Beside Oneself

towards a participatory feminist art practice

ELIDA SCHOGT

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Abstract

Comprised of a research paper and the presentation of a performance, my dissertation in studio-based visual art is part of a larger discussion about the role of art and the viewer-participant within social and political systems.

Working with queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of *beside* and what she calls its useful resistance to narratives, as well as feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz's return to bodily specificity in her reading of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's BwO (Body without Organs), I move from my former reliance on psychoanalytic tropes and representational forms towards a spatialized, embodied, and participatory art practice. In what curator and critic Lucy Lippard characterizes as the feminist values of collaboration, dialogue and constant questioning of aesthetic and social assumptions, I situate my practice alongside Lygia Clark's experientially interactive installations, Sophie Calle's intersubjective video-art and Doris Salcedo's participatory research-based sculpture; as well as performance artist Andrea Fraser's institutional critique and multi-disciplinary artist Emily Roysdon's choreographed movement.

The dissertation artwork is a performance of choreographed movement by a group of girls and diverse adults, who create a composite character, the realization of a two-year period of research and planning. The performance begins the moment the viewer-participant enters Toronto's Old City Hall, which currently functions as a provincial courthouse. Guided upstairs into a grand, open hallway and then up again through a long corridor, movement and tableaux punctuate the spaces, culminating in the dissertation defense.

In both the writing and the artwork, I harness affect theory to examine ways the dissociated self, fractured through childhood sexual abuse, can be reconfigured through participatory practices into a cohesive whole that challenges established power structures.

for Janet's sister

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Introduction

Before getting started on this project, I jotted down some words—

Janet
not Janet
girl
woman
self
other
rights
justice
boundaries
water

Do not be misled by the apparent chronology or verticality of this list – it is by no means a hierarchy. In fact, much of the writing in this paper follows a more horizontal, or planar, mapping of text and imagery. The words—Janet not Janet–girl–woman–self–other–rights–justice–boundaries–water—might be a coded shorthand for key components in both the written work that follows, and the artwork—*Janet not Janet*—that has emerged from this research-creation process. For fear of ruining the sense of discovery that I have had in writing this text, and also in conceiving the artwork, I want to hold back, here in the introduction, on revealing too much of the thematic content the text holds.

While my writing is built through an intuitive, associative, and often visual approach, I have created the three-part structure, with numbered chapters, to guide the reader through the evolution of my process. With an aim to elucidating areas of concern in my creative practice, in the first section of the text, entitled "Permeable Boundaries," I look closely at a Hans Haacke's *Condensation Cube* (1963-1965), Maria Nordman's *untitled* 1979, Roni Horn's *You Are the Weather* 1994-1995, and Emily Roysdon's *I Am a Helicopter, Camera, Queen* 2010. The section's title comes from my discovery about how the notion of permeability plays out in each of these chosen works. Furthermore, permeability speaks to several aspects of breaking boundaries in my own project—between types of writing; between disciplines or theoretical approaches; and, between people. While I may have set out to write an academic text, a diaristic approach soon began to fuel the process. At first, I thought of the

diary entries as separate from the analytic writing, but through the editing process discovered how having the two types of text intermingle freely helped create a more dynamic unfolding of ideas. Moreover, when I draw on philosophy, cultural theory, art history, geography and queer theory, among others, I do so to dislodge my thoughts and feeling to help with the emergence of concepts and images pertinent to the development of my artwork and beneficial to the flow of my writing. I am not favouring one discipline over another or one thinker over another, but want to situate my practice, sharpen my ideas, and, ultimately propel my decisions as part of my creative practice. Permeability between people, in the form of a participatory methodology, has emerged as one of the core tenets of this project.

In the second section of the text, "Beside Oneself," I apply affect theory to my studio practice, taking a series of self-portraits on my laptop, working with Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick's notion of *beside,* as a way to move out from the well-worn grooves of psychoanalytic thinking, cultural theory and philosophy that she suggests dwell on the *before, beneath,* and/or *beyond.* These studio sessions, in tandem with the writing process, are what lay the groundwork for the artwork to come. In ultimately naming the work *Janet not Janet,* I am contradicting the law of the excluded middle Sedgwick points to as being endemic to binary thinking. The law of the excluded middle, as stated by Bertrand Russell in *Principia Mathematica* is where, "Everything must either be or not be. " (Whitehead 72). But the artwork that I have developed is precisely about the possibility of being both oneself and *beside* oneself. At first, I take this to strictly be about the affective state of being "beside oneself" with pain, fear, shame, etc. However, as the project progresses, I come to see how being beside oneself also speaks to the possibility of a participatory practice where collaborative thinking becomes a collective way of working through ideas.

Finally, in the third section of the text, "The Body Politic", the idea of *beside oneself* is more clearly linked to one's embodied relation to diverse others within power structures.

Within each of the sections, the odd numbered chapters, 1 – "Artistic Audit", 3 – "Applied Affect", and, 5 – "Feminism and the Body Politic" contain more theoretical writing. The even numbered chapters, 2, and 4 are creative summaries that describe my thinking, planning and actions in the development of the new work. These summaries, "Fieldwork", "Conceptualization", "Choosing the Site", and "Choosing the Participants" are a thinking through of concepts, or a performing of activities in service of the development of the artwork. At the same time, I am also attempting to step back and situate my practice during this process. Particularly in chapter 1, the analysis of other artists' work is a way to draw out concerns for the not-yet-formulated dissertation artwork. Because the writing process is so intertwined with the intent to create, the writing also becomes a creative end in itself. However, whether it is with the writing, the studio sessions to sketch ideas, or the many meetings with artists and invited participants, I prefer to let the work emerge and guide my process. What this means is, rather than having a clear, pre-established intent at the outset, my unfolding process can often feel like being temporarily lost in the fog. The fog metaphor will make more sense when I describe *fog experiments* in chapter 5—a series of installation pieces that bridge my earlier work on Holocaust memory with my newly emerging feminist practice.

Insofar as a text can, this paper attempts to embody my process of developing an artwork. As such, at times, the text speaks to intuitive, fledgling and fleeting thoughts or quotidian activities. Rather than think of such a moment in the text as an aside, think of it as a *beside*. Similarly, working beside, among others, the prepared places of installation artist Maria Nordman, the participatory video work of Sophie Calle, the collaborative research of sculptor Doris Salcedo, the feminist institutional critique of Andrea Fraser, and the choreography *cum* political action of Emily Roysdon, I begin to grapple with the idea of a shared consciousness through the notion of *intersubjectivity*.

In the chapters on both affect theory and feminism, there are significant references to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as well the most-recognized Deleuzian theorist, Brian Massumi. But how

these texts inhabit the space *beside* such thinkers as Elizabeth Grosz, with her *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, or Luce Irigaray with her *This Sex Which is Not One* and *Speculum of the Other Woman*, is what becomes most relevant. Irigaray is the feminist philosopher who cautions against the systemic preference for solid over fluid dynamics. Where the solid marks boundaries, fluidity, similarly to *beside,* opens up the possibility for continuity and permeability. Working through the permeability of the various texts, I have found that the seminal male thinkers tend towards abstraction, while the female thinkers tend towards embodiment or the experiential. This gendered and essentialized division in thinkers is not an end goal: as if, I, a cisgender female, might not be legitimately capable of contributing to an abstract philosophical discussion; or, for that matter, that the feminist thinkers I draw on are somehow delineated by gender to only have access to the operating manuals written by the men. On the contrary, the aim here is to break down the very barriers that mark such systemic, gendered assumptions.

In addition to the question of gender, race is another area of concern both in this text and the artwork that has emerged from it. The huge body of scholarly work that addresses questions of race and society is beyond the scope of this paper. Here the term *intersectionality* proves helpful, because the writing of the paper has been developed not only through the reading of theoretical texts and subsequent self-reflection, but also through meetings with a group of participants who directly informed my thinking, from a number of different but interrelated points of view. Along with race and gender, in current use, the word intersectionality also takes into account questions of heteronormativity, able-bodiedness and class. However, in its inception, "[t]he word 'intersectionality' comes out of a metaphor coined by the critical legal theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw to explain how race oppression and gender oppression interact in Black women's lives" (kickaction.ca). In the 1980s, Crenshaw discovered that because US law distinguished discrimination against women (on the basis of their gender) from discrimination against Black, Latino, Asian, and

Indigenous people (on the basis of their race), Black women were not being protected by the country's anti-discrimination law because the discrimination against them was twofold (kickaction.ca). The intersection of race and gender enters into my work through my collaborative discussions with a number of diverse people who adopt the name Janet for my piece. While intersectionality does not tend to refer to questions of age, in chapter 5 on feminism, I talk about girlhood in an effort to raise awareness of how the female child is perceived in theoretical discourse.

Within this text, there is also a story—a story of childhood sexual abuse. This project—the written text, the artwork, and the participatory research—is about finding a way to work *beside* the story rather than in service of the story. Apart from the more or less chronological diary entries, the text eschews a strictly theoretical approach opting rather for a self-reflective unfolding in the present, leading to the creation of an artwork. Rather than end with a conclusion, the paper sets the stage for the artwork to come. The artwork, and thus this research support paper, grapples with questions of individual and societal dissociation through gender-based oppressions and postulates how cohesion might be achieved through intersubjective processes that embrace diverse identities.

Methodology

I have not chosen a given methodology with the view to bolstering a specific theoretical standpoint. The feminist methodology I have developed over the course of the dissertation writing and artwork, questioning social assumptions and adopting participatory practices alongside various thinkers, is particularly suitable to the uncertainties of the creative process and furthermore challenges the power structures that this research-creation project is challenging. According to the *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, "[f]eminists challenge the belief that pure research, and the search for truth, are removed from and of little consequence for the perpetuation of systems of power" (Code 341). In her article, "Groundless Beauty: Feminism and the aesthetics of uncertainty", cultural

sociologist Janet Wolff posits that "uncertainty is the necessary basis for morality and for political judgment after the demise of ideologies of universalism" (143). Ultimately, she challenges the feminist mistrust of beauty as a universal, and even defends the *return to beauty* insofar as it yields "complex intersections of the aesthetic and the political" (Wolff 155), where aesthetic judgment is the outcome of "dialogue and communication on the basis of community" (Wolff 154). For practicing artist and theorist Barbara Bolt, who co-edited *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* with Estelle Barrett, feminist methodology is more specifically applicable to creative practice itself. In *Material Thinking and the Agency of Matter,* she invites artists to conceive of creative practice "as a performance in which linkages are constantly being made and remade... rather than being overly pre-occupied with the intentionality, meaning and making [of] an artwork" (Bolt 3). For Australian cultural industries researcher Brad Haseman, such symbolic data as still and moving images, music and sound, forms of live action and digital code may all work performatively to express the research (5-6). It follows that the material outcomes of practice are research findings in their own right.

Extrapolating from Haseman, writing that falls outside the margins of the scholarly text can also be seen as performative expressions of the research. As part of the creative development process, I have been engaging in writing that consists of email correspondence, edited diary entries, jotted down "thought blurts," and graphic elements, all of which I fold into successive drafts of the dissertation paper as the artwork begins to emerge. While the scholarly research and writing are key to helping me frame ideas and situate my work, this memoir writing is most helpful in generating momentum for my creative practice. In describing her "turn to memoir," in *Depression: a public feeling,* queer theorist Ann Cvetkovich points out how the concentrated spurts of writing, as opposed to more protracted, formal academic writing, are not only practical in a busy schedule, but that the "short pieces of the finished product also reflect a resistance to the scholarly injunction to analyze

and connect in order to make a coherent whole" (76). She goes on to say that the segments in the memoir are semi-autonomous and thus stand apart from the "more continuous form of the academic essay" (Cvetkovich 76). She also describes how memoir writing often circumvents the conscious mind, leaving the possibility to "generate material from places of feeling, including the body" (Cvetkovich 77).

Chapter 1
Artistic Audit

Haseman has suggested that practice-led research, or performative research, be thought of as an alternative to established quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Grounded in J.L. Austin's speech act theory, this third paradigm, as Haseman calls it, does not just *describe* phenomena but actually *creates* them. The *artistic audit* I am proposing is a process Haseman describes as explicitly designed to transform the *literature review,* often used in humanities dissertations, into a "more layered and rich analysis of the contexts of practice within which the performative researcher operates" (8). Where the literature review relies on summary, classification, and comparison of text, through the artistic audit the researcher examines earlier and contemporaneous artwork in order to contribute to the overall research context for their work (Haseman 8). Relating the research directly back to the creative process honours the unique form of knowledge production in creative fields. In this way, my study of other artists' work, rather than the study of theoretical texts *per se,* becomes key to developing context for the doctoral artwork project. At this juncture in the development of my dissertation artwork, the analysis of other artists' work helps draw out questions of intent and possible aesthetic formulations of ideas, as well as considerations for its social and political context. Because my own project is still at such an early stage of conceptualization as I write this audit, the reflections on the other artists' works do not always directly translate into specific aesthetic formulations in my own emerging artwork.

It is interesting to note that all the artworks I have chosen to write about are ones that I have not seen first hand. Consequently, although it is my intention to conduct performative research in responding to the selected works, I am inevitably relying on second-hand materials. As far as my research moves beyond strictly cognitive processes into affective and embodied experiences, I am, nonetheless, limited to relying on documentation and other people's critical analyses.

Rather than describe the selected works chronologically as they were made, the order is based on a sense of curiosity, even urgency, related to a working through of ideas in the development of my own work.

- Roni Horn: *You Are the Weather* 1994-1995
- Emily Roysdon: *I Am a Helicopter, Camera, Queen* 2010
- Maria Nordman: *untitled* 1979
- Hans Haacke: *Condensation Cube* 1963-1965

Roni Horn
You Are the Weather (1994-1995)

In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* Roland Barthes says that through contemplating the photographic record of any person, particularly a historical one, the viewer is faced with human mortality—"*that* is dead and *that* is going to die" (96). According to Barthes, "[w]hen we define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not *emerge*, do not *leave*: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies" (57). While developing my work on Holocaust memory, working with archival still images and family albums, I have returned to Barthes' musings on photography countless times. Each photograph I selected for a film or installation work carried an indexical weight, giving proof of a previous occurrence. Barthes' notion that "[w]hat the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially" (4), is what gave the presentation of each photograph in my work such eulogistic solemnity.

Roni Horn's *You Are the Weather* series flies in the face of Barthes' observations. Taken over a six-week period in various pools across Iceland, the installation consists of 100 colour and black and white portraits of the same Icelandic woman, Margrét (see figure 1).

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Far from a pinned down butterfly, the subject, Margrét, appears palpably alive. Youthful skin, pouting lips, furrowed brow. Water, sky or mist frame a face that varies from life-sized, when tightly cropped, to slightly smaller in scale. The photographs show the subject often submerged in water to her neck, her facial expression only slightly different from one photograph to the next. All taken with natural light, each photograph measures a uniform 10 $^{7/16}$ x 8 $^{7/16}$ inches (26.5 x 21.4 cm). Because the installation as a whole extends beyond what the viewer is able to comprehend from one vantage point, there is a pairing of physical engagement with the mutability of the face and the changeable conditions of each photograph (see figure 2).

