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A research report submission in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF DRAMATIC ARTS

From

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

For out of the darkness, comes the moment of exposure: Discovering androgynous performance through alchemy

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For out of the darkness, comes the moment of exposure

Discovering androgynous performance through alchemy

This research report aims to reflect on a practice based period of inquiry in the area of performance studies. It will reflect my analyses, interrogations and experimentations informed by questions around the possibility of creating a performance event that does not take gendered practice of role/behaviour/sexuality as given or essentialised embodiment (Smith 1993:3), but which challenges, problematises and attempts to re-construct the frames that exist in role expectation in an effort to create androgynous performance. The study looks for the possible answers to this question through the lens of performance studies, using the metaphor of alchemy to explain the process of performance, or the process towards creating a performance event itself. The research is informed by the researcher's personal lived experience, agitations and recollections of events in the past and recent. The paper will function on various levels. The first being to frame the concept of alchemy for the purposes of arguing in favour of it as a practical and reflexive approach to creative processes. I will discuss performance as a malleable phenomenon, doing so by drawing on creative processes that have already been carried out. These experiments include an improvisation which I recognise as and have named: *moment of exposure*, a performance titled: *invitation to correct* and another experiment which I have called: *the garage process.* These processes fall into the domain of performance via different but connected modes of inquiry. The study embraces an auto-ethnographic research methodology of 'discovery through alchemy'. Autoethnography as explained by Tony E. Adams and Stacey Holman Jones (2011) is a research method which tries to disrupt traditional and dominant ideas about research, particularly what research is and how research should be done. The Autoethnographer, they say, treats identities and experiences as uncertain, fluid, open to interpretation and revisable. The researcher might respond to subject matter using various media to represent 'findings'. Such responses may value embodiment, performance and alternative ways of knowing. An example of other ways of knowing may be evidenced in the researcher embracing: through analysis and interrogation, the cultural standpoints they inhabit for example.

The autoethnographic research method uses personal experience with culture or a cultural identity to make unfamiliar characteristics of the culture evident or identify what is familiar for insiders and outsiders. The ‘autoethnographic’ refers to a sharing of politicized, practical, and cultural stories that resonate with others who are then motivated to share theirs, effectively bearing witness, together, to possibilities shaped in different kinds of telling.

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Part I: Orientation

1.1 Introduction

I am interested in an active working against. Those places we go to so easily. I seek to rupture their surface rhythms.[1]

The findings of this study are both generated and generative. The study as well as its findings shift. The shifts are both conscious and unconscious. They do not exist in isolation. The study performs and it is performed. This too shifts. I write from and within various, yet very particular positions; I am an African, South African. I am a Motswana female-born individual. I am a theatre-maker. It is impossible to write this paper without locating myself within it. As part of my Practice as Research I proposed to undertake a process that would result in an androgynous performance event. I imagine the notion of the androgynous, at a very basic level, to refer to a manifestation of a state of 'in-between-ness' across many spheres. In my most idyllic imaginings, however, is the existence of:

The unsexed body…which like that!, would eradicate a fundamental biological determinant. An imagining of a body that performs without representation. A body, which, despite its margins, is unbound…

But first, orientation is essential. And I would like to expose you, the reader to some of the incessant 'wonderings and wanderings' (Acty Tang, 2005) along with some of the writings (as I have begun to do above), that have influenced the undertaking of this study. Tang articulates his own 'wonderings and wanderings' as he grapples with writing on the topic of the *Body performance in the wake of social trauma.* In his thesis, he introduces a beginning in which he was 'caught in between unspeakable discontent, and the scrutiny of the viewer's discourse: always demanding meaning, order, and truth, something with which to identify. He grapples with trying to not only make sense of his own process, but to also satisfy the necessary academic requirements for him to obtain his master's degree. He orientated the reader, by not only

[1] This is the first of creative writing that reflects various thoughts that occurred throughout the period of this research.

including his personal accounts, but stories from other theorists, when his own would not do in isolation. I feel that it is important to include some of my own influences and thinking processes from the periods before, and during the undertaking of the study. This orientation I feel will provide both you (the reader) and myself (as the one providing a reflective account of the journey of the research) with a sense and understanding of how it is that we find ourselves here, in this present moment.

1.2 a. Often, when I am observed in performance and…

…I am asked afterwards, 'where did you go?' I am, in most cases unable to answer as I do not feel that I ever left. Most recently after a performance in which I collaborated in an improvisatory performance with a group of various artists who had never met before, I found an answer that seemed to accurately describe the experience of my own performance process during that event. The performance event involved a poetry reading which was accompanied and complemented by musicians and movement. Because of my training in the physical theatre and contemporary style of performance, I took part in this performance event as the movement artist. The most exciting thing about our collaboration is that we had never worked together before and had only met a few hours before the performance. And during this meeting I remember committing out loud (this happened during a conversation) to be 'present in the presence' and to have 'presence in the present'. That intention on my part gave the performance the energy that it needed for the 'magic' to be created. By being present in the presence of the other performers and allowing my presence to be both receptive and responsive to their offerings and contributions we created the potential for a reaction to take place. If the performance space, auditorium, studio were to be likened to a laboratory, our coming together as performers was similar to that of foreign elements in an experiment, and the result a chemical reaction that in all consideration – with largely opposing and conflicting factors (Singer 2000), should have failed or ended disastrously, instead created gold. Our first time collaboration, in my eyes, was a successful one. It gave us the collective ability to transform the space and ourselves in the space, and to transport ourselves and the audience on the journey. I imagine that what takes place in performance is that 'thing' that directors often encourage the performer to do when they say 'just go there!' That thing that has something to do with trusting the process or what is probably the

most ideal, to surrender yourself completely to the process. These things are easier said than done. Often one needs to warm up to the process. Initially there will be some hesitation or nerves that come with things that are new and unfamiliar or things that which at first seem to be just plain scary, as the beginnings of this research definitely were.

1.2 b. Often when watching a performance…

… I experience the urge to leap on stage and be part of the action. Sometimes the feeling is of complete appreciation, other times it is because I am so moved or impacted upon that I feel it an absolute injustice that I am not part. On very rare but numerous occasions, it is because I feel that I really should be on the stage to make it (what I am being exposed to) 'all better'. I wonder how many other people can say that they have experienced such an urge and where it stems from? There is a saying that young people are throwing around these days. The acronym of which is FOMO: for 'fear of missing out'. Perhaps that is the root impulse of my urge, I do not know, but I know that this feeling which I experience for whatever reason is what has led to my area of study.

I cannot yet name this yearning. Perhaps it is for a 'diplomatic' or democratic theatre: i.e. representing the interests of various and opposing forces, factors or elements (Tang, 2005), allowing for the oppositions to exist in harmony. I imagine a space in which one can exercise the right to involve oneself in whatever capacity in the action of a particular event. I am interested in what I imagine to be a kind of theatrical experience that creates the conditions that allow for the possibility of an active engagement by an audience member if/when a subjective impulse occurs. A performance experience that is not overtly about getting people involved, but one which activates personal story and enables reflection. This making it possible for people to get involved if they would like to. And because there is no outright mission to involve people, the event should also be able to stand on its own despite or in spite of the presence of bodies within it.

For the person that is involved in the experience, whether in their capacity as a performer, witness or participant-observer/performer to be deeply moved or removed from a conscious or critical reality. Some people might describe such an experience as a 'transportation' to an elsewhere. If one is part of a process, that has a beginning, and end, there is often a point in that (in most) journey, story or narrative when a climax is

reached before the story can be brought to a close. The big reveal. The thrill after the suspense. The moment of magic. Exposure.

I think that this is an important study to take on for both performers and non-performers, because I feel that we are all creators in our own right. Whether skilled with the understanding of performance, or theatre and the techniques of construction and compilation involved, I feel that it is necessary that attention is paid to the experiential aspect of construction and compilation: i.e. to understand the processes and phases that may be involved in our working towards creating something (O'Toole, 1992). I think that this study may benefit individuals involved or interested in works and practices that have the body at their core (Abramovic, 2012, Barba, 1995, Brook, 1968 and Grotowski, 1968). It is a study that I think is important as an attempt to awaken questioning around the systems that influence how the body functions and to understand the unconscious ways in which the body is presented and represented (Richard Schusterman, 2006): how it communicates and makes offers in a stereotypical and expectant manner when certain demands are made on it, and even more important as an exploration towards gaining an understanding of the ways in which to work through the common and easily depended on offerings (Anne Bogart, 2001), in favour of a way of communication that is attuned and engaged, at an internal: moment to moment level, as opposed to the more externally constructed and often predetermined rationalised and numbed (by conditioned or internalized attitudes and beliefs) approaches. I believe that it is important to attempt to investigate ways of creating process or performance events that engage people critically. O'Neill describes the crafting of a process drama as one that is closely related to contemporary theatre in its approach to role. She describes the creative process of contemporary theatre as one in which the body is placed at the core of the theatre event; serving as a site of 'ultraincarnation' in which the body is at once living and functioning as an artificial object; suggesting, illustrating and presenting a role, rather than character (1995:70). The desired achievement of such a crafting, I imagine, would be to do so in a manner that does not make the participants more aware of their differences, but which facilitates an experience that brings about a responsive critical consciousness (existing outside of the bounds of thought and speech): exposing the fragments that make up the whole individual. This consciousness would take shape in a heightened form, wherein the potential to bring about change is ever present. The transformative presence: being as a result of engaging the individual

participant in an embodied experience, that lessens or eliminates the immediate necessity for cognitive and dialogic processes that often distract, stunt or disengage in a process,

Involvement with process in my own experience of study has sometimes proven to be difficult, because of the context: i.e. the classroom space being one of learning, and associative power dynamics. On many an occasion we were unable to disengage from our critical thinking selves, for the sake of 'living through' an event. And while the term 'living through' has been continually experimented with and reinterpreted, since posited by Dorothy Heathcote (1984:88) for example. It is the suggestion that 'living through implies continuously arresting the process of living to take a look at it, and it is the 'spectator' as much as the 'participant' that re-engages with that living' (Millward in Bolton 1999:232), that I align myself with here.

It is important that it is a creative process experienced as opposed to observed (Abramovic, 2010, Landy, 1982), as it is only through an undergoing that one can be confronted with the many positions and attitudes that they hold in their everyday practices (Emunah, 1994), and to be re-exposed to the ways in they respond to things that stimulate their bodies in ways that they are not typically familiar. I feel that this is an important study to take on in order to establish whether it is in fact possible to create the conditions where this kind of heightened awareness can be realised. This by giving people permission to cross boundaries (Giroux, 1992, Prentki, 2009) and creating the space in which the crossing and the validity of those boundaries can be brought into question through reflection. In relation to the argument on boundary and border crossing Massouni (in Grosz, 1995: 131) argues that:

> boundaries are only produced and set in the process of passage. Boundaries do not so much define the routes of passage: it is movement that defines and constitutes boundaries. These boundaries, consequently are more porous and less fixed and rigid than is commonly understood…

I am interested in the transformation potential (Fischer-Lichte, 2008) of creating the conditions of an event where we do not read everything that we are before we engage or respond. In other words, I am interested in exploring methods for the undergoing of processes which immediately activate the thinking body. I feel that it is important that we are involved in processes where the reliance on our minds making sense of experiences is lessened and the body's reception and

response is highlighted instead. Processes in which we are incited and encouraged to just be present, in a here-and-now-space, that is not cluttered by excessive rationalising processes (Bogart, 2005).

1.3 Gender

I have proposed to use this study to confront my discomposure with the specifics of gender. Gender is a problematic concept, which, continues to be organised (in terms of how we embody and practice gender specific roles) and defined, but which, in my opinion, points towards the existence of a state of androgyny outside of the accepted concepts of feminine and masculine. In an article describing androgyny as a state of mind, Stephen Feldman (2001 and 2007) defines gender identity as a subjective view of oneself, explaining that an individual can identify as either man, woman, both or neither. I recognise in myself, an automatic obedience – in my application of the particular social/gender roles, taught to me in my formative years. What I mean is that, I, from an early age understood that I am part of a system that has functioned and continues to function as long as the particular 'role ideals' – largely influenced by biological make-up and environment – are fulfilled. In my case these roles are of: daughter, scholar, member of society and community and potential wife and mother. My obedience involves making considerable efforts to ensure, that the expectations within those roles are, to satisfactory degrees, met. An obedience that I have observed to mean that I deny or compromise my own authenticity because of the conditions or expectations of a particular environment.

Navigation is key. Your internal GPS guide to the perfectly placed positions that keep you in check. So that you are never out of place.

Gender is a process of personal negotiation which is discourse defined, while sex is an alterable anatomical phenomenon. The sex with which one is born is no longer the absolute determinant of the individual's gender status, practice and community. The surface of the body is itself a signifier. It is inscribed and therefore translatable and explainable, reflecting conventions and attitudinal discourses. The gender argument has come a long way from being merely about the configuration (i.e. the inversion or protrusion) of the primary organ (the penis) determining

whether a body is considered to be male or female. Dianne Willen (1998:460) states that gender involves the relationship between prescription and practice, men and women, social and cultural history, the culture of which affects perception and experience. Judith Butler says that the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus

> a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce and sustain discreet and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions – and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction compels our belief in its necessity and naturalness (Butler 1999 [1990]: 178 in Distiller, 2004:4).

I often interrogate the particular attitude and behaviour shaping systems that have influenced me thus far as a black female theatre maker, with a background framed by Setswana culture and a Lutheran-Charismatic Christian foundation. I have developed a heightened awareness of the ways in which we (referring here to my personal experience as well as that of the peers I have observed to share similar if not exact backgrounds/spheres of influence) adjust ourselves in order to appropriately step into spaces where practice and behaviour is ordered and defined, in ways that are significantly discordant with how we are when we negotiate 'contemporary' space in our personal lives. The abovementioned ways of adapting, appear to me to be placed as approaches to life, which do not take the 'living' aspect of life into consideration. In my opinion, it is only if we live responsively and receptively to the everyday experiences of our lives: where there may be planning, but essentially experiences are not known, because they cannot be predetermined, that self-reflective learning take place. These adaptations rather become escapist representations of ideals that are removed from the body that is in the world now. They, instead are 'game-like' structures, within which we practice or engage semi-consciously stepping in and out of roles that meet or satisfy certain demands or expectations; keeping up appearances by repeating and venerating the practices that proliferate the function and power of those systems. This 'heightened awareness' of the various ways in which I have observed my own negotiation through the frames of my sphere of influence, is what has inspired my interest in interrogating notions of gender and its influence on role through the lens of performance. Particularly within the blurry spaces when the role which one is playing is not easily discernible from that which is, considered 'real' or expected.

Ambiguity – which is associated with a multiplicity of meaning, interpretation or possibilities – has become that which necessitates the formation of gender difference (Morris, 1995). West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is a process of doing, not a role one inhabits…not what one is, but what one does in interaction with others. It is dependent on context, different enactments of different masculinities and femininities in different situations. It is not an inherent state, but one in which people collaborate to create gender. People: both men and women adopt gender displays that are expected of them. Butler's argument on the performativity of gender, extrapolates what West and Zimmerman describe as a doing. Butler's focus is on the effect of the repetitive act of doing. She argues that because people grow accustomed to a certain routine of performance or presentation, they come to believe that it is mandatory, effectively perpetuating the belief as an essence of gendered practice (in Morris, 1995:573).

Androgyny has proved useful as a means to navigate unknown spaces in performance – not only the unknown territory between male and female, or gay and straight, but also the juncture between expectation and reality, history and fiction, other and self (Elizabeth Klett 2006: 181). My use of the term androgynous, refers to the emergence of the 'blurry spaces' in performance situations or events which are catalysed by a transformation of some sort. An inexplicable space in which there is potentiality. It is an ambiguous space which, in my opinion, involves the balanced combination of a sensitivity, attunement and empathy with assertiveness, firm control and responsiveness in situations and encounters.

Androgyny has also been adopted to obliterate varieties of role expectation, informed by gender specificity. Dictionary definitions often describe androgyny as possessing both male and female properties, this in reference to a composition of a whole being. In their article about *Androgyny as a lifestyle,* Joy and Howard Osofsky (1972), give a practical definition of a society without stereotyped behavioral differences between male and female roles on the basis of sex alone (1972: 411). The term androgyny itself is often, according to Catriona Macleod (1998), used to refer to a codified discomfort over or anxiety with homosexuality: as threatening to patriarchal views of masculinity.

I think it is important at this juncture to make mention of how the queer debate fits into the androgyny argument. The notion of 'a queer community is often used to construct a collectivity

no longer defined solely by the gender of its members' sexual partners. This new community is unified only by a shared dissent from the dominant organization of sex and gender' (Amy Goodloe, 2009). Queer identity cannot, by its very nature, be fixed, but is constantly under negotiation, as it were, defining itself over against the non-queer, the normative, the institution of compulsory heterosexuality. The key difference and reason for my difficulty with queerness is the general understanding communicated above. One of my main concerns is the 'dissent' from dominant organizations of sex and gender. These organisations in fact are a necessary component for my reflections and considerations, because they are so present in the experiments and analysis. It is not my intention to deny them even in my acknowledgement of my discomposure with such organizations.

June Singer (2000:11-12). sets out to provide an understanding of what androgyny is by outlining what it is not. She says that it is not hermaphroditism or bisexuality. She defines hermaphroditism as a physiological disorder in which sex characteristics of the opposite sex are found in an individual. It is a term, she says, which generally refers to the appearance of abnormally formed external genitals which resemble those of the opposite sex. She suggests a move towards recognizing androgyny 'as an essential reality of human nature'. Such a recognition she says might move us into a world where roles and behavior are more fluid.

They tell you this way and that. Explicit and punctuated. Like this, never that… It's this side and that, and over here sits the border. A dividing reminder that you stay in the place demarcated for you. Marked. Your space to play, forever.

The 'constructedness' of the body becomes most visible when it exists outside of the normalised convention of presenting it: when it is not in alignment with the community of practice to which it belongs (Morris, 1995:570). Exploring the potential of creating a performance event in which an androgynous performing body, occurrence or language is realized, is what was at the core of this research.

