the liquid soap attached to the mirrors above the sinks. Replica stickers were also visible on the inside of the door of each toilet cubicle.

2.g. 'Fur Kiss':

'Fur Kiss' is a one-minute, monitor-based video work made in 2003. This video features my pet German shepherd dog and me reciprocally licking each other's faces. We face each other side on in the visual frame, and are visible from the shoulders up. We are seen to be head-to-head, face-to-face, and nose-to-nose. The licking is constant over the duration of the video and the noise audible. The action appears somewhat like mutual preening and grooming between human and dog. The reciprocal interaction and equality of position that is visible between woman and dog aims to highlight their potential for social similarity. 'Fur Kiss' has been exhibited extensively, both nationally and internationally.

2.h. 'Licking Dogs':

'Licking Dogs' is a video work made in 2007 shown across four, floor-based monitors grouped together like a dog 'pack'. This work uses the same visual constructs and actions as those of 'Fur Kiss' (which is described in 2.g), but includes not one, but four dog participants: a German shepherd, a Rottweiler, a Patterdale Terrier and a St. Bernard. Each monitor shows looped footage of a woman and dog licking, and being licked by the other's mouth. Loud, licking,

slurping, and salivating are audible and visible in this work. The overall look is that of a lick-fest between human and dog pack members, and proximate beings. 'Licking Dogs' has been exhibited in this format in the exhibitions *Animalism*, at the National Media Museum, Bradford in 2009, and in *Five Years* at Artsadmin, London in 2007. A single-screen projection of this work has been shown at various national and international exhibitions, which include *EAST International* at Norwich University College of the Arts in 2009, and *The Future Can Wait* at Old Truman Brewery, London in 2008, and Galerie Schuster, Berlin in 2009.

The dog participants were as involved, or uninvolved in the process of constructing the work as they wished. This was important to establish a sense of equality between us, both in the moment that the action took place and in the exhibited video piece. I initially licked each dog to invite, and provoke their participation; their response, however that was constituted, was then used to create the work. This freedom saw different levels of involvement become evident. They were intimate and attentive (German shepherd), forcefully physical (Rottweiler), slobbery and short-lived (St. Bernard), and barely making contact (Patterdale Terrier). That the Patterdale Terrier chose to barely engage is an example of how much control the dogs had; he preferred to sit and look instead, and only offered an occasional lick at his discretion.

In showing human and dog mouths licking and being licked, 'Licking Dogs' presented the potential for humour and anxiety. The comparatively large head of the St. Bernard made some viewers laugh: its disproportionate size seemed potentially absurd. The physical force of the Rottweiler could be considered as potentially aggressive: he looked as if he may be too involved, too enthusiastic in his contribution. His breed did not help this situation, of course, and this was also true for the German shepherd. Although the latter's involvement could be regarded as gentle and considered, the anxiety that his breed creates could be seen to unnerve some viewers. The Patterdale Terrier's lack of engagement presented a potentially surreal situation: looking around, and away from me, he situated himself as if he were a comedian. As he moved and repositioned himself throughout filming, his command of the visual frame seemed to work with the conventions of comedy. Audience laughter has been particularly evident at the points where he looks directly down the camera lens.

Appendix 3: conference abstract for a paper given in 2007 at *Intimacy* symposium, Goldsmith's, University of London

Meeting Grounds and Collisions: boundaries, objects, actions, and spaces in-between

In life and art performative laws regimented by public consensus maintain boundaries to do with appropriate behaviour. When the artist transgresses the boundaries that divide and legislate, to inhabit the space in-between, a vibration is created that is liminal and potent: an intimate meeting space evolves where meaning is understood without rules.

The 'art/life gap' (as Günther Brus called it) is the driving force behind an artistic practice involved with abjection, intimate exchange, and the liminal human mouth. Addressing the marginalizing effects of abjection through concept and site, the practice explores the vibratory, polluting capacity of saliva. This is produced through activities that involve the collision of inanimate made, sculptural objects and live events, and canine collaboration. Live encounters of culturally borderline mouth centred actions (such as spitting, sucking and licking) are delivered in awkward, in-between spaces outside, but adjacent to the traditional art venue. Typically sited in gallery doorways, toilets and cafes, these actions and objects become inappropriate by being situated beyond the norms of the traditional exhibition space. Positioned *just* 'out of place' they are unrestrained; they exist without rules for how they should be viewed, or interacted with. These encounters situate the audience in the intimate, vibratory space between art and life and invite them to (often unwittingly) take part. To do with proximity and meaning, this sees the space 'between' relational spectatorial positions become the meeting ground where art production, meaning and understanding exists. This illustrated paper offers an explanation of the complexities, anxieties and interests of a practice that relies on boundaries being violated.

Appendix 4: conference abstract for a paper given in 2004 at *Interdisciplinary Landscapes: Post-feminist Practices in the Arts*, at University of Northampton, and in 2005 at the *PSI#11: Becoming Uncomfortable* conference held at Brown University, Rhode Island

Am I the Art: an analysis of the relationship of the live artist to the event

We set boundaries: social hierarchies and trends inform these boundaries; they are coded and gender specific. We live by, and are measured by their dictates. In a society, which concerns itself with frameworks, barriers and placement, we have givens as to what is wrong and what is right.

With social parameters establishing systems of what is correct and incorrect, how does the female artist articulate her practice to sit against, and with these constructs? When the female artist is inappropriate, and seemingly violating mechanisms of traditional patriarchal display, how is she received and positioned as a practitioner and as an individual? Does the art stand as separate from her being, or is this judged as part of her cultural entirety, reflecting back on her position and status as woman? Does the metaphor that resides in the art begin to reference the artist herself, or can a divide be maintained?

This paper addresses the social effect on the female artist making work considered transgressive. A performative element will be included: spitting, as an act of inappropriateness, will punctuate the spoken text. I aim to ask the audience to consider their feelings in respect of both text and action in doing this.

Canine Collaboration: objects, actions, and morality

Moving beyond symbolic boundaries that represent the polite and safe can present a problematic departure for the visual artist. When working with issues that are at the limits of the social parameters defining safety, decency and acceptability, a set of circumstances can evolve that activate disgust and repulsion. These circumstances may throw into relief the complex etiquette of behaviour and relations. And when you produce artwork through clearly visible, non-human collaboration, a set of ethical and moral dynamics can be seen to exist.

As an artist whose collaborative partner is her German shepherd dog, a set of reservations to do with contamination and appropriateness can become evident. With a focus on the mouth the work deals with a disruption of the polite and the social, and is produced as sculpture, video and live art. This collaborative work can involve mutual licking, the sharing of food, and the making of sculptural objects through chewing. The audience can be seen to demonstrate an emotive polarity of mediation, ranging from the horrified, to the amused, as ethical issues are raised. The morality of the artist is called into play, and questions range from those on health and safety, to what defines animal abuse. Pertinence is also given to what transgresses the thresholds of disgust, and to what is acceptable as artwork. This has the potential to make the work a site of conflict, and a focus for questioning on culturally acceptable working relations. The spectator may experience liminal anxiety through its viewing.