The intersection of the changing weather conditions, the water which the subject emerges from or is submerged in, and the alterations to her eyebrows, eyes, cheeks, and particularly her mouth all contribute to a tangible sense of presence in the work. The bright blue background could be an indoor wall or an endless sky. This blue makes me notice the pink in her skin, the blue of her eyes and then also the blond of her hair. (*Always a comparison. I am not blond. "Blondes have more fun." Then the more sinister—if I'd been alive then, during WWII, I could have been killed by the Nazis.)* My examination of *You Are the Weather* soon moves beyond the specifics of Margrét's strawberries and cream complexion, her blond hair and blue eyes. Is it because of the attention to the tiniest of changes in her facial expression? The recording of these moments suggests a continuity outside of the specificity of race or even of gender codifiers. With 100 images, all of Margrét, hair tied back,

rather than dwell on the differences between the subject and me, I begin to look for subtle variances between one picture and the next. While her age and the identifying features of hair colour, eye colour and age struck me at first, I begin to notice the uniformity of the subject across the work.

Because, in *You Are the Weather,* the same face subtly transforms from one photograph to the next, there is a sense of movement across the 100 photographs, almost as if the images have been culled from the linearity of a film strip. The quality that makes Margrét different from what British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey describes as the conventionally erotic cinematic female is that her gaze is fixed on *us*. Margrét stares at the viewer. The voyeuristic dynamic between viewer and subject, endemic to both pornography and the cinematic experience, is broken down in Horn's piece. Furthermore, rather than dominating the subject, due to a shifting horizon line, the viewer becomes disoriented within the landscape. In her dissertation *(Dis)Orientation Identity, Landscape and Embodiment in the work of Roni Horn,* Barbara Garrie illuminates the central importance of gender performativity and spatiality in *You Are the Weather*. She analyzes how the viewer comes to play a role within the experience of determining the horizon where the multiple images of the same woman have a varying horizon line. Although Garrie does not reference Sara Ahmed's work, she is grappling with what the queer feminist theorist terms *wonky*—the vitality of disorientation; the questioning of monolithic reality to inevitably enter less stable ground. For Ahmed, "a queer phenomenology would function as a disorientation device; it would not overcome the 'disalignment' of the horizontal and vertical axes, allowing the oblique to open up another angle on the world" (172). Garrie draws on phenomenological thinkers Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's view of landscape as a site constructed through our embodied interactions with it. Further to this, she analyzes how, "Horn approaches landscape as a performative category through which to address the performativity of identity, and that in doing so her work privileges the viewer as an embodied participant" (Garrie 3). Geographer Catherine Nash states that, "a recognition of the constructed nature of identity allows

landscape to be used as a shifting strategic source of identification without implying the adoption of a masculinist position, or a fixed, natural or inherent identity, or a restrictive notion of space"(239). Of particular interest in *You Are the Weathe*r is the potential for disequilibrium in the viewer produced by a rigorous interplay between portrait and landscape. Pointing to the ever-shifting possibilities of the face-to-face encounter, Roni Horn's subject Margrét takes on one hundred different faces as she repeatedly poses for the artist. In a text for *A Kind of You: 6 Portraits by Roni Horn,* Hélène Cixous writes,

> Who are you, Face, you who I am, whom I follow, you who look at me without seeing me, you whom I see without knowing whom, you in whom I look at myself, you who would not be without me, you whom I envelope, you who seduce me and into whom I do not enter, who are you, who is this being promised subjected to my gaze, to my objective, this being docile to my law, and who remains totally impenetrable for me? What is you? Who am I, you? (7)

Cixous's words suggest the complex interplay between the face and the gaze that Horn's installation evokes. Beyond this study of the face and the gaze, Horn's work also parses out the subtle intersection of Margrét's responses to the atmospheric conditions and her performed gestures for the camera. The performed gestures are what Judith Butler would call "performing gender". Ultimately, *You are the Weather* registers the atmospheric changes on the face of one woman—Margrét, yet the intimacy of the gaze and the subtle facial changes create a multitude of Margréts.

Most compelling about Roni Horn's *You are the Weather* is how Margrét's gaze connects with me when I look at her face The gaze and the face are both in play. It is not as if Margrét's is a familiar face—I don't know her—yet she meets my gaze, face-to-face in a disarming way. Through the face-to-face encounter and the gaze of the other, questions of identity begin to emerge. According to Thierry de Duve, the "you" in the title *You Are the Weather*, the "you" in the photos, and the "you" of the viewer all coalesce in a place where there is "room for uncertainty and questioning" (83). Uncertainty is born from the multitude of difference emerging from the same face, as well as from the uncertainty of the face-to-face encounter between the viewer and Margrét.

As described by philosopher Bettina Bergo, Emmanuel Levinas' conception of the face-to-face encounter with the Other is an "intersubjective experience, [that] as it comes to light, proves 'ethical' in the simple sense that an 'I' discovers its own particularity when it is singled out by the gaze of the other" (4). Working with American psychoanalyst and feminist Jessica Benjamin's understanding of intersubjective theory, "sameness and difference exist simultaneously in mutual recognition" (47). Horn's work, stemming from questions about androgynous identity, is an aesthetic formulation of the tension between sameness and difference. In *You are the Weather*, the infinitesimal changes in Margrét's expression point to a continuum of difference within the same face. Where the viewer engages with Horn's work, the artist's individual mapping of identity becomes shared. Furthermore as Benjamin suggests, "[e]xperiences of 'being with' are predicated on a continually evolving awareness of difference" (47). For Horn, describing her sculpture *Asphere,* an orb of solid forged and machined copper, measuring 12 $^{1}/_{4}$ x 12 $^{3}/_{3}$ inches (31 x 33 cm) in diameter*,* noting how the object is distorted in a way that is barely visible, she suggests:

> Androgyny is the integration of difference as a source of identity. When you combine the one with the other you come towards a synthetic identity, one that is not so nameable... not that kind of mutually exclusive form of identity like gender (Spinelli).

In *You are the Weather*, Horn's integration of the asymmetry of difference into a single identity through the spatial mapping of Margrét's portraits suggests a space where self and other might become one and where one can simultaneously be oneself and beside oneself.

Emily Roysdon
I Am a Helicopter, Camera, Queen (2012)

Commissioned by the Tate Modern in London, UK, for the Live Performance on YouTube series, Emily Roysdon invited volunteers, who self-identified as queer and feminist, to participate in her piece— *I Am a Helicopter, Camera, Queen.* Drawing on her earlier manifesto, Ecstatic Resistance*,*

the artist created a space where celebration is protest. Roysdon describes Ecstatic Resistance as "a project, practice, partial philosophy and set of strategies... a call to re-articulate the imaginary" (Roysdon). She describes the work as undermining hegemonic oppositions—the Eurocentric, phallocentric world order. Roysdon's project is about "pleasure in the domain of resistance—sexualizing modern structures in order to centralize instability and plasticity in life, living and the self" (Roysdon). Parallel works emerge from the live performance and a YouTube feed. A group of about 200 participants follow a series of instructions given by the artist that include: looking at the camera, then turning in sync to face first one wall and then the other. As Maria Walsh describes in her review, after one participant breaks free to hold up the title, another drops down to make a scissor kick movement, the group begins to chant:

> "clock," "block," words whose ambiguity seem to empty out any demand that one could situate the work in relation to identity politics. Identity here seems to work as a ruse as well as a presence. As the crowd lines up in front of the online screen, the camera finally moves to centre, aligning itself and us online viewers with the position of the camera lens that is drawn, like a dildo, between the spread legs on the floor. This move addressed the lack of intimacy of a live audience by creating a sexualised, humorous interrelation between virtual audience and live work and vice versa... (37).

Emily Roysdon specifically put out a call asking for volunteers who identified as queer and/or feminist. In an interview, she defines the term queer as follows: "It's open. There's a history to the term. It's political... inherently it is. It's not identity based. It does not define a specific set of practices. It can be a way of thinking, a way of acting, a way of being; and, that's why I use it" (*BMW Tate*). This definition, as well as her call for volunteers, directly situates her work in a political realm. Her intent is to create a queer/feminist space within the Tate Modern. That she makes an open call to the public at large, but at the same time defines her demographic, speaks to her desire to break the institutional boundaries of the Tate itself. In an interview by Tate curators Catherine Wood and Kathy Noble, Roysdon shows a sheet of paper with a series of rectangles on it, each with a dot pattern representing the participants' movements. Her role is clear in relation to the participants: she is the director of their

actions with a "script" of moves that she has the participants perform for the camera. Roysdon talks about the "hard walls of the room" as a starting point for the conceptualization of the piece. She also discusses how at the outset, she wondered what other potential resources could be inside the room (*BMW Tate*). The volunteers that Roysdons works with become her most dynamic resource. The fact that Roysdon's demographic is young is a product of who identifies with the term "queer," who is inclined to respond to a call for participation, and who would do so for a piece at the Tate Modern. All the participants have presumably been invited to wear black and/or white, creating some homogeneity of dress among the group. This makes personal hairstyles—some obviously dyed, others sheared, and one worn loose and unusually long—more of a focal point. One participant who particularly stands out among the young, predominantly female group is a woman walking with crutches. As Roysdon has the participants first face the camera and then turn to slowly make their way across the room, backs to the lens, this woman lags behind. Her disability sets her apart because she is not able to perform the choreographed moves at the same pace as the rest of the group. This woman, with her cropped hair, black tank top, tattooed shoulder, and crutches delimits the relative homogeneity of the other participants from the world beyond the walls of the institution.

On the floor, Roysdon has installed a wall-to-wall vinyl cover with a colour photo of a twelve-foot pair of white, female legs spread apart. On the crotch, an illustration of a camera. At the knees, an illustration of a camera lens. Other floor markings include pinky-red swooshy scribbles, a large dotted circle and various clock faces. The clocks reference Roysdon's Ecstatic Resistance manifesto in which she states that the project "is about waiting, and the temporality of change" (Roysdon). The inversion of wall and floor space creates an added dimension to the movement of the participants as they perform the choreographed sequences within the gallery. Scanning the whole group, the eye is drawn from one face to the next, to the floor and back to the participants. The gallery walls serve no other function than

as a barrier to further movement as the participants carry out Roysdon's choreography, participants often finding themselves all facing one of four white boundaries of the room.

The already absurd quality of the work is heightened when the participants snip from a long strand of yarn they have pulled across the gallery to dangle strands down over the camera lens that is documenting the event. The viewer now peeks through the strings hanging down the camera, like magnified pubic hair, to see the participants drop to the floor into a straddle-legged chain as they wend their way out onto the 3,400 square metre concrete floor of the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall (see figure 3).

Figure 3.

Hundreds of queer and feminist participants lie on the concrete floor, shouting out utterances one at a time—"live, no, now, queen." In *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performance,* Judith Butler describes "the possibility of a speech act as an insurrectionary act" (162). In Butler's words:

> I would insist that the speech act, as a rite of institution, is one whose contexts are never fully determined in advance, and that the possibility for the speech act to take on a non-ordinary meaning, to function in contexts where it has not belonged, is precisely the political promise of the performative, one that positions the performative at the center of a politics of hegemony, one that offers an unanticipated political future for deconstructive thinking (162).

Roysdon lifts Butler's words off the page, inviting her participants to fill the gallery space with their utterances. Through a careful orchestration of single word blurts, Roysdon breaks down conventional syntax opening language up for new paths of meaning. For Roysdon, staging the

speech act is part of a larger project that breaks down hegemonic systems. As she describes, here, it is the *desire* to speak, as well as the improvisational nature of the speech act that ultimately creates resistance:

> Significant is the formulation of speaking as a desire: a desire to share, or to articulate, an experience to an/other. The telling springs forth from desire, the tension between pleasure and the need to forge a route to bridge the encounter. Assisted by affect, the situation becomes improvisational—"I must find a way" to say what I mean, to share what I've seen (Roysdon).

Rather than through Levinas' shared gaze, as described above, here *intersubjectivity* takes the form of sharing or articulating the experience within the encounter. With *I Am a Helicopter, Camera, Queen*, Roysdon transforms one of Britain's most prestigious visual art venues into a place of Ecstatic Resistance. As she declares in her manifesto:

> Ecstatic Resistance postulates the necessity of a new imaginary. The potential of this new imaginary is to move forward from a place that is unrestricted by patriarchal rationality and historical oppositions that serve only the man who is a man and looks like a man and wants to be a man (Roysdon).

It is the "ecstatic" in Ecstatic Resistance that is both the most challenging and the most engaging part of Roysdon's practice. Her "choreography as organized movement in an aesthetic and political sense" (E. Thomas) creates exuberance and humour, transforming her drawn schema into full, collective and embodied experiences for participant and viewer alike.

Maria Nordman
untitled (1979)

While I have been familiar with James Turrell's work since the 1990s, I had not heard of his contemporary Maria Nordman, also considered part of the Light and Space movement, until starting this doctoral degree. I was curious to know more about this female artist working alongside her better-known male colleagues. One of my original goals in examining Nordman's work as part of this study was for recuperative purposes, that is, not only to discover her work, but to also bring it to the fore.

After seeing documentation of Nordman's *untitled* (1979) in the exhibition catalogue *Andre, Buren, Irwin, Nordman: Space as Support*, I was unfortunately unable to track it down, even after following a number of leads that included libraries across the United States, as well as the name of a specialty bookseller given to me by Nordman's New York dealer, the Marian Goodman Gallery. My analysis of the work has thus been limited to working with a review by James Merle Thomas, an American art historian and curator specialized in abstract art, experimental architecture, and radical design of the 1960s and 1970s.

On June 21, 1979, Nordman presented her untitled work at the Berkley Art Museum to coincide with the summer solstice. She covered the dark concrete surfaces of the museum in a white, matte vinyl-adhesive covering, removed filters from the skylights and placed red, blue and green gels over the glass doors. Accounts of the experience suggest that walking through the transformed museum "elicited Ganzfeld-like perceptual effects: intermittent visual flickering and a disorienting uncertainty as to one's own position in space" (J. Thomas 2). Thomas further discusses how Nordman diverged from the other artists in the *Andre, Buren, Irwin, Nordman: Space as Support* show. Where her colleagues "used a focused study of materials to produce an iterative, sequential logic, which structured the space of the museum," Nordman conjured up Husserl's lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) —a world not yet defined by scientific measurement or "objective" time (J. Thomas 2). Thomas suggests that Nordman puts us into contact with the politics of perception—a pre-theoretical space that is not beholden to knowledge. He goes on to further differentiate her from the other Light and Space artists due to, as he puts it, the porosity in her work that suggests a social valence and sets up a "perpetual condition of co-presence" (J. Thomas 2). This focus on human exchange, where one's private subjectivity becomes part of another within the context of a public art experience, instantiates the idea of *intersubjectivity*. Nordman is quoted in the catalogue that accompanied the piece:

> I propose to give the unknown speaker the first word.
> The work could be of any person who is present.
> Any person in the presence of any other person.
> (The possible presence of one or more unknown persons is a public instance)
> (J. Thomas 2).

James Turrell's 1986 site-specific piece *Meeting* is exactly the kind of public instance that Nordman is describing. Turrell literally frames the sky by cutting a rectangle out of the ceiling of New York's PSI gallery (see figure 4). Visitors are invited to sit and contemplate on benches built along the walls of the space. Gazing up, the sky no longer boundless, shifting light and cloud formations are framed by the remaining ceiling. The eyes trace this new edge challenged by the perceptual boundaries of sight. Turrell's finely cut and tapered opening in the gallery ceiling draws attention not to the social, but rather to the act and process of *looking*. His gesture inspires reverence.

Figure 4.