It is for you
All of this
For you
So you understand what to do and what not to do
It is best that you follow

The path demarcated for you
It is in your best interest
The signs
Of
Propriety
Are
Everywhere
You can't ignore them
Remarkable how
They teach you
Guide you
Correct you
They apply
And warn

'An androgyne is a projection of a society caught up in defining an object with its opposite and is ultimately useful in describing a search for harmony only if one sees the world and its phenomena as divided into antithetical fields' (Sara Friedrichmeyer, 1987: 72). Recognizing this projection provides a basis of understanding of why and how the ordering system that defines and rigidifies, is extended to the alignment of sexual categories. One can only be defined and identified in relation to the objective standard as opposed to what may be seen as the inferior subjective individual. Van Leeuwen (2006) maps out a chronology of the embrace and rejection of the concept of androgyny as 'unrealisable'. He includes Virginia Woolf's interrogations and hypothesizing that the mind should in essence be androgynous in the same way that the body possesses and has the potentiality to express characteristics of both sexes, so too should the mind. Woolf defined a 'normal' state of being as that in which the male and female principles exist in union within the individual. Van Leeuwen explains that these ideas of 'spiritual cooperation' (Woolf in van Leeuwen, 2006: 57) significantly subverted the dominant psychology of her day. He does, however, seem to ignore the fact that her approach seems to function within the dualistic realm of reasoning that separates the mind and the body. The Cartesian concept of dualism, according to my understanding perpetuates the notion that the mind and the body exist as entities that function harmoniously and yet are separate and independent of one another.

Singer is of the opinion that the new androgyne suffers some confusion with an image that was popularised in romantic literature. The word 'androgyne' she says had been used to describe 'effete young men who wore foppish clothes' or 'women with boyish figures and façade'. She

describes the Romantic era in England and France as tasteless in how it dealt with sexual pathology, the macabre and the diabolical. The writings had no concern for a 'wholeness and fusion of the sexes but with a superabundance of erotic possibilities'. The new androgyne, she argues however, is not confused about his or her sexual identity. Androgynous men express a natural, unforced and uninhibited male sexuality, while androgynous women can be totally female in their own sexuality. The concerns of the androgyne are mainly 'intrapsychic' according to Singer (2000:15). There is an acceptance of the interplay of the masculine and feminine aspects of the individual psyche. They complement the other according to Singer (2000:15). 'The androgyny principle is intuitively experienced as the key that can unlock the prison of sex and gender – a key that is available to anyone who has the courage and imagination to make use of it'.

In mythological structure, there are gods that are immortal and androgynous. They represent images of perfection: in never-ending life and in wholeness of being respectively. The mortal man, who is only half of his perfection however, has a definite and inescapable end, death. The Ouroboric, or tail-eating serpent is the archetypal model for the conciliation of the beginning and end, male and female, life and death. The mouth and tail of the serpent remain in contact, creating an unending cyclic movement that is associated with immortality: i.e. the never ending cycle of life or production (Arturo Schwarz, 1980: 58-61). The tail eating snake symbolizes a self-contained, circular process that expresses what I would like to achieve in the carrying out of a creative process. Where the individual is most aware of themselves in the company of others, in relation to other bodies inhabiting the space which they too inhabit. And more especially aware of the effect of their behavior on the other bodies' behaviour as well as the space which they inhabit. Marion Woodman (2012) refers to there being a divine marriage, in every creative process between the masculine and the feminine. The fruits of this marriage being the 'fifth element', 'the hermaphrodite', or 'the androgyne'. Catreona Macleod (1998:29) says that the word androgyne is also a linguistic construction: a composite, which suggests a forcible bringing together of polar opposites as well as an artful fusion. She describes it as an unruly word and a paradox because it also masquerades as the union of opposites but instead maintains the separation of disparate elements rather than enacting fusion.

Elizabeth Klett (2006:182), states that the body: both in real life and on stage cannot – transcend or forget its gender. In acknowledgement of that I will admit that the elements worked with in this study contribute to gender identity. The body is at the core of all of the experiences; in the exploration of the possibility of it performing without representing anything (and without taking away the body, by making it absent); in explicitly making a commentary on how it is inscribed or activated out of a necessity for survival or meaning-making practices that come with role behaviour. According to Singer 'Androgyny begins with our 'conscious' recognition of the masculine and feminine potential in every individual and is realized as we develop our capacity to establish harmonious relations between the two aspects within the individual' (2000:23). I would argue that the androgynous being is one that has an integrated cognitive and somatic functioning. In practice it is a being that thinks through its body. The body learns through experience and experience teaches the body to remember things it has already embodied. It is this understanding of the body as a container for storing memory that is often referred to in writings about the body as 'archive'. I am of the opinion that, even though role assignment, to a large extent defines one's mannerisms and traits in order to satisfy societally determined prerequisites of that gender – no one identity can be assumed at any given time. That the manner in which an individual, approaches any one situation can involve a fusing of roles that may independently appear gender specific. I may for example adopt both the masculine and feminine aspects of myself in one given situation and not have to discriminate between the propriety of one over the other, as both qualities are likely to benefit the circumstance.

1.4 Embracing Androgyny

An androgynous performance, as delineated by this research, is one that allows for the possibility of the 'wonderings and wanderings' (my personal writings as indicated in italics throughout the study). The various ways in which the concept has been explored in the research study, will be unpacked throughout this paper. I have included both the personal and the practical approaches in this report in order to orientate you towards some of the thinking processes that have influenced the beginnings and execution of this research study. It is an allowing space. It is a space of possibility. The androgynous space is an allowing space which is not dependent on or expecting that you bring to it the roles, behaviours and other ways of being that you are or occupy on a regular and everyday basis. The androgynous space allows one to live outside of the

limitations of expectation, in welcome of surprise. Whether that is entirely possible one can only continue to discover through the alchemy of the creative process.

I have identified the approach informing this study as one that does not fit neatly or comfortably into categories. It is an androgyny that is associated with more than one possible meaning or interpretation, which may sometimes cause confusion or uncertainty. This is a complex matter. As matters of identity, belonging and embodiment are. I have a consciousness about the complexity of choice and the intersection of expectations within space, environment and interpersonal relationships. It is not possible to just be one thing, in my case: to just be a Motswana without being black and female. My discomposure and restlessness is with the confines of these categories or identity markers. The experiments that will be referred to in this study are androgynous because they are ambiguous. They are also informed by my dis-ease with what it means to be a woman. With womanhood. This however, is not a queer study. It is possible that I might argue or reason with logic characteristic of queer theory which is a broad area of study. To clarify matters, I do not identify my work or myself as a queer individual, nor do I feel the need to define or legitimize my space within a particular kind of queer community or body of thought. It would probably be much simpler to locate 'my queerness' as a kind which functions transgressively - effectively positioning my personal discomposure with or aversion to categorization. This is a strongly held position influenced by living in a country-on-the-brink-of anarchy, where it is disadvantageous to be identified as black, middle class and a woman, but is even worse to be identified as a black, female-born, lesbian-identified individual from the location[2] for example. This is merely a reflection on how the association from both identifying codes; for example, how the assistance of clothing and signs, could conjure up considerably evocative specifics about the person described. I would like to emphasise again, that my discomposure and restlessness is with the confines of the abovementioned categories or identity markers. It is precisely because of this complexity of categorization that I resist the possible association with queerness. While significant, I do not think that it is a primary focus of this study.

[2] A location is also referred to as a township in the South African context. 'Ghetto', which references the American equivalent is sometimes used by South African youth.

The experimental processes of this study will be analysed through the lens of autoethnography, which allows me to sit with and interrogate concerns about what it means to be a black, woman born into the Setswana culture and belonging to numerous others in the year of 2012. Tami Spry (2001:711) cites Minh ha who emphasises that the living body or the subjective self of the researcher is recognized as a salient part of the research process. The autoethnographic text emerges from the researcher's bodily standpoint as she is continually recognising and interpreting the residue traces of culture inscribed upon her hide from interacting with others in contexts. The researcher is the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns. Stacey Holman Jones (2005) describes it as research method which works to hold the self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis.

This study does not follow a particular or dominant approach to research. It creates an inventory of voices. The design of the study is greatly influenced by Anne Bogart's concept of viewpoints in which there is a methodological focus on re-organising ways of thinking about performance. Breaking up the components of the acts of performance, the overarching elements of which are time and space: involving architecture and spatial relationships.

Ann Hamilton (2012-2013) describes the process towards creating a work of art as one which involves a sequence of recognitions. These recognitions in her own work are historical (in the sense of a personal, lived history) and are largely influenced by past moments. In one interview she recalls how the memory of her grandmother reading to her became an integral part of her most recent project, *The event of a thread.* She reflects on how one's history can influence the manner in which one comes to understand oneself as an artist. Similarly this study is concerned with identity: it is reflexive and fluid. I will refer to the abovementioned experimental processes I have carried out this year, in order to illustrate how the performance events connect to the concept of alchemy and androgyny. While apparently different, these processes/projects are connected to, inspired by and have led to the discovery of an alliance with the stages of the alchemical process and androgynous performance. Below I introduce you to the 'elements' that make up this research. The experimental processes undertaken provide frames of reference attempting to answer and challenge the research question as it has been put forward. It asks:

> Is it possible to create a site-specific performance event that does not take gendered practice of role/behaviour/sexuality as given or essentialised embodiment (Smith 1993:3)

but which challenges, problematizes and attempts to re-construct the frames that exist in role expectation?

In the description and analysis of the experimental processes I will uncover some of the accidents, deviations, errors, faulty calculations and struggles (Smart 1985:56) that came before and inevitably or inadvertently initiated the start of my journey into this research. I will discuss the notion of performance from various perspectives: Performance and space; Exploration as performance; Performance as resistance/activism and Collaborative performance. I will argue that the androgynous performance event or experience is a result of the undergoing of an alchemical process of creation, involving the action of elements. It is androgynous until it can or is named or reflected upon. This because the naming of a thing that was at one moment undefined, is no more, in the moment of its definition. Androgynous performance is elemental. I find myself in appreciation of Saraswati's (1998:330) practical observation that this is because 'the action of elements on our lives is alchemical'. It is a process of digestion. We digest inspiration, ideas and experiences which according to Saraswati, activate a 'psychometabolism'. Experiences are processed by the brain as well as the nervous system. It is a continuous process. These are some of the aspects of the study.

I imagine an androgynous performance to be experiential. One that allows for the possibility of what we would normally consider impossible to exist. Not characterised so much for what it represents and/or reproduces: consider the performance of roles associated with gender for instance. Anne Bogart[3] suggests that the purest form of female art is non-linear and cyclical…there is not female and male there are gradations in between. Whatever you put forward, you must also put forward the opposite. That in her opinion is what makes feminist art subversive. I envisage a body, performance event or space that can embody these gradations that is not specific only to a female art. Wherein the body, whatever its form can become a non-representational vessel for a magical experience that can rarely be explained. While Bogart's argument is specific to the paradigm of feminism and the female perspective, I would argue that her logic applies to the concept of the alchemy, which involves a cycle of transformative processes, in which opposite and sometimes conflicting elements are made to react and respond. I feel that the gradations of which she speaks would constitute androgynous spaces or performance. Wherein a body can surrender to a moment: without definition in, or limitation by

[3] Anne Bogart on Viewpoints, Women in Theatre: dialogues with notable women in American theatre. (2004).

the past, but a presence in a present moment that unfolds into an indeterminable next. Ann Bogart and Tina Landau (2005:19) refer to a surrendering that allows one to 'fall into an empty creative space' and instead to be driven by a trust in the existence of something that is outside of the ego or the imagination.

1.5 Alchemy: a creative approach to performing androgyny

> Every great journey begins with disorientation... (Anne Bogart 2001:70*).*

Alchemy is a process that can be described in a number of ways. Its history is widespread and fits in to the paradigms of science, religion and psychology, to name a few. A characteristic element of the process of alchemy, is that of discovery through transformation. Dennis William Hauck (2013) highlights a concern, in alchemy, that is with the underlying principles of *how* things change as well as the basic processes of transforming one thing into another. It is the process of de-composition towards re-composition. In a variety of arguments, the abovementioned discovery is described as both an inner and an outer transformation which allows one to collaborate with or surrender to an energy, force or impulse beyond or outside of oneself in the organic unfolding of an experimental process.

In writing on the origins of Alchemy, Paul Keyser (1990:353) states that Alchemy is the anglicized Byzantine name given to what its practitioners referred to as 'the art' or 'knowledge' often characterized as divine, sacred or mystic. It transformed from a scientific search for transmutation into a mystical search for transformation writes Keyser. The focus in this regard being that of transforming the mind and the soul into their most perfect, divine nature (Keyser 1990:368). Franz Hartmann (2013) describes alchemy as not only an intellectual, but as spiritual science which is also as an art. He describes the process as one of 'becoming'. This process of becoming can also be expressed by the traditional formulas of initiation: the suffering, death, and resurrection which is made possible by the symbolic transformation of matter. Whether raw material, base metal, divine or human spirit, there must be the suffering of purification and separation, in which something changes character. Whether material or human, the change in

character involves the separation of elements in order for them to be reformed into something other (Hartmann, 2013). Alchemy involves an acceptance of a pattern for the unfolding of a work or process that is not known or owned, but which requires an openness to whatever that pattern might be. It is a grave mistake, in Hartmann's opinion, to confuse alchemy with chemistry, as alchemy does not mix or compound anything; it causes that which already pre-exists in a latent state to become active and grow.

In Hauck's opinion, the great work of alchemy has always been to speed up the natural process of perfection. He describes a history of alchemy that has always been on the edge of science and religion, involving different yet similar processes which seek to activate the hidden energies trapped in matter to achieve gold. Gold, being the symbol of the hastened perfection and in some respects, the outer manifestation of the inner ideal. The achievement of gold is what weaves all the different processes together. Extrapolating the spirituality mentioned above, the alchemical process, in this regard is an internal one. It takes place in the laboratory of the spirit and the soul wherein the gold is a spiritual achievement of enlightenment (Hauck 2013).

In her application of alchemy to mythological structure June Singer (2000) lists a four-fold design. In this explanation, alchemy, firstly starts in a *massa confuse,* also referred to as a disordered chaos. Wherever we find it in myth this stage refers to that which lies before the 'source' or 'first cause', or even causality itself. Nothing is differentiated in this stage, yet all potentialities are present (pp84-85). In what she details as the second stage: *Nigredo,* is where everything is hidden in a pregnant blackness and the indeterminate formlessness develops substance and shape (p85). In the third stage, a stirring occurs. Something begins to stir in the chaos and something is called into shape which, in its nature is principally androgynous. At first the androgynous lies asleep, unconscious of its containing – what is often used to describe androgyny as– 'the two within one', and still more unconscious of its potentiality for separation and differentiation. What occurs at this stage is the key shift or transformation, which Singer calls the 'epoch of transition' or the 'fall' (p85), and which I refer to in my research as 'the moment of exposure'. The fourth stage which she describes as speaking back to mythological structure contains concepts of creation and the created world. This in alchemical terms would involve the coming together of the opposite elements to create the 'new' element of their

chemical reaction. Herein she identifies a tension between separate male and female aspects that long for reunification (p85).

Alchemical processes involved in psychology refer to chemical imbalances that take place in the brain and body and more specifically to character disorders as investigated and treated by Carl Gustav Jung. Keyser (1990:371) notes Newton, Goethe and Jung as three great figures who were heavily influenced by alchemy. Newton regarded alchemy as part of his intellectual life, and as important as his work on gravitation and experimentation. Goethe believed in it in the sense of obtaining mystical substances with transmutative powers. He believed that the rules of nature applied to particular things as well as to universal ones. Jung connected the symbolism of alchemy and the structure of the unconscious. He described the process during which the individual becomes aware of their own androgynous nature as that of individuation. During this process the man is aware of his feminine 'anima' and the woman is aware of her masculine 'animus'. This awareness is what brings about a sense of balance in the individual. The balance is a result of embracing the opposite aspects of the individual as unified within the individual, as opposed to forcing or perpetuating their conflict-heavy split. The conjunction of the opposites brings about a new union in alchemy. In this union, the opposites have been differentiated, and the newly formed substance purified. In terms of the development of the human soul, either through meditation or through psychological work, this corresponds to the differentiation of the various qualities that make up our own personalities. This means for example, that we are able to break loose our idea of what we are from the self-images we have constructed in order to conform to what we imagine to be the expectations of our roles in society (Singer 2000: 102). This process of individuation, as per Jung's construction, would in an alchemical paradigm, be referred to as the 'golden awareness'. The abolition of the conflict embedded in the Cartesian male-female divide for a reconciled body (Arturo Schwarz, 1980:58).

In terms of art forms, Hauck states that the process is similar across the spectrum (of arts, or disciplined practices: from acting and dancing to tai chi and meditation for example). The artist tries to transform dead matter into something living that speaks to those who experience it. The magic of alchemy he says is what lies behind the artist's impulse to create (Hauck 2013: n.p), the impulse is the trigger. He states:

> The most basic task of the alchemist is to center himself within the consciousness of the divine creative presence so that he or she can leap beyond themselves and humbly assist in…the great work of the universe.

Van Leeuwen, 2006), describes mercury as the most significant symbol. It dissolves all earthly binaries because it exists at the beginning and end of all alchemical processes. 'Androgyne', 'hermaphrodite' and the 'fifth element' are among the terms that are used to describe the product of the chemical reaction that takes place when mercury and sulphur are put under heat. These names speak to the incestuous relation between the elements which should not be made to transmutate. I am interested in the concept of the androgyne and its application and resonance in theatrical performance and performance studies.

Arturo Schwarz states that 'Man is a bisexual organism that has forgotten its bisexual origin' (1980:57) He states that it is the alchemist's concern to bring this reality back to consciousness. To endow humans with the proverbial gold, in the form of awareness. I appreciate Schwarz' notion that the 'quest' is the most important aspect in alchemy, he argues that the undergoing of the quest, which brings about a self-consciousness and awareness is revolutionary and thus a reward in itself (Schwarz, 1980:57). This study will investigate whether it is possible to create a performance event that does not essentialise gendered practice, but which, in undergoing the alchemical 'quest' is able to create an androgynous performance. The kind of androgynous performance event that occurs out of the activation and effective transformation of matter: the body, mind, and seemingly incompatible or conflicting ideas and concepts.