As a supposed dangerous breed, working with a German shepherd dog can posit a question of where the danger lies, with the art making human or the canine beast? And as a woman who works with acts of the mouth through canine collaboration, suggestions to unladylike behaviour and deviance can often be heard. Ethical rationales can become the main focus for work, because of the collaborative process and in spite of it. This paper hopes to question the anxieties regarding the boundaries between human and beast.

THE SCOTSMAN

Wed 16 Feb 2005

Modern art 'mess' scrubbed away by critical cleaners

EDWARD BLACK

TRADITIONALISTS would argue that much of modern art's attempts to push back creative boundaries deserves to be cleansed from the collective conscious.

But a group of Glasgow cleaners proved to be the ultimate critics after they scrubbed a bathroom from top to bottom without realising they were wiping away a potential masterpiece.

The team of cleaners were shocked to see the mess left behind in the toilets at the Arches in Glasgow, following the National Review of Live Art festival the night before. They found soap stuck to walls, toilet paper littering the floor, and unpleasant stains on the tiled walls and immediately set to work.

Yet after scrubbing the bathroom from top to bottom the head cleaner realised they had accidentally removed the live art performance of Angela Bartram, an English visual artist who specialises in showcasing "extreme bodily functions".

The cleaners can at least take solace in the fact they are in good company. Last year a bag of rubbish that was part of a work by Gustav Metzger, said to demonstrate the "finite existence" of art, was thrown away by a cleaner at Tate Britain in London. A Damien Hirst 2001 installation was also mistaken for rubbish by a cleaner at London's Eyestorm Gallery.

Georgie Fowler, cleaning and services manager at the Arches, said she could not believe the mess she found in the toilets was an installation.

She said: "I was really annoyed. There were stickers all over the walls and cubicles, she had stuck extra soap dispensers to the mirrors and there was soap covering the walls, floors and sinks.

"She had put up stickers that said 'Now wash your mouth out' and I thought it was a joke or something, I didn't think it was art - so I threw it all in the bin. It was such a mess. I was quite worried for health and safety as well because the wee mirrors aren't supposed to take the weight of dispensers.

"Normally, when a company is renting out our space they need to get permission to put anything up in the toilets, and I knew they hadn't had permission."

It transpired that a message had been sent by the festival's directors warning that nothing in the ladies toilet should be touched as it was part of the exhibition.

Up and coming artist Bartram had originally wanted to perform her work in the Arches venue itself, but concerns for health and safety meant that she was relocated to the toilets.

Her performance forced the audience into contact with the more "dysfunctional and impolite uses of the mouth". She spat, dribbled, licked, choked and chewed soap in a series of bizarre rituals.

Kirstin Innes, spokeswoman for the Arches, said the cleaner had simply made an honest mistake.

She said: "It was quite funny afterwards. Everyone was chuckling about the cleaner's mistake at the time. The Arches is proud of our track record in supporting new artistic developments and this incident is certainly not representative of our attitude towards the artist. This was an honest mistake resulting from a misunderstanding."

The National Review of Live Art is the longest running festival of live art in Europe and prides itself on extending the boundaries of art and understanding.

The Herald

Body Parts II, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh

MARY BRENNAN

February 21 2006

Midday Saturday, and Edinburgh's Royal Scottish Academy is thrumming with visitors. In the Finlay Room, Angela Bartram is sucking suggestively on something pink that's protruding from a wall. Small children want to know "what's the lady doing?". Are parents reassured to discover that Bartram is sooking vigorously on a candy replica of her own tongue? As she tongues away the tip, a wee white spot appears, with tiny red lettering that spells out Suck It.

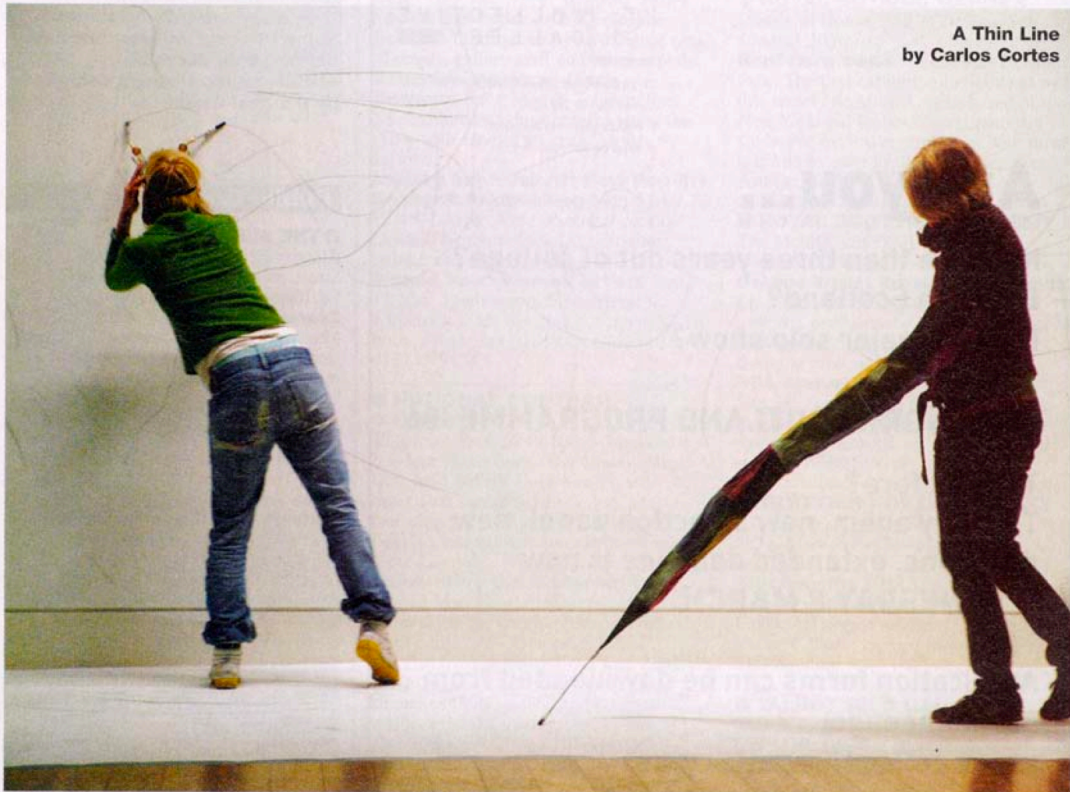
Afterwards, the tongue sticks out like a sore thumb, puzzling later passers-by – not least because Bartram's battered mouth has ringed it with blood.