What Nordman offers are temporary interventions that deliberately create a convergence between phenomenological exploration and a *social dynamic*. The social is predicated on the fact that in experiencing her artwork, as she says, the "presence of one or more unknown persons is a public instance." Thus, her interventions specifically highlight the permeability between the environment, seen as a public space, and the person or people temporarily inhabiting it. In the documentation below that I shot on my laptop from the September 22-November 29, 1991 Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) catalogue *Crossroads: Geneviève Cadieux, Robin Collyer, Isa Genzken, Rodney Graham, Bernie Miller, Maria Nordman*, Nordman's untitled work shows her persistent interest in integrating social-public considerations into both the process of creating and the experience for the viewer

(see figure 5).

Figure 5.

Building a structure on former farmland, Nordman worked with Martin Construction, who she describes as "a group of persons who decide to be known only as a group" (AGYU 10). The structure they created together is made of white pine, with each wall measuring 9 x 9 feet (2.7 x 2.7 m), to match the size of the quilt she had made for inside the gallery by a group of people she writes about in her artist statement as deciding to stay anonymous. Along with this emphasis on individual anonymity and labour, Nordman also pays particular attention to describing the lighting of both the inside and outside work as being consistent with the conditions under which the work was made. When AGYU Director/Curator Loretta Yarlow declares, "Maria Nordman has such a harmony with nature" (AGYU 10), she is falling into essentialist tropes of women and nature and entirely missing the astute choices in materials and lighting that point to the artist's exploration of gender issues and labour practices, through the pairing of the wooden installation outside with the quilted work inside and her acknowledgement of the workers who contributed to her piece on the specifically selected, former farmland site.

In "Groundless Beauty: Feminism and the Aesthetics of Uncertainty," Wolff notes: "[as] Griselda Pollock has argued, the most important task for feminist art historians is not to 'add' women to the canon, or to reject the canon entirely, but rather to engage with it—to examine the

ways in which it operates, as she puts it, as 'mythic structure'" (153). Wolff goes on to say how she is "interested in the development of a model that engages with the canon in terms of the very specific operations of communities and social groups whose choices and values find expression in the negotiation and production of... aesthetic hierarchies" (153). In the case of both of Nordman's untitled works from 1979 and 1991 described above, the aesthetics of the work challenge hegemonic systems. How Maria Nordman's work not only falls outside the boundaries of "the canon," but also challenges the very notions of such a canon, is worth a more concerted study.

From affixing vinyl-adhesive covering to floors, removing filters from skylights and adding coloured gels over glass doors in 1979, to creating a wooden latticework assembly in the midst of the menacing Brutalist architecture of York University in Toronto in 1991, Nordman's interventions invite questioning of the very structures that "hold" her work. It is the porosity of the pieces and the social dimension of her *prepared places* that make Nordman's project particularly pertinent for my research.

Hans Haacke
Condensation Cube (1963-1965)

Hans Haacke challenges boundaries by defining them. His 1963-1965 *Condensation Cube* is a box placed inside the gallery that echoes the boundaries between the gallery walls and the outside world. The sealed, clear, plexiglass box, with evaporating water inside, relates to the humidification of art and museum spaces, while also drawing attention to the very air that the visitor is breathing as part of the gallery experience. Looking back at this early work, Haacke reflects, how the "box has a constantly but slowly changing appearance that never repeats itself. The conditions are comparable to those of a living organism that reacts in a flexible manner to its surroundings" ("Condensation Cube" 265). In a review of a Haacke retrospective, critic Jonathan T.D. Neil notes how within the artist's work there are "complex systems at work, systems which respond to every environmental

variable, including the presence of any 'actors' within the space" (133). The engagement that Haacke demands transforms the viewer into a participant. It is through active participation that the viewer becomes implicated in the work's becoming. Thus, as with Maria Nordman, the other German-American artist born during the Nazi reign discussed in this artistic audit, the work is no longer simply an object to behold, but a site where hegemony can actively be countered.

Figure 6.

In his 1993 contribution to the Venice Biennale, Haacke repeats some of the metaphoric terrain of *Condensation Cube* by emphasizing the boundaries of the German pavilion in relation to the overall event. The German pavilion becomes a site within which the participant is invited to walk on the ruins of the nation state (see figure 6). As Haacke describes:

> I learned that the pavilion's present appearance was tied to Hitler's rise to power in 1933. As part of an excursion to Venice for a meeting with his comrade Benito Mussolini, the man who had not succeeded as a painter in Vienna, paid a visit to the Biennale and the German pavilion. Hitler did not like what he saw. As a consequence, by 1937 an exhibition titled *Degenerate Art* opened in Munich, and plans for the re-styling of the pavilion in Venice were approved. A new national corporate identity was in the making—and so were preparations for the expansion of Germany beyond its borders and the introduction of a deadly programme of ethnic cleansing ("Lessons Learned").

Key is Haacke's ability to synthesize the relationship between individual human processes and larger power structures into a concise and cohesive visual expression.

p e r m e a b i l i t y

1) s t r u c t u r e s

It was not until well after selecting these four works and writing about them that I began to see a common thread drawing me to them. The notion of *permeability*, either in a literal or figurative sense, runs through all of the selected pieces. In the case of Roni Horn's *You Are the Weather* and Hans Haacke's *Condensation Cube,* the artists are working with the relationship between water and the porousness of human power dynamics. In her work, Horn challenges the conventional male gaze, empowering her subject, a young woman submerged in water to her shoulders, face dotted with water droplets, by giving her the gaze that fixes on the viewer. As art historian Garrie suggests, "Although never having definitively aligned herself with feminist art practices... Horn's work is nonetheless indebted to feminist ideologies which have challenged ingrained notions of gender and what it is to be a woman" (28). If for Horn, "[a]ndrogyny is the integration of difference as a source of identity" (Spinelli), the 100 photographs of Margrét can be seen as a study on gender performativity where landscape is also an indicator of identity. There is not only a porousness between male and female in the work through shift in the use the gaze, but also between animate and inanimate—the face and the weather conditions—in a way that creates a spatial fluidity in which the human subject, while still central to the photograph, is decentralized within the larger context of the material setting. In the *Condensation Cube,* Haacke creates a parallel between his constructed mini eco-system of the plexiglass cube of 76 cm^3 and the white cube of the gallery space. The permeability of the plexiglass speaks to the porous nature of the gallery itself with its walls taking in human visitors. Within the context of Haacke's later, ongoing institutional critique, the water droplets trapped inside the cube suggest questions of access to the museum space. How porous are the gallery walls, for example; and, to what degree is the white cube a rarified space of entrapment? Maria Nordman works with natural light in her untitled 1979 transformation of the Berkeley Gallery to break down the relationship between the

exterior and interior of the exhibition space. In the most recent of the works, Emily Roysdon's *I Am a Helicopter, Camera, Queen,* the artist works with feminist and queer identified participants to permeate the boundaries of the Tate Modern. It is through the process of creating permeable boundaries that each of the works discussed in this audit becomes an act of resistance.

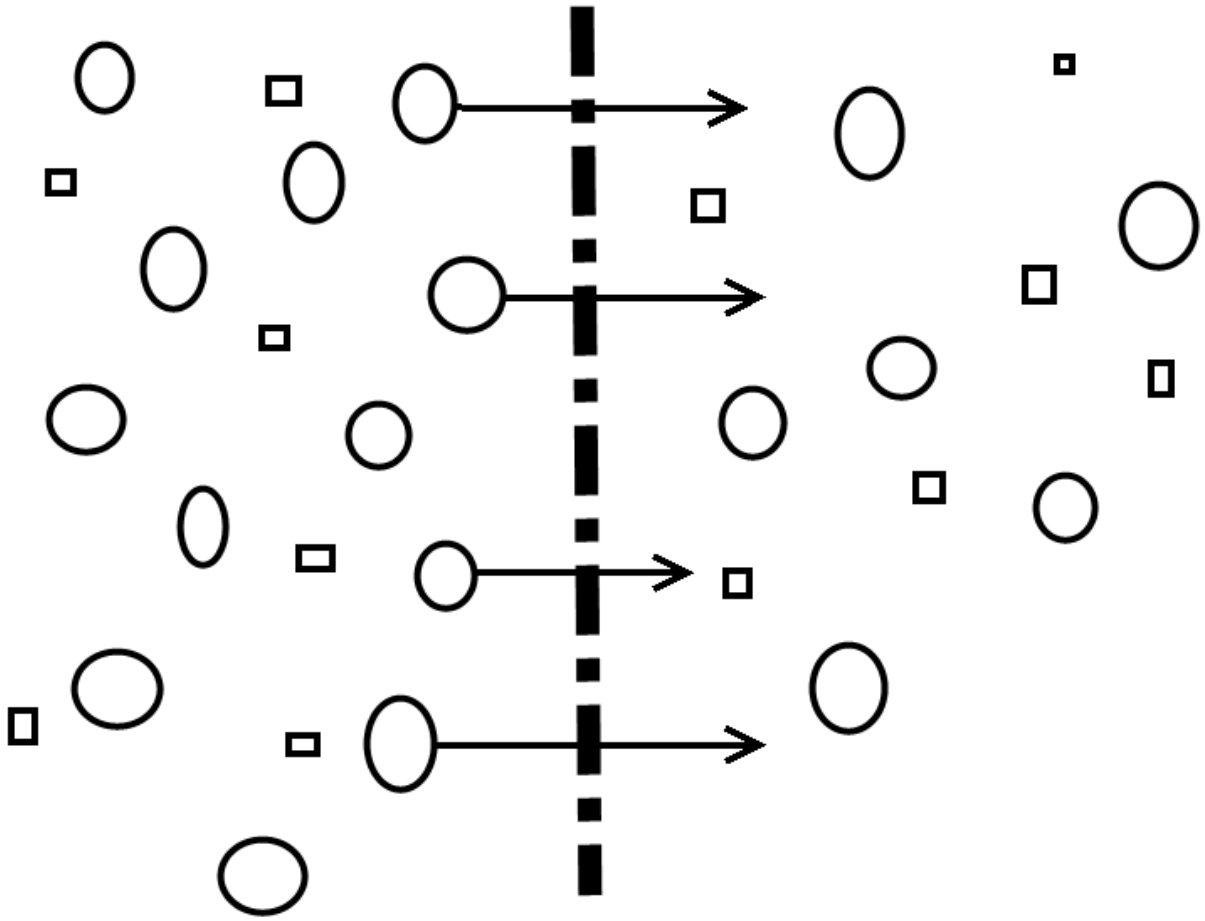

Figure 7.

2) participation

The term *permeability* also applies to the boundary between artist and participant where one subjectivity might overlap with another to become *intersubjectivity*. Theoretical philosopher Christian Beyer summarizes Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity as follows:

> From a first-person point of view, intersubjectivity comes in when we undergo acts of *empathy*. Intersubjective experience is empathic experience; it occurs in the course of our conscious attribution of intentional acts to other subjects, in the course of which we put ourselves into the other one's shoes (19).

Megan Boler, of the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, points to the risks of empathy, stating, "At stake is not only the ability to empathize... but to recognize oneself as implicated in the social forces that create the climate of obstacles the other must confront" (257). It is with this idea of social responsibility in mind that I intend to create participatory opportunities that spill out beyond a dyadic exchange into a plurality of forces.

Bridging Husserl's phenomenology with social science, practicing lawyer Alfred Schütz (1899-1959) brought a pragmatic approach to questions of consciousness. In his article "On Multiple Realities," written in 1945, he coins the term *We-relation*:

> On the one hand, I experience the occurrences of the other's speaking in outer time; on the other hand, I experience my interpreting as a series of retentions and anticipations happening in my inner time interconnected by my aim to understand the other's thought as a unit.
>
> Now let us consider that the occurrence in the outer world—the communicator's speech—is, while it goes on, an element common to his and my vivid present, both of which are, therefore, simultaneous. My participating in simultaneity in the ongoing process of the other's communicating establishes therefore a new dimension of time. He and I, we share, while the process lasts, a common vivid present, our vivid present, which enables him and me to say: "We experienced this occurrence together." By the We-relation, thus established, we both—he, addressing himself to me, and I, listening to him, —are living in our mutual vivid present, directed toward the thought to be realized in and by the communicating process (12).

The We-relation is helpful insofar as it engages with questions of shared consciousness through speech, dialogue and interpretation; it does not, however, address the more experiential, sensorial qualities of an exchange.

Figure 8.
Dialogo: Oculos (Dialogue: Goggles)
Lygia Clark, 1968

Brazilian Neoconcretist artist Lygia Clark created what she called "relational objects" that emphasized the experience over the object itself. The 1959 manifesto she signed along with her compatriot artist colleagues, takes a stand of Neoconcretism "especially vis-à-vis the Concrete Art movement, which has dangerously indulged in excessive rationalism" (itaucultural.org.br). Opposing the orthodox dogmatism of the constructivist and geometric trends, Neoconcretism defended freedom of experimentation, return to the expressive act and the restoration of subjectivity (itaucultural.org.br).

The goggles pictured here constrain eye contact obliging the viewers to engage in interactivity (see figure 8). As art historian Yve-Alain Bois describes:

> [Clark] categorically rejected the idea of an exhibition, arguing that since 1968 all she had done was distance herself even further from the object—that her current work, in which the individual bodies of participants became a collective body in the forming of an ephemeral architecture, no longer bore any relationship to art—particularly since the very notion of a spectator was entirely banished from it (Clark 87).

Figure 9.
Mesh, late 1960s

Clark's idea of individual bodies becoming a collective body opens up the possibility for a work stemming from one artist into an expression shared through active engagement of participants (see figure 9).

Walking in Circles
—towards a participatory practice

I bring a group of about 10 classmates outside to the York University Commons, on a cold November day to either observe or join me if they wish (see figure 10). We are taking a course called *The Practice*, which I will describe in more detail below, in chapter 2. I feel very self-conscious; my knees almost lock as I take one wooden step after another around the concrete oval.

Figure 10.

Not wanting to look back, I'm not sure if anyone has joined me. But, as I make my way around, I notice in my peripheral vision, first the instructor and then as I finish my walk, I see a classmate is making her way around too. After the three of us have made our way back to join the rest of the group standing off to the side, only a few words are exchanged. We soon disperse. It's the end of class.

I don't know what the work is about yet. New for me is asking people to join me: to observe in a work's creation; to participate in its making.

Chapter 2
Creative Process Summary
Part 1 *Fieldwork – towards a participatory practice*

When I am working on a film, I always invite people to see my work at the rough edit and fine cut stage. It is helpful to get feedback from a group of discerning friends and colleagues when you have lived with the work very closely and have inevitably lost perspective. With this doctoral project, I have decided to reach out to a number of people at the conceptualization stage. The outreach parallels a formal aspect of the work: namely that participants are integral to the piece itself. While I haven't fleshed out the work yet, I do know that I will be inviting a number of people to either read a text or share a story with the goal of creating a composite character: Janet Anderson. This is a name I gave myself when I was 12 years old. What might otherwise have been a series of informal meetings held in Toronto, in the context of the dissertation research, will be called *fieldwork*: "practical work conducted by a researcher in the natural environment" ("Fieldwork"). Where the sociologist or anthropologist goes into the field for observation and to conduct surveys or interviews, as a visual artist, I am sounding out my early ideas with a number of other artists and friends to help better define the parameters of the work.

In this chapter, I briefly describe these meetings and elaborate on some of the possible directions the work may take. As with the previous chapter, "Artistic Audit," the process is helping me articulate the context where my work resides. The process of discovery during this creative development phase is integral to the final work. As I begin to engage in meetings with friends and colleagues, *participation as a method* is beginning to emerge as a new part of my practice.