The material liberation of philosophic gold from vulgar metal is a metaphor for the psychological processes concerned with the liberation of man from life's basic contradictions. Jung points out that 'from its earliest days alchemy had a double face' (Arturo Schwarz, 1980:58). On the one hand, he says it involved the practical chemical work in the laboratory and on the other hand, a psychological process. The psychological also involving two parts: a conscious psychic aspect as well as a consciously projected aspect: made evident in various transformations of matter.

The laboratory in the case of this study refers to whatever experimental in-between space has been decided upon to investigate the possibility for the emergence of a performance event. In respect to this research the sites, were chosen on varied grounds of inspiration: either simply for

the sake of representation or coincidentally as triggers for the potentiality of an alchemical process to be explored.

In a lecture he delivered in 1957 on 'The Creative Act', Duchamp declared:

> We must deny him [the artist] the state of consciousness on the aesthetic plane about what he is doing or why he is doing it (in Arturo Schwarz, 1980:59).

An aspect of what makes the artist's process an exploratory one is the idea of not knowing, but merely following impulse or exploring a conceptual hunch. Arguably, the less an artist or creator is aware of what is driving him to create, the greater the likelihood of the artist to be intensely creative.

The disorientation in the quote used at the beginning of this section suggests a lack of order…yet what would there be to put in order if there was nothing but emptiness? This is a question Singer (2000) asks and then offers an answer to. Chaos, which is often associated with disorientation, is the potency that exists in the Void, the potentiality for energy within the potentiality of matter. The Void or the Chaos is the starting point for nearly all creation mythology (Singer 2000:34).

1.6 Gender, Role, Expectation and Performance

How one performs one's gender is determined by a complex system in which background, class, race and socio-economic standing are all a part. These reinforce the normative discourses in which appropriate or inappropriate behaviour is determined by one's identity. Self-monitoring affects role performance. How we come to perform ourselves: through embodiment and engagement is a result of learning through imitation and observation. The way we come to understand feminine physical and vocal expression as softer and more passive than the depth and aggression that is associated with the masculine emerges from social practice (Newham, 2002). In my experience we often deny or repress in ourselves the existence of the 'opposite[4]' that has been proven to exist within every individual. Thus a conflict, often emphasising what we should (and should not) in fact be doing, persists. In the case of women, a kind of monitoring that is observed as a very basic imperative for example, is situated in the simplistic practice of crossing legs as dresses are worn and in the embodiment of nurturing roles. These are typically characterised, for example by ensuring that voices are gentle and softer pitched. The abovementioned understandings associated with the gendered practice of one born into a female-identified sex, I call typical because they have and continue to be affirmed within my own context and questioning of my matriarchal foundation of influence.

Questions of gender, sexuality, identity and body awareness are also linked in a complex, almost undifferentiated manner. These relationships reflect the environment in which one is placed: bringing a focus to the dominant discourse that provides a hegemonic view. In younger years understandings of the abovementioned categories are seemingly definitive. But as one grows and begins to discriminate and challenge the 'absoluteness' of such categories by offering an opinion, it opens up possibilities for interpretation and new understanding as well as the possibility of the creation of problematic perceptions. In order to understand sexuality one must understand gender, culture and ethnicity. I am not offering the explanations for what these are, but I am claiming an awareness of their impact on the construction of my own complex identity.

> From the beginning sex/gender systems mark individuals with the possibility of being other than ideal, a possibility that is represented by the normative system as being a failure, but that may be embraced by individuals in courageous and joyously subversive

[4] See Singer (2000) and Woodman (2012)

> ways… by asserting that the body assumes its sex in culturally mandated practices of everyday life, the theory of gender performativity offers the possibility of restyling that same body In non-normative and occasionally subversive ways (Morris, 1995: 573).

Having existed in the world for twenty-six years there are expectations which although tacit, 'should' have been fulfilled. They are traditional/cultural, social and systematic. They are worldly. I have expressed a personal frustration with what it means to be a black twenty something year-old woman in 2013. At school still, without a husband, with no such prospects or any desire for such and/or its likelihood. I was born into a body that has been classified as female and black. I have learned that such a basic classification elicits very specific attitudes, beliefs and expectations. Part of my agitation rests with my feeling that I have not satisfied the criteria of the particular expectations of my particular body since its coming into being. I do not feel that I have or will ever satisfy them all. Although it is widely understood that we are ever evolving because the world changes and we change with it, there are resistances within the afore mentioned systems of expectation that people hold on to, for the sake of identity/familiarity, propriety or preservation that make it very difficult to be as fluid with the times as they themselves are.

The quantity of roles we play is based upon many factors and the number of roles available in one moment is understood to be the role system. This system is a translation of the interplay of roles which make up the personality of an individual. 'The roles one plays are largely fictional, whereas in later stages the roles are drawn directly from one's real-life experience. Whether fictional or actual, the playing out of a multitude of roles serves to expand one's role repertoire, foster an examination of the many aspects of one's being, and increase one's sense of connectedness with others' (Emunah, 1994:12). Theatre, in this regard is a mirror of or frame around lived reality, marked by its separation from and representation of everyday experience.

Goffman (1963) suggests two extremes in relation to the various ways in which we perform ourselves every day. An individual he says, may be completely taken in by his own act, with possibly no awareness of the existence of that act, or the individual may be cynical about it. He explains that we come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons: i.e. many personas of ourselves. Marvin Carlson (2004:73), cites Richard Bauman as saying that 'all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model

of that action'. Carlson argues that 'performance is always performance for someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when (as is occasionally the case) that audience is the self.

I am particularly interested in a kind of performance in which the performer is 'working against the magic of illusion' (O'Neill, 1995:74), found in character. Engaging the performing body in a fragmentary suggestion, illustration and presentation of roles, rather than the fixity of narratives, I feel is a more realistic representation of life, if theatre truly is, meant to hold a mirror to it. These roles as Renee Emunah suggests exist both in our own restricted perspectives and in the limits of the expectation of others beyond us. Emunah further argues that there is some benefit to *Acting for Real*, advocating that the playing out of multiple roles offers the individual insight into their being, equipping them with the tools for self-examination (1994:12). If we are able to name our roles, we can afford ourselves some distance from them, allowing us the space to become conscious and reflexive in the moments before we revise the expression within those roles.

Perhaps, as Jeanne Jackson (1998) argues a more subtle, but powerful, notion of role theory is that social integration is to be valued and personal satisfaction to be understood to be intricately tied to one's acceptance and fit within the existing social structure. The emphasis and one's main individual concern is toward 'looking normal'; 'acting normal'; or 'moving normally', thus perpetuating the belief that the more 'normal' one becomes, the easier successful social integration will be (Jackson 1998:50-53). My interest, with regard to the interrogation of gender and its influence on role through the lens of performance, is particularly in questioning the responsibility of the performer and the observer in a performed situation. I feel that we are part of a culture of passive observation which, in my opinion, is closely linked to the kinds of exchanges within traditional conventions of theatre where; positions (those of audience 'spectating' and actor in character), task and function are repeatedly practiced without a disruption of, or an upsetting of the expectation of the audience. They (the audience) are seated in an auditorium on the other side of a proscenium barrier; separating the experience of the performer and the audience.

Bruce Biddle (in Jackson 1998: 50) argues that we know how to perform ourselves in relation to others performing themselves. Role play, he says, reflects power structures and endorses normative behavioural expectations for the self and others in relation to the self. We internalise

expectations in the form of: norms, beliefs and preferences. We hold expectations for one another and as those expectations become known and 'habit' - as in the case of the traditional theatrical setting - we perform them automatically as they are conditioned.

In this research I have experimented with the concept of experiential rather than observational learning. The experiments were set out to enable an alchemical process, and not much else was known. There was no script and nothing had been rehearsed. There was merely a concept and some triggers and that was all that was the initial place of knowing. The study served as a platform in which to examine and disrupt the kinds of processes that facilitate the taking on/stepping into role that affect the perpetuation of systems that limit and constrict: an upsetting of conditioned behaviour. As part of the experience, the audience engages as participant-performers. Instead of inviting them into their accustomed roles as passive audience members they were activated as collaborators in the improvisation of the performance event. And the performance event, which was evidenced in the reality that something happened in a particular space, I would like to argue, was the culmination of the undergoing of the alchemical process.

In this research, multiple sites have been either catalyst or container spaces for experimentation. The spaces themselves have had androgynous qualities characterized by their location: offering re-imaginings of the notion of the neatly organised performance event. Setting out to explore – by placing at the core of the theatre event – the expression of the body beyond its everyday expression makes the notion of ‘somaesthetics’ (Mullis, 2006) an interesting one. Somaesthetics refers to an exploration of the many ways in which the body by being a vessel, suggesting, illustrating or presenting a role (Cecily O’Neill 1995), effectively becomes a vehicle for something that can be transformed into, a ‘locus of aesthetic value’ (Mullis, 2006:104). In this way, the body opens up possibilities of expression beyond what is already in its’ capacity. The performing body, by extension, is allowed, through task-based exercises and improvisatory practice: located in a range or very specific disciplines, such as acting, dance and even martial arts as mentioned before, to expand on its’ ‘natural’ lived styles of expression.

My psychological and dramatic reflections on social expectation and behaviour, while linked, have been addressed differently. In the former I would argue that the assignment of gender is prescribed by a society which establishes roles using binary systems of classification and naming, for example, the ‘reality’ of male as contrary to female. Gender hegemonies thus

influence the development of the forms/frames that perpetuate difference and the binary divisions inscribed in assigned roles. I am of the opinion that the aforementioned roles effectively communicate expectant norms, tantamount to socially acceptable systems (which are evidenced in behaviours and codes) of propriety, albeit through prominent disparity. In my creative exploration I have revelled in the embodiment of the incongruities; performing alternatives to accepted feminine ways of being or marriages to archetypes I have seen (mother, aunts, and grandmothers) and experienced.

At this point I would like to introduce you briefly to some examples of the experimental processes which make up the analysis of this paper and their connection to gender, role, expectation and performance. In a performance as intervention exploration process titled: *invitation to correct,* clothing becomes central to the experimentation with the body as a platform for displaying what is beautiful or grotesque. In this experiment, clothing is looked upon as a coded system of signification. Although often looked upon as neutral, cloth(es) transmit(s) psychological, sexual and cultural messages. Clothing is also a 'role player' in how we perform ourselves because it moulds and expresses our gender and sexuality (Morris 1995:20). The androgynous explored in this experimentation was for the purpose of attempting to find a sexual ideal in performance that could exist in the transitionary, in-between, or threshold spaces of the city and outside of the bounded space of the body. Another considered choice, was that of specifically locating the exploration on the black body as a site on which the abovementioned expressions are performed. This process was an exploration of the androgynous as 'an aesthetic ideal' as opposed to an attainable reality. On one hand *invitation to correct* highlighted the body as a sign vehicle, affirming the difficulty with imagining it realistically, to be non-representational, neutral or androgynous considering its associative constructions. On the other hand, one could argue that the possibility was realised, because of the manipulation and use of theatrical technique and the 'make believe' to remove it from performance at the level of everyday reality.

In another experiment: *the garage process*, I sought to create a space in which an invited group would be incited to create a performance through process. In this I created the conditions in which that possibility may be realised, but in which no explicit expectation existed. The androgynous performance in this process was embedded in its conceptual structure and in the

engagement with the objects and elements within the space. It was a process that challenged the audience member, taken on an individual journey in the company of many others (making up the audience and fellow performers) to confront and challenge themselves. The structuring of it as an attempt to bring about what Giroux (1992:256) fittingly describes as a 'critical consciousness', which in my view involves a heightened awareness of oneself and presence (whether in engaged movement or expression) in relation to others in time and space. In process the participant-performer was allowed what Tim Prentki (2009) describes as a 'transition space', which on one end provided the participant-performer with the security of their own identity, separating them from other participants. And on the other end, a barrier space, preventing participants from developing new capacities or trying new identities. This in an effort to work from where the person involved in the process is in the moment of engagement: bringing about a heightened awareness of their current state of being, so to speak, without the 'safety' of masks and tricks that remove us from looking directly at ourselves. In *the garage process*, as in Prentki's (2009) writing on border crossing, the participant-performer was entered into a space in which they were exposed to the boundaries within which they exist (by explicitly telling them that they did not exist), and bringing their conditioned or believed-in existence into question. In this way, the participant-performer was instead allowed to reflect on the roles they already inhabit or identify. Morris is of the opinion that when habitual acts are brought into consciousness and objectified, they are transformed (Morris, 1995: 583).

The lines that stabilize separation cannot be blurred.They facilitate a necessary and promised integration… Contact management between you, and them and those…

Robert Landy (1982:259) describes the taking on or playing of role as an inherently human process. He emphasises however, that while it is necessary for one to have an awareness of the roles one already fills, it is the openness to the possibility of their shifting or multiplying that is of value. I believe Antonin Artaud to be a good example of a practitioner looking to rupture the linear narrative in describing a theatre that:

> …releases conflicts, disengages powers, liberates possibilities…the action of the theatre, like that of the plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness and hypocrisy of our world…and in revealing to collectivities of men their dark, their hidden force, it invites them to take in the face of destiny, a superior and heroic attitude they would never have assumed without it (in Landy, 1982: 137).

The systems that govern the body are controlled by language and codes that are tacit and explicit. Everything that is known or understood about the body is bound in some sort of system. During a personal investigative process I began to ask myself a number of questions… How do I move? What are my codes? And what happens when I let them go? What happens then?

I carried out an improvisation: *moment of exposure* in which I sought to explore my 'shadow' movement. Initially I was very aware of a kind of movement that began as stereotypical and recognizable. I am referring here to movement that I recognized to be representative and typical of my own learning (and internalization) about the expression of a female body. Although in this case, there was in fact a female body (mine) performing in an improvised event. The purpose of this improvisation was to explore an androgynous movement body language that blurred the lines between (and effectively revealing the 'shadow') masculine and feminine expressive movement.

In discussing the difference between our daily performances and our actively 'staged' performances, I have attempted to highlight the differences between doing and performing. According to thinking that recognises all human activity as performed to a degree, performance is not so much in the viewing of life vs. theatre, but in the attitude that drives the performed expression. The difference is located in the consciousness to the action that is very different to the functional semi-consciousness we adopt in order to get through our days (Marvin Carlson in Bial, 2004: 72). I would argue that through embodying and embracing multiple roles and forms of ourselves through the conscious interrelation and negotiation of what is spatially or behaviourally expected of our selves. By rebelling and sometimes rejecting the normalised or hegemonised patterns of practice and embodiment we can begin to push up against the conventions of gender construction and role or behavior appropriation, even if it remains within the space of a single performance project.

1.7 Gendered space, Personal space and Androgynous space

> The form of social space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity. But what assembles or what is assembled? The answer is: everything that there is in *space*, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols. Natural space juxtaposes – and thus disperses: it puts places and that which occupies them side by side. It particularizes. By contrast social space implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point. It implies, therefore, the possibility of accumulation (a possibility that is realized under specific conditions).
>
> (Lefebvre 1991:101)

As suggested above, no space is ever just neutral. Even the most neutral-looking space, whether chosen for the purposes of functioning only as a container as opposed to adding to the frame or subtext of what is to take place within it, is always, inadvertently activated. This understanding of the potentiality of a performing space, affords to the objects and people that gather within, and in conversation with it, a potential for performance. The potential for performance however is only one element of how a body, or thing performs.

> There is a place and time for everything!

In this section I would like to argue that through our habitual and repetitive gendered performance we come to create the spaces and places that reflect our gender-specific attitudes in our inhabitance of them. In other words the spaces which we occupy in our lived experiences,

whether they be ‘home spaces’, ‘work spaces’ or ‘public spaces’, come to reflect the power relations that exist within those spaces. The spaces that would typically be regarded as masculine spaces have specific qualities that can be associated with a masculine type with regards to the agreed upon discourses of gender, by the people inhabiting those spaces and similarly with regards to female spaces. By extension these divisions reflect power relations and our attitudes to them may effectively reflect the process that brings those varying degrees of power into being. The spaces that we occupy are thus influenced and produced by the gendered performances with which we identify, what then of the spaces ‘in-between’ the spaces where our roles are defined?

The purpose, not only to deter
And, not entirely to denounce
But to take care
And return you, to the perfectly placed positions that keep you and things in check
To instill in you, a strong belief that something will happen
The expectation is conditional

There are words that my grandfather used to say often in moments when we needed reminding about what kind of behaviour was required in a particular situation. I recall an incident – when I was told that it was not appropriate for me to be singing at the dinner table – in which he rather emphatically uttered the words ‘there is a place and time for everything!’. This utterance, effectively cueing me to adjust my demeanour to suit and satisfy the expectations of the particular situation at the time. I often wonder about the learning of this tacit discourse. When and how does it occur? Is there room for its reimagining or reconfiguration, or at the very least, its interrogation?

There at every point… Reminding you to: adjust, fix, make proper and stop… In times that you may get a little bit ahead and out of yourself, reaching upwards, stepping outwards, they will pull you back and in. They contain you. This was part of your earliest learning, when you stood there, assembled in that fashion.

The abovementioned unconscious adjustment for space is one which I recognise to be expected: often rationalised or dismissed as being ‘just one of those things’ or ‘part of how we do things’ in a largely uninterrogated manner. Pierre Mayol (1998:23) speaks of the way in which ‘the dweller’ is ‘taken care of’ by the signs that secretly order him or her to behave according to the

requirements of propriety, to make everyday life possible. If one forgets this long process of habituation, one risks missing the true, though veiled mastery with which others manage their own ascendancy over their environment. A o ko o ikeetle!, which I translate to mean 'just hold on' (in most of the contexts it was used in relation to me) is another phrase – this time from my mother – which I heard often during my formative years. This in many cases was in relation to untimely questioning, or out of place behaviour which I may have displayed in various situations. As if to quietly (without giving away the secrets of the game) advise me to slow down and take the time to learn by seeing what is already going on. The ability to convey the understanding to me in the discreet and tenacious fashion that comes with knowing one's place, is one which I can attest to and say that my mother had definitely mastered. I however did not easily acquire the skill of shifting roles to appropriate myself in accordance to what was polite, lady-like or what could only be discussed in the privacy of our own home. Some habits were absorbed and taken for granted and others rejected. I did not always agree with the rules of the game.