That's what makes Body Parts really tick in terms of performance and intervention: in the midst of douce surroundings, you can walk in on something untoward that jolts you into looking at what's around you. Mark Wayman's RSA/ASR took this a step

further, leading us outside for what has every appearance of a guided tour, except that his meticulous descriptions don't marry with the vistas in our sights. It's whimsical, but profound because the details in his monologues – like witness statements – explore ways of seeing and processing information and his authoritative delivery encourages us to trust him before we trust our own eyes.

Elsewhere Zhane Warren spent an hour or more reading out a litany of fears – typed on rice paper – before eating them and Amanda Couch's palely elegant lady began by sipping tea but ends by crunching and eating her cup and saucer, cunningly made of icing sugar. A very conventional art space was enlivened by unexpected live art.

Visual Art



A Thin Line
by Carlos Cortes

PERFORMANCE ART
BODY PARTS II

Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, Fri 17 Feb–Sun 19 Feb. SHOW ENDED ●●●●●

With its risk and wrongdoing, performance art is rarely about rehearsal, and the weekend festival devoted to this art form demonstrated such problems beautifully. From Angela Bartram sucking a sugar cast of her own tongue stuck on a wall, to Amanda Couch eating her Victorian tea-set, conspicuous consumption is the kind of witty grotesquerie that the Body Parts festival delights in. But anticipating Bartram would unintentionally cut her mouth on the prosthetic bon bon during her teen-snogging frenzy, leaving smears of blood around the gallery wall, and Couch would accidentally break her crockery half-way through the performance is what makes this bravura show-and-tell so captivating.

Thankfully only resorting to video-works once, almost all the acts shunned sensationalism. The artists showed little artifice, and compulsive viewing of South African artist Zhané Warren's performance – eating over 270 slips of paper with her fears written on each and read aloud – made one of the festival's most powerful and brave acts. Delicate and languorous, Warren's parching

and ingestion of fear was coloured with personal experiences of violent crime in Johannesburg. This subtle, slow masochism was reflected in many of the performances throughout the festival, and emphasised the irreproducibility of feeling that live art creates. Yet not all were transient affairs – the finale performance by Carlos Cortes has left its fingerprints on the basement walls of the RSA. Recruiting the audience as fellow artists, Cortes' playful creation of communal graffiti harnessed the same sense of exuberance and inclusion that Found Collective's paper plane bombardment created for the festival's opening night.

Admittedly still an adolescent festival in its second year, the joint RSA and SSA effort is an encouraging push to create a new space for performance art in the capital. Boldly opening just one week after Glasgow's much-acclaimed National Review of Live Arts at Tramway, Body Parts has understood something quite significant about the nature of performance as public art: it competes with the NRLA's international status, but as a free festival. Opening unticketed to an unlimited audience, its approach echoes performance art's inherent principles of freedom: Body Parts is not for sale. (Isla Leaver-Yap)

Appendix 9: documentary witness account of 'Tonguing' written by Hester Parr. Performed 18 February 2006, *Body Parts II*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh

Tonguing: a wee ethnographic observation

There are people queuing outside, a mix of ages, some people look very arty, trendy, and some just average, carrying rucksacks. We had arrived earlier, but the security man had not wanted to let us in. He showed us the room where the tongue was stuck on the white wall. It looked funny, comical sort of and I felt a wave of apprehension, wondering what the audience reaction would be, what my own reaction would be.

Around 12 noon, the security man opened the door and people wandered in, some clutching their leaflets, looking round. There were more people than I had expected. Some people went up to the tongue and started taking pictures, which I thought was odd. The whole idea of performance art to me is about the event-like nature of what is it, its mobility and its transience. Ange's work disrupts that by using sculpture and objects that have a semi-permanence to some extent. Still, to try to capture some aspects of the performance through technology – the camera or video recorder – to try to capture the model tongue specifically in an event about live performance – seems odd to me. The room crowds, and there is an air of expectancy. Some space has cleared around the tongue – quite a large space – people have generally filled up the edges of the room. Some lurk near the door, unsure perhaps of their place in this kind of event, unsure of the event, unsure of the tongue. People's faces betray something of their expectation, some are smiling, some look slightly puzzled, others study their leaflets and chat. Ange is in the room talking to people she knows, including me. She looks sleek, in black. Her choice of hairstyle and clothes speak of performance. Her composure is one of expectant performer, although most in the room probably do not know it is her. Eventually she walks up the tongue and stands in front of it. The room goes silent. It is a powerful moment. The red tongue, the blonde hair, the black clothes, the white wall. The symbolic power encompassed in the colours, stance, moment and the crowds' respect for the space of the performance is captured by one of the curators. He videos or photographs the beginning, itself referencing and

reinforcing the power of the act. I had expected to want to laugh – the idea of my old friend licking a mould of her own tongue had seemed amusing in abstract – but in the moment of the beginning, I am caught to in the powerful moment of its starting, its symbolism and power. I think Ange knows this moment has particular power and I wonder whether she had thought hard about how to first lick, how to use and reference her own tongue against its replica. She starts by showing much of her own tongue and rather seductively licking the bottom of the mould. She holds her hand behind her back and I think immediately of how sexy this looks and how sexual her movements are, particularly the way she starts to lick. I had not expected this, given that previous performances have been about disgust and distancing and I think that other people in the room might have expected something other than this. This is immediately pleasurable. The people in the room shift, some crowding the edges of the room, some still in the doorway. They seem to want a sideways view, to understand and encounter the nature of the licking more clearly. Those around the door seem less sure, their choice of position symbolically representing their uncertain investment in this event. They look puzzled, but not disgusted. Some people come in briefly, have a look, smile in a confused way and leave after a moment. It is an intense space. Some people look embarrassed, some laugh quietly, are looking around for other's reactions but most eyes are on the performance.

The performance lasts some time. I wonder about the level of interest and how people might sustain it, but most are rooted to the spot, engaged. Ange licks and sucks more intently and with a variety of actions and additions as we move through this time. As I watch from the start of the performance, my own reaction is to be aroused. I find the actions, and her restrained hands behind her back very sexual, and I want her to inhabit this role further. I want her to release her hands and put them on the wall and move her body more, as if she is involved in a sex act. I am surprised at this reaction, she is my friend, but also a woman, but there's something about the act of the lick, the licking of tongue with tongue that evokes this strange feeling. I am not disgusted at this, at her and the licking at all, in fact, the performance almost makes me wish it was more so, more disgusting, and this also surprises me. I wonder about the other people in the room and if they are also aroused by this. I look at them, trying to decipher this, but this is impossible. A middle aged woman near Ange has looked wistful, amused and intense all the way through her performance and I think that she is turned on by it,