Studio Visit with Interdisciplinary Artist
Nicholas Torok - April 19, 2013

Nicholas Torok graduated from OCAD University in Integrated Media and is currently taking an Interdisciplinary Masters Degree at York University. His three subject areas are: Gender Studies, Biology (Endocrinology) and Visual Art. Nick is transgendered.

I want to hear Nick's perspective on my dissertation artwork project, *Janet not Janet*—specifically what he thinks about how I am phrasing the call for participants. When Osgoode Hall, York University's Law School recently announced they are inviting submissions for an artist-in-residence, I imagine myself working with law students—female (identified) law students—to help me create the composite character Janet Anderson. Being a doctoral student, I am not eligible to apply, but the idea of working with female-identified law students sticks. Where Nick comes in is that while I pursue questions that stem from my experience growing up female and identifying as female, I am aware of how delineating my experience within these boundaries might create too narrow a focus and limit possible meanings for the work.

When I show Nick a process booklet that I have been compiling, he suggests I reduce the entire document to 10% of its actual size. Seeing all the pages together as thumbnails, only the four pages with large symbols stand out: first the black asterisk, then the white; first the black Star of David, then the white. I talk about the question of being marked or unmarked.

Meeting with Video Installation Artist
Peter Kingstone – April 29, 2013

I approach Peter Kingston because his installation, *100 Stories About My Grandmother* shown in Toronto at Gallery TPW in 2008, creates a composite character through multiple interviews.

On his website, Peter describes how he uses the narratives of male prostitutes to construct a picture of his grandmother (Kingstone). He sees the work as giving voice to the voiceless and encouraging an audience to feel kinship with a marginalized community through the common denominator of the grandmother.

I pitch *Janet not Janet* to Peter thinking we will talk about the specifics of the call for law students to help me create the Janet Anderson alter ego. Instead, Peter pushes me to talk about the deeper origins of the idea—to push harder in terms of my own story. He suggests I do research into dissociation by interviewing psychologists or even people that have experienced it themselves.

What then emerges from our conversation is that 12-year old girls, or in today's culture maybe 8 or 9-year old girls, would make better participants for the specific subject matter I am exploring.

Meeting with Marketing and Communications Consultant
Mark Thompson – May 4, 2012

I tell my good friend Mark about the Janet project and being caught between the idea of working with girls and the original idea of working with law students. He immediately points to the question of gender performance that working with the law students will draw out. Mark references African-American writer Gloria Naylor's novel, *Bailey's Cafe*, in which a black man decides to wear a skirt around town after being rejected by one too many prospective employers. I imagine Mark playing this part.

A new Janet project emerges:

- a black man in a skirt
- a girl child
- a law student
- a transgender female to male

I take *Bailey's Cafe* out of the library and quickly see why Mark has recommended the book. Each chapter is a separate description of the narrator's customers—one story more harrowing than the next. With most of the customers being women from the brothel down the street, a blurring between characters starts to occur—an amalgam of pain and suffering that culminates in the last chapters with the introduction of Miriam, the pregnant, Ethiopian Jew who escaped persecution at home only to die in childbirth at the back of a Brooklyn café. Following her story, here is what the café owner says about his neighbour Gabe who owns the pawnshop down the road:

> He's a Russian Jew. I'm an American Negro. Neither of us is considered a national treasure in our countries, and that's where the similarity ends. We don't get into comparing notes on who did what to whom the most. Who's got the highest pile of bodies. The way I see it, there is no comparison. When most folks come out with that phrase, what they're really saying is that their pain is worse than your pain. But Gabe knows exactly what I mean: they're different ball games (Naylor 220).

Thanks to the story of Miriam, Naylor is able to outline the unique historical legacy of Black-American identity while placing it alongside the racial hatred and genocide perpetrated against the Jews during WWII.

* *

DIKKE LIPPEN

In Holland for the summer holidays
I am twelve
On the island of Texel
I meet a girl
A new friend!
She has me recite the alphabet for her in English—
Over and over
Suddenly she blurts out:
Warrom hep je zulke dikke lippen?

[Why do you have such fat lips?]

My Dad's grandmother married a man named Schogt and had two sons with him.
The second son, my grandfather, was much darker than the first.
After her husband died, my great grandmother married her neighbour.
Samson was from the then Dutch colony Suriname.

MY OBSESSION WITH BLOND WOMEN

My obsession with blond women started when I was a kid. I learned that blondes were happier than brunettes. Why else would there be so many smiling blond, blue-eyed girls and women in all the magazines?

I imagine Janet Anderson as a conventionally attractive blond, blue-eyed girl or woman.

Drawing on women I know, I imagine a cast of blond Janets:

- Charlotte – the Danish florist
- Lindsay and Aude – the photographer and her daughter
- Nora, Emma and Liefe – girls at my daughter's school
- Monica – the cinematographer

May 7, 2013

This morning, I decide the piece will be a two-screen projection with the touching sides becoming a "space". If one space is "beside" the other, the third, interstitial space is the transition space, the inbetweeness. At the seam is where opposites co-exist and paradoxes thrive.

Meeting with Theatre Artist
Michelle Polak – May 8, 2013

Michelle doesn't know anything about my work, so I tell her about my background as an experimental documentary filmmaker. When I describe my work on Holocaust memory, Michelle tells me that her father's side is Dutch Jews. We nod together as she describes how not many survived. Around 75 percent of the Dutch-Jewish population perished, an unusually high percentage compared with other occupied countries in western Europe (Blom 333). The high death rate for

Dutch Jews comes from a combination of their assimilation—i.e. they did not perceive themselves as Jews—and, the pervasive collaboration of the Dutch with the Nazis.

> *My maternal grandfather, a non-religious Jewish lawyer living in an affluent neighbourhood among Gentiles, felt invincible well after the Netherlands became a Nazi-occupied territory. He even helped other Jews escape while continuing life as usual in the comfortable home he had built in 1929. It was not until the danger was truly imminent that he and his family found hiding places. My mother and her two sisters were given new identities (false papers made by the Resistance) and all three given separate addresses: my mother and one sister each with a family and the oldest with a job as nurse in a Catholic hospital. My grandfather and grandmother hid in a tent on a farm until they were eventually caught by Dutch collaborators and sent to Auschwitz where they were both killed. My mother and her two older sisters survived.*

I don't tell Michelle this story, but do tell her how I made up the name Janet Anderson to avoid being *me*—the sexually abused girl. Without hesitation, Michelle suggests her daughter as a possible "character" for the piece. She also thinks her partner, Michaela, a Métis actor with experience in theatre, film and stand-up comedy, might be interested in being part of the project. Soon the project Michelle and I are discussing evolves into a theatre piece. Michelle asks, "Who is Janet Anderson?" She envisions the piece as a mystery. Each of the actors describes aspects of Janet that would touch on her mystery. For example, she suggests, what if there were a story about swimming? We talk about water. Water as emotion. Tears. Flow. Interconnection.

I describe dissociation—how it feels like going into nothing.

We've met in the schoolyard, sitting on a little wooden ledge, just before our daughters are about to come out from school. The exchange has been short and intense. Michelle ends with the idea of introducing humour. I give her an uncomfortable smile. Her daughter Charlie arrives and I turn away to let my face sag a bit.

May 8, 2013

The Janet Anderson project will take the form of a split-screen or dual screen projection. Imagery flowing between the two screens, the projection will either be on one wall or on two with the corner seam as the dividing line.

Meeting with Video Installation Artist
Deanna Bowen - May 14, 2013

Deanna describes her practice as follows: "My works are informed by theories related to the aestheticization of the 'unspeakable' as they contribute to my efforts to reconstitute the self/collective by artistically 'working through' familial and community silences" (Bowen). In her most recent exhibition, *Invisible Empires*, she re-enacted a confrontational 1960s CBC television interview by a white journalist of two Klu Klux Klan members and Black Civil Rights activist Reverend James Bevel.

Deanna has a way of honing in on the essence of a creative problem. Today proves no exception. As soon as I have described my project, she asks me: What does it mean if you don't define the alter ego yourself? i.e. you are defining yourself (the self) through others. What would happen if *you* define Janet first?

Deanna wonders if I can include a Jewish text as part of the work. As fast as I think of Anne Frank's diary, it is immediately clear that the narrative is too specific and weighted.

Anne Frank Interlude

Laat me mezelf zijn, dan ben ik tevreden.
Ik weet dat ik een vrouw ben, een vrouw met innerlijke sterkte en veel moed (Frank).

Let me be myself, then I am content.
I know I am a woman, a woman with inner strength and much courage.

Meeting with Alternative High School Teacher
Barb Sniderman – May 14, 2013

Barb is currently teaching at a small alternative high school in Toronto and visits me at the studio to ask about grad school. Towards the end of the conversation, I tell her about the Janet Anderson project. No backstory this time. Just the notion of several people all with the same name. She tells me about the idea of creating a composite character with high school kids in her drama class. She leaves me with the lesson plan on *Verbatim Theatre*— "a form of documentary theatre which is based on the spoken words of real people" (Cantrell).

Meeting with Accountant
Zoe Klein - May 23, 2013

During my annual tax appointment, Zoe and I catch up. The conversation slips from naming children to childhood experiences. A short child with glasses and buck teeth, Zoe was the only Jewish child at her school. Zoe describes how to avoid her real name... to not be herself, she would call herself either Susan or Janet. *Janet!*

I have not yet mentioned my project. After a brief description of creating a composite alter ego named Janet, based on my own need for a new name as a child, I ask Zoe if she would be willing to be interviewed for the piece. She agrees.

Winter 2014

After putting out a call for participants to a number of friends and acquaintances, I audio interview 14 people. (See Appendix for "invitation to participate"). The group ranges from age thirty-something to sixty-five and can be characterized as diverse in class, race and gender identification.

Each conversation begins with my welcoming the interviewee as Janet—a name they have accepted to adopt before we begin to record. I set up the interview by talking about how I came up

with the name Janet Anderson, when I was a child, as a way to be "beside myself"—be myself and not be myself. Among other things, we talk about dreams, names and naming, identity and identifying, performing gender and childhood experiences. From this group of interviewees, a group of performers begins to emerge—"the Janets."

Part 2 *Conceptualization*

Fall 2011

As part of my required coursework for the PhD, I am taking a course in the film department called *The Practice* given by a guest teacher, experimental filmmaker Mike Hoolboom. Through teachings in psychology, Buddhist philosophy, a number of meditation exercises and in-class screenings, Mike guides the students to integrate a new sense of awareness—perceptual, embodied and political—into our creative practice. For one assignment, he asks us to write about our core story. I go straight for the story—the story about my father and me. I come to class anxious, my page of writing tucked in a folder. But Mike never asks us to share our work.

For one of our last classes, we meet in the entrance hall of a downtown Toronto shopping mall. After pairing up, one person leads the other blind-folded through the mall and out into the busy streets, restaurants and businesses. After this exercise, we eat our packed lunches in silence in the food court. Mike then leads us on foot to our next, as yet unknown, destination—Toronto's main courthouse. He invites us to observe anything we want, to go into any courtroom we wish—again in silence.

My heart is pounding as I peer around the door of a courtroom in session. A few people turn to look at me. *I blush.* Then quickly slink out.

I walk around the hallways and up a winding staircase. Stand with a classmate staring out a window. We break the rules and exchange a few words. There seem to be a lot of people pushing carts full of documents. Lawyers. Legal aids. I walk off on my own and come upon a sign on a door:

> Room 254
> Domestic Abuse and Child Abuse
> Crown Attorney's Administration Office

I sit down for a long time on the bench facing the closed door of the office, observing people coming up and down the majestic courthouse stairs and walking through the echoing hallways.

Again the door.

> Office Hours:
> 8:15AM – 4:30PM
> Thank you.
> Domestic & Child Abuse Team.

December 19, 2012

If there were ever a person who would want to challenge patriarchy—the rule of the father—it would be me. My father first sexually abused me when I was a four-year-old girl and he continued until I hit puberty. I buried these memories until after I had my own child. When I confronted my father, only after much vehement denial did he admit to his actions. The volatile psychological work of recovering these memories has fueled my creative work. But ironically, the countless hours, over many years, spent in psychoanalysis, cognitive behavioural therapy and trauma therapy has also taken me away from my filmmaking and art practice. In addition, as primary care-giver for a child, I have spent much time over the last years, first breast-feeding, changing diapers, doing laundry, cleaning and tidying the house... then cooking, doing more laundry, cleaning, tidying, soothing, playing, reading stories and conversing. My effort to provide my daughter stable care, coupled with my emotional turmoil in processing the recovered sexual abuse memories, has made my art practice progressively more tentative and uncertain.

By articulating the circumscribed specifics of female, care-giver, incest-survivor, I am making an effort to avoid framing my research-creation work with the monolithic term feminism to the exclusion of other terms such as race, class or gender. But by putting the question of therapy in a larger context, I am also returning to the phrase made famous by Carol Hanisch's 1969 article, "The Personal is Political." Communicating the personal is not in and of itself therapy. Hanisch points out how in the 1960s and 70s, within the Left, women's sharing of personal experiences within groups was derided by some as therapy, but actually functioned as a form of political action. In her 2006

introduction to the earlier text, Hanisch explains how, "Taking the position that 'women are messed over, not messed up' took the focus off individual struggle and put it on group or class struggle... " (Hanisch). My current creative impetus, as well as many of my theoretical concerns, stem from my position as a female recovering from the actions of an abusive father. What has also become apparent to me is that the relatively recent recovered sexual abuse memories create a profound sense of ambivalence. While I want to lay claim to the unjust power my father exerted over me, I do not necessarily want to go public with this story. Despite positioning myself in such a personal way in this text, I also intend to open my artwork to questions that move well beyond autobiographical specifics.

July 31, 2013

Six months later, I find my project firmly planted in the autobiographical.

July 12, 2013

It is only now that I can say why a call to female law student participants makes sense.
I want to give voice to my story, my perspective AND I want justice.
VOICE AND JUSTICE

June 20, 2013

I watch a TED Talk by Social Worker Brené Brown called *The Power of Vulnerability*. Brown talks about how shame and vulnerability are intertwined. She says: "tell your whole story with your heart." Derek Kwan, an opera singer and actor, who I met at a party last night, recommeneded the talk. He tells me about how he is working with a mask-maker to create a number of masks he can perform with in an upcoming show. He is interested in exposing his vulnerability through the mask work. While the mask covers your face, it also allows you to reveal parts of yourself. Ironically, the mask unmasks you.

Her Dad was a linguist.
Semantics was his field.

When she was twelve,
she gave herself a new name.

Janet Anderson.

I have been spending the last few weeks thinking about formal aspects of the disseration artwork. While contemplating what draws me to Hans Haacke's *Condensation Cube* and Emily Roysdon's *I Am a Helicopter, Camera, Queen,* I am struck by how both these works challenge the parameters of the gallery space: the former with a miniture, schematic model of the space, the latter with a performance that plays against the walls of the space. I have come up with an interpretation booth as possible stage/site for the new work (see figure 11).

Figure 11.

Another booth comes to mind.

Figure 12.

How could my piece play out on this "stage?"

Actors. I will have actors perform my story. As many actors as I can gather. I will invite them to a space in downtown Toronto and have them perform my story. Live. The booth is a live space.

THE JANET BOOTH:
MY FATHER SEXUALLY ABUSED ME.
PLEASE HELP ME MAKE MY ALTER EGO.