1.8 Embodying: can the space between be created?

At the very core of my research interest is a desire to examine what it is that we experience in a change-over space. To potentially create the space in which that transition might be studied. I am interested in interrogating the simple moment of transformation for a situation, a context or a location that already has implicit or explicit messaging of how one must perform in that space. In analysis, I attempt to understand the resistances or difficulties that present themselves in the face of some transformations. So what characterises a 'change-over' space? My interest in 'who' we are in those 'change-over' spaces and in 'how' we transition from one aspect of ourselves into another or others led to my looking for a transitional and androgynous space in which to carry out my experimental processes. The purpose of the transitional space being to establish what impact or influence a transitional environment has on those changes. These questions are influenced by wanting to give focus to our ways of presentation, by interrogating the very act of presentation and questioning why it is so. What are the conditions and expectations that exist, making it necessary for us to transform ourselves to adapt to different situations or contexts?

Goffman (1963:4), highlights studies that often focus on the offender rather than the 'rules and the social circles that are offended', he suggests that it is perhaps the public and semi-public spaces of streets, parks, restaurants, theatres, shops and other spaces of community that must be given some attention as they may hold a significant amount of illuminating information. Often studies are focused on group activities or 'collective behaviour' such as ritualized play in 'spectating' on a sports field, in protests or crowds. He is of the opinion that 'ordinary human traffic' and the patterning of ordinary social contacts has been little considered.

I would like to discuss how my selection of spaces – in terms of the decision-making around sites being either containers or catalysts for action – in which to carry out processes unfolds. I associate my work with a kind of activism that is social, knowledgeable and responsive in a manner that is devoid of the violent and pejorative associated with the word 'activism' alone. Often my work juxtaposes notions of the public and private, saying something because the experiment or process is well informed by what is going on in its own environment and the world at large. In my experimental processes I acknowledge existing concerns and attempt to incite those who come into contact with, or experience it, to interrogate their own awareness of a concern or particular subject matter. In an androgynous psychic space, an experimental process which I may carry out would filter into how we interact and engage in action, impacting those who encounter it at a subliminal level. The activity at many levels surfaces the activism embedded in a typical experimental process in which those who are engaged, do so as participant-performers: having ownership and the power to impact how the process unfolds, as opposed to the passivity that accompanies mere reception. The difference is one of perception: with awareness or without. I would like to argue that the notion of a subliminal activism as an activation for awareness is a solid one. And that there is room for such subliminal activism in the applied theatre practice for activist-practitioners (or practitioners with concerns across disciplines). I consider my experimental processes to be exercises in choice-making: reflecting or revealing our willingness (or lack thereof) to make room for external stimuli into our sphere of influence.

Mayol speaks of a 'mystification' that comes with one's transference of supposed criteria for how the opposite sexes complement one another, to architectural data. This data being hard and soft, dry and moist, logical and poetical, penetrating and penetrated, as if the differences between

the masculine and the feminine were just a matter of crossing a ‘genital or biological border’, separating sexual partners. I find this thinking interesting, as I too refer to places that attract my interest, in the same way that Mayol does, as having hard or cold qualities. These spaces often translate as possessing a particularly masculine appeal when I select them to work in. In beginning to work in those spaces I task myself with the activity of ‘personalising’ the space. This often means 'bringing myself ' into the space by placing in it objects or furniture that would often occupy personal/private space, in order to create some sort of balance: make this masculine space more inhabitable.

‘In the kitchen as well as the park: where it is no longer a question of male or female space but, of the very archaic work of the androgynous fantasy, the melodramatic muddle is always tangled up in an unending dialogue’ (Mayol 1998:25). These are words which I feel speak to the kinds of impulses that inform my interest in or decision to carry out a process or have a performance event take place in a particular space. Below, I share an example of how such a process of selection might come about so that you gain an understanding of how Mayol’s concept of archaic androgyny resonates. I had gone for 'a walk on the edges'...

Cathy Turner (2004) sets out the exercise of ‘taking a walk on the edges’ for the researcher or reader to explore unusual spaces: ‘on the margins’ or ‘in between’ in otherwise large and busy environments. I carried out this exercise in areas called Braamfontein and Newtown in the City of Johannesburg as well as in the more concentrated and busy CBD. When nothing spoke to me on these adventures, I sought to carry out this exercise on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand. It was there that I found possible host locations for the research. I had given myself options, after anticipating possible difficulty in the event of approaching the university grounds staff for permission to use ‘official’ territory. I narrowed my list down to three potential spaces: One was a biodegradable compost heap, which resonated with me because of a dream I had had some years ago and written about. At the time of discovering the site, I thought it possible that it was being revealed to me once again. But because of the rules on occupational risks and fire hazards I was not allowed to use the site.

The second potential site was located in the change-rooms and bathrooms of the grounds staff workers. I was told that I would not be allowed to use the locker-room and bathroom facilities in that space as it was potentially dangerous for me: given that there are men that change in there. I

found this ironic as the female bathrooms, which I had tried to enter into on the day of my walkabout had been locked. This space that I was asking to use was in fact a shared space between the female and male grounds-staff. But, again, understanding that there were rules of government, I chose not to challenge the decision. The final space and the one which got the nod (after seeing to additional procedural affairs) was under management by the PIMD (Property and Infrastructure Management Division). The site was a large garage structure that used to be a car-wash, but which at the time was in the process of transition and redefinition. It appealed to me not only on the basis of its androgyny: referring here to its in-betweeness of function, but also because of its associative representation, which for me included: shelter, security and storage, which are largely feminine characteristics. My association with garages is that they are spaces for cars and 'stuff': imagining the picture of shelves and disordered boxes filled with things redundant or archival, that often have no room in the house and are found space for in there. I found it amusing that it was a larger-than-life concrete and zinc kind of structure that would probably park an extremely large truck, rather than store your average car. This was the exaggerated masculine energy to which I was drawn. In it are a number of warning signs with the message: 'NO PARKING: WHEEL CLAMPING ZONE and a small cupboard (which provided something of a 'homey' feel, but looked especially small in relation to the rest of the space and structure), with a Bob Marley sticker in it and a few hooks where I assumed keys used to be hung. On the day of my walk, which was a Saturday I was able to get easy access into the site, but on the day that I met with management – to discuss the formalities of getting permission to use the site –a chain had been placed at the entrance of the garage: making it appear to be a bound and more contained body. The manager explained that it was because people ignored the warnings and parked in the garage anyway. The site's contradictory elements (size, function or performance) and the interplay of the feminine and masculine qualities in the sense of having 'penetrated' and 'penetrating' characteristics became instrumental to my decision making around using the site. I appreciated the contrasts in the architecture of the space and the story it now told in relation to its history. On some days offering the university staff a place to 'hang-out' and play cards during lunch time and on others offering interesting negotiations with the space that seem in conflict with the bodies embodying the space. I find that the space aptly embodied elements of Mayol's (1998:25) description of questionable male and female spaces, as archaic works of androgynous fantasy.

1.9 Other thoughts on the social, political and ethical aspects of space…

Cremona et al (2004) argue that the theatrical event consists of behaviour or activity that is conspicuous enough to be distinguished from real life. It is also emphasised that there can be no division between the area of 'spectating' and that of acting but that the audience and performer exist within a 'world of enchantment' (Erika Fischer-Lichte, 2008), where the interplay of space, time and action is without distinction, but has basic functions of a shared communal exercise. Lichte describes a kind of engagement in performance blending social, political and ethical elements. Her enchanted world imparting a sensation of things as they are perceived as opposed to what is known about them. The notion of representing things, so that they appear to be something new or unknown is what I find myself drawn to in the investigation of audience and performer roles and expectations in performance. She describes a transformative element in performance in which an aesthetic experience occurs. The transformation she theorises is a transformation that involves risk, when borders become thresholds through which they (the audience and the performers involved in a performance event) are returned to themselves. While Cremona et al posit that a performance has to be noticeably distinguishable from everyday experiences, I would like for that possibility to emerge out of the inconspicuous routine and perceived order of the goings on in the androgynous space itself. Performance in Lichte's opinion, provides an 'allegory and image of human life, while also serving as its model; by entwining the participants in a metaphorical and actual performance' (2008: 205-206). Albert Bandura (1986:19) in his interrogation of the foundations of social behaviour suggests that 'people plan courses of action for cognized future, guiding their action anticipatorily', which, if I relate it to a performance event, I understand to mean that if the outcomes or the ways in which things unfold are known or predictable, there is no 'real' experience. We are bombarded with a cornucopia of demands, which affect a need for us to exist in survival mode. A self-protection that is linked to what Mayol (1998) terms the 'reality principle'. He observes that fundamentally, the stereotypes (or rules) of propriety are for imposing controls that protect the individual (p.21). The 'reality principle', I would argue equips us only with the tools that will service our necessity to manage situations in accordance to how we have previously experienced them. And as long as those experiences are in line with the kinds that have taken place in our past, we have the wherewithal to manage ones that might occur in the future. There is very little consequence to be

wary of. In the event however that we experience something that is foreign to our system of experience, being and management, we struggle. Cremona et al (2004) quote Maslow (1968) as saying that the need to know where one is in space and time is a matter of 'safety and security' and a basic human need. According to Maslow, the anxiety, fear and sometimes terror that comes from being lost emphasises the importance of orientation for wellbeing. This, in turn accounts for how space, roles and the activities within those spaces are structured. In my opinion, we become so self-involved that we lose sight of everything that goes on around us when the ground that keeps us stable is shaken at its very core. We resist, and usually attempt to respond in community with others, in conflict with our individual 'survival reserves'. The result of this ambivalence, as is often the case with any kind of uncertainty, is fatally catastrophic. One does not have to look too far to understand the violent eruptions taking place out of mis-managed encounters of confrontation between South Africans and South African bodies of authority. In my exploratory processes I like to exploit these beliefs and to place participants in situations where their comfort levels and expectations are challenged, as a call for them (as participant-collaborators/performers) to exist in the thresholds of opinion, of view, and of experience and to really be present now. Without tricks or previous knowledge and understanding. But to just receive the impulses as and when they come to them, and effectively respond, as and when necessary.

Whether or not one feels safe or vulnerable, 'part of' or 'outside of' is also a result of our every day practices. In the practice of internalized everyday rituals is the manipulation of the powers we understand to go along with them. These powers are afforded to us through practice as well as our exercising of choice to select behaviour that is congruent with the literal (architectural) structure and expectation of a space and the community within it. The processes of power structure hierarchical systems in which gendered space and behavioural spaces are ordered. Often masculine qualities or occupancy is regarded considerably higher than the feminine alternative. The socialization within these systems of occupation accounts for many of the attitudes that exist around issues of politics, sexuality and society.

> …the body is…directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it; mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs (Foucault in Grosz, 1994: 148)

Even while we insist that there are traditions to be respected. They are constantly being replaced by ruling narrative displacing ruling narrative, adjusting to the ever-shifting global narrative. Whitehead in Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 842-848), says that discourse is the means by which men come to know themselves, to practice identity, to work and to exercise gender and power. In speaking to gender hierarchies Connell and Messerschmidt, posit that in order to understand hegemonic masculinities we must understand that bodies are both objects of social practice and agents in social practice. Listing:

a. Hegemony as something that may be accomplished by the incorporation of such masculinities into a functioning gender order, rather than by active oppression in the form of discredit or violence. And stating that in reality: incorporation and oppression occur together. They provide an example of the gay spectrum of experience as one which ranges from homophobic violence, cultural denigration, to toleration; celebration and pride and even political representation. Similarly with women, who construct, adopt or embody masculinities (p848).
b. Women as central to constructions of masculinities in their roles as mothers, schoolmates, girlfriends, sexual partners and wives, and workers in the gender division of labour (p848).

The consideration of the body as a gendered space exposes our compulsion with marking it in order to identify our position and ourselves in terms of identity and sexuality… which becomes an induction for the body to become a cultural sign (Butler 2004:189). This marking can be subliminal, and in the background. But it is an ever present presence, like the notion of being watched. One could argue that we are always being watched, since we live in a CCTV, digital or smart technology age. The feeling of a constant watching can become a determining factor for how identity is constructed.

Part of my agitation as I interrogate the notion of the androgynous existing on many levels is in the manner in which we are 'trained' as mentioned above and we are placed into systems that are not flexible to change. One can really only function as either a man or woman with a limited amount of skills and ability required, thus repressing other possibilities of being. Performance allows us the space to blur our learned compartmentalisations. Eugenio Barba (1995), when writing about the difference between the natural and the non-natural performing body states that

the heightened extra-daily techniques (describing movement outside of what we do every day) present in the performing body allow for the manipulation of an integrated energetic state that is not only masculine or only feminine. Even though Barba writes largely about the physical performing body, I think that in considering how elements come together in an alchemical process, that if a different kind of awareness is brought to a space, it too can have a double or multiple functions, outside of what it is usually limited to. I find that Barba's logic for the physical performing body connects to the discussion of the masculine and feminine qualities mentioned in the section around my walking on the edges. Barba (1995:62) uses *Anima* and *Animus*, not in the manner they have been used in Jung's study of archetypes to draw the distinction between the masculine and feminine qualities, but as an energy differentiation. The Anima-energy thus refers to a soft and delicate type of energy, while the Animus opposite refers to a vigorous and strong type of energy. In reference to the performing body, Barba describes energy as 'a personal temperature-intensity'. This, he says, can be determined, awoken or modelled. Even though Barba distinguishes between natural and non-natural bodily movement, 'the performer's extra-daily body technique, he posits, dilates the body's dynamics. The body which I would argue can be both a building or body, as site is able to be reformed, rebuilt or reinterpreted for theatrical fiction or function. This 'art body' (which again I would say applies to space, the deliberately staged or the performing body in everyday practice) – and thus, 'non-natural body' – is neither male nor female in and of itself.

In this section I have attempted to explain how I have been influenced by binary-perpetuating bodies, those of my elders, the discourse of their teachings both verbal and observational and my training beyond the contained and secure spaces of my 'home space'. I have been subjected to 'training' for appropriation into work spaces, educational spaces and other spaces where particular systems of practice and the sign-systems that accompany them are in place for one to 'fit' in.

I explained how I have gone about trying to locate or possibly create an androgynous space in order to examine the interrogations that may surface when people are confronted with themselves in a transitional or change-over space. This in consideration of personal and institutionalised boundaries as well as to investigate into who we are, how we perform our selves, or whether we are even aware of those change over spaces. In the following portion of this study I will provide examples of how I created the conditions for an alchemical process and

how the androgynous was integrated or how it came about in the carrying out of my experimental processes.

Part II: The Frames

> One has to understand the state of mind from which they are doing the work. Charismatic space and energy. The more one learns about those things the more one understands that nothing else is needed. Just energy. [5]

Thinking is not linguistically or symbolically reified in the alchemical process. There is no spelling out of how a process must unfold or end. It is experienced and lived and responded to in the moment: as and when it happens. The individual logic that develops is the result of what has the potential to be an infinite chemical or energetic exchange of listening, responding and discovery…alchemy.

2.1 Events leading up to a *moment of exposure*

My creative process began in 2012. From the beginning of my year I was prompted to begin to interrogate what I have referred to, in part one, as my incessant wonderings. To look into the realm of obsessions that I considered worth researching into, or worthy enough to call research at all.

Nigredo (state of blackness): Stepping into the Darkness

Nigredo is the name used to describe the first stage of the alchemical process (Dooling, Gillabel, Leeuwen1985, 2003, 2006). This phase involves a descent into what can be the unconscious, the underworld or the darkness. This descent encompasses a distillation of material to be engaged with. In the separation of this material there is a purification, wherein the volatile is sorted from

[5] Marina Abramovic (2012) discusses performance in a youtube video titled: *On performance*. This is a transcribed account of her words. The video is available online.

the non-volatile. In my proposal I imagined that this would be the stage in which I identified stories or text through multiple channels: such as writing, conversation or memory recall.

A beginning

For two weeks in September, I engaged in a process of free writing every morning for ten to twenty minutes. In addition to the free-writing, I wrote in response to trigger sentences or phrases[6] set out to generate story or text[7]. This was the most structured part of the process. I would write every day, with the intention of only going back to sort through the generated material at a later stage. Parallel to this routine structure, was my drawing of a body map. On it I detailed memories marked on my body as well as the areas on my body where I hold various kinds of language. The most notable areas were those that hold the most tension, and my hands as the most expressive. At the beginning of the year I became most aware of the tendency for my shoulders to rise up very nearly to my ears. An indication I suspect, of the anxiety of the transition made in my coming to study in Johannesburg, a city which I had previously had no desire of relocating to[8]. I had not been aware of this kind of 'shoulder activity'[9], until the reality of my transition from Grahamstown to Johannesburg set in. Marking my shoulders as an area of tension on my body map, in reflection, made me aware of how they are an indication of a particular kind of anxiety that is, more often than not indicative of a change-over season or situation.

My chest, I marked as the home of a feeling language. It represents warmth and fire. My mouth as the area I have most recently experienced to be troublesome. It is marked with three large

[6] Some examples of the sentences used as triggers for writing: Childhood place of significance: An early memory of water: the nuclear event, to name a few.

[7] These trigger sentences are called story-making strategies pioneered by Mark Fleischmann of the University of Cape Town. This practice was introduced to me by Sara Matchett (August 2012).