I don't know why, it's the expression on her face that makes me think this, it betrays her. Some people get lost in the moment, despite themselves. A young boy shifts position against the wall, a small smile plays on his face throughout the performance and I think he too finds it sexually intriguing. Halfway through the performance I begin to be aware of sound. Ange's licking is audible now and I wonder whether this is also deliberate. The crowd whispers and shifts and whispers and laughs and these sounds also make up the performance space. Some people can't keep watching and read their text, as those this will help them make sense of what is happening but also offer a break from the intensity. I think some people find the performance uncomfortable. Ange has by now released her hands, in a more intense way using her body, moving with the rhythm of the licking, and she also licks the wall. This is more obviously erotic, although I want her to put her hands above the tongue, and more deliberately reference the sexual connotations of the performance, I am laughing at myself now and my reactions to this, largely because it is Ange and I am looking forward to telling her that I found her work sexy. The sweets are being offered round, although I don't get one until afterwards. This is a shame, as I think this could be really helpful in accessing the performance, I think it is a clever participative device – to encourage and allow the audience to participate in the sucking and licking – to get a crowd who are using their mouths while watching someone else use their own in such an unusual way. I am not sure whether this increases the intensity for the other people. I do notice that the wistful middle aged woman goes for several bits of candy and even after the performance I notice her going for more before she leaves. I don't think that is just about craving sugar, it is also about other needs, uncomfortably, pleurably evoked by the transgressive nature of the act. Some people whisper to each other while sort of gesturing to their mouths and signaling a type of sucking with their hands. They are curious I think about the licking turned sucking and its nature. As the performance nears the end, I think about how this is a mixture of the public and the private. The tongue is a public/private body part anyway, inside and outside our bodies. We ingest, masticate, lick, talk, taste with our tongues – it is a body part that links us between the inside and outside. A funny device for communicating the world in multiple ways. This semi-private part is what makes the performance powerful in the public arts space. The act of licking also references the private/public disjuncture. This seems like we are witnessing a private act, sort of sexual in nature, and I think that's what feels funny and pleurably uncomfortable for the crowd. We are like voyeurs. It was always going to be like that I suppose. Ange stops and pauses theatrically and walks away. Some of the crowd on

her side turn to watch her face. What then surprises me then is the way the performance space collapses, the crowd merge immediately around the tongue, wanting to see the writing that they have been told will appear. The white wall, the respectful, nervous berth given to the model tongue before and during the performance is destroyed as people converge, colourful, noisy and curious. I laugh at this. I think it is funny that Ange's sucking has diminished the mould, literally, and the performance and the diminished mould disrupt the crowd's uncertain spatial relationship with the tongue. For now they seem less afraid, less distanced. They want to be proximate to the tongue after it has been licked, this I think is also about evoking something uncertain but desirable in psychological terms. However, the technology comes out again and now people are capturing the licked tongue, and again I find this odd, another sort of distancing. I try to listen to what people are saying afterwards, but it is impossible to hear. The moments after the performance are very important – I think this is about proximity and intimacy and distancing in a complicated relationship. The tongue is bought up close by the performance, the crowd want to be close to the tongue after the performance (although I do not want this). However, they also then distance themselves from it once again by returning it to an art object, referenced in their picture taking. I think the mould sort of transforms between an object, a tongue and an object during the performance and afterwards in people's imaginations.

Appendix 10: documentary witness account of 'Tonguing' written by Chris Philo. Performed 18 February 2006, *Body Parts II*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh

Tonguing

A typical exhibition space, white walls, straight lines; for the moment empty, bereft, sterile, perhaps awaiting the hanging of some old Masters. But not today.

Instead, something pink, unexpected, unsettling. True, not immediately that obvious, not taking up much space, but – once spotted – eye-catching in its pinkness, its promise of moistness, half-way up the otherwise blank wall (opposite the main entrance), about head height. On close inspection, its nature is revealed: a tongue, or rather a model of a tongue, not dripping, but just stuck there, affixed to the pristine gallery paintwork.

It is not entirely alone. Several bowls are scattered about the floor of the room, each containing what appear to be white-and-red sweets. Like the tongue, these are not at first noticed, and there is uncertainty about their relationship to the pinkness on the wall.

The people gradually wander, shuffle or stride in, their comportment reflecting prior experiences of the gallery environment, maybe their familiarity with performance art, maybe numberless personal preoccupations. Some keep walking, hardly if even spying the tongue sticking out at them from the wall opposite. Some hastily leave the room for the safety of the art in the next room along. It might be easier to interpret; it might not demand any input, any embodied reaction, from the audience – that's always the worry about performance art (you don't want to be part of the artwork, do you?). A child starts to chunter, seemingly on the brink of crying, and a man picks him up and moves on to the next room. Such disruptions to

exhibition space are problematic at the best of times! – but particularly in these hush-full instants before the performance. I wonder why.

The folks who stay seem a little nervous. We are a mixed crowd: young and old, some very trendy (art students?), others could have been on the family supermarket trip, one or two older men in tweedy suits, but nobody really making a statement ('look at me at this cutting-edge event ...'). Low talk, shy smiles – one of two possibly more knowing (ah, they know about performance art ...) – and people in ones or twos, perhaps threes or fours, murmuring, gesturing (at the tongue, the bowls, the other people). Why are we so quiet? Is this a learned gallery etiquette? Some people clutch programmes, some read these a touch obsessively (there is not *that* much text!), some hold notebooks and pens (art students?), and several wave around digital cameras or mobile phones with camera facilities. A few people are on their own, their eyes shooting flickeringly from tongue to feet to tongue to ceiling to the doorways.

I realise that most of us are trying to figure out from where the performance artist is going to enter. Or, just maybe, there will be *no* performance artist? Maybe the half-hour will just be us doing what we have been doing for the last five minutes or so? Maybe that's the point? It is hard to tell sometimes with this performance art: the *lack* of a performance may sometimes be the performance, or is our performance in waiting for the non-performance the 'art' of the moment? Temporarily, I had forgotten about the tongue.

No, this is nonsense: there will of course be a performance centring on the tongue. The programme tells us this, and our 'geography' in the room is revealing, informing each other that this is indeed what we are all anticipating. We make a surprisingly neat semi-circle, leaving a clear space free of people, bags or other obstacles around the tongue, with an obvious distance left between us, the tongue and whatever is about to happen in its vicinity. Is this because we are obeying certain known conventions of exhibition space, not crowding the picture, sculpture or even performance, not hogging sightlines of it, because we do not want to

upset anybody or intrude upon the 'thing' (again, perhaps, we do not want to risk too close a contact, an implication, with the artwork?)? Who knows, but we *do* seem to know ...

But, hang on, here comes a man with a proper camera and even a tripod: moving some viewers, he sets it up to focus on the tongue, reminding us all of the one really 'odd' thing in the room – which we may have started to forget, despite our semi-circular reverence. Good, there *will* be a performance, and, yes, maybe it is about to begin. There is a small ripple of excitement in the audience, and eyes now turn attentively to the tongue, albeit still with sideways glances to the entrances (do we secretly want to be the first to see the performance artist? Surely not ...). The chattering, quiet as it had been, now dies down even more.