It is not the fact that my father sexually abused me that makes me vulnerable. The abuse happened a long time ago. I am not vulnerable the way I was when I was a child. I do not see my father. He is an old man. I am a grown woman. What makes me vulnerable is the possibility of rejection. Not by my father. But now. That's shame. Brené Brown says, "shame is disconnection." I am afraid that telling people about my story will cause me to be rejected. The fact of the matter is that telling people about my story *has* caused me to be rejected in the past. For all of Brené Brown's pithy, insightful sound bites, the fact remains, people rarely want to hear about incest. Do I couch my story in operatic drama to make it "pallatible?" Do I hire Derek Kwan and Neema Bickersteth, the host of last night's party—also an opera singer and actor? I grab two headshots from online (see figures 13 and 14).

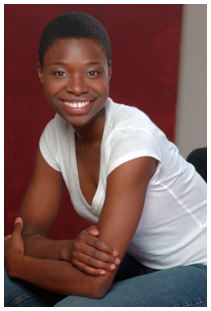
Figure 13.


Figure 14.

I try again.

Figure 15.

Figure 16.

Now I am creating an opera for Janet, staged in an interpreter's booth.

June 20, 2013

I feel anxious that I am not meeting my self-imposed writing deadlines. Instead of working on the affect chapter, I find myself playing with words.

FATHER DAUGHTER
FATHER DAUGHTER
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FATHER DAUGHTER
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FATHER

... one thing
that has been singularly
neglected,
barely touched on,
in the theory of the unconscious:
the relation of woman to the mother
and the relation of women among themselves.

– Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*. 124.

July 22, 2013

My Mom called me yesterday. We haven't been in touch since I emailed her to ask her to stop contacting me. That was in February.

She fainted during the recent heat wave. Went to the hospital and was told to come back because of issues with her heart.

She told me she is sorry and that she loves me.
Issues with her heart.

She also invited me to visit her.

I told her I can't. That the last time I did it was too hard for me.
Issues with my heart.

My Dad lives there too.
I don't want to see him again.
I tried.
Beyond uncomfortable.
My daughter.
Her age.
My age then.
In a rage for a whole week after.
Plate smashing rage.

I feel for my mother.
She is an old woman now.
She must feel lonely. Probably scared too.

I want to visit her. To sit with her. To hold her hand.
I do not want to be in a rage.
She has stood by him all these years.
I understand her choice.
I do not agree with it.
So, here I am now, as she calls out to me.

Chapter 3
Applied Affect

According to Clare Hemmings, Professor of Feminist Theory at London School of Economics Gender Institute, "[a]ffect broadly refers to states of being, rather than to their manifestation or interpretation as emotions" (551). Theorizing about affect inevitably transplants preconscious, non-narrative, sensorial phenomena from their non-verbal zone back into the world of emotion, language, and representation. By using the term "Applied Affect" I point to this irony, while also acknowledging that the study of affect can indeed be applied to analyzing visual art practice. With particular attention to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's invitation for cultural theory to embrace the notion of *beside* and Brian Massumi's interpretation of Gilles Deleuze's *intensity,* I will hone in on the application of affect theory to the areas of interest for this project, namely dissociation, cohesion and the aesthetic encounter. The idea of the *encounter* is one I borrow from art historian Griselda Pollack and psychoanalyst-artist Bracha Ettinger whom she often cites, to signal the importance for me of Holocaust trauma, as well as experiential aesthetic formulations of psychological transformations that occur in the development of my artwork. However, with Ann Cvetkovich's reformulation of the notion of trauma to the everyday and Elspeth Probyn's examination of shame, I shift the focus more specifically to affects that emerge from my childhood sexual abuse history as these too have shaped my work. I also briefly look at how the lack of affect connected to depression is linked to elements of dissociation. Ultimately, affect theory helps clarify the relationship between these autobiographical underpinnings and the ontological and social elements in my art practice—the *being* and *being with others* of the work.

It is precisely the distinction between the *being* and *being with others* that delineates two strains in affect theory, my analysis of which is drawn from the blog, Theoretical Living (theoreticalliving.tumblr.com). Following the separate strains, two of the most cited thinkers in affect

theory have divergent origins: Brian Massumi in Deleuzian philosophy and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in Silvan Thomkins' biologically-rooted psychology. For Massumi and those following in his footsteps, affect is used as an autonomous zone of potential and intensity that intersects with the real. For Sedgwick and other feminist and queer theorists, affect is a conduit for naming connections between the somatic and the social (theoreticalliving.tumblr.com). According to Hemmings, affect theory has been embraced by Massumi and Sedgwick and other critical theorists because it offers an antidote to the hegemony of semiotic and deconstructivist approaches grounded in signification and representation (549). Hemmings warns that affect theory risks being a general "panacea for Theory's hypochondria" (558), where overlooking the affective terrain of fundamentalism or fascism (551), as well as omitting feminist standpoint theory epistemology from the discussion (557), isolates it from critical engagement with "the nature of the social" (565). She dismisses both Massumi and Sedgwick for this reason. But her criticism seems better aimed specifically at Massumi,[1] with his notion of the "autonomy of affect" than it is at Sedgwick, who deftly interweaves affect with the social in *Touching Feeling: affect, pedagogy and performativity*. Despite Hemmings' observations that help delineate specific feminist concerns vis-à-vis affect theory, my goal here is not to enter into the debate and set Massumi against Sedgwick. Rather, for the purposes of this project, I aim to mobilize elements within affect theory with the goal of unpacking the relationship between a) a sense of core being that I derive from and express through the research-creation process, and b) the social aspects of the participatory process in developing and showing the work.

[1] In spite of Massumi's theoretical claim to the autonomy of affect, his larger analysis is ultimately aimed towards social and cultural criticism. See, for example, his talk on how the US administration replaced deliberation with "hair-trigger action" prior to the Iraq invasion (Massumi, theguardian.com).

MAPPING AFFECT

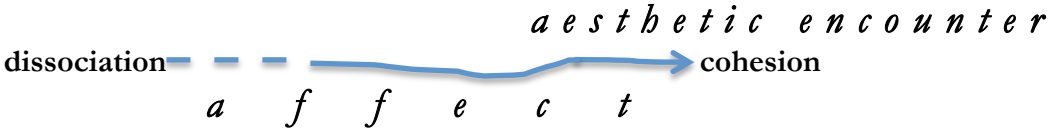

Figure 17.

This schematic diagram helps visualize the trajectory within the developing artwork—the eventual *aesthetic encounter*—from its thematic origins in dissociation due to trauma, to the affective explorations and aesthetic formulations that aim for cohesion: a communication and reintegration of self within community (see figure 17). The broken, jagged line represents a path from *being* isolated to the work involved in attending to affective responses and grappling with aesthetic formulations. Cohesion refers to *being with others*—the process of integrating participants in the creative development and final presentation of the artwork.

Before looking at Massumi's *intensity* and Sedgwick's *beside* that leads to a look at Elspeth Probyn's work on *shame,* I will first situate my specific experience of dissociation through Pollock and Ettinger's elucidation on trauma and the aesthetic encounter. For the notion of cohesion, I turn to feminist philosopher and social-political theorist Theresa Brennan's formulation of the transmission of affect within the social sphere. I will further develop the notion of cohesion in chapter 5, "Feminism and the Body Politic", where I look at consciousness-raising and outreach in feminist art as discussed by Lucy Lippard.

TRAUMA AND THE AESTHETIC ENCOUNTER

In "Art/Trauma/Representation," Griselda Pollock differentiates between *structural* and *historical* trauma. Suggesting the distinction is productive, although perhaps unsustainable, Pollock explains that "structural trauma refers to what is theorized by psychoanalytical tradition as inevitable

events in the formation of subjectivity which are subjected to primal repression" (43) —birth, loss of the breast, loss of the loved object all figure among the events that mark subjectivity in its formation. She goes on to point out that "[h]istorical trauma refers to overwhelming events or experiences by which we, having become subjects whether children or adults, may be afflicted in the course of our lives: abuse, death of loved ones, exile, torture, accidents, political terror and so forth" (Pollock, 43). The two distinct senses of the term have in common that they feel "overwhelming, unsignifiable, immemorial, that which we cannot know or remember or bear to handle" (Pollock 44).

The notion of art as a *transport-station of trauma* was created by artist and feminist philosopher of psychoanalysis Bracha Ettinger. Ettinger explores the processes by which an aesthetic encounter—what she names "aesthetic wit(h)nessing"—can become a site of transformation of the traces of trauma that inhabit an individual or a culture in post-catastrophic histories. Here she defines her terms:

> The place of art is for me the transport-station of trauma: a transport-station that more than a place is rather a space, that allows for certain occasions of occurrence and of encounter, which will become the realization of what I call *borderlinking and borderspacing in a matrixical transubjective space* by way of *experiencing with an object or with a process of creation.* The transport is expected in this station, and it is possible, but the transport-station does not promise, that the passage of remnants of trauma will actually take place in it; it only supplies the space for this occasion. The passage is expected but uncertain, the transport does not happen in each encounter for every gazing subject (Pollock 91).

In describing the work of Belgian filmmaker Chantal Ackerman, daughter of Holocaust survivors, Pollock draws on another Ettinger neologism, *metramorphosis,* to analyze the processes involved in the interplay between trauma, creation and transformation:

> Metramorphosis as an aesthetic process provides creation of a form for passage... through which the trauma, that was always there as a constitutive void shared between mother and daughter, is now moved outside both of them by an aesthetic formulation that is the film (18).

Through this doctoral research process, I have been working to form a new framework and methodology for my artistic practice. Before this work began, I had fixated on the term trauma. The word was interchangeable between my mother's experience of losing her parents in the Holocaust and my experience of childhood sexual abuse. In *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Culture,* Cvetkovich notes how the Holocaust has been a key reference point for the most influential work on the subject of trauma in cultural studies (27). Cvetkovich argues for a definition of trauma that does not necessarily hinge on collectively experienced events such as war and genocide, but focuses rather on domestic and private spheres, bringing the term into "the textures of everyday experience" (3). To carve out a distinction between what Cvetkovich is describing from Pollock's binary of *structural* and *historical trauma*, I would like to propose the term *systemic trauma*. The notion of *systemic trauma* expands Cvetkovich's idea of trauma as part of the everyday from being localized within the domestic and private spheres into the fabric of social power structures. It is with the relationship between the private and public spheres in mind that I want to explore dissociation.

DISSOCIATION

In the most general sense, *dissociation* is, "[t]he action of disconnecting or separating or the state of being disconnected" ("Dissociation", Oxford). In psychiatry, *dissociation* is "[s]eparation of normally related mental processes, resulting in one group functioning independently from the rest" ("Dissociation", *Psychiatry*, Oxford). A chapter entitled "Development of Dissociation and Development of the Self," in *Dissociation and the Dissociative Disorders,* outlines some of the nuances that occur in concert with the condition. Of interest here are the disruptions in memory and identity:

> Memory dysfunctions include the inability to recall autobiographical information or complex behavior and disruptive intrusions of traumatic memories. Disturbances of identity consist of experiences of discrete behavioral states (each associated with a subjective sense of individuality) as well as depersonalization, and psychogenic amnesia (Carlson 39).

Psychogenic amnesia, is a "memory disorder characterized by sudden retrograde autobiographical memory loss, said to occur for a period of time ranging from hours to years" (Arzy et al. 1422).

While I never forgot the fact that I had given myself the name Janet Anderson, I had no conscious recollection, until recently, of how my alter ego helped me detach from my surroundings, precisely because *she* was there to help me "forget."

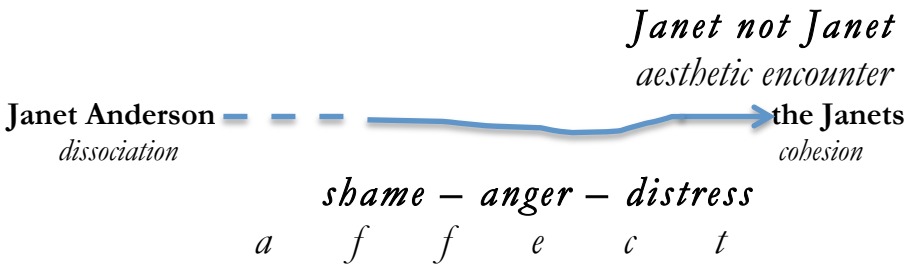

Figure 18.

The *Janet not Janet* project is an attempt at an articulation—an aesthetic transformation—of my experience with dissociation (see figure 18). Questions of isolation and alienation inherent to dissociation extend beyond my personal narrative. The inability to recall autobiographical information can be seen as parallel to systemic omissions and underplaying of contributions and perspectives of women and other under-represented voices to philosophy, critical theory, political thought, the artistic canon, law or the justices system and so on. Thus it follows that the dissociation of my *being* is connected to *being with others*.

I have been drawn to affect theory because I sense that somewhere within the abstract zone that Massumi outlines, through his work on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, I might begin to articulate the ontological aspects of dissociation with a view to transforming what was once an autonomous experience to one that becomes dependent on the involvement of others, first through participatory research and then through the aesthetic encounter.

Brian Massumi makes the distinction between *affect* and *emotion,* by suggesting that the latter is "qualified intensity" (Massumi, "Autonomy" 88) —that is, the place where intensity becomes "semantically and semiotically formed progressions, narrativizable action-reaction circuits, function and meaning" (Massumi, "Autonomy" 88). Affect, on the other hand, is pure intensity: "a critical point, or a bifurcation point, or singular point... the turning point at which a physical system paradoxically embodies multiple and normally mutually exclusive potentials, only one of which is 'selected'" (Massumi, "Autonomy" 93).

The distinction between affect and emotion is particularly helpful as I embark on transforming my own embodied responses to the various incoming stimuli that make up any particular day, into a visual language that can be shared through the aesthetic encounter. Where psychologist Silvan Tomkins' work in the 1960s delineated such states as *shame*, *anger* and *distress* as affects, for cultural theorist Massumi, this semantic identification would already be part of the world of emotion. Massumi suggests that affect is "autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is"(Massumi, "Autonomy" 96). The *capture* and *closure* of affect are the "[f]ormed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage" (Massumi, "Autonomy" 96). I imagine the capture and closure of affect from inside to outside—first at the level of neurons and across synapses, then out to the epidermal layers. *Blush.*

When Massumi says that "[t]he *autonomy* of affect is its participation in the virtual" (Massumi, "Autonomy" 96), it is because "[t]he body is as immediately virtual as it is actual. The virtual, the pressing crowd of incipiencies and tendencies, is a realm of *potential*" (Massumi, "Autonomy" 91). Within Massumi's ontology, affect is perpetually hovering on the edge of *becoming*, always with a potential plurality of pathways. In Deleuzian terms, the question of *becoming* is one in which two or

more systems come together to form an emergent system or *assemblage* (Smith). Transposing this model onto my project, the ontological becomes social, with Janet Anderson *being* affect and the Janets *becoming* all the virtual possibilities. And together, Janet Anderson and the Janets create a *becoming*, a symbiotic emergent unit—the aesthetic encounter, *Janet not Janet.* (See figure 18).

AFFECT – BESIDE

Thanks to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, I have begun visualizing the relationship between Janet Anderson and the Janets in spatial terms. In the introduction to her *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity,* Sedgwick describes how *beside* is the most salient preposition in the book (8). For her, the spatial positionality of *beside* offers resistance to the ease with which *beneath* (or *behind)* and *beyond* turn from spatial descriptions into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos (Sedgwick 8). In her review of Sedgwick's book, Marla Morris writes about being beside oneself: "I am beside myself, I am in a sense not-myself, but I am myself" (Morris). I am *Janet*—in a sense, no longer myself—but I am still myself, *not Janet*.