[8] I was born in the neighbouring town of Rustenburg, where I had attended a small private school. After completing my matric I moved from Rustenburg to continue my tertiary level schooling in the small university town of Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape. I have very vivid and felt memories of flying to and from Johannesburg and needing to adjust my breathing to lower my shoulders, calm myself and accommodate the fast pace of life, activity and the general increase in size of everything in Johannesburg. On most drives home I would literally catch myself clutching on to the sides of my seat. I could not believe how my parents would maneouvre their way about the city and traffic with such skillful nonchalance

[9] Outside of the rehearsal space when one is involved in the ritualistic practice of releasing tension and finding the ideal posture of release and 'no tension' or a' neutral body': where the muscles are relaxed, but one is in a state of heightened presence: referring to a readiness for action.

'X's. A depiction of what I had noticed (particularly in 2012) to be a significant struggle for speech. This experience of a 'loss' of spoken language came as a considerable blow, firstly, because I have no recollection of ever having experienced quite such a lack to such an intense degree. And secondly, because it was a problematic reality considering my location in an academic environment where one is meant to be able to structure arguments and articulate oneself quite clearly for the sake of debate, presentations as well as for meeting writing requirements.

19th September 2012[10]

Nigredo, as the first stage of the alchemical process is the one which I had the most difficulty engaging with practically. My year of study began with an awareness of needing to confront some kind of darkness, but not being too sure of what that darkness is or might mean for me. I think about it now and I suspect that my subconscious anticipation of what this 'darkness' might surface as, as well as my entertaining imaginings of the worst kinds of manifestations and effects, led to a state of debilitating nothingness.

Albedo (State of whiteness): Sorting through and Suspension

The state of whiteness is what emerges from the depth of the darkness. Revealing a volatile spirit and the discovery of the androgynous space. This is the stage at which the unconscious is brought to the surface and the discoveries made are absorbed. It is a slow process that requires patience. In my proposal I wrote that I imagine that it involves a kind of 'listening to' or examining of the material that has surfaced in order to experience the next stage of the process. I expect that at this point, lies the beginning of the transformation. It involves finding the incubator that facilitates the 'moment of exposure' (Gillabel, 2003).

A major moment in which the 'problematics' of such a lack mentioned above in describing Nigredo, converged in a meeting with my academic supervisor and my then, potential creative supervisor. I had had the unfortunate experience of failing to explain to my creative supervisor

[10] The inclusion of this date is significant as a marked contributing factor to the alchemical process leading up to the improvisation in which a 'moment of exposure' came about.

what I might like for her to contribute to my research process. And after admitting in the meeting to having had very little sleep (due to one of my sporadic work-through-the night episodes and the last-minute organisation of this meeting), I was not able to clearly communicate my needs: which were that she provide the perspective of an outside-eye, by feeding back her observations. I sort of explained that I was struggling to get into the practical aspect of getting on the floor and 'doing': the 'stepping into the darkness' as it were. My creative supervisor challenged me and asked questions which I could not answer. She advised that I just do something and trust that I would not cause myself irreparable harm. She cautioned that if that was one of my concerns then I may have to consider finding ways of coming back from distraction: i.e. the depths of my imagined darkness. Another of her suggestions was that I approach the alchemical process in a random order as opposed to scrupulously following its stages.

After this very difficult exchange (this is assuming that there was one at all) and the fact that I had not been able to extract myself from what I experienced to be a deep hollow place I was left with severely activated tension areas. My shoulders soaring and the home of my feeling language, an inferno. In my experience, when words fail, the body continues to speak. Dooling (1985) describes a process of making something die, by way of eruption or explosion, in order for it to be reborn. Explaining that it is at that point that the material to be used would be activated somehow…I feel that due to the experience of this encounter, I became the embodiment of Dooling's eruption.

20th September 2012

A moment of exposure.

It is important for me to highlight the moment with my supervisors as a stimulus; one that facilitated a remarkable shift. It is this moment, of transition, which my chest and shoulders, the day before had introduced as a change-over situation. What I described as a 'debilitating nothingness' in a deep hollow place was, in fact more in line with what Marina Abramovic would refer to as not just empty emptiness, but 'whole emptiness'[11]: pregnant with potential.

[11] Abramovic uses this phrase in youtube video showing her preparation for her long duration museum performance in her performance art work *The artist is present (2010).*

This moment of stimulus: the experience of the inferno is what activated a discovery on this morning.

I wake up this morning feeling a desperate sense of needing to do something. Anything. I open my eyes. Roll out of bed. Reach for the camera. Switch it on, push record and improvise. I undergo a transformation, a noticeable shift in the second of a series of four improvisations which I carried out.

The experience of this improvisation led to my questioning of what constitutes a performance. The improvisation exploration, I would argue resulted in a performance event, despite its occurrence in the privacy of my residence bedroom. The bedroom represents an informal 'workspace' which Sara Matchett, argues allows for the production of personal narrative, as it is governed by feminine principles. A formalised workspace on the other hand, produces a kind of economic narrative ruled by male principles (2005:8). In reflection I began to question:

Was my improvisation a performance for myself as the manipulator of the camera? Not 'a someone' but 'a thing'? Does 'a someone' need to be watching for it to be considered a performance? Or was the very act of manipulating the lens of the camera an extension of my own gaze.

Reflecting on the process…

At the beginning there is a strong sense of self consciousness and being watched and so having to 'keep it together' or 'keep up appearances', so to speak. I notice this in the maintaining of lady-like[12] movement. But there are some slippages of unlady-like, 'ugly' movement that come in, which to me seem to question, reject or protest the nicer movement. There seems to be movement that represents a possible 'consequence' that may result from one not keeping oneself in check. The movement is challenged to a point of rebellion or breakthrough making way for the beginnings of a significant shift to happen. It is at noticeable points that these occur in this improvisation. A marked point at which my eyes close, in this improvisation, is where I witness (in the watching of the recorded event) the movement to have a shift in energy. It becomes

[12] I am referring here to the kind of feminine embodiment that I have discussed earlier in this paper. These movements are both stereotypical in a worldly sense and also specific to my own experience. An example of such movement, which occurred in this improvisation was in the repetitive action of crossing and un-crossing my legs, and making a seemingly concerted effort to keep them together

riskier, bolder and less self-conscious, continuing to build. I notice a couple of additional watershed moments just before the eyes open again and the movement returns to what it was in the beginning. Aware. What happens during the period in which the eyes were closed is what I saw as androgynous movement. My body becoming a container for the gentler, conditioned and expected movement as well as something more aggressive, raw and un-doctored. The co-existence of these movement languages, creating a new blurred, energised and unspecific language.

Rubedo (state of redness): exposure to the androgynous

This is the final phase of the alchemical process which embraces the stage of becoming. It is the stage at which a new kind of embodiment emerges, that which houses the incongruities, without conflict, allowing for a multiplicity of roles in one body. It is at this stage that van Leeuwen's (2006: 64) idea of a realm that grants 'synergy, cooperation and inclusiveness exists'.

This improvisation came out of a conscious and unconscious undergoing of the three stages of the alchemy as a means of working through a process that would end in performance. It was conscious in that I was aware that I was undertaking an investigative process, through the stages of alchemy, but unconscious in that I did not know how the process would turn out. The final stage was an improvisation, in which I discovered what I have called a *moment of exposure*. I became interested in the moment (in the re-experiencing of the improvisation)[13] when I was exposed to a shift in movement, around the time that my eyes closed. Since the alchemical process is cyclic (as in the serpent eating its tail) that process could have continued. I could have gone into another descent and seen what other or new material could have emerged out of using the first 'moment of exposure' as a trigger.

Improvisation can be described as an ongoing and prolonged present. That it is only the mind that thinks, and only the body that moves or 'does', is merely an assumption. The 'presence in the present' and the ability to remain 'present in the presence' of what is going on in the moment is what is required for one to think in the movement during an improvisation as opposed to anticipating movement by thinking of it. The body's engagement with the world is through

[13] I have attached a copy of the improvisation on disc. The CD will read as a USB/Flash drive when inserted. I recommend that it is viewed using VLC media player.

movement, because the ability or capacity to move is a sign of 'being' a body. Thinking in movement is a process where sense and perception (thinking 'shadow' in the case of the *moment of exposure* improvisation), itself becomes motion and motion itself becomes a sensory channel. By allowing the process of the improvisation to unfold and holding on to the trigger I was able to put fire under the incessant repetition of gestures and movement of modification in order for the androgynous movement language to be borne out of that pressure. By thinking 'shadow' (the trigger), an impulse was given and a reality created: it was thought of and therefore it existed. My existence within that reality required a certain amount of commitment to engage with the elements that made that reality, real: concrete and tangible or just simply known and believed in.

> The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change, until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds. (R. Laing, quoted by Michael Quinn Patton)[14]

I ascribe the discovery of the notion of the displacement as a theme to a number of matters that concerned me. My unwavering preoccupation with the idea of propriety and its many manifestations for managing or determining behaviour is one. Another is to how people have expectations, and how certain spaces require certain parts of ourselves to be fore-fronted in order for us to exist within or occupy them appropriately.

The result of this improvisation led to my exploring what the word exposure itself reveals. I began to think around creating experiences or processes in which others might come to be exposed to a number of elements as I had been. Allowing for reflection on past movement (playing on the 'ex' portion of the word), current movement (the in-the-moment exposure), and kinds of movement (playing on the 'pose' portion of the word) we embody or use to express ourselves, and effectively revealing who we are (playing on the 'ure'[15] portion of the word).

[14] This quote was offered to us by a visiting lecturer Nicola Christofides during a Monitoring and Evaluation class with a focus on Social Behaviour Change/communication for development on 2 October 2012. 17th Floor of the University Corner Building. University of the Witwatersrand.

[15] In what is called 'sms language', referring to the jargon that is used in social networking for example, words are often shortened or made into acronyms to get meaning across. U're in this sense refers to 'you are'. The 'ure' portion of exposure, is a play on this culture.

2.2 *Invitation to correct*

Introducing:

Theatre as Activism Project: Museums Of Border Crossing Discomposure

- Title: Invitation to Correct
- What was it?
  - A journey of inspiration towards a performance as activism intervention experiment (according to my presentation).
    - The activism course
    - Marikana, the xenophobic attacks, the pride march protest that turned violent
  - A commentary on the sex and gender based violence (hate-crimes) and the picture of protest in the country. An exploration towards a subliminal activism:
    - Invisible
    - Improvisatory
- The set-up?
  - A display/exhibition of articles about crimes against the LGBTQIA communities of South Africa. It also provided an mini-archive of the trend of protest in the country, from the apartheid era till now.
- A washing line with a laundry-show-case of activism t-shirts. These ranges: Human rights, Children's rights, Woman's rights, Ethnic rights, Health rights
  - Two performers. Myself and a young gay black man. Getting changed in two change-rooms/closets/corrective booths. In conflict with a representative mother figure trying to make sure that the performers stay dressed in clothing fitting to the 'instrument' they are born with. Also attempting to ensure that the performers do not leave their closets to get onto a taxi to Noord.
    - Noord is the site where taxi drivers have violated young women walking in short skirts.
    - Such violations occur in spaces occupied by a largely black demographic (taxi-ranks). The hate-crime and corrective rape violations are carried out on a group identified as a largely black lesbian community coming from the township. Recently they have been attacks on intersexual individuals too.

Above is an Illustration of the invitation sent out to potential audience/participants

I carried out an experimental project in response to the recent hate crimes and sexual/gender based violence attacks which seem to be on the rise in the country. It was my intention to use this project as a parallel exploration alongside my MA research study. The purpose of it was to explore notions of displacement through a performance event that was designed as an interrogation of what it takes for one to become involved in a situation, emergency, or event.

It sought to question whether the failure to intervene is characteristic of larger city environments. Or whether the individual's likelihood of responding is affected by the presence of (an)other(s). The experimental process also sought to highlight how the body is both a sign and signifier - in the performing of gender - of one's sexuality. The project's aim was to explore the notion of a subliminal activism in an effort to conscientise the people involved in it and to activate personal reflection. At a primary level, this project was a query into the interplay of space and place in the attempt to maintain propriety. This thought addresses matters of gender and sexuality and how the body performs in satisfaction of grand narratives that govern and create the categorized rules of how the body is dressed, how it communicates and therefore how it performs.

> Autoethnographic texts reveal the fractures, sutures and seams of self interacting with others in the context of researching lived experience. In interpreting the autoethnograpic text, readers feel/sense fractures in their own communicative lives and like Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual create efficacy and healing in their own communal lives. (Spry 2001:712)

The concept of the project was to set up a change-room, as a representation of a change-over space in a public transitional space, and to address, by extension the notion of the displaced body. The public space, selected was located at the meeting place of the margins of the university and the city, epitomising what Cathy Turner (2004) describes as a space on the 'edge' and what for me represented an androgynous space. At a primary level it does not make sense for a change-room, (what I also called a 'correction booth' during the process), to be set up unusually in a site that does not lend itself to its erection. I felt that this was an important concept to explore as it was driven by a desire to raise awareness and make commentary on social issues, by disrupting the usual flow and function of a space in which we have become accustomed to blocking things out. And instead allowing a 'happening', characterised by its difference to ordinary ways of being, in order to facilitate reflection. Peter Brook (1968:61-62) describes a happening as something that can be anywhere, occurring at any time, for any length of time. In his provocation he states that nothing is required for a happening to happen and nothing is taboo. A happening has the possibility of being spontaneous or formal, anarchistic, an injection of intoxicating energy that shocks people awake. 'A happening, he says shocks, surprises and makes a dent in the spectators reflexes, making the spectator more open, more alert suddenly and more awake. In the event of a happening possibility and responsibility arise for onlooker and performer alike'.

Keith Allen and Kate Burridge (2006) argue that notions of taboo and rituals of politeness are some of the elements that guide or determine social interaction, which according to them are generally oriented towards constraints on behaviour: having the potential to cause discomfort, injury or harm. They also offer a way of maintaining one's public self image. During a classroom discussion these kinds of 'confines' were described as having a 'domestication' effect, which was said to not be empowering to the people involved. Instead becoming a 'rehearsal for fear' rather than a 'rehearsal for action'[16]. At the time, I reflected on the word 'domestication' as passive and disempowering, and if we are to consider earlier discussion on the constitution of feminine behaviour/spaces in opposition to masculine behaviour/spaces, this word, I thought, was a very interesting use of language and evidence of our own ability to perpetuate sexist views.

Allen and Burridge (2006:102) go on further to say that political correctness constitutes conformity to current beliefs about correctness in language and behaviour with regard to policies on sexism, racism, etc. It is not very 'polite' to put a change-room out in a public space, but by bringing what is understood to be a privatised space out into public, the space in which the private is publicised begins to perform in a manner that is different to what it usually 'does', thus creating new conversation within it.

[16]Theatre as Activism presentation on play by Dr. Kennedy Chinyowa. 27 September 2012. 17th Floor of the University Corner Building of the University of the Witwatersrand.



An illustration of the conversation created when the private was made public in the androgynous performance space

Mayol (1998:24) describes 'transit zones' as air locks for re-adjustment to the social atmosphere, between the world of work and private life: ambiguous spaces. While seeking such a location I approached Park Station management with a letter requesting permission to use their premises as a representational backdrop for the kind of environments in which gender based violence occur in South Africa.

In a section of the proposal to the PRASA management I wrote:

Johannesburg Park Station serves as a major transport interchange-hub located between the local business district and Braamfontein, and apparently the largest railway station in Africa. It is the site that I have selected for the carrying out of my project. I recognise it as the most

representative of 'transitional spaces'[17]; and an invaluable site which enables the smooth transitions of an innumerable number of commuters across Africa dependent on it. It is my wish to use the environment as a platform for the project to explore how we perform in society or how we are asked by society to perform whether directly or indirectly. I intend to analyse responses and involvement through observational evaluation during a performance event, and after that event, which will speak back to and converse with the system that is already in place.

PRASA is the acronym for Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa. The agency covers what they term commuter rail and mainline passenger travel as well as bus services. They however do not monitor and maintain the taxi-rank environment. I encountered some difficulty attempting to 'locate in order to liase' with management or a representative 'in-charge' of the entire transportation services, in an effort to secure my use of the premises.

In reimagining my interest in transitional spaces and considering the concept of this project, I thought that park station would be an ideal alternative to the actual environments in which such violence has been reported. I felt that park station was an ideal representation of this kind of 'troubled space'[18]. Because of the experimental nature of the project I could not ensure the safety of myself or the participants who would engage with the process. This thinking is what led to my interrogation of whether it is possible to find a space that is less restrictive, without necessarily expecting for there to be no restriction at all. When I experienced a considerable amount of difficulty garnering permission to use the Taxi Rank of the Park Station transportation hub as a site for experimentation I began to look for another site with close enough features for commentary. I was looking for a public space with a significant amount of thoroughfare to set up the correction booth. It would not be as interactive as I had initially wanted it to be when I imagined it at the Park Station Taxi Rank[19]. The benefit of that site, as public as it is, is that it, in comparison to the site[20] that was chosen for the project presentation, is a lot more contained.

[17] The Park Station establishment has multiple options for modes of transportation. It offers: bus services; traveling cross-country and cross-continentally., taxi services and trains services as in the form of rail way travel: i.e. Metro rail and rapidrail travel: i.e. Gautrain services as modes of travel. This information is available on the internet.

[18] The most infamous of these troubled spaces is the Noord taxi rank in Johannesburg. A location at which young women had been assaulted for wearing short skirts.