The artist appears, quickly, with no fuss; in fact, she is there and the performance has started before anyone has a chance to register – and I still do not know where she came in! Dressed from head to toe in black, slim, trim, but slightly austere, slightly distant, almost striving to be anonymous, perhaps because the focus is not meant to be her – at least, not her as a person about whom you might ask questions (how old is she? is she rich or poor, successful or otherwise? where does she come from, not the doorway, but her home, her origins, her motivations, hopes, fears?). I also wonder whether we should ponder her sexuality, or is the interesting point going to be simply the embodied sensual moment of her encounter with the tongue – a mould of her tongue, I remember – somehow unencumbered by any allusions to / imaginings of (the wider frame of) her own, biographical, ongoing sexual being?

She starts to lick the tongue, her own tongue moving rhythmically around its small pinkness, sucking, lapping, slurping, even slobbering, with the occasional sound of mouthy lip-smacking. She is tonguing her own tongue, a provocative act of auto-French kissing; and, yes, there is a sexual pulse – as well as other questions about embodied exchanges – all coded into this insistent act, loving maybe, but also erotic, even rude, hinting at unspoken sex acts in shadowy spaces between strangers.

My sense – or is it just my sense? – is that the audience feels this sexualised charge; small thrills run through the assemblage, some embarrassment perhaps (and one or two people do swiftly make their exit), many smiles (there is comedy here too), and now whispering breaks out behind cupped hands pressed to neighbours' ears. The art students in particular swap thoughts, perhaps beginning to theorise once the first instant of response has passed, and one begins to write furiously in her notebook. Most people in pairs or threes pass words on what they are witnessing, again the smiles, even the odd giggle, and some point their fingers – an unnecessary action, surely, given that we are all looking the same way at the same unfolding drama – and even gesticulate (in a minor, restrained way, not to attract attention).

I am amazed to find a number of people taking pictures with cameras and mobile phones, or even, in one case, poking a camcorder at the happening. A woman with a camcorder gets quite close, really trying to get the tongue-on-tongue action on film, as well as then ostentatiously sitting down and panning her machine over the audience. She is the only person to make any kind of 'scene', other than the artist, and I wonder about whether the artist is happy about being recorded in this manner. I wonder about the 'intellectual property rights' involved here, and about the status of this woman's record of the performance – what if she used it on a website? in a publication? or in some teaching? – and the relation to what is presumably the more 'official' video-record of the performance being taken by the man with the camera-on-tripod.

The actions of this woman do underline the spatiality of the event, in that she is the only member of the audience to break the charmed semi-circle between us and the tonguing artist. The rest of us maintain our distance, and there remains unclaimed ground between us and her. There is nothing stopping us getting closer, as had camcorder woman; nothing to prevent us craning in our bodies, necks and eyeballs to see more, much more intimately, every flick of a lick, every puckering of a suck. Why do most of us not wish to be in there, at the heart of the performance, experiencing it first-hand (not at our respectful distance or later, vicariously, through our downloaded images)? Maybe we do not want to get covered in spit, dribble and drool – the usual fears about bodily residues, at least those of strangers, and wanting to keep

them safely distant – boundaries rarely breached, except perhaps in the heat of sexual indiscretion? Or, perhaps again, it is just this politeness, not wanting to spoil an other's viewing pleasure, or maybe is it this reticence about being centre-stage, of becoming part of the artwork? Whatever, we stay back, and the semi-circle is unbroken.

Various viewers notice the bowls again, leaning down to prod their contents. A few folks realise that these are sweeties – small fragments of 'seaside rock' – to be eaten, a realisation that diffuses as another woman starts to hand around the sweets in one of the bowls. We also start to perceive a connection between the sweeties and the tongue on the wall: perhaps they are made of the same ingredients? And so it dawns on us that the artist will actually be able to lick away the tongue, it will dissolve with the secretions from her saliva glands, as is the fate of a sucked sweetie. And our eyes are drawn back to the wall, to the risqué display of licking and sucking before us.

The artist is getting particularly intimate with her tongue. The whole 'show' becomes increasingly embodied, much more physical, and the sexual mood is heightened. She gets below the tongue, licking upwards and the noises get squelchier; and, to improve the purchase of her tongue on the imitation tongue, she starts to press her hands, arms, upper torso, more and more firmly against the white paintwork (the black on white is stark, with flashes of pink, real tongue on imitation tongue). But is the dissolving going fast enough? I start to wonder if the performance is going 'wrong'; if the sweetie-tongue is not going to be licked away quick enough, in the scheduled half-hour, and if the artist's increasingly frenzied actions are a sign of desperation, because the tongue-scape will not erode quick enough under the saliva-weathering? Is she worried? How much does the tongue have to be licked away? Can she stop whenever she wants? If she goes on too long, will it ruin the timetabled Body Parts programme? Or interfere with the hanging of an old Master? Is she really getting more frantic, or do I just imagine this? Or, most likely, it is all part of the performance – a working towards (the) climax? Or, again, is that me reading too much into things? I wonder what other members of the audience are thinking; but I do reckon that, with the growing intensity of the

performance, the sharper movements and louder slurpings, their talk has dropped and their concentration deepened.

And then the performance is over. Once more with no fuss, no acknowledgement of her viewers, the performance artist takes her leave of the room – perhaps a stray hand-wipe around her mouth, but otherwise giving no bodily indication that she has just been doing something rather unexpected before a gaggle of onlookers. I fancy, though, that she looks a little relieved, possibly even tired; but she does not look back, and in fact we pay less attention to her exit than to what remains on the wall. And what does remain? A pink and white splodge, still sort of tongue-shaped, but now rather stumpy, less defined, and even, possibly, drooping downwards. And all around the tongue – I like this – some licky marks, where the artist has tongued not just her own tongue but the immediately surrounding whiteness, collateral damage of her fervent tonguing efforts. The licky marks look like they would be sticky, with traces of pink and white smeared up, down, left and right around the last vestiges of the tongue-model. It occurs to me that the artist may actually have scarred the whole previously pristine white wall, leaving a tangible trace – a lick-slick – of her exertions; and maybe someone will now have to paint the whole wall white again to return it to its pre-performance state? That makes me grin inwardly.

The viewers huddle around the remains of the tongue, excitedly but also a little guiltily – are we allowed to do this? to break the semi-circle? And we tilt our heads, one or two or three at a time, to see if there is anything still to be learned at this tail-end of the performance. Is there a final clue, possibly even a key to unlock what went before, or can we accept that the performance was its own story, its own truth? But we do find something, exposed by the licking, brought to the surface by removing the upper layers of sugary pinkness: indeed, we find the words 'SUCK IT', upside down – was that planned, or was the tongue glued to the wall the wrong way up? – offering a final commentary on what we had just witnessed. Was it an instruction to us, perhaps to continue the performance, to resume the lick-sucking of the now absent artist? Or was it a provocation, perhaps telling us that we are 'suckers', that we have been 'suckered' by the performance, that we have been 'sucked' into watching something in

the name of 'art' that was *not* really 'art' at all but has now become 'art' because we are standing here gawping at the remnants of a fake sweetie-tongue stuck to a wall in an exhibition space in the middle of Edinburgh?