Figure 19.

Taking *beside* into my studio, the work begins when I perform a number of self-portraits with the aim of further development for a final artwork (see figures 19-21 and 24).

Figure 20.

The empty chair leaves a spot for another/others to join.

Meanwhile, I cannot see myself and do not want to be seen.

In *Blush: Faces of Shame*, Elspeth Probyn argues that shame is "the fine line or border between moving forward into more interest or falling back into humiliation" (*xii*). She suggests that shame is productive because it demands acknowledgement (Probyn *xii*). The "fieldwork" I have been engaging in—the meetings with friends, acquaintances and other artists—has allowed me to formulate my sexual abuse history with others, sometimes overtly, sometimes not.

Figure 21.

February 20, 2013

Meet with my studio mate.

Tell him my new work is going to be a self-portrait,
made through images of other women—
women that are "beside" me, so to speak.

Facing Guntar, I am confronted with his blond hair and blue eyes.
Different from my brown hair and brown eyes. (*Not the Aryan story again).*
I have begun thinking about which friends I might to invite to be photographed for the piece.

Figure 22.
Margrét
not Margrét

Figure 23.
Chair
not Chair

Figure 24.
Woman
Not Woman

The participatory discussions in the development of the artwork are also a process of coming out about the childhood sexual abuse... finding ways to talk or not talk about *it*. In *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures,* Cvetkovich draws parallels between coming out as a "lesbian" and coming out as an "incest survivor," both in terms of sexual identity and in terms of the potentially devastating impact to families (89). Cvetkovich's investigation becomes particularly pertinent to my project when she talks about incest revelation in terms of the public sphere.

> It is essential to keep in mind that incest stories or narratives are performances whose contexts may vary tremendously. An incest story could be offered up as a testimony in court, an object of scrutiny on a television show, material for processing in a therapy session, a plea for public and political attention to the problem of sexual abuse, or a disruption of other political projects (93).

The participatory work in this project has been a way to bridge the private and public through face-to-face, one-on-one discussions where the repetition of sharing diffuses the intensity of the revelation. Through this process, the eventual aesthetic formulation of the Janet Anderson story has become less about revelation than it is about what Theresa Brennan calls the *transmission of affect*.

COHESION

For Brennan, it is the constant communication between individuals and their physical and social environments that is central to any conception of affect. In her book, *The Transmission of Affect,* she proposes that the energies of an individual or group are constantly being absorbed by one another and the environment within which they find themselves. Brennan contrasts the advent of the notion of the individual, with its contained emotions and energies, with the idea of "other cultures and other times, [where] there are—or have been—different, more permeable, ways of being" (2, 11). In working first in one-on-one meetings and then as a group within the performance environment, I aim to transmit the specificity of my once dissociative pathways towards a sense of cohesion with partcipating performers and viewers alike.

Through Brennan's conception of affect, the edge of the virtual in Massumi's *intensity* and the spatialization in Sedwick's *beside* become rearticulated within the flux of the social. Buoyed by the idea of permeable ways of being and the transmission of affect, I return to the question of participation.

Chapter 4
Creative Process Summary

Part 1 *Choosing the Participants*

September 26, 2013

Woke up far too early this morning.

Thinking about a group of girls, my daughter and a few of the girls she is taking a dance class with right now.

October 4, 2013

Another meeting with Michelle Polak.

Michelle and I have planned to meet in the schoolyard right after dropping off the kids. But it's pouring. Michelle offers to drive me to the studio. We end up having a meeting in her parked car.

Our conversation moves freely from my work to hers and back again, not without a lot of personal anecdotes from both of us. I tell Michelle that I've landed on the idea of her daughter, my daughter and choreographer Julia Aplin's daughter being the three performers. I want to see them perform something in the second floor hallway *just outside the sexual abuse office... but neither the girls nor the audience need to know this...* Michelle talks about ways of giving the girls direction without necessarily giving them access to the content of the piece. She gives me homework to come up with a list of 15 words or phrases that I'd like to see her help bring to life in the girls.

I tell Michelle that I have begun imagining her daughter sitting in the judge's seat. Calling out "order"... "disorder." *I am not able to tell Michelle much more about what happens in the courtroom. I can't imagine this yet.*

We have sat in the car for a good hour and a half. This location is a first for Michelle as a creative meeting place. For me as well. She sees how our conversation is part of what I am calling

"permeable boundaries." Yes, I say. This is my work. I walk to the studio both drained and exhilarated. We have both shared a lot. There is a lot of work ahead.

October 31, 2013

On making boundaries (ethics)

My childhood friend, Lisa Evans, is in town from Whitehorse where she has been a counseling psychologist at an elementary school for over 15 years. A large portion of the students at the school and many of the ones she's been counseling come from the local native population. She hasn't disclosed any specifics, but has told me that alcoholism and sexual abuse are prevalent problems at the school.

I now turn to Lisa for help in phrasing my participant consent forms, particularly the assent forms for minors. She must have been one of the first people I talked to after I recovered my childhood sexual abuse memories. It feels natural that she be the one to give me advice on the ethics forms.

While it has been a natural impulse to work with my daughter, it has also become obvious that working with her poses too many ethical concerns. How can a child refuse participation in a project her mother invites her to work on—no matter how rebellious the child, she still wants to please her mother. What if I go on to make a video using her image and she later regrets being part of the work?

If I do not fully disclose the thematic nature of the work, am I not reproducing the secrecy that has caused me so much difficulty over the years?

November 1, 2013

I meet with Julia Aplin for tea after we drop off our girls at school. She is the mother of a new girl in my daughter Sofia's class this year. When I tell her about bringing together a number of

girls and women to participate in helping me make an alter ego—Janet Anderson, the name I made up for myself when I was 12 years old, she seems charmed. Janet Anderson: to Anglicize my name, I say. But also to distance myself from the fact that my father was sexually abusing me.

Tears in her eyes.
I nod once.
Keep my composure.
I want to continue working right now.

I explain to Julia that I won't be asking my daughter to be one of the dancers because of ethical concerns, and that every child and adult participating in the project will be explicitly told that the work is partly derived from the theme of sexual abuse.

I invite her to be the choreographer.

I flap my arms and swoosh my hands to and fro to explain that I want to create a space of imagination and freedom. Julia says that I can come up with a number of ideas that she will use in working with the children. She's worked this way before. I can come and see what they've come up with and add more ideas until we have set the choreography.

We don't have a lot of time and Julia speaks in the shorthand of an experienced choreographer. Is this a performance, or is this a dance for film? How many dancers? What will they wear? How long will the dance be? Julia suggests no more than five minutes is good for children. These are only some of the questions she fires at me. As she speaks, her arms and hands move with intent. New ideas emerge. Strength. *Anger.*

* ❋

Have a dream I am yelling at Dad that I didn't take him to court.

Creative Process Summary
Part 2 *Choosing the Site*

September 5, 2013

My daughter is back at school. Grade 3 this year. At the end of the summer, she was in a drama camp for two weeks. The idea was for her to have a good learning experience while I had time to work on my dissertation artwork and paper. The drawback was that the camp was way across town. Due to construction, and a rerouted streetcar, it took us over an hour to get to camp every morning and then another half hour for me to get to the studio after the drop-off. In the end, the time sitting together gave us a chance to be together in a new way. Sometimes chatting. Often just sitting quietly together. These trips across town seem to have brought us closer.

On my way to the studio, staring out the window, taking in the city. Passing the courthouse, I feel my heart pounding. The main floor or one of the grand upstairs hallways—could that be a space for the female law students to perform? *Perform what?*

One day, after dropping Sofia off, I go to the courthouse. I pass through security. Go upstairs to sit on the bench across from the sexual abuse office. *Why not have the piece take place inside a courtroom?* On the way out, I ask the security people about having an art event in a courtroom. They aren't sure and suggest I talk to the film office at City Hall next door.

At the film office, I am given Theresa Bailie's number. She's Facilities and Logistics Coordinator for New City Hall, as well as Old City Hall where the courthouse is located. On the phone, she tells me it isn't a problem to do a shoot inside one of the courtrooms. There is no cost for the room. Only a fee for the staff. *This all sounds good.* What about having the space open to the public? This isn't allowed. This has never been requested. The spaces are run through the Attorney General's office and this would be a new kind of request. There would need to be additional security. *I must be onto something.* I decide not to push too hard. I don't want to lose the option of getting the space. So, I make the request sound more like a conventional film shoot again. I don't talk about the

public access again. Not for now. I want to meet with Bailie in person so I can begin to test the waters.

September 23, 2013

I have an appointment tomorrow morning to see Theresa Bailie at Toronto's main courthouse. I'm feeling anxious and excited to see the possible sites for *Janet not Janet.*

September 24, 2013

I had my meeting with Theresa Bailie at 8:30 a.m. this morning. We had to meet early, before any of the courtrooms were in session. We shake hands and say hello. *She looks different from the picture I found of her online. The one where she is holding her twin baby boys. She is more petite than I was expecting. Maybe those tiny babies made her look bigger.* She is accompanied by a staff person; probably a caretaker, judging from how he is dressed. A court officer also joins us. We say our hellos. They are all friendly and relaxed, which puts me at ease.

They take me to the second floor and show me a first possible courtroom for my "shoot." *I've decided not to call the piece an installation, intervention or performance.* Room 124 has an imposing wooden judge's bench with back paneling that takes up a whole wall. Also in the room is a plexi "cage" that, although much smaller and less imposing, reminds me of the Eichmann trial booth (see figure 12).

The next courtroom—122B—is much smaller and has contemporary furnishings. No grand wood finishes here. This room also has a plexi box. I say it's the IKEA version of the last room. The group chuckles at my comment. The court officer says that 15 people would make this room look full. He reads from a label on the wall that the maximum capacity for the room is 30 people. The morning light is shining through the windows behind the judge's bench. Very different from the last room. Unadorned. Simple. Less distracting. My heart is beating faster.

En route to the next courtroom, we walk past the Domestic Abuse and Child Abuse office. *Much more tame than the words "sexual abuse" lodged in my mind.* Courtroom 121 is even grander than the first space. There is a viewing mezzanine with ornate archways. Again an ornate, wooden judge's bench—this time flanked with flags: Canada's on one side, Ontario's on the other.

The caretaker and I are a few paces behind. My voice warbles as I ask him where the sexual abuse cases are tried. He says they happen on the third floor. What about here on the second floor? All criminal. I ask him how long he's been working here. Twenty-one years. I look at him as he speaks. Started with the afternoon shifts when the kids were young.

We look at another courtroom—128—on the second floor. It's a small, cramped room. Then another—room 126. This one holds 173 people, the courtroom officer reads out after I ask. I ask Bailie about making any alterations to the room. We had already spoken about this on the phone. As long as I restore the room to its original state. She says there are some restrictions and that I need to write a request with my plans.

Well, that's it. The courtroom officer says. We are back in the hall. Unless there is anything else you want to see. What about the third floor? I ask. They all look at each other. *Is it not possible?* We start walking again. The caretaker and I are a few paces behind again. He calls out to the court officer to ask him about the sexual abuse cases. I don't catch what he says. *Even though I'm right there.* I tell the officer that my research is focused on sexual abuse because of my personal history. *I didn't need to tell him this.*

Bailie presses the elevator button for us to go up a floor. Three tall men in dark, well-tailored suits are already in the elevator. My eye lands on an earlobe with a big silver stud. *Criminal lawyers.* They are chatting about children. *Are they?* They laugh together.

I'm led through a busy open hallway full of people—waiting and milling about. We go down a narrow, dingy, carpeted hallway. This is where the sexual abuse cases are tried—

THIS IS WHERE THE SEXUAL ABUSE CASES ARE TRIED—

courtroom "J"—

J is for Janet!

I imagine my piece happening here. *What piece? What is going to happen here?* I take a few pictures: the window, the judge's bench—this one simple, with a white wall behind it. And, just like all the other rooms, a Canadian coat of arms—smack in the centre. I ask the court officer about the box. Does it open? Yes. He walks over to check. I take another picture (see figure 25).

Figure 25.

The seats in this room are wooden pews. How many people does this room hold? The officer says 184. He laughs. Better update that, he says to his colleagues. No way that many people would fit in here. He says. I look at him, briefly. Then notice the ornate ceiling and take a picture. Interesting. Bailie says. *What?* You've never been up here? The caretaker asks. No, never been here.

I look over to the clutter on the judge's bench and lawyer's tables. Would that stay in place if I were to use this room? The caretaker says that they can clear the room if I want.

* ❋

Bailie and I walk back towards New City Hall. I ask her whether or not my group would clear security through the front entrance. No, they would go through the back the way you did this morning. They really want the filming and the court activity to be separate. But that's what interests

me. I put my fingers together in a grid. The idea of bringing creative expression into the courtroom. As we cross the street, I look at Bailie's face. It's the possibility of people having their pictures taken. The possibility of them then not showing up because of that concern. We just can't do it.

September 25, 2013

Another meeting with Nick Torok (see page 31).

Nick comes for another studio visit. He remembers that I was having trouble deciding between child performers (girls he thinks) and law students. I tell him I haven't resolved this issue yet, but that I have chosen a venue: Old City Hall–a second-floor hallway and a courtroom. I still need confirmation on whether or not I will be allowed to use the space. But if film crews can, why wouldn't I?

> Did I tell you about the core story behind the piece?
> Nick shakes no.
> I give an intent look.
> He tilts his head. Maybe?
> It's childhood sexual abuse.
> I think you'd remember. I say.
> I wait to see Nick's reaction.
> His expression doesn't change. *Not really.*

I describe the venue and talk about my vision of a group of girls dancing between the columns of the grand second-floor hallway. I also describe the elevator ride with *the suits* (as Nick later calls them) up to the third floor. And, the dingy carpeted hallway that leads to Courtroom J—where sexual assault and abuse cases are tried.

Nick imagines the girls taking adult viewers by the hand and leading them to the elevator and up to the third floor. There he pictures a party with laughter and drinking. A case won. The suits lining the narrow passageway to Courtroom J. *I do not picture this.*

We talk about performance art. Nick says documenting the work might interfere with the palpable sense of presence that can happen with performance art.

WHERE AM I SHOWING MY WORK?
NOT IN A CINEMA
NOT IN A GALLERY
NOT IN A MUSEUM

January 13, 2014

Theresa Bailie emails to let me know there is still no word from the Attorney General's office as to whether or not I can use the Old City Hall courtroom and hallway. Also, as she is moving to a new position, she has cc'd her successor, Ellen Herridge. *It might as well be Janet Anderson.*

It is difficult to think about the work without having the space confirmed.

For now, I leave aside Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish.*

January 17, 2014

Herridge emails to say the Attorney General's office has two ongoing building projects that is making it difficult to forecast which courtrooms will be available for the time of my request.

She ends with—
Please let me know how you would like to proceed.

I email back to ask that I be kept in the queue.

July 30, 2013

Went to a film screening last night.
Experimental works from the 1960s and early 70s.
Joyce Weiland's *Peggy's Blue Skylight*—loose, open and full of humour.
Hollis Frampton's *Ordinary Matter*—relentless citations of Chinese syllables, Stonehenge and corn fields: language, perception, consciousness.

Talk to local video artist after.
Tell him my doctoral work is about father-daughter incest.
He shakes his head—*sorry.*
Power. Assumption. He says.
Where was the mother, I always think. He says.
She was a hidden child during the Holocaust.
He winces.
I'm taken aback.
So different from my experience. He says.
It was too much for her. He says.

POWER.
ASSUMPTION.