[19] In my imaginings I had envisioned setting up a point on a found platform at the taxi-rank where the travellers wait to board a taxi going to their decided destination. This point would have been set up to be one of interrogation, not destination. Unlike the many markings in the taxi-rank inviting people to queue according to where they wanted to go, I decided that that the signage at this point would signal a 'going nowhere' post. This as a political statement and

A layering Disruption…

A defining shift in the planning of this event happened when news broke about a group of LGBTIA activists of the 1in9 campaign interrupting the Pride march on the 6th October 2012. In their argument they say that the protest action was driven by the 'depoliticisation' of the Pride march. Some of the writings include:

> While the Johannesburg Pride board and many of Pride's participants may be substantively shielded from violent hate crimes as a result of their geography, class and race, most LGBTi South Africans live everyday in fear of assault, rape and murder. Johannesburg Pride's privilege was highlighted by a board member's on radio explanation that so-called "corrective rape" was not on Saturday's agenda because it was the 'theme' of Pride 2011. In the largely racialised class system of South Africa black township-living LGBTi people are on the frontline of multi-layered and often brutal oppression and discrimination as a result of their race, class, geography, and sexual orientation. Johannesburg Pride's relegation of hate crimes against black LGBTi people to a once-off 'theme' is offensively ignorant and denies the daily and continuous struggle of members of our LGBTi communities. It highlights a devastating disregard for the silent terror and brutalization experienced by many black LGBTi South Africans every day. (The Gender Action Project – 2012)

While I agree to the need of raising awareness. I feel that this is characteristic of the kind of knee-jerk reactions that do not help us (the people of this country) confront our social ills. In many ways I think that the result of that kind of approach, while often causing a necessary counter-upset, is on a larger scale ineffective when the 'action-inspiring-issues' are forgotten or very quickly become about other things. The race issue, as an example is often what is highlighted when these matters bring about debate. My particular discomfort, with this particular

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a catalyst for dialogue with the participant in the established change-over space. The dialogue would be deliberately placed to incite reflection by the individual responding. Some of the inspirations captured in my journal entries to this end include: 'sometimes I quite enjoy not going anywhere you know. It makes you stop, pause and just have a look at things. Like where you've come from and where you are headed. Where are *you* going?'. In my last recorded point in this entry (21-22 Sept 2012) I would step into and out of the change-room, coming out every time having made a minor change to my appearance.

[20] The chosen site. Is on the margin. Between the public space and university space. Situated in front of an old and now inaccessible entrance to the theatre of the University of the Witwatersrand. The significance of this site is multilayered. Firstly its named location. The corner of Jorrissen and Station as the 'ghost' element of the Park Station environment, which I had wanted to use to begin with. The word station as evoking images and associations of a place that is a stop en route' to somewhere else. I mention a desire for a site with a significant amount of thoroughfare as a place that is 'host' to a variety of activities. Of comings and goings of people and transportation. Of waiting and potential for reflection. A person or thing can also be 'stationed' at a location. We stationed ourselves at a point adjacent to the intersection on the corner of Jorrissen and station. This area in front of Wits has – as of early 2012- become a station for a series of Taxi's transporting people mainly to an area called Yeoville.

performance installation was with the manner in which it was carried out. I also found the signage informing their attempt to pause a process for a moment of silence in acknowledgement, to be problematic. In a press release, they explained what their intentions were. In the release put forward they wrote:

> Violent attacks, the threat of rape and murder and experiences of discrimination are an everyday reality for the economically marginalised lesbians, bisexual women and gender non-conforming women. Lesbians and other women and female-born people who appear to transgress patriarchal gender and sexual norms – including sex workers, women in non-traditional occupations and women who dress in what is considered to be non-traditional clothing, such as trousers and skirts – can expect to be ridiculed, threatened, stripped, beaten, evicted from their homes, denied education and employment, raped and killed. Fear poverty, rape, hunger, disease, indignity, ignorance, subjugation constitute the fabric of poor women's lives in the country (1in9 campaign, 2012).

I am interested in creative work that offers a platform to empower subconscious messaging about shifts in identity. To open up more room for diversity. It is already evident that there is a wide-spread dissatisfaction with what I will call the 'promise' of the rainbow nation in this country. Instead, I would argue, we have witnessed the breaks in that promise of assimilation. Revealing distinct pole divisions of colour, the most highlighted in this country being the extremes of 'the black demographic' on one end, its opposite extreme being 'the white demographic' on another. What I have described above as evidence, points to the many intersections along this continuum. It is not as clear-cut as it may seem. South Africa is not a country that is only affected by, or deals with black and white issues. It is a country that is still experiencing the effects of failing to 'shift' into a process of becoming part of that promised something. The expectation and consequence of the promise: that its people would have miraculously transitioned into an integrated state. Or perhaps for its people to have become living and practicing embodiments of a rainbow nation without the introduction of practical possibilities of how to go about this. At least, not since the TRC was introduced, and that, in my opinion, is what is at the heart of the complex problems that we continue to face as a society today. The absence of the allowance of room to attempt to reach such a place or to negotiate different identities has resulted in a different kind of reality of a country without cohesion. There is a reflexive tendency to immediately point to debates about power and space. Just as violence is another reflexive

tendency in the face of threat or confrontation. I am interested in creative work, experimentation and process that does not have a knee-jerk response to the instability it is influenced by.

> Performance is an act of intervention, a method of resistance, a form of criticism, a way of revealing agency. Performance becomes public pedagogy when it uses the aesthetic, the performative, to foreground the intersection of politics, institutional sites, and embodied experience. In this way performance is a form of agency, a way of bringing culture and person into play (Denzin, 2003:9*).*

The aesthetics: A check point

I decided to do some research and compile an archive of the 'picture of protest' in the country. I collected articles on the protests spanning from the Sharpeville massacre; recent protests for improvements of the educational system and its resources; altercations between political parties, The Marikana massacre and violence on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexuality, age etc.



A collage interpretation of the 'picture of protest' in South Africa.

With these gatherings I created a museum of articles for study and display in the style of an exhibition. Also in the exhibition was a 'washing line' of statement or activism t-shirts, with a range of concerns about: race, HIV/AIDS awareness, Abuse, rights of women, children, to expression, of sexuality, to choice and the like. The gatherings became part of a museum/archive showcasing articles on protest in the country, providing some background as well as functioning at a subliminal level for the audience that came to watch a performance. The various articles and statements were from newspapers, blog sites and other sources from the internet. In the collection were articles speaking to service and government, strikes: for text-books, for working conditions, reflections on the effects of Marikana, and the 2008 xenophobic attacks and the like. The largest and most significant contribution for this process were writings based on the LGBTQIA community: highlighting concerns, responses, and coverage on attacks and debates around pride or prejudice.

The audience that were invited to experience the performed activism were also encouraged to come 'wearing a t-shirt displaying the activism you are about', thus extending the performance of the activism beyond the people that the audience had themselves come to see. In this way the activism was made personal. The audience, in wearing their own activism on their chest/bodies reflected both 'on' and 'back to' the issues that concern them. This I felt was an important theme in line with Stacy Holman's (2005) notion of the personal being political. Spry's (2001:711) reflection using the words of Conquergood to describe the dynamic and dialectical relation of the text and body, as a major theme in autoethnographic praxes, is interesting in this regard. Wherein the site of the body, in terms of this project and its relationship to text or the notion of inscription as an example is explored, redefined and the boundaries re-assesed, blurred and manipulated.



The set-up

The museum archive of articles as set up at the site and an example of the kinds of t-shirts on the washing-line display.

The conventional dichotomies that exist in reference to the body include: sexuality (in terms of: desire, sexual preference, sexual orientation) as heterosexual and homosexual; sex (in terms of biology or physiology) as female and male; and gender (referring to social status, sometimes with sexual identity) as woman and man (Lorber 2007). Even the violations inflicted upon these groups become specific to these dichotomies. In South Africa, the association with notions of a 'lesbian community' mostly identifies black, masculine survivors or victims of corrective rape. Effectively eliminating the experiences of other survivors or victims of rape and other kinds of sexual or gender based violence. The experiences of other women, and other marginalised

groups within the LGBTIA community, like that of the beheaded Miss Gay Kuruman[21] (a male to female transgendered member of the LGBTIA community) in the year 2012, for example, become secondary. It also becomes difficult to identify any other woman who has sex with/loves women and is black, outside of what has become the putative bracket or category within the homosexual community of South Africa.

It is at this point that I begin to question the meaning of activism (which I consider to be a performance of resistance), especially because I consider the desired outcomes of the experimental processes which I carry out to have properties of activism. Must 'activism', in all its forms, as well as the ugliness which the word has come to embody, have the properties of what is often defined as violent and aggressive and dare I say masculine. I find myself uncomfortably straddling the fence on this matter as I interrogate my own process. I would like to refer back to the Pride march protest, in an effort to continue making sense. As someone who is familiar with 1in9's aggressive activist approach I understand and appreciate the need for people to be shaken out of their comfort zones to reflect what is often times a truer and less dressed and manicured way of dealing with things, in order to jolt us out of our ordered and organised daily or expected experiences as suggested too by Brook (1968). As a theatre-maker, scholar and practitioner within the field of applied theatre for education, therapy, as well as activism, however, I am aware of the responsibility to others and the necessity to ensure that no harm is done to those involved or exposed to an intervention or process. During the 'die-in'[22] some of the activists held up a banner with the words 'no cause for celebration' on it which I think confused the thousands of marchers who then reacted violently instead of engaging positively. I recognise the problematics of messaging in this intervention and as a result appreciate the importance of sign-systems when dealing with individuals or groups that are unknowing or unfamiliar with a particular approach. I have a sense that I have become more conscious about recognising how layers of communication might manifest: especially in instances when I had not necessarily set out to communicate anything, in my own work.

[21] An individual born Thapelo Makutle. He identified as both gay and transgender and an activist in the LGBTI community. City press writes about the killing and beheading of Miss Gay Kuruman following an argument with two heterosexual men over the sexuality of Thapelo. This article among others was published on the June 13th, 2012 and is available online. URL: www.citypress.co.za/miss-gay-kuruman.

[22] This 'die-in' involved a performed representation of the number or statistics of individuals who have fallen victim to gender-based violence. The die-in refers to the activists' literal performance of dead bodies in the middle of the road, creating an obstruction for the progression of the, march.

Reflecting on the process…

Invitation to correct: was an investigation into the effect of space on gender performance and attitudes towards sexed bodies and sexuality. The aim of which had not necessarily been to affect long-term or even measurable change, but to create a platform in which to show resistance to the abovementioned issue in the single event of a performance. We investigated how a process might develop in an in-between space in which the function/power of it is unclear. And to see what would translate, or what kind of action could potentially come about when the commonly understood performance of gender is deliberately blurred and subverted. The process offered a reimagining of the performance of gender and role while also addressing and reflecting cultures of fear, invisibility, shame and silence in institutional sites (the taxi rank and the university margin in this case), as spaces which hold power and history. The understanding that appearance sends information about the person and the assumption that this is a way of free expression were brought into conversation. The conversation revealing, as it has in many ways, in many different contexts, that there are social and cultural rules and conventions that make keeping up appearances a less voluntary act. Appearance sends messages about: work, class, personality, demeanor, attitude (conservative or otherwise), sexual interest and approachability.

One is often said to be making a statement in how one dresses. Clothing, symbols or logos written on clothing have a tendency to 'say' (some)things. Smart (1985) describes 'discourse' as a group of statements and the 'archive' as standing for the various systems of statements: defining the mode of occurrence of the statement and its enunciability. The practice that differentiates dress in terms of gender, if we are to stick to the argument of cloth or clothing enforces a general understanding – that may be removed from influences of fashion-perpetuating associations with what is considered to be a masculine way of dressing (often associated with the male physique) and a feminine way of dressing (often associated with the female physique). It is a general system of the formation and transformation of statements (Smart, 1985:40). He suggests that our own archive is the most complex of systems because it is governed by a subjective rule system. I find the suggestion of our personal archive to be a most interesting one if we are to consider the exploration of the performance of dress as alchemical. The most insightful investigation highlighted in this project was the notion of the clash between

systems. A ruling system (as alluded to above) is informed by political and cultural attitudes, as well as the subjective system of the individual: i.e. containing the attitudes of the individual. These attitudes are often appropriated (and therefore repressed) in spaces that hold expectation, effectively eliciting 'normative' behavior. The attitudes of the subjective system, occupy both the internal spaces, as well as the spaces in-between the spaces that we adjust ourselves for. The purpose of the project was to expose the possible conflict negotiations involved in the process of 'how to' dress the body. Contending with: what is expected of it (the gendered body), how it should be appropriated, and how it might 'truly' want to express itself. The project entertained the realistic possibility of androgynous existence, through heightened representation.

As an experimental work that had at its core an understanding of 'signs' and space as facilitators for personal behaviour it came to my attention that the framing of the invitation may have already begun to have an effect on how the participant-observers of the experiment were going to experience the work as a virtual and imaginative space had already been activated. The words in the invitation may have already inadvertently incited the audience to partake in a manner opposite to the freedom, and openness, if you will, that had been set up/offered in the invitation *[Please revisit the invitation included above for reference].

You give people freedom they want order…

The audience being invited to wear their respective activisms on their person was a supportive layer and reference to my thinking about sign systems. The clothing and the person wearing the item of clothing displaying a particular commentary, became part of a whole sign system of a particular standpoint, attitude, or way of being. The t-shirt being a 'neutral' item of clothing: not specific to the male body or the female body. An androgynous (imagining androgyny here to refer to a 'consciousness'[23]) item of clothing that can be placed onto any and all bodies. The sign. The image, logo or words displayed on the t-shirt being the signifier. The body being the signified. Whether the body was present or absent, as in the case of the t-shirts that were hung on the washing line, the body is always implicated. The sexed body more aptly so. Also asking the invited audience to bring their own prejudices to the performance installation, to come and go as they please, alerted me to the possibility that I was in fact, setting them up to become passive.

[23] See Singer (2000).

Even though they were given the freedom to ‘come and go as they pleased, to engage or not to’, the majority of the audience fell back into purely receptive roles. This is not to say that they were not at all engaged in the experience, since part of the language in the invitation set up a space for reflection. They had been activated to some degree, insofar as being able to choose to display a position with regard to the fight for or the violation of certain rights, or whatever the case may have been. It was interesting to observe that the transparency: of intention in the framing of the event, to a large degree rendered the participant-observers passive or expectant, without action. This was a ‘subliminal surprise’ (Barba, 1995: 57), which I myself had not anticipated, even though I was exploring the concept of a subliminal participant activation.

The taxi-drivers had seen the activity, in rehearsal before the showcase, and dismissed the activity as a ‘sketch’ or drama, whereas before, there had been a genuine interest in what was going on. Perhaps an indication that the process needed another kind of provocation. To continue, in another direction, from the point where it had ended on the first day that it was seen. It was particularly evident that even though the observers of the activity at the site may have considered it just ‘play’, they were as a matter of fact interested in gaining information on what the performance was about as well as what informed its making. This highlights the benefit of the ‘process’ aspect of putting together the elements that would contribute to the performance event, given our rehearsing and carrying the performance event out in one site, as opposed to intervening in new sites on every occasion of the happening.

Consider our being asked questions about why it is that we were dressing in public and why the man (referring here to the other performer in the process) by the end of our activity in rehearsal was wearing women’s clothing and claiming to be a woman. Similar behaviour and role subversion explored by the female performer: who dressed up as a man, in traditional garb and moved with a bulge in her pants was dismissed. In conversation (speaking back to this observation) with one of the taxi drivers afterward it was said (by this particular taxi driver) that it was not unusual for women to do that kind of thing, and dress up as men because ‘basadi ba phapha’ (women like things). When he spoke of the male performer’s actions: ending up with him in clothing that points to a ‘feminine’ way of being he spoke out of disgust. Saying words like ‘selo se ga se monna se’, meaning ‘this thing is not a man’.

Goffman (1963:33), who is of the opinion that when individuals come into an environment where no words are spoken, they still share in some sort of communication. He argues that the individual employs a 'public character', modifying activity for it to be perceived.

The experiment sought to explore notions of public/private space by bringing to the fore our interior realities and experiences in a public space. This out of a desire to expose the idea of 'territory' where the basic gestures of 'ways of operating' are deployed and repeated daily in domestic space. The private territory must be protected from indiscreet glances. Even the most modest home reveals the personality of its occupant. It is an involuntary confession of one's intimate way of living and dreaming, it confesses income level and social ambitions (Mayol, 1998:145-146). This idea was highlighted in the bringing of objects to the outside space as a commentary on private property; experimenting with the contrasts of separateness in spaces.

The impact

Change is not instant. And while one wants to measure the effects of a project. The effects are both conscious and unconscious. On a basic level the performance created interest, thus creating awareness, which I would argue is absorbed at a subconscious level. The conscious mind recognises a play, acting, or what my elders would have called 'a sketch'. Something not to be taken too seriously. But at an unconscious level there is potential for the subconscious mind to be affected and as a consequence of that: future actions and attitudes will also be affected.

Having observed the largeness of the site, and having a particular liking for spaces that have the potential to completely swallow action or inadvertently highlight or forefront it, I was excited to discover what might surface as a result of our experimentation.



Above: Some of the unknowing audience that engaged with the performance

To extend on the interesting observation of the lack of engagement from the audience, I would like to refer to some post-performance reflections. In speaking to a particular moment when a performer, who played a larger-than-life confrontational mother-figure, challenged the audience, there was a palpable silence. One member of the audience mentioned in a post-performance conversation that she had felt an urge to respond as nobody seemed to oblige. When I approached another who had been asked to explain the term 'feminist' inscribed upon the t-shirt she was wearing she said that she had chosen not to respond because responding is something that she does on a daily basis and sometimes one just needs to be quiet. I recognized in this response an indication of what I would like to call an 'activist fatigue'. The monitoring of this kind of input is significant and telling, considering the invitation for people to take part as they wished.

The concept for observation and response, and not necessarily dialogue was a key one for this process. Not only because I feel as though a considerable amount gets lost in the search for meaning through spoken language, but the manipulation of language itself is problematic. A

notable example of this was in the experience of the mother figure as the link for engagement in the performance. The mother figure was an exaggerated example of the conditioning and corrective voices that entrench and perpetuate the silencing and fear experienced by young black individuals in their expression of seemingly 'alternative sexualities' but also a representation of the older questioning voices, that making strides at understanding, while not always going about it in the most comfortable, or accommodating of ways – androgynous in her own right.

> Life maintains and displaces; it wears out, breaks and reworks; it creates new configurations of beings and objects across the everyday practices of the living, always similar and different (de Certeau, 1998: 148).