Hhhmmmm ... so many questions. We start to disperse, some lingering a while, maybe thinking my thoughts too; a few beginning to chat again, to reflect, to wonder about what do next, which café to go to. One or two of us keep shooting glances back at the sucked-tongue – maybe we think it is going to slide down the wall? Or that someone in a uniform is going to appear to remove it, perhaps in a plastic bag, tut-tutting about the weird things that artists get up to these days?

Chris Philo,

5th March 2006.

Appendix 11: documentary witness account of 'Tonguing' written by Lisa Crockett. Performed 18 February 2006, *Body Parts II*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh

I stood in the room against the wall opposite the tongue. People began entering the room, some following the roped off guided walkway, others tentatively walked into the wide-open studio/gallery space. A small crowd began to gather, whispering excitedly, whispering politely. An air of anxious expectation began to fill the room. The artist appears and there is some recognition by a few of the audience. Nudging each other, nodding towards Ang, whispering again. Ang walks to the pink tongue, she studies it, she licks it. At this point I turn away! I find it very uncomfortable watching my friend, confident, best mate, engaged in erotic activity with a pink tongue stuck on a wall. I turn my attentions to the crowd, a mixed reaction, still extremely polite. Curiosity, a few edge closer, bowls of "suck it" rock are placed on the floor. A young man leans down and takes a piece, popping it straight in his mouth. A girl grabs one studies it, sees the writing, click, you hear the penny drop. She tells her friends; they all eat rock. Ang is still sucking; there is an uncomfortable feeling in the room. I notice men shuffling their feet. They seem unsure whether or not it is ok to watch a girl sucking something stuck to a wall... I find this difficult too. I don't want people watching my mate being intimate, erotic, it doesn't seem right. There are only two brave souls, who venture close enough to observe Ang's movement. (I later learnt that they are performance artists themselves). Ang finishes, I breathe a sigh of relief, and she walks away. There is an excited rush towards the wall, everyone trying to see the "tongue". Laughter breaks out when the "suck it" is read aloud. Others look confused. I am still amazed at the politeness of the people in the room. The crowd exits quickly.....

Appendix 12: documentary witness account of 'Tonguings' written by Lisa Simmons. Performed 20 May 2006, *Sensitive Skin*, Future Factory, Nottingham

Tonguing – sensitive skin

Upon entering a small room with subtle lighting you are instantly hit by the sweet and sickly smell of confectionary. This confectionary however is a replica of Bartram's tongue made out of pink seaside candy and stuck to a wall at mouth level. The artist begins to suck at her sugared tongue with a fixed gaze towards the viewer. After a few minutes the artist moves towards another replicated tongue and begins her actions again. At the end of the performance you are offered a gift - a piece of candy with the traditional inner lettering of any seaside rock - however this lettering is 'suck me'. *Tonguings* was part of *Sensitive Skin 2006* and I can't think of a more apt performance to take place within this season of performance and live art.

Lisa Simmons

Appendix 13: documentary witness account of 'Tonguing' written by Manuela Antoniu.

Performed 24 November 2006, 12th *International Sample of Performance Art(s)*, Ex Teresa Arte Actual, Mexico City

Tonguing in the Convent

This promises to be huge. The organisers are expecting upwards of 300 people to attend, all of whom will have been aroused as a crowd by the immediately preceding performance: the forceful bursting into the performance space of 30 riot policemen in full working regalia, all beating in unison a hypnotic, menacing rhythm of plastic batons on plastic shields, the overall effect one of machine-like, practiced precision-quashing of an unspecified mass transgression.

Then the scale changes. It's Ang's turn. The place quietens. The arousal changes nature. Something about and around a flesh-like, pink protuberance sticking out of a white wall is about to unfold. The anticipation is palpable amongst the docilely sat down crowd. They have just been informed by the curator that the ambiguous-looking object (no one has yet had the opportunity to look at it closely) casting an extruded, pointed shadow down the wall's surface, is a rock-candy mould of the artist's own tongue - a three-dimensional freeze-frame, if you will; a captured instant in the outward extension of the bundle of muscles that is Ang's tongue.

The expectation of the pleasure of being entertained is here mixed with the frisson of the unknown, with the titillation of hovering danger (the previous evening, one of the performers had left himself too open to the whim of the participatory crowd and came uncomfortably close to an unscripted blade, so anything is possible). But where is "here"? What is this space, barely vacated by credibly choreographed riot policemen, in which Ang is about to perform?

We are in Mexico City, in the *exteresa* gallery of contemporary art. A gallery that has taken over a whole building. A building that saw the day, in the 17th century, as a convent for 22 Catholic nuns of the order of the Barefoot Carmelites. According to their statutes, contempt of the world encompassed denial if not mortification of the flesh. They could not abide the sight of their own bodies - they bathed fully clothed. They could not be touched - visually or otherwise - yet they had a secret observation gallery (*mirador*) from where they would watch, unnoticed, the congregation in the church nave below.

Thus, for those 22 Carmelites, the vector of vision was clearly unidirectional, centrifugated out and away from an own body so problematic it had to be encased in firm denial, frozen out of perceptual existence, repudiated, figuratively spat upon. So here, at *exteresa*, it seems that Ang, with her non-site-specific bodily organ performance piece, has nevertheless happened upon a space whose history could not be more apposite (and opposite), more redolent of very complex notions of the body and one's attitudes towards it.

To begin with, in Ang's performance that erstwhile vector of vision is emphatically refracted right back, as the whole happening unfolds in layered explorations of what could be called 'mirroring'. A mirroring that takes the form of a provocative yet unstated dialogue, one in which, moreover, the reflective surface itself, albeit mostly abstract, is far from overlooked.

The performance's cinematic sequence, its arc of action, is deceptively straightforward: Ang rises from amongst the crowd, goes to the wall, quizzically approaches the pink excrescence (which is jutting out exactly at mouth level) now from this side, now from that, then goes to work on it - at an unhurried pace, very methodically, she licks, she sucks, she slurps, again and again, then pulls back a bit (as if interrogating a canvas), then plunges in once more. The pattern is repeated over and over until, without forewarning, Ang wipes her (live) tongue on the wall in a continuous horizontal line starting at the replica, until the first opening in the wall occurs, sucks Ang in, and she's gone.

The first condition of mirroring that becomes apparent during the performance is the situational relationship itself between the artist and her object. However, as the performance progresses, this proves far from just a simple reflection. Here we have the artist beginning to interact with an object that is not only of her making, but quite literally of her. Thus we can talk of a specularisation of self through organ replication: the mirroring of the performer in a cipher - her severed tongue, an object that stands for her whole body.