My father assumed he could get away with it.
And he did.

January 22, 2014

Ellen Herridge,
space facilitator at Old City Hall,
fires off a quick email—

Courtroom J is not permitted.
Please let me know how you would like to proceed.

January 23, 2014
Morning

Meet with video artist Deanna Bowen. I tell her about this morning's struggle to get Sofia to school on time, losing my temper about the dishes not being done, partner not helping, while I'm making lunch for Sofia, about my writing process.

Deanna talks to me about a charged meeting and ongoing issues of systemic racism at her workplace.

I show Deanna two courtroom photos (see figures 26 and 27). We discuss the differences in the sites.

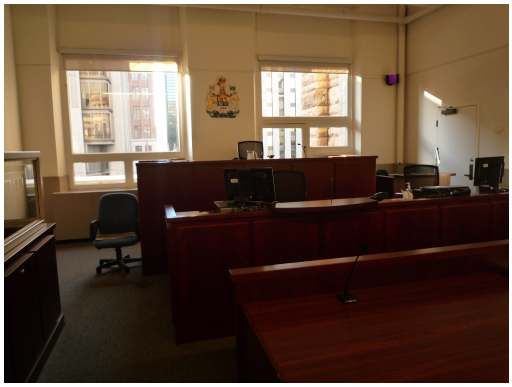

Figure 26.
IKEA courtroom

Figure 27.
Fireplace courtroom

Deanna teases out the difference between the overbearing austerity of the IKEA courtroom and the almost stifling intimacy of the small courtroom with the fireplace. The IKEA room looks more like a space for *art*. Stark. Minimal. The fireplace courtroom looks like a living room. The more we talk, the more suited the small room seems. Like being at home. Domesticity and power entwined.

Thinking about Maria Nordman, I talk about the possibility of an intervention like gels on the windows. As our conversation continues, it becomes clear that this kind of intervention will clutter the work.

The performance is the intervention.

January 23, 2014
Afternoon

Deanna suggests I email Herridge for clarification about access to courtroom J.

Within 10 minutes Herridge fires back—
I will check and get back to you.

***

Late afternoon
Herridge emails again—
You can't touch any of the new, sensitive sound equipment.
Otherwise, courtroom J *is* available.

March 6, 2014

Michelle and I meet in the theatre space she is using to workshop her new piece.
We talk through *Janet not Janet*. Michelle suggests that my PhD defense be the performance in the courtroom.

We spend the morning, doing exercises embodying the words I've come up with, word by word:
dizzy–invisible–sad–strange–strong–silent–angry–
First I move across the room.
Then Michelle.
A few movements begin to take hold.

Creative Process Summary
Part 3 *Janet not Janet – project description*

OVERVIEW

Held in a courthouse and courtroom in front of a small live audience, *Janet not Janet* is a performance about the making of a composite character—an alter ego created by the artist when she was 12 years old, but never brought to life.

The movement-based piece with four nine-year old girls and a diverse group of adults, as well as the courtroom "drama" with a small cast of participants and the attending audience, will be documented. A split-screen video work may be developed at a later time using this documentation and/or newly shot material.

Locations in Old City Hall (Provincial Courthouse of Ontario)

1) Albert Street entrance, foyer
2) Second floor main, centre hallway
3) Third floor south corridor
4) Courtroom J

The performance begins the moment the viewer-participant enters Toronto's Old City Hall. Guided upstairs by "the Janets" onto a landing and then into a grand, open hallway, movement and tableaux punctuate the spaces. After passing through a long corridor, the piece culminates in the dissertation defense in Courtroom J (see figure 29).

Figure 28.
Hallway, Old City Hall

Figure 29.
Courtroom J, Old City Hall

The girls perform a movement piece within an approximately 6 square meter area between four pillars on the second floor of Old City Hall (see figure 28).

Inside courtroom J, a performed presentation marks the beginning of the dissertation defense.

Chapter 5
Feminism and the Body Politic

On pondering the relationship between the biological fact of her female body and her identity as a feminist philosopher, in the context of a history of Western politics and epistemology that attempts to deny difference, Naomi Scheman describes *the body politic* as follows:

> One way of dealing with the problem of diversity, of the many, is by discovering, or postulating, the one. (Why diversity is a problem is another question, one I haven't an answer to. What's clear is that for Western epistemology and politics it has been a problem, perhaps *the* problem.) Individual knowers and political actors may be endlessly diverse, but premodern authority resides elsewhere—in a unitary realm of Forms, in God, or in the king. An individual's claim to knowledge rests on his ability to trace its origin to the unitary source. And that source is either literally bodily... or with a barely sublimated body (186).

Scheman goes on to describe how with sacrificial animals, the incarnation of Christ, or the splendor of cathedrals, among others, the "sublimated body, unlike the actual one, transcends any particularity—it is not different" (186). However, "the residue of bodily presence ties authority to a patriarchal memory, makes it emotionally real, and encourages the belief that we are all part of one large body, all have our proper places in its constitution" (Scheman 186). As Scheman points out, in premodern Europe, whether *pater familias,* king as father, or God the father, "the many found their place and grounded their knowledge in relation to the one who gave and sustained their lives"(186), with the mother being only a nurturant of the male seed.

Keeping Scheman's articulation of *the body politic* in mind, I will analyze some of my earlier film and installation work, as well as ground abstract notions of feminism with concrete examples taken from performance art, sculpture and video art. A return to Irigaray helps draw out the specific body from its position as undifferentiated other, while also situating *her* within a more fluidly dynamic ontological system. Through a discussion of feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz's reading of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri's problematically disembodied notion of girlhood and becoming-

woman, I aim to develop socially grounded and embodied parameters for abstract philosophical concepts.

As I examine how my work has shifted from an individual, narratively driven focus to a collaborative, participatory approach, I draw on feminist thinking on embodiment, in particular as taken up in performance as described by American artist and art historian Katherine Stiles in her analysis of the discipline. The work of performance artist Andrea Fraser, known for her institutional critique, serves to link the "personal is political" of 1970s performance art, with more self-reflexive, current practices that explicitly draw viewers into the concept of performing social and political roles. I also draw on a feminist framework to think about the participatory research and creation work of sculptor Doris Salcedo and photographer-installation artist Sophie Calle, whose practices help demonstrate the tension between the solitary artist (whether performer or not) and the possibilities of a more socially engaged practice. This exploration paves the way for my new work *Janet not Janet*, where women's subordination is addressed through a performance that gives space to girls and diverse adults within the power structure of a courthouse.

Before embarking on a larger discussion on feminism, the body and feminist art, I would like to introduce how girlhood and its representation have also been relevant to the development of my previous artwork. In order to critically assess how I work with girlhood, I will give an overview of past work, themes and approaches, leading to the 2006-2010 installation and photo-based work *Liquid State.* As I have detailed here in the memoir sections of this text, much of my motivation for making visual art that addresses gender-based oppressions stems from my childhood sexual abuse history. From my first short film *Zyklon Portrait,* completed in 1999, to the current project, giving space and voice to the female child has been central to my work. Repressed and recovered memories, as well as the silencing effect of the incest taboo, are themes that have permeated my work. While working with photographs and footage of children, I have blended the child's perspective with my

adult point of view. My awareness of the tendency to look at the past through a present lens stems from French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' (1877–1945) observation of how we reconstruct our past through mental images available in the present. For Halbwachs an individual's understanding of the past is not only seen through the present, but also framed through a group consciousness situated within society. He called this *collective memory*. In my work on Holocaust memory, I used this notion to contrast the individual family album with the larger narrative created through institutional, archival imagery.

My 2006-2010 project *Liquid State* exemplifies my work with images of girls and girlhood. To produce the final photo-based work, I positioned three ice blocks (100 x 50 x 25 cm) to melt over copies of archival images from the United States Holocaust Memorial Archives (see figure 30). One of the three blocks of ice covered an image of a girl who survived, another the image of a girl who perished, and the last block had nothing under it. Creating the work became a process of documenting and managing the melting ice blocks over three consecutive days. The process of re-photographing the archival copies through the melting ice allowed me to draw parallels between solid-to-liquid transformations and mechanisms of remembering and forgetting. By having identified so directly with both the girl victim and girl survivor, in the development phase of this installation piece, I was able to finally access my own repressed childhood sexual abuse memories during psychoanalysis. While the images of the girls could be seen clearly through the ice, it was the process of placing the heavy blocks on the images, then photographing the gradual changes in the ice as the melting took place, and also the work of removing buckets full of water, that offered me a way to re-enact and actualize the process of accessing the repressed memories. Despite the considerable effort and mess involved, my dragging of the buckets of water to the drain is not something I chose to show. In fact, the resulting photographs seem to reinforce what Irigaray refers to as the cohesion of a "body." As seen in the

photo-based triptych below, the fixed, final images work against my effort to show the fluid nature of memory (see figure 31). As Grosz describes in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, for Irigaray:

> This disquiet about the fluid, viscous, the half-formed or the indeterminate has to do with the cultural unrepresentability of fluids within prevailing philosophical models of ontology, their implicit association with femininity, with maternity, with the corporeal, all elements subordinated to the privilege of the self-identical, the one, the unified, the solid (195).

Figure 30.
Liquid State
process documentation, 2006

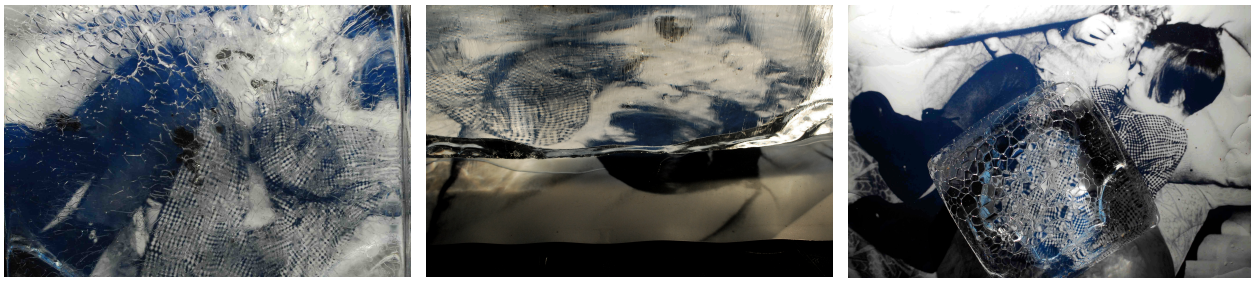

Figure 31.
Liquid State
digital c-prints on aluminum, 40 x 60 cm, 2010

There is no accompanying text about my recovered childhood memories with the *Liquid State* photo-based triptych. On its own, the work seems to get stuck in a hermetic, symbolic language. As I am now questioning my strategies for making work, I see the limitations of working with metaphor with an aim to finding representation. In "Posthumanist Performativitiy: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," feminist theorist, Karen Barad describes how "The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of

practices/doings/actions" (802). In her more recent book, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Barad delineates how the idea of representation is deeply embedded in our Western culture, and is linked to epistemologies and ontologies dating back to the Greek philosophers. She traces the criticism of representationalism to cultural philosophers Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, as well as philosophers of science Ian Hacking and Joseph Rouse. Barad adopts Donna Haraway's idea of diffraction as an alternative to representation, suggesting that diffraction presents patterns of difference rather than the patterns of sameness and mirroring that representation and reflection present (Barad, *Meeting the Universe* 29). Within feminist discourse, representation carries with it the idea of mirroring. With mirroring comes the idea that the subject (the male) is reflected back to himself, obliterating the other.

Irigaray points to the limitations of representation, with its often hidden mirror. Her discrediting of the mirror stems from her larger critique of Jacques Lacan's privileging of the "visual constitution of the ego in the Mirror Stage," which Martin Jay summarizes as her critique of Freud and Lacan's blindspot to symmetric thinking rooted in Descartes (531). Irigaray entwines the idea of the male subject and the hardening of boundaries with its alternative—fluid messiness that threatens to "deform, propagate, evaporate, consume him, to flow out of him and into another who cannot be easily held on to" (*Speculum* 237*)*.

Along with Irigaray's insight on fluidity, it is thanks to Deleuze and Guattari's description of the Body without Organs (BwO), in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* that I have begun to seek new ways of formulating the body in space. For Deleuze and Guattari, the BwO "is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles" (40). Grosz outlines how the BwO offers a helpful antidote to the well-ingrained Cartesian duality:

> [Deleuze and Guattari's] notion of the body as a discontinuous, nontotalizable series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances and incorporeal events, speeds and durations, may be of great value to feminists attempting to reconceive bodies outside the binary oppositions imposed on the body by the mind/body, nature/culture, subject/object and interior/exterior oppositions. They provide an altogether different way of understanding the body in its connections with other bodies, both human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate, linking organs and biological processes to material objects and social practices while refusing to subordinate the body to a unity of homogeneity of the kind provided by the body's subordination to consciousness or to biological organization (165).

With the BwO in mind, I developed the *fog experiments* during 2012 and 2013*,* to create a bridge between my work on Holocaust memory and a new, yet-to-be-articulated feminist orientation in my practice. While the (5.5 x 14.5 x 14.5 m) fog-filled room was an abstracted version of the gas chamber at Auschwitz that I had explored in my film *Zyklon Portrait,* the space was also a scaled-up version of Hans Haacke's (76 x 76 x 76 cm) condensation cube (see figure 32). During the event, visibility was reduced to approximately a metre in front of each participant. With only dim overhead lighting, the rectilinear boundaries of the room took on the evolving, amorphous shape of the fog and the limits of the space were called into question. By nullifying the girl image *as an image* from the earlier exploration in *Liquid State*, I was instead creating an experience. This *prepared place* offered an environment where, with vision obscured, uncertainty and disorientation began to occur. The sensorial experience within the space was akin to a detachment from one's surroundings that occurs during dissociation *(resulting from childhood sexual abuse)*. The question was to see how the participants reacted to being surrounded by the fog. Some pairs or small groups that came to experience the work moved independently in the space, while others stayed close to one another. Regardless of how the participants configured, they relied on reaching out or calling out to one another to help orient themselves. There was a shared effort through gesture and utterances/language to create cohesion within the space. In an effort to both share and transcend the childhood sexual abuse through the

creation of the fog-filled space, I had abstracted the specificity of my girlhood experiences beyond recognition.

Figure 32.
fog experiments
glycol-based fog, 5.5 x 14.5 x 14.5 m, 2012-13

Grosz points to the "departicularization" of girl, her bodily specificity, and the abstraction of becoming woman as an "unsettling tendency many feminists have found in approaching or attempting to utilize Deleuze and Guattari's works from a feminist perspective" (175). For Grosz, the decorporealization of the figure of the girl by Deleuze and Guattari is particularly problematic in the following passage from *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*:

> The girl is certainly not defined by virginity; she is defined by a relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, by a combination of atoms, an emission of particles; haeccity. She never ceases to roam upon a body without organs. She is an abstract line, or a line of flight. Thus girls do not belong to an age, a group, sex, order or kingdom; they slip everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes: they produce *n* molecular sexes on the line of flight in relation to the dualism machines they cross right through. The only way to get outside that dualism is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo... ß to each opposable term, man, woman, child. It is not the girl who becomes woman; it is becoming-woman that produces the universal girl (176-177).

Perhaps the problem in my work has been one of extremes—on the one hand, an overreliance on psychoanalytic tropes leads to clichéd, essentialist, two-dimensional girl imagery, while on the other,

the hyper-abstraction of Deleuze and Guattari obliterates specificity leading us back to Irigaray's critique of the undifferentiated *other*:

> She is not uprooted from matter, from the earth, but yet, but still, she is already scattered into x number of places that are never gathered together into anything she knows of herself, and these remain the basis of (re)production—particularly of discourse—in all its forms (*Speculum* 227).