There were many exposures in this process, but whether a single overarching alchemical process took place is something I cannot identify. Although this felt like an important experimental process to include in this study, I am still unable to locate and fit its, alchemical puzzle piece, into the grand picture of this study. And maybe that is the point. That it does not have a perfectly placed position, as no process ever really goes perfectly, in my opinion. I continue to wonder whether, this process constitutes an androgynous performance because it was created and took place in, in-between and therefore androgynous spaces. My standpoint on this matter continues to shift. What I do feel deserves a significant amount of focus however, are the many exposures revealed in the carrying out of this process. These exposures are responsible for awakening me to the many elements that need consideration when conceptualizing a process, because they are constantly at play. In many cases one is not aware of the many factors that contribute to an event before the event itself has even taken place. These exposures are important as they influenced and facilitated the beginning of the process at which I find myself now.

In terms of the exploration of whether it is possible to create a performance that does not take the concepts of role, behaviour and sexuality as essentialised, this project, I think presented those very essentialist attitudes, exposing them and attempting to negotiate their subversion collaboratively, publicly and in the private internal spaces (systems) held or occupied by the individual engaging with the process. The performance was most effective at creating an awakening or raising awareness to the constructedness of sexuality and gender-based roles and behaviour, and the ways in which their effects manifest in the represented cultures of the black demographic of South Africa. The project as a whole was most interesting as a study on our resistances to influences that exist outside of our systems of understanding or discourse. Just as

things that are ‘other’ are not readily embraced, ‘freedom’ of engagement is also not easily welcomed.



Engagement from a distance by the taxi drivers parked at their station during the performance event

2.3 *Garage process*

I observed (albeit in varying degrees) that our personal preferences, past experiences and current feelings affect both what we perceive and how clearly we perceive it. It is something of an oxymoronic existence: that when there are rules, there are myriad efforts to break or eliminate them, yet when they are explicitly non-existent (as was the idea driving this process), the need arises for there to be limits within which to function. Whether conscious or not: there is always expectation. Whether explicit or not: there must always be rules.

The garage process arose out of an urge to explore the potential of my 'thinking in images'[24] (during my period of exploration around the time of the 'moment of exposure' improvisation). It was also an extension of my interest in audience interaction (reception and response, as experienced for example in *invitation to correct*) during a performance event. I set out to investigate what might happen if one invites an audience to a space, to undergo and create an experience without having explicit instructions or expectations. The experimental process was one which was intended to involve an invited group (of participant-performers) to partake in a performance experience through an inciting or prompting to action. The conceptual thinking driving the process was that it would result in an androgynous performance event: blending facilitation, improvisation and collaboration. I had hoped that an alchemical process would come about from the elements placed together in time and space. The first aspect of which being the invitation of a group to the space in which they would interact with and activate objects and writings, placed in it. The elements in the space would function as prompts, catalysts and toys. Secondly, the participants would use these objects to transform the space, through their active embodiment (of manipulation, negotiation and exploration) within the space, effectively creating a performance event.

[24] At some stage I kept having images of toilet-paper inners and benches that I couldn't make sense of, so I collected them. There was also an image of a washing line with clothing, cloth and pictures of faces hung up on it. So I planned to put one up, but instead of pictures: to hang up my writing as means of putting a twist on the idea of 'hanging up dirty laundry'. The writings are reflective of my thought processes, history and memory. These came about during the stage in which I was only generating text for two weeks. I count the images as among the text which was generated. Another image that came to me when I revisited writing I had generated was regarding my time in the Brownies and Girl-guides. The image was that of a memory box. I started to think about a kind of game to play with audience or participants that could have them engage. A memory game we used to play involved our recalling (to the best of our abilities), as many objects as had been displayed for a period of time, in an effort to be awarded the opportunity of cutting a block of chocolate from a large slab with a knife and fork. I created a list of the images that came to me in this fashion and in other ways during the generative stage and afterwards, as a means of creating a record of what I might like to include on an experimental process in the future. Following the processes of 'moment of exposure' improvisation and the process that was *invitation to correct*, I planned to explore how they might be used in another process. The culmination of things learnt, experienced or arising from the processes that came before it.

Thinking in images

Throughout the process of this study I have recorded a flood of images which have come to me: either during my generative period of writing, because of exercises carried out, in dreams, or as a result of observations made at random. I invited a group of people to join me in the garage site[25] to explore some ideas about bringing those elements together practically: by responding, playing, and giving feedback. My intention being to find a way of creating a shared performance experience through the engagement with my own text, writings and objects relevant to my own lived experience. In order to see what and how they (being the participant-performers) are able to generate an experience, by also drawing from their own lived experiences.

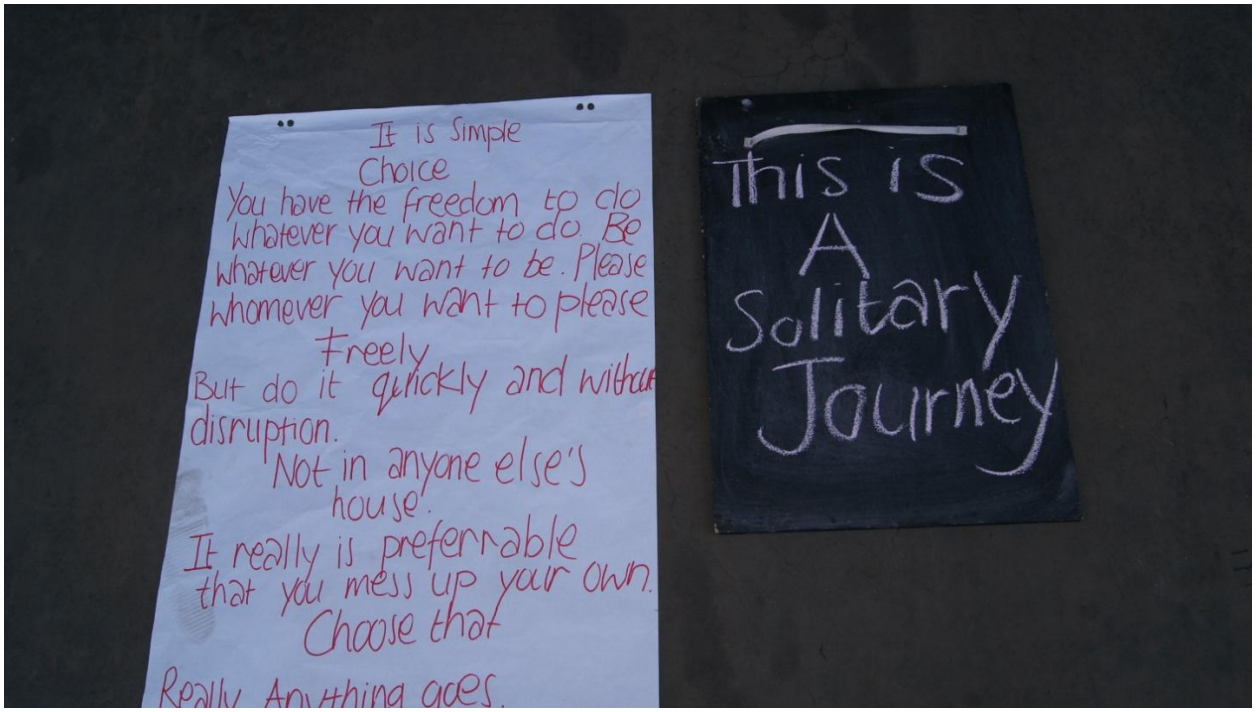


Friedwald (1996: 126) describes autoethnography as 'the kind of art that takes you deeper inside yourself and ultimately out again' (in Denzin, N, K., Lincoln,Y, S., Smith, L, T. 2008:375). It sets a scene, tells a story, weaves intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation…and then letting go, hoping for readers to bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives. It makes a text present: demanding attention and participation, and implicating all involved while also refusing closure or

[25] This is the site that was discovered during my 'walk on the edges' (Cathy Turner, 2004).

categorization (Holman Jones 2005:765). Tomaselli , Dyll, Francis (2008:375) expand on Holman's description of a demand of attention as one which makes witnessing and testifying possible; allowing pleasure, difference and movement the space for productive conversation. In light of the above words, I would like to reflect on some of the accounts of the integrated experiences of the participant-performers in the next session.

This is a Solitary Journey



One of the written elements in the space, placed at a point that most of the participants gravitated towards consequently marked the starting point of the process. It read: 'This is a solitary journey'. The prompt for a solitary journey in the company of others. Inciting them to participate, act, and take risks (Holman Jones 2005:771), the audience were allowed the space to free associate with the understanding that the journey is solitary, with no particular beginning or end. Planning for the audience to participate in exploratory performance by exercising their freedom of choice and association. Inciting activity for collaborative performance and witnessing. The audience is introduced to a museum of memory and inspiration: of stimuli and objects, both arbitrary and significant, placed in the space. The objects which were placed in the

space to incite the participants to become performers and create a performance event by actively engaging with them included:

Chalk

Toilet-roll inners

Incense

A lighter

A washing line

Personal writings on newsprint hung on a washing line

Personal writings on newsprint pasted on the floor

Writings as suggestions/instructions/invitations

Cloth

Ash

A camera

A writing pad

Pens

A digital camera

A memory box

Refuse bags

Benches

A laptop[26]

[26] On the laptop is video footage of the improvisation I carried out on the 20th September 2012. When I experienced a ‘‘moment of exposure’’. Above the laptop is an invitation to press ‘play’ and to press ‘stop’ once the viewer has

Reflections on the process…

In *the garage process* the participants became the performers. By simply participating they created a performance event. This process was an amalgamation of what had been discovered during the previous two processes. The intention, for the audience to undergo their own alchemical process, thus creating their own androgynous performance, and identifiable shifts or moments of exposure, is what led the activation of this process.

The result of the event was a blend of performance, facilitation, collaboration and improvisation in which I would argue that both an internal and performance alchemical process took place, for the performer-participants in reflection and engagement with the site and the materials in it. I describe it as an internal process due to the participant-performers referring to the process as having had meditative and therapeutic qualities. Some appreciating the 'solitariness' of it, as well as 'the freedom to associate'. In another reflection, a participant-performer expressed an appreciation in the process not being forceful, expanding to say that there was no pressure to do anything that they didn't want to, and most valuing the opportunity to interrogate the manner in which they interact in the world. In fact one participant described the site as representative of the world we live in and the process itself as one which reinforced self-awareness. And by extension it was reflected upon that we are all players in the game of life because we decide on its rules together. On the whole, the responses to the absence of rules was the most poignant aspect of the process. I also found that the questioning of what it was that I was looking for, an interesting one, as I think it, most overtly evidenced what I would like to describe as a dependency on being told what to do and how to do it, the presence of expectation, or in another light, the need to always get something out. One participant expressed that he was bored and needed rules, while another communicated that she found the boredom interesting. I find this reflection on feelings of boredom telling of the habitual practices of the participant-performers and rather amusing as I contemplate Abramovic's (2011) quote of John Cage, saying that: 'it is important to learn to see things behind the boredom'.

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seen enough. I had hoped to develop the sequence in the footage in and for the space, but my response in the moment was to keep the intimate feeling if it. The sense of being watched, by inciting an active and involved viewing of it. The viewer is effectively implicated.

I think of *the garage process* a watershed experience in my investigating how one might structure a process in which the participants come to perform through engaging with elements foreign to them. I think that it is significant that the space was located as well as made androgynous, so that the participants would not tend to typical associations and modes of practice, as one does when one identifies comfortably with a particular environment. From the feedback of the participants it was clear that the coming to, the engagement in and the activation was initially uncomfortable and unfamiliar territory, which translated with the participants not being quite sure of how to negotiate their way through the process.

On the level of interrogating whether the process resulted in an event in which the roles, behaviours and sexuality of the participants was not essentialised I would state, not initially, but eventually, it is a process.

So…what really happened here?

At the beginning of the stage I observed how the participants went about familiarising themselves with the space. This process of warming up to the site and its contents was an activation of the exhibition element of the structure. This mention, I include in consideration of my aforementioned interest in experiments that can stand on their own despite or in spite of the bodies within it. Even before the participants began to partake in an embodied experience of engagement with the site and the trigger objects within it, they were exposed to a museum display of another lived experience (my own), which in itself would have had a reflective impact on the participant, had they decided not to do anything else in the space. Initially the participants (experiencing their stage of descent: Nigredo) seemed to have been thrown into the deep end. Disorientation is after all a characteristic that is synonymous with this stage, also referred to as the phase of darkness in alchemy. In post-process communication the majority of the participants communicated that they had wanted to know what the rules were and what was expected of them. This need for boundaries, role identification, or purpose of function, I feel, is an indication of our conditioned expectation of being told what and how to do or be.

In what I identified as the second stage of the process, or Albedo (as it is referred to in alchemical terms), I noticed that the participants began to be taken in more deeply by the

environment. The participants began sorting through and activating the objects by improvising (i.e. responding in the moment) and becoming more 'playful', until they reached a point at which they ran out of ways to play and 'boredom' set in. In alchemy the whiteness or Albedo stage, as mentioned before is said to reveal the volatile spirit and make way for the androgynous. This in my view explained the sudden eruption of energy, leading into 'plateau', when some of the participants began to experience boredom. At this point some described feeling the need to stop, but needing the instruction for when to do so, as one does when they know the rules of a game and what makes it end. Another kind of restlessness set in, at this stage which is also said to require some patience. Often, I would say, that part of the experience of improvisatory and meditation process requires a significant amount of 'pushing through' what may appear to be blocks, what may be experienced as fear, or nothingness, for something else to emerge, in this case the androgynous performance.

The point at which the participants transformed into participant-performers, and eventually discovering their androgynous performance occurred when they were able to discover another kind of expression beyond their individual and collective borders. I think that this process was successful in allowing for the re-constructing of the frames that exist in role expectation, in that by the end of it the participants-performers were involved in an embodied experience somewhat removed from the expression in their own physical boundaries. By challenging, questioning and problematising their own initial 'wants' or anticipations of what the process should be and then later of the possibilities of what the triggers in the space are asking. The participants gained a heightened awareness of their own ability to influence an event by interrogating the relevance of the prompts to their own experience in the space and extending the reflection to the ways in which they interact in various other environments. I think that the mere contemplation on the flexibility or rigidity of space, as well as the disagreements in what different participants experienced, preferred or disliked was in itself an indication of how the space allowed for conflicting ideas to exist. The participants' experience of the Rubedo stage, meant that they were exposed to the possibility of a co-inhabitance of diverging opinions and views existing 'healthily', in an environment that was not oppressive or repressive but structurally and conceptually held. In discovering their androgynous performance the participants were able to exist in the thresholds of opinion, of view, of experience and 'being' having newly-discovered an alternative state of presence.

I think that the focus on rules and margins of time, offers an interesting point for reflection as it too gives one a sense of what can be done in an allotted space and within a given period of time. Time itself has become so compartmentalized. Given our belonging to a technological age in which gadgets, smart-phones, social networks and the like give a sense of constant activity, a never-endedness, but also, in another light, a 'pressuredness'.This 'pressuredness': creating the feeling that one can't have enough time, and yet there is never enough gives the sense that there is a great 'lack' in relation to time. The invitation for people to 'record something' was a both an extension of the display of *the moment of exposure* improvisation on the laptop screen, calling one to come into a focused and more intimate space than what we are afforded or allow ourselves on a daily basis. On the other hand, the prompting to record something, deepened the participants awareness of the environments and all of the elements within it. The decision making or the exercising of the choice to record a particular thing or activity, became a form of witnessing, as the thing itself performed. This notion of 'capturing', making what was witnessed and 'caught', viewable at a later stage, allows for the re-experiencing of the performance, which in turn enables the extension, elongation or manipulation of time: creating a sense of timelessness that is not always possible in reality.

A very profound moment of reflection from a participant alluded to the androgynous:

> In terms of what is she trying to say
>
> I think
>
> My understanding of what you're looking at is
>
> You're looking at inbetween
>
> The fact that
>
> Uhm
>
> In life there are rules and we have to follow those rules

And we have to do some things a certain way

And it comes out in the way you talk

The way you move

What you're trying to make people recognize

And pinpoint in themselves is that

What are your inbetween moves?

When you're not doing those things

And I think that's what you were doing in your video

Cos we all act differently when we are by ourselves

So I think you're looking at that

And you're trying to make us recognize that in ourselves

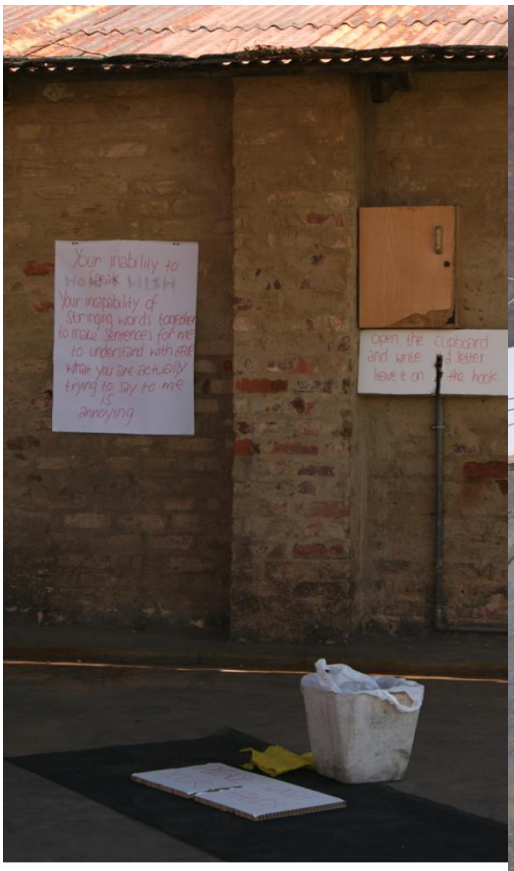
The evidence that a performance event came about was not only revealed in the difference in the look of the space at the end of the process, but in the responses. The participants recognized how the elements in the space had a significant part in their 'creation' within it.