The disembodiment - hence, reflection - is then further underscored by the effected transmutation of the organ of taste into an object for tasting (for potential devouring, even, through tasting).

There is, however, another transformation that the object at the wall submits to, and here Ang's movements become paramount. Her lithe black-clad body, seen mostly from behind, undulating against the white sheet of the wall, transacting with it, leaning firmly into it with both hands summoned for support and leverage, blond head bobbing, face engulfed, all accrue to an undeniable sexually suggestive effect. Ang is, for all appearances, fellating the wall. But is the assumed phallus the wall's or ... hers? This puts us in mind of another kind of mirroring - that of self through an other.

Echoes of the myth of Narcissus penetrate here, but of the myth's purportedly archaic version, in which Narcissus would have seen - and presumed animate - not his own reflection, but that of his deceased twin sister. At the wall's reflective surface, through her bodily replica, Ang has trans-sexualised herself into a male recipient of her sexual favours.

But the wall as mirror makes yet another appearance.

While Ang was hard at work, painstakingly unveiling with her live tongue the command written and embedded in the inert tongue ("suck it"), at the very moment when her sucking noises became discernible to the audience, under instructions from her I was to start distributing ... candy. From a white bowl. Thus the rigorously flat expanse of white wall containing a sweet containing a text, in the zone of spectatorship would curve up and morph into a concave receptacle containing sweets bearing the same text. Yet the textual echoing, of course, was to become apparent to them only at the end, upon close scrutiny of what was left protruding from the wall in the wake of Ang's travails.

With this sleight of hand were the spectators turned into speculators: mirror-bearers, but also hypothesisers – what was it all about?

Ang was long gone, but she'd left them a clue - if not a glue, a bond, a taunt: would they dare mirror her performance, by sucking to completion (in this age of AIDS)? would they dare suck themselves out of spectating safely?

The writing was, well, on the wall.

Physically arduous, the performance had drawn blood from her, and she then drew with that blood. That horizontal line she had traced on the wall was an ad-hoc bloodline, a constructed kinship uniting performer and onlookers in an ephemeral genealogy of reciprocal specularity.

Carmelites included.

Manuela Antoniu

Exteresa (el convento de San Juan de las Carmelitas descalzas), Mexico City, November 2006

Appendix 14: documentary witness account of 'Tonguing' written by Douglas Gittens.

Performed 10 July 2007, *Five Years*, Artsadmin, London

We seemed to be waiting for an age. The corridor had that discomfort of an elevator, a bit crushed in, a bit too close to strangers, even a bit too close to people I knew. There were some whispers, tinged with mild anxiety, people wandering whether Ang was going to start the performance soon. The corridor isn't like a room, or a theatre. You can't fiddle about and get comfortable, or chat to the friends you've come with. I got more uneasy. Because of the strangeness of the place, you can't get comfy, adjust to being 'audience', and prepare yourself as a voyeur.

And then there's the tongue, sticking out of the wall, a kind of misplaced stamen from an exotic South American plant, one of those flowers that eats insects. I've seen this a few times now and, in the past, prototype tongues have been stuck on the kitchen wall at home. In fact there is still a plaster one in the kitchen now, though it's a bit grotty with dust and age. So I guess I'm a bit of an aficionado of rock tonguing. But they always seem fresh in a new setting; the pink, shiny sweetness of a pristine, just unwrapped tongue, sitting on the stark white wall, each imbuing the other, object and plane, with a seductive promise.

People never want to go near it. Even in the confines of the corridor, people are more comfortable being a bit too close to strangers rather than step too close to the tongue. A semi circle has formed around the pink projection on the wall. There is some mild chat by now, but generally the space is filled with an awkward silence. Steve, a friend who owns one of the dogs featured in Ang's other piece, asks me what's happening; 'what are we doing now? Why are we in the corridor?' I don't think he knows that Ang is about to perform - so I explain and he ushers his partner in from the other room. Both individuals are displaying increased delight at the thought of watching Ang suck the tongue.

Ang appears at the end of the corridor, accompanied by a sense of group shared relief and a mild bout of that special coughing people do before a performance starts. Ang wanders in and approaches the tongue. She always looks the most vulnerable at this point, she's not quite in tonguing mode, like she's in the wings, or waiting for the curtain to go up. Then, when she finds her mark and the performance starts, she has that level of concentration you see in boxers, a total focus on the activity, and a singleness of purpose. The act itself, the tonguing, starts with a mirrored pointing of her tongue towards the sugary cast of the same tongue on the wall. And it's this point for me, which diverts the whole performance away from an overtly sexual metaphor. Ang is sucking her own tongue; it's obvious when her tongue quivers just millimetres from the pink one on the wall, the rock tongue shares the same size, shape and stiffness to Ang's tongue. This knowledge takes the work in a different direction, not in a narcissistic sense, but rather a reference to the self, her own mouth and her own body, rather than someone else's. It's like we are privy to a secret pleasure normally reserved for her alone.

I've never seen the work as overtly sexual, that is, as a metaphor, symbol or abstraction of phallatio. Though, arguably, those references are around the work and probably unavoidable, whether Ang intended them or not. You see, people more often get like this about food, especially when watching others eat their favourite or special food. Oral gratuity is, I think, more immediately associated with strawberries, bacon sandwiches and chocolate flakes, rather than sucking a cock. Phallatio is a reference to eating special foods, rather than the other way round.

When the sucking starts, I have a job to do. It's quite a relief really. I attain the opportunity to move around a bit, avert my gaze from Ang's increasingly disturbing actions and meander about, offering people a piece of chopped up seaside rock from a bowl I have been nursing. I feel like a perverted version of those desperate salespersons you see in shopping centres, trying to get you interested in a new phone or bathroom. This time though, the audience are very receptive to having a sweet, smiling and saying thank you. Maybe it's the corridor – last time I did this, Ang was performing in a large open atrium and the audience were more

transitory, more mobile and able to make choices. Stuck in here, maybe individuals feel more obliged to have a sweet, in case someone views them as a kill joy or unwilling participant.

Sweeties passed out, I return to my spot and suck on a bit of rock myself. I don't even like seaside rock that much, or Kendal mint cake, it is a very northern treat; you pay for the sweetness with the fire of the mint. Growing accustomed to Ang's sucking, I notice the relationship that is formed between the performance and the other works in the exhibition. Earlier narratives of previous performances are being read out quietly through two speakers at the other end of the corridor. The terminology of Ang's tonguing filters through the space; licking, sucking, spittle, dribble, protuberance... The licking of the dogs next door becomes extraordinarily loud and I become aware of the group sucking and tonguing that's going on around the corridor. We are all sucking a bit of tongue now, salivating, rolling and slurping behind the confines of our lips. We are now akin to Ang, but socially ok, not taboo, not an affront, not a challenge about our own mouths, inner workings, fluids and organic grossness.