Whether sexual difference is core to feminist theorizing of differentiation has been intensely debated. In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* Judith Butler challenges Irigaray's notion that "the question of sexual difference is *the* question of our time" (167). Butler notes that privileging of sexual difference not only implies that sexual difference should be understood as more fundamental than other forms of difference, but also that other forms of difference might be *derived* from sexual difference. Furthermore, Butler questions the notion of sexual difference as "[t]his view also presumes [an] autonomous sphere of relations or disjunctions," and "is not to be understood as articulated through or *as* other vectors of power" (167).

Nonetheless, *sexual difference* has allowed feminists to think through what is meant by a female body, regardless of age, race, or gender identification. Grosz articulates how for Irigaray, as well as such thinkers as Butler and Cixous, the body is "interwoven with and constitutive of systems of meaning, signification, and representation," but is at the same time also "an object of systems of social coercion, legal inscription, and sexual and economic exchange" (18). As Grosz outlines in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, the sexually specific body is socially constructed. For anthropologist and cultural theorist Mary Douglas, the contours of the body are the "borderline state" where "[b]lood, vomit, saliva, phlegm, pus, sweat, tears, menstrual blood, seminal fluids, seep, flow, pass with different degrees of control... " (Grosz 195). With the intersection of bodies and borders, we enter a new discipline. Geographer Robyn Longhurst challenges her field's reluctance to deal with the messiness of the human body in her book *Bodies: Exploring fluid boundaries*. Drawing on Irigaray and Grosz, she attests:

> When geographers speak of the body they still often fail to talk about a body that breaks its boundaries—urinates, bleed, vomits, farts, engulfs tampons, objects of sexual desire, ejaculates and gives birth. The reason this is significant is that the messiness of bodies is often conceptualized as feminised and as such is Othered (23).

Carolee Schneemann's performance piece *Interior Scroll* is the textbook example of radical feminist art from the 1970s aimed at challenging not only the boundaries of the body, but also the limited roles women embodied creatively, spiritually and politically (see figure 33). Schneemann ritualistically stood naked on a table, painted her body with mud and slowly extracted a paper scroll from her vagina while reading from it.

Figure 33.
Interior Scroll
Carolee Schneemann, 1975

I was a 10-year-old girl when she stood there like that.
What if my Mom had been a performance artist?

What if I had become a performance artist?
What if I were to become a performance artist?

December 18, 2013

My studio mate's collaborator, a dancer-performance artist comes for a studio visit (see figure 34).

When I tell her about the Janet project, *about the sexual abuse*, she looks right into my eyes. Doesn't blink. Says nothing. After we talk some more. She says that maybe *I* am ready to

talk, that *I* am prepared. But what about the other person, the other people, the participants, the viewers?

Zoja wonders if I am not too close to the material.
Do you mean that it would be difficult for me?
No. Not that it would be difficult for you. But that you will not be able to make something that stands outside of yourself.
Outside of myself...

Figure 34.
Zoya Smutny

Zoja Smutny is not Janet Anderson.
Zoja Smutny is Janet Anderson.

Feminist performance art exemplifies the intersection between embodied artistic expression and political engagement, as discussed by Longhurst, Irigaray and Grosz. Stiles suggests artists working in performance "exhibit the body as *the* vital social and political interface" (76). She offers an overview on the emergence of performance art:

> Women deserve special attention in any account of performance in the 1970s for their development of the genre. Indeed, women represent the majority of artists engaged in the practice of performance art. This demographic reflects both the absence of a history of male achievement in the field (in comparison to painting and sculpture) and the widening of opportunities for women offered by a new genre (86).

The artists I turn to in the following section demonstrate how the raw energy of 1970s feminist performance has evolved into a more nuanced practice that critiques systemic gender oppression within the artworld itself as well. California-based artist Andrea Fraser brings the urgency of 1970s feminist performance art together with the more self-reflexive questions of *institutional critique,* a term she is often credited with coining. As she notes here in "From the Critique of

Institutions to an Institution of Critique," in her own work, social and political systems reflected in the artworld become embodied in the performer:

> It's not a question of inside or outside, or the number and scale of various organized sites for the production, presentation, and distribution of art. It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals, these are the questions that institutional critique demands we ask, above all, of ourselves (283).

While Fraser sees herself as *the institution*, the "Janet not Janet" project angles its critique from outside the regular channels of art presentation. Situating my doctoral defense artwork performance inside a courthouse, I challenge the institution in the following five ways:

1) The artwork is stripped of its value: it is no longer a currency within the conventional arena of the art market (gallery, biennale, art fair, artist run gallery, art festival, etc.).

2) The rituals of the defense of knowledge (in this case, the university exam) are being amplified by their presentation within the legal defense/justice system.

3) The site where the judicial system operates is being turned on its head: rather than have the defendant, my father, brought to court, I, the victim, am speaking in court to defend myself, my thesis.

4) The structures and rituals of the courthouse and courtroom are challenged through placement of incongruous, expressive movement and gestures by girls and diverse adults within the site.

5) The ambiguity of performed vs. real within the "institution" of performance art is heightened with the artwork culminating in the actual doctoral defense

In terms of the artwork being stripped of its value, I take a cue from Tino Seghal's radical alternative to the buying and selling of the art object. Seghal eschews conventions, not only with this economic model, but also by presenting disarmingly intimate performances—not by himself, but by hired dancers, performance artists, and actors—that put the viewer in close proximity to the performers, within such austere art venues as the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall or the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt.

> [He] sells his work, or "constructed situations", by means of verbal transactions in the presence of a lawyer with no written contract. Instructions on how to re-enact his works are delivered by word-of-mouth, with collectors under strict orders never to photograph or video the works, a prohibition that he extends to museums" (Harris).

Seghal has stringent boundaries regarding the payment for and documentation of his works. By comparison, while the *Janet not Janet* performance is intended as an ephemeral, site-specific occurrence, the video documentation if developed into a finished video work has potential to circulate in the more conventional art market channels.

By conflating dissertation defense and the legal defense within the site of the courtroom, *Janet not Janet* aims to make visible the power structures within both the university and judicial systems. As Michel Foucault states in *Discipline and Punish*: *The Birth of the Prison*:

> The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance (184-185).

Ultimately, the incongruities of the exam as well as the expressive movement piece within the courthouse challenge the accepted rituals of both proceedings. The emails and meetings with city officials leading to access to the space and the presence of courtroom officers in attendance for security at the performance, are instances where the artwork intersects with the institution. Creating a video to circulate at a later date opens the possibility of a public to witness the intervention.

Fraser's 2008 work *Projection* integrates performer, performance, artwork and public within a single video. The piece is not strictly performance that has been documented, but rather performance made for documentation. In the 50-minute, two-channel video loop, she reenacts the

roles of both herself and her analyst through 12, short, scripted monologues that emerged from a series of psychoanalytic sessions she participated in (see figure 35).

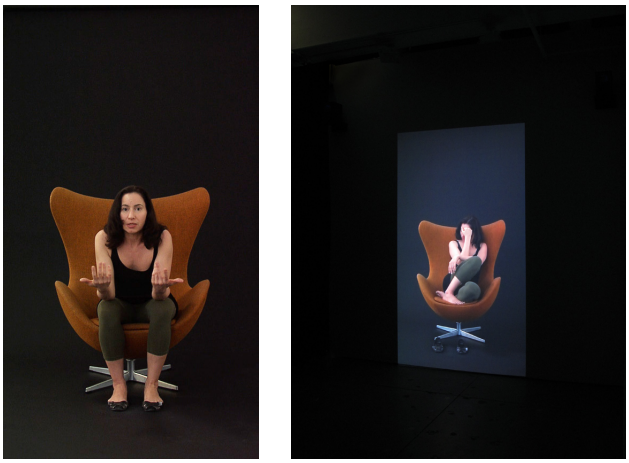

Figure 35.
Projection, 2008
two-channel, high definition video projection
50 minutes

Fraser appears life-sized wearing the same clothes, sitting on the same chair, with the two parts alternating and projected onto opposing walls. The different characters can thus only be identified through body language, voice and emotion and the therapeutic interaction between analyst and analysand is redirected into its constituent performances. Many of the notions that Fraser uses in the piece, including desire, exhibitionism and projection, lend themselves as easily to the world of art as that of psychoanalysis. Looking at *Projection* through psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin's lens, where "the idea of intersubjectivity reorients the conception of the psychic world from a subject's relations to its object toward a subject meeting another subject" (20), the two Andrea Frasers—Fraser as "self" and Fraser as "other" —can be seen to collapse into one. As artist and writer Marc-James Léger comments, Fraser's feminist institutional critique, "makes use of subjectivity as an institutionally conditioned site of fantasy and identification" (21). Léger's comments are made specifically in relation to Fraser's most controversial work *Untitled* of 2003, where she invited an unmarried, male, heterosexual art collector to meet her at a hotel room for a sexual encounter. The

resulting 60-minute, silent, single-channel video for display on a small monitor, earned the artist nearly $20,000 US paid by the collector.

The subjectivity I am exploring in *Janet not Janet* is much less projected outward onto the institution than back-and-forth between the participating "Janets" and myself, through the creative development meetings and movement-based work with the theatre artist and choreographer. The project may have stemmed, in part, from the shame or fear of *being seen* (discovered to have an unacceptable past), but it has evolved into a processing of allowing others to *see* while at the same time *seeing* others, *being with others*. While Fraser *is* a performance artist, with the *Janet not Janet* project I aim to find ways to create an intersubjective exchange between artist and participant that does not necessarily culminate in a performance by the artist. More than just having the viewer implicated in the artwork by virtue of being a witness, it is their participation in its making that truly generates the intersubjective exchange.

For Colombian sculptor Doris Salcedo, gathering other people's experiences helps fuel her work. In the following passage, she describes her process in making *Shibboleth,* a piece exhibited in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in 2007:

> When I'm working it's not only my own experience that counts; the experience of the victims of violence I have interviewed is an essential part of my work. Dialogue is crucial in this process; it is what allows me to know the experience of the Other, to the point at which an encounter with otherness in the field of sculpture is possible. Thus my work is the product of many people's experiences (Basualdo 13).

Figure 36.
Doris Salecedo
Shibboleth, 2007

Shibboleth begins as a hairline crack at the west entrance to the Turbine Hall and gradually widens and deepens as it runs 167 meters to the far end of the hall (see figure 36). The fault line that Salcedo produces speaks to issues of exclusion and division. By hacking right into the floor of the symbolically powerful British institution, she points to the relationship between the victims she has interviewed for her work and the larger systemic impact of colonialism on her native Colombia. What strikes me most about *Shibboleth* is the way in which Salcedo alters the space where every viewer walks. The alteration of the space reminds me of what Maria Nordman calls *prepared places,* where intersubjectivity, or the "perpetual condition of co-presence" becomes the place of exchange. In Salcedo's work, the distillation of a multitude of stories of pain and isolation into a coherent visual form—the gash in the floor—makes the act of bearing witness reverberate well beyond the act of the viewer seeing the artwork.

For Sophie Calle, the process for making her piece *Prenez soin de vous* (*Take Care of Yourself*) is the inverse of Doris Salcedo's. While Salcedo speaks to victims of violence to distill their experience in a sculpture, Calle speaks to others to make her own experience of pain coherent. Rather than turn inward, Calle extends her own thought processes, actions and creative expression by collaborating with others. The title comes from the parting tagline of a break-up email Calle received from a lover.

For the work, she invited over 100 women, among them a lawyer, a Talmudic scholar, a clairvoyant, a writer, a translator, and a number of musicians to each interpret the letter in her own way and offer her "findings" to the artist.

Figure 37.
Sophie Calle "Prenez soin de vous" 2007
Installation view, Venice Biennial

A photograph of each participant is mounted on the wall (see figure 37). In the work, what Stiles would describe in performance art as the "*transpersonal visual aesthetic,* which functions as an *interstitial continuum"* (76) disperses from the artist into a multiplicity of interpretations coming from a panel of gridded monitors. Calle's work is a powerful example of how a participatory practice can amplify the artist's agency.

Giving this chapter the title "Feminism and the Body Politic," I set out to make a connection between the individual body—*the girl's, the woman's*—and the groups within which she functions. The Oxford Dictionary tells us that body politic is "the people of a nation, state, or society considered collectively as an organized group of citizens" ("Body politic"). Thus, individual "bodies that matter" become part of a collective process of governance and power. As curator and critic Lucy Lippard states in her 1980 article "Sweeping Exchanges—The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s," feminist values include "collaboration, dialogue, a constant questioning of aesthetic and social assumptions" (363). She goes on to say that "[f]eminism's contribution to the evolution of art

reveals itself not in shapes but in structures. Only new structures bear the possibility of changing the vehicle itself, the meaning of art in society" (Lippard 363). Whether Salcedo's process of interviewing survivors of violence or Calle's invitation to participants to contribute interpretations of a letter, these artists are engaged in what Lippard sees as:

> [S]tructures grounded in interaction techniques adapted (and feminized) from revolutionary socialist practice—techniques on which the women's movement itself is based: consciousness raising, going around the circle with equal time for all speakers, and criticism/self-criticism (364).

It is with Lippard's characterization of feminist art in mind—art having elements of outreach and connections beyond process or product—that I embark on making *Janet not Janet.*

Epilogue

January 26, 2014

Meet up with one of the Janets to see a play.
She brings her sister to have tea before the show.
We end up at a nearby greasy spoon.
Sit down at the long counter.

Janet's sister—the poe—
leans in to pour milk into her tea.
She knows a bit about my project.
Laughs—
why not call yourself Sam?

Too many Janets.
She smiles to herself.
I know a bit about dissociation.
She tells me.

Janet's sister—the poet—
Doesn't want to come to the play with us.
Wants to go home.
Work on her poetry.

Janet and I settle into our seats.
She tells me that her sister has memories—
from when she was three years old.
Three years old.
She *herself* doesn't have these memories.
No such memories.

Janet's sister—the poet—
has schizophrenia.
Diagnosed.

The lights dim.
The play begins.

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Appendix
Janet not Janet – invitation to participate

Janet not Janet
a documented art performance

As part of the research process for my practice-based PhD in Visual Arts at York University, I am inviting you to help create a composite character. Her name is Janet Anderson.

> *Because I didn't like my funny sounding name, when I was twelve years old, I came up with a new one for myself. The deeper reason for the name change is that I was being sexually abused.*

I have only told you this backstory to give you a sense of what sparked the idea of the project. I am not asking you to share anything you do not want to share. In fact, I am not looking for stories about abuse. Simply tell me a story or anecdote, real or imagined, using the name Janet Anderson. To guide us in our conversation, I will describe how the notion of *beside* has been helpful in my research. I will explain more in person.

The goal for the work is to create a space for collective empowerment.

The project has two parts:
1) story gathering
2) performance

All those interested will participate in part 1.
We will meet one-on-one at a mutually convenient time for about 30 minutes.
I will record our conversation and later transcribe it. You may remain anonymous if you choose.

Depending on your interest, availability and suitability, you may participate in part 2–
the performance, to be held on June 7, 2014 in front of a small audience. The performance will consist of a series of conversations and/or gestures. Performers may or may not end up enacting their own stories and anecdotes. A photographer and videographer(s) will document the performance.

Elida Schogt
Toronto, Ontario