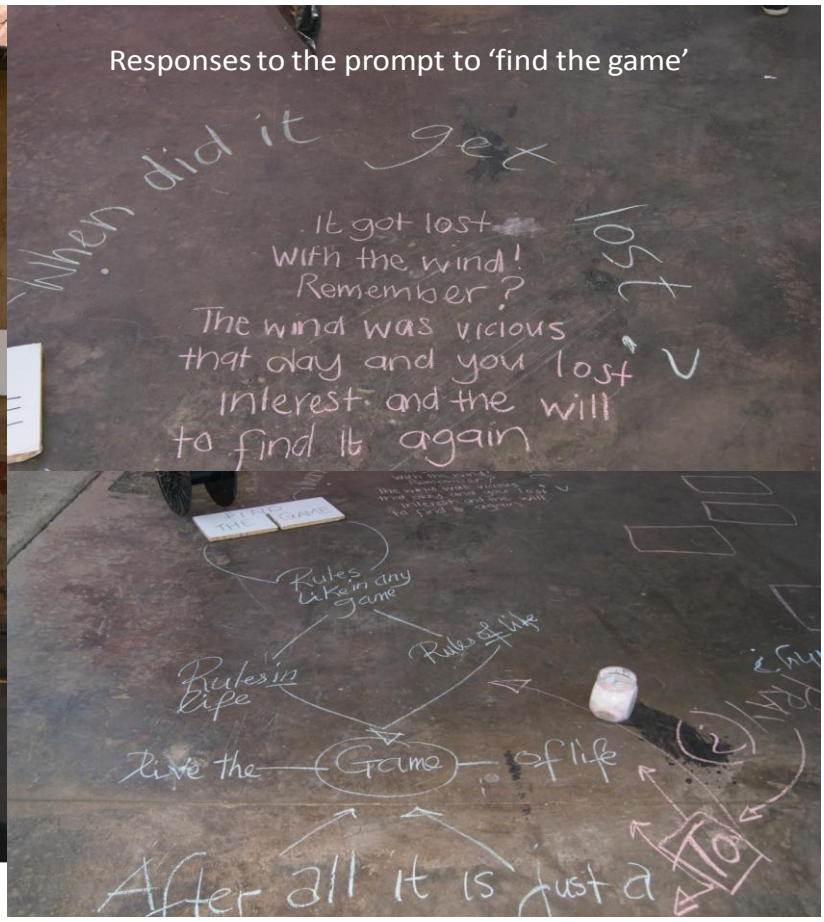
The garage site before the process



The space as the invited participant-performers found it.



Responses to the prompt to 'find the game'

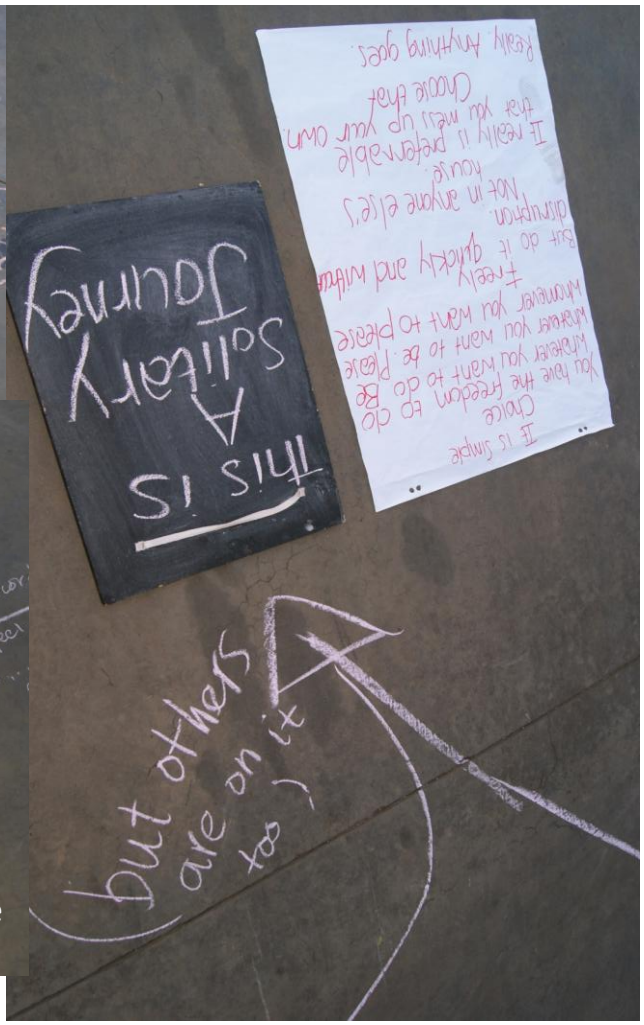


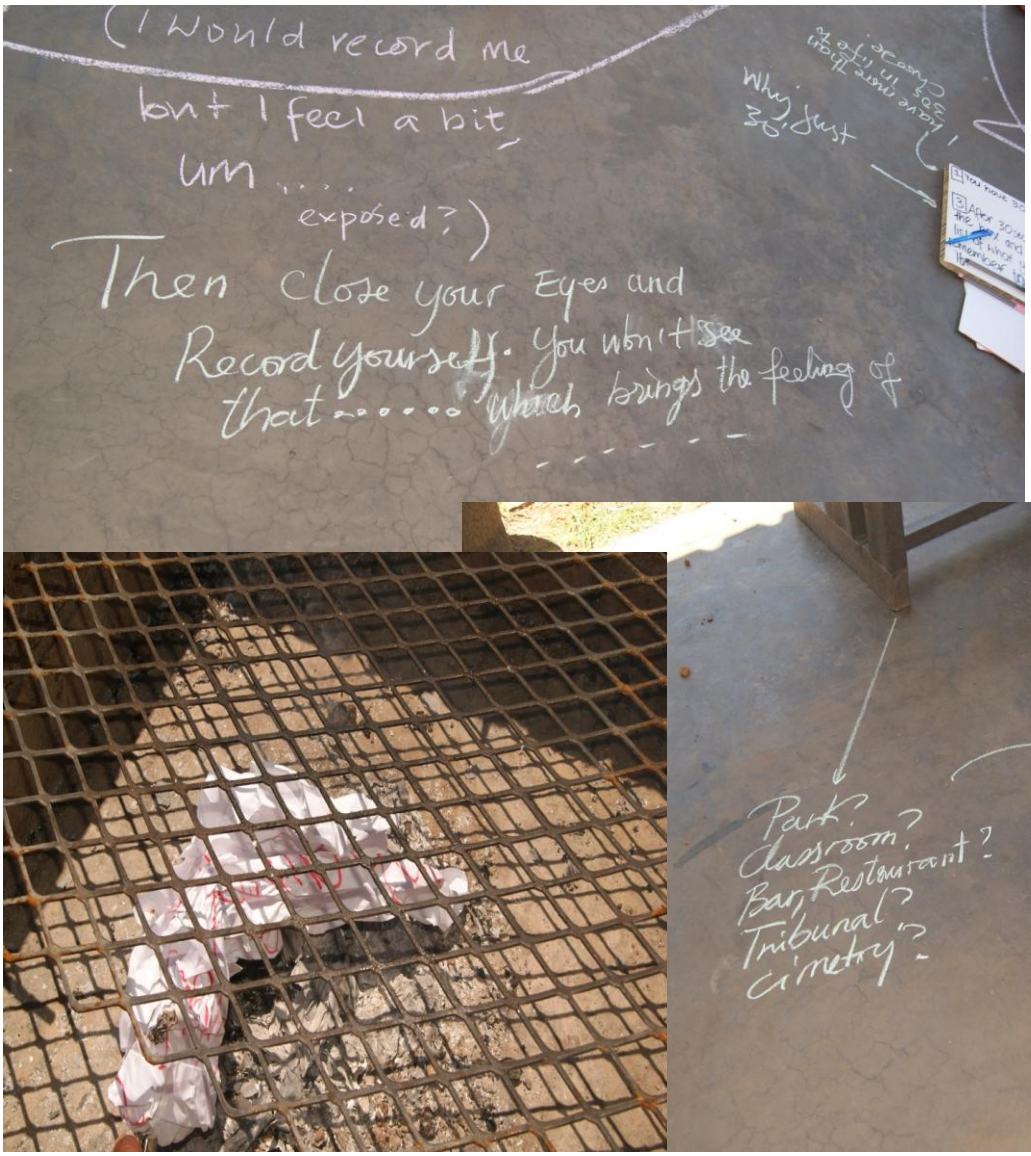


Responses to the prompt/invitation to 'play!'



Responses to the invitation to 'take a seat' and to 'record something'. There was a suggestion (this was an impulse I had shared too)that the recording to be set up in an enclosed space. For privacy. I had talked myself out of the impulse thinking that it was too personal and this instead allowed for some distance. But since there was choice, surely one would only record if they wanted to?





After: Indication of the space having performed and having been performed in

The practice as research looks in particular at 'performances' as identities entangled within questions of perspective, the problem(atic)s of embodiment and the possibility, as Trummer

(2008) helpfully shapes, using the ideas of John Cage, of real community existing in absences: the "observant lingering"[27].

As soon as the participants started to do things, in and with the toys available to them, they were performing. I would also argue that I too, as a tangible human body in the space, engaging as a participant-observer was performing. I extend this argument by suggesting that I performed on two levels: 1. Live, as the others did in the real-time exploration and 2. In the footage of an improvisation that had taken place in another time and space/place, but which could be manipulated (switched on and off) at one's leisure and interest. In acknowledgement of this element: my present, but absent performing body, a participant said that it looked as though I was in battle with how society makes us move. In conflict with what is engrained in us and expected of us.

Coming out of this exploration was an interesting negotiation. It became clear that there needed to be some sort of indication of an end. It may be worth putting a time-boundary in place. The rules of a game give meaning to many of the acts that take place, and the game can only be understood in terms of the goals and concepts involved in the game. These became experiments in discovering the necessity of rules, by breaking them. To see what happens. After the revelation of the process at play before the audience came to experience the performance that was *invitation to correct*, I became aware of the various ways in which to explore and exploit rule structure, expectation and communication in process.

Barba (1995:51), in speaking about the undecided body describes how instead of dancing with the spectator's attention, performers or theatre makers more often than not tend to bombard it and alienate it. In the case of the *invitation to correct* however it was a deliberate choice to let the environment bombard the senses of the audience as it happened in a large, loud and open public space, where there was very active thoroughfare and traffic. The other deliberate choice was to

[27] On thoughts about communication as affiliation the quote is cited from: John Cage, "Thoreau said: The best communion men (sic) have is in silence." From *Empty Words* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1979) p.5. Another interesting connection to the silence/absence is the introduction of the "buffer zone" as the space of indeterminacy, the gap between words written and spoken that calls for attention found in the book *Voice and void* (p.10). Hearing and seeing is shifted in space it's 'bound in time', "sight is beholden in space" and the blank space suggests 'roominess" for other things to happen (p.14).

keep the performance, although engaged, a largely silent one. This as an attempt to reduce our part in influencing the participants' reception and engagement in the process. I would like to expand on the emergence of what appeared to be resistance due to my framing of the experience and the notion of power and its manipulation in the *garage process.*

In considering the notion of resistance I wonder whether it is a question of power. And who is manipulating whom. In claiming to give participants absolute freedom, am I not the one who is in actual fact setting them up to not want it? Perhaps.

During my garage exploration I wondered whether it is possible to carry out a process without verbal communication. Entertaining ideas that non-verbal instruction/inciting might be more powerful. And now I wonder if it was perhaps an unconscious search for a mode of operation in the creative space that does not seem manipulative. An attempt to find a way of working that will keep my conscious clear. My desire was to create a space, where feelings, moods, memories can be evoked and to allow the time for the 'evoked' to unfold or transform into self-stimulated action, a performance. In this way I feel that I would not be the one with all the power, that in providing the space and time for a performance to take place the power would be shared between the performance-participants and myself. It would be collaborative. In speaking to Foucault's questions around power, Smart (1985:77) writes that power is not necessarily about possession or a dominant class. It is also about strategy, manoeuvering and tactics. The resistance that came with my manipulation of my power as a facilitator, participant-observer and a facilitator-performer *in the garage process* proved to be a catalyst for action and revelation.

Considering language as a role player in gendering space and behaviour according to masculinity and femininity. I would like to provide an analysis of expectation created in the framing of one of the experiments in this study with particular reference to the use of the word 'play'. The masculine is identified as active, while the feminine is associated with the more passive characteristics. It was perhaps significant that the participants were my fellow peers and lecturers, all of whom have a sophisticated understanding of the categories associated with masculinity and femininity respectively and of psychological scales of development as well as a familiarity with play.

In the most recent exploration: *theatre exposure process*[28], I recreated the conditions, allowing for the potential of an alchemical process to take place, with some adjustments. For one, I thought it would be interesting and relevant in terms of reflection to find the androgynous quality of a theatre space as host. Reimagining the use of the downstairs theatre of the University of the Witwatersrand, I invited a group of individuals to engage with a space, similar to how they had been incited to do so in *the garage process.* In this process I decided to explore the concept of the absent presence, as an interrogation of various kinds of involvement by removing myself altogether. My tangible body was not immediately present in the main space of exploration, and while it was possible for it to be discovered[29] in the unfolding event it was very likely that it could be missed. I limited my experience in the main exploration site to the display of myself in the performance of my *moment of exposure* improvisation.

While it was clear that a performance event took place in the space, as rationalised before, in my arguing that the activation of the objects within the space, provides that proof, I was aware that the participant-performers had undergone some kind of process. It was unfortunate however, that I was unable to identify and 'feel' the moment in which the alchemical shift happened in that process, with the same degree of power which I had felt in the communal experience and carrying out of the *garage process.* In the *garage process*, I was able to identify the shifts that took place during alchemical process because I was actively involved in the experience of it. In the relocating of the conditions into the theatre space, I structured an installation in which the participant performers could and would go about a haphazard individual journey. While there was ample evidence to prove that a happening had taken place, I felt removed from the process of the event as I had not been part of its entirety.

[28] Please see additional footage and image indications of the unfolding of the process. The CDs included are titled: Theatre exposure process and numbered. The CD will function as a flash drive when inserted. I would recommend viewing the footage with VLC media player. In my experience, this player functions best, where other players eliminate sound.

[29] As per one of the prompts in the space for the participants to go in search of me in a different and not so obvious site. This site was in fact another translation of a space on the edges of the main exploration environment of the theatre. The participant would only find me if they allowed themselves to go on a journey along the margins of the space.

Part III: Making way for new cycles of exposure…

At the beginning of this paper I expressed the feeling of a need to create an event in which individuals could be exposed to the kinds of performances they carry out in their daily lives, by involving them in a process they could determine the outcome of, by taking part if, when and how ever they decide to . This would happen in the undergoing of a process in which the participants would transform into performers through inciting them to interact with stimuli, objects, space (depending on the conceptual framework of the project), in an embodied and responsive way, that might bring about a heightened consciousness. The experience of these kinds of events has the potential to leave the participant with an understanding of the conceptual 'drive' behind the structuring of a process, and possibly providing a key to their own unhindered personal reflection.

This work is significant because it raises awareness to notions of negotiation of self, and in relation to various spaces and the various other bodies and objects that occupy or transition through those space. It highlights how one positions oneself in relation to issues that affect the individual at a personal and an extended societal level. One is awakened to one's choice making strategies and the influences of group think, as well as the various conventions and systems of appropriation that affect them when given the space and time to discover and reflect without oppressive or repressive condition. I feel that it is important for us to continue to experiment with ways of becoming concientised to the ways in which we indirectly or directly collaborate, facilitate, direct or perpetuate action or inaction and attitudes in relation to issues that affect us as people of a nation, or as creators, educators and activists, across the board. I have made the very best effort to let you into the psychological and practical processes that have driven my conceptual experimentation with issues that are of concern to me.

I have highlighted three specific processes where conceptual drive or objective provided the trigger for the way into the interpretation of the alchemical study. One was to bring attention to gendered performance and expectation, through the stages of dressing a gendered body. In another comparison: to understand and question space, gender and performance conventions through an analysis of the stages of an improvisatory experience. Finally, and on a larger scale, inviting a group to engage in an experimental study of understandings of role, behavior and

expectation in performance situations. All of these conceptual drives, as interpretations of alchemical processes in their own right and re-imaginings of what a performance should entail.

The experiments making up this paper, were necessary (if at points confusing and seemingly disjointed) in showcasing a journey towards discovering a methodology that might answer to the research study put forward. I am not sure if I have answered the whole question yet. I do however believe that I have been exposed to moments of possibility through the carrying out of the events and in analysis of the data collected in footage, captions and post-process conversation. The journey towards discovery or finding is not one that is finite. I feel that I will, and can only ever achieve a satisfactory closeness to what the crafting of a process in which transformative moments of exposure are encountered could be. The model that I am sitting with now is one that is always changing and one which I will continue to manipulate and test in a variety of other spaces in differing ways. A thematic thread linking all of the experiments in this study is an ever-emerging focus on presence and questions around involvement.

In preparation for her long durational performance art style of performances Marina Abramovic's body often undergoes, what I consider an alchemical process in order to get ready to manage the demanding and sometimes gruelling conditions under which she places her body in performance. The performance event itself may have many alchemical processes and reveal many a moment of exposure, which in my opinion would require the most attuned kind of presence. Abramovic (2011) describes performance art as a live form of art which she says needs to be experienced for it to be transformative. Abramovic argues that performance is a real experience and that it is real experiences that change our lives. From this I understand Abramovic to suggest that it is the experiences that occur outside of what I have previously referred to as the numbed-out, semi-conscious or auto-pilot states, which bring change to our lives. And often the things that bring that notable change are feared because they are unpredictable and oftentimes tragic, as opposed to the routine and ritualistic practices we become accustomed to.

I have every intention of continuing on the cyclical journey of discovery and rediscovery as offered in the framework of the alchemical process. To be able to make use of the tools that would facilitate a process of transformation, through exposure. And for the participants to perform as they engage with the tools that have been 'installed' for them to engage, in whatever

context, circumstance or space. Without oppressive or repressive rules or expectation, but an offer of time and a single requirement of presence in whatever the installed reality might present.

Heart-felt acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors and advisors, both official and unofficial. For instigating, facilitating and sometimes experiencing the shifts along this research journey. For the conversations, the questioning and the invaluable warmth, harshness, guidance and holding, in especially challenging times. A special thank you to the Drama For Life family for the journey, the discoveries, challenges and opportunities.

Abundant blessings, wellness and light to you all.

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