Over time the actions become accepted and it is as if Ang reads this, unconsciously, because once everyone is ok about her sucking this pink thing on the wall, she stops. Ang looks at the tongue for a brief moment, pleased or pleased, glad it's over - I'm not sure - she then walks away down the corridor. The performance is over and people breathe out a little and commence sharing polite gallery small talk, observing their own rituals reserved for spaces like this. Things return to normal and its then that you realise how abnormal Ang's behaviour has been, how extraordinary challenges have been presented to us through something quite ordinary. And it is this final revelation that stays with me - how taboos simply shift about. That despite the best taboo smashing efforts of 20th century art and culture, we are still deeply codified beings, like we need our taboos even more in order to belong to something or somewhere. The taboos might change their identity, shape shift into another disguise, but they are still with us. In order to understand what we are, we still need to understand what we are not.

Douglas Gittens

July 2007

Appendix 15: documentary witness account of 'Tonguing' written by Gary Jones. Performed 10 July 2007, *Five Years*, Artsadmin, London

A tongue is stuck on a wall. Really, it's a small pink protrusion in a large empty corridor.

Actually, I already know it's a cast of Ang's tongue but nevertheless as we pass through the corridor to drop bags off I think to myself how tiny it is – like I was expecting some fuck-off monster tongue that I'd have to step around in order to pass by. Even so, you still walk by on the other side of the corridor, like it gives off bad vibes or something and you don't want to get too close.

As the corridor starts to fill up with people, we pick up our bowls of candy in readiness to hand out to the people watching – small pieces of rock with the words 'Suck it' running through them, inviting people to join in the performance by active participation. We take our positions in the crowd that has now assembled, waiting for Ang to arrive. From my viewpoint, I can see the full length of the corridor, and it strikes me that people have left this huge space around the tongue, choosing to use the ends of the corridor rather than being close to where the actual performance will be. It just seems to me that being far away is odd – like watching a band in the cheap seats, you won't be quite close enough to soak in the atmosphere.

The shuffling of the crowd starts to dwindle when Ang enters the corridor, and everyone now has their eyes either fixed on the performer or on the tongue, waiting to see what will happen next. Ang moves over to the tongue, looking at it at first, and then beginning to lick it. At this point, I'm waiting for my cue to go round and hand the candy out, I'm itching to get that job over with so I can settle down and watch the performance. But Doug waits for a small while, letting everyone get a glimpse of the action first and only then moving to hand the candy out. On cue, I offer rock to all of the people close by and begin to move behind Ang to the other side so I can offer sweets to them too. But fuck, Doug gets there first and I'm now stuck in a kind of no-mans-land where I can't really go back because I'd obstruct everyone's viewing again and I'm

now the closest person to Ang, just behind her to the left. She's now sucking the tongue, arms down to the side and I'm actually thinking 'Shit!' at this point, quickly realising that no-one has moved in close because there's an air of uncomfortableness being very near to this personal act. Perhaps they all knew something I didn't, or maybe they were all being cautious.

Ang continues to suck at the tongue, sometimes stopping to look at it before resuming. I think to myself that perhaps I'm supposed to be turned on by this because there is something very sexual in it – it's very much like someone going down on somebody for Christ's sake – but I'm not really, maybe because of being uncomfortably close, or Ang being a mate, but more I think because I'm trying to work out what it's all about. I already like the humour element to it – I know that the tongue also has the words 'Suck it' running through and there's something quite humorous about that. But what else is there to it? Uncomfortable. You feel uncomfortable watching this – I'm feeling very uncomfortable where I'm positioned. So there's something of the voyeur watching this. But the use of a tongue has to be significant – I mean, if you just wanted the shock value you'd just cast up a knob wouldn't you – so the tongue must hold some meaning. Taste, touch, speech – what else is it used for? Perhaps it's something to do with cutting one's tongue off to spite their face.

Clearly there's some depth to this but my thinking wanders and I start to listen to the girl in the speaker to my left. There are two speakers, on either side of the corridor wall, and I can hear the girl in one of them giving a description of the performance. How an older woman is sitting on a chair wearing red lipstick, how a younger boy is leaning against the corridor wall, shuffling uncomfortably. I look to my left and both of those people are right next to me, and I start to think how amazing – there's someone giving live commentary – but in fact I know this can't be the case because the feed from the speakers was on even when the corridor was empty, and yet...so accurate. And I start to listen to the speaker while watching Ang, who now thankfully has her hands against the corridor wall while sucking (I thought how uncomfortable it must be to just stand up without any support). She's saying how turned on she was during the performance and I'm compelled to have a quick scan around, wondering what other people think and wondering if any of them are turned on. But it's at this point that the performance

concludes – Ang has walked away and a couple of the audience have got up to inspect what remains of the tongue. I go to place the bowl of candy below it, quickly noting the ‘Suck it’ phrase that has now appeared. Some people gather round, but many just move away. It leaves me thinking that everyone here must have a different interpretation of what they have viewed – that there’s no ‘one’ reading. I suspect Ang would be happy with that.

Glossary of key terms

The following is provided for ease of reference, and comprehensive definitions of these terms, and their relevance to this study, can be found in the introduction.

Abjection

Abjection exists between the boundaries that demarcate roles and positions within relationships and situations. It occurs as a consequence of a boundary, or boundaries being breached, and the experience feels uncertain, ambiguous and unknown. The abject naturally occurs at 'in-between' sites such as the human mouth (as a space that separates the inner and outer body) and as a consequence of encountering unfamiliar territory. This research has specifically explored abjection through an analysis of the performance of inappropriate oral actions, such as spitting and licking, and by denying conventional distances between the audience and artwork that contains such actions.

Disavowal

Disavowal is the process of denying knowledge of, and connection with a situation or experience. It is a reaction that is typically given to performance, and one in which the audience may 'act out' their role as viewer. They may seek to project a response that appears unmoved by, and detached from the experience through this process. Disavowal has been significant to this research, as it has provided a benchmark of typical levels of engagement from which an

analysis of the affect of performance actions delivered at close proximity to the audience could be measured.

Performativity

Performativity is defined as a ritual that constitutes an act through repetition. Essentially, it is a proposition that establishes the act to which it refers, such as being charged by the police with a crime. Performativity is the enactment of two locutionary actions: illocution, which creates cause, such as a promise or threat and perlocution, which is the effect of an illocutionary act, such as being frightened or engaged. The reiteration and repetition of oral rituals in this study discusses their illocutionary 'cause' and their perlocutionary 'effect' in terms of how they are understood in relation to the performer.

Transgression

Transgression is concerned with infringement and going beyond acceptable physical, psychological, conventional or moral bounds. Acts of transgression concern a breach of the boundary that maintains the acceptable social or personal norm. An example would be if one gets uncomfortably close to another person, particularly if the act is unwanted, as their sense of physical and psychological self would be compromised. This study is concerned with two types of transgression: the effect of positioning the viewer uncomfortably close to my performing body, and how the performance of anti-social actions, such as spitting, impact on this situation.

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