

Practices of Use

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Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'A. Huges', is displayed within a light gray rectangular box.

27th June 2017

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Abstract

Practices of Use develops self-forming practices of performative and disciplinary body acts, at home and in wider social contexts. Body/subject positionings are explored in these practices as a process of constant ‘becoming’. The phrase ‘practices of use’ encapsulates a research aim to incorporate the use-value of Michel Foucault’s ‘technologies of the self’ as well as Clark Moustakas’s heuristic methodology. The project extends and contributes to feminist enquiries (Butler, Heyes, McWhorter and McLaren), working across Foucault’s disciplinary and self-forming practices. This project’s significance lies in a set of practices that lend emphasis to subjects and contexts developing and operating relationally. This emphasis on relationality explores the subject as becoming, forming, sensing and thinking differently so as to reveal and counter normative regimes.

Through private training tasks in my home *Practices of Use* develops a group of body acts that acknowledge and act into personal histories of the disciplined female body. These explore relational positioning in various sites such as the floor and doorways to develop modes to think myself differently. Through methods including the use of sound, moving image and sculptural material, these ‘private’ tasks both incorporate and question how I am positioned in relation to the home context. They help me act, and, in turn, act as records of processes of forming, fixing and attaching. Through these practice based performance paradigms, research questions develop about how my subjectivity is encountered. Moreover, how does this private training prepare me to continue these acts in public contexts, where my body acts are encountered in shifting contextual settings in which wider scenes, including passersby, are involved? Thus this project explores a range of the research problems encountered when personal histories of the disciplined female body in the home become viewable, publishable, or accountable in art contexts.

The research builds on Judith Butler’s body acts as social and performative practice, and are further understood through Foucault’s ‘disciplinary power’ (1975) as relationally productive. A question of how knowledge is ‘attached’ to moving bodies is considered in early film technologies, and agency as a productive relational strategy, as well as ethical requests of assistance and support, are explored in art and performance.

Introduction

Practices of Use proposes that in art and performance we find a space that enables practicing thinking oneself differently to how we may be required to understand ourselves, thus revealing processes of *becoming* a subject, countering dominant histories and mappings of ‘a subject’. The research draws upon these propositions to reflect and respond to personal histories of the disciplined female body in the home, and in particular the medical management of my mother, which hampered and caused unruly body acts as well as the institutional threat that the other females in the family may be given similar attention.

Three ‘practices of use’ form the core of this creative practice-led research, including *Floorpress*, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing*. Each of these practices explore modes of self-forming through disciplinary and performative body acts. They contribute to feminist enquiries that aim to acknowledge and also act into struggles with becoming subjects within normative regimes through drawing upon Foucault’s creative, experimental and ethical self-forming practices.

These practices emphasise that subjects always develop and operate in contexts. *Practices of Use* explores the question of how body acts in art and performance can both acknowledge locally embodied circumstances and offer opportunities to act. The practices raise and respond to questions about what is publishable through shifts across contexts and remaining in use. Art and performance contexts and audiences provide wider social infrastructures that allow propositions of body acts as self and social work that incorporate local embodied circumstances and offer the opportunity to propose relationally ethical questions of assistance and support. Through these practices of use, this project contributes to discussions not about locating the subject, but rather exploring the subject as *becoming*, forming and sensing in relational and productive propositions of thinking oneself differently, revealing and countering problematic subject/body positionings.

The exegesis is divided into three main parts. Part One situates the project’s questions and methodological approach. First, three practices of use: *Floorpress*, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing* are introduced. They developed through private training tasks in my home into a group of body acts that respond to these histories. These are practiced across private and public contexts and

encountered in various modes and forms. They question the relationship between forming subjects and their contexts. By practicing becoming formed with and by the floor, under things, and attached to door frames, I am able to contest other potential positionings, through bringing critical attention to becoming a subject via these acts of self-forming. I am also able to acknowledge, recognise, and counter the particular circumstances and predicaments of my mother at home, and rethink her positioning as not her work alone.

Practices of Use takes a methodological approach which foregrounds heuristic use value. It does this through drawing on Foucault's (1988) technologies of self and feminist engagements with self-forming practices. These practices are required when critical attention needs to be paid in one's life to how we are to understand ourselves, or when the practices that define us become untenable. They propose, as Ladelle McWhorter (1999) shows us, a contingency in oneself, as always *developing*, or *becoming*, within normative frameworks. These practices are reflective and social. Feminists working with Foucault's self-forming practices appreciate this location in practice. McLaren (2002) recommends that such practices acknowledge concrete embodied local circumstances, while Cressida Heyes (2007) finds possibilities for thinking oneself differently and self-transformation. McWhorter (1999) proposes, through modes of countering, opening up another reading or sedimentation, another way of understanding our body/subject positionings.

The critical use value evident in Foucault's self-forming practices informs this project's research question: how to acknowledge and act into these histories in ways that "keep power relations in play" (McWhorter, 1999, p.208). Clark Moustakas's (1990) heuristic research methodology supports the personal relationship underpinning this research project.

Following discussion of this project's use value, the practices of Adrian Piper (*Catalysis Series*, 1970s) and William Pope.L (*Crawls*, 1970s ongoing) are explored as self-forming practices which have a heuristic use value. They draw upon and work into wider social infrastructures, extending the personal to the political and the social. Piper, through altering her appearance, and Pope through crawling on the ground, explore their social relational positionings to reveal ethical requests inherent in taking up a body/subject positioning. These activities are relevant to Piper's and

Pope.L's own circumstances, and draw on their local embodied contexts and the wider social scenes. For Shannon Jackson (2011) art performance practices such as Piper's and Pope.L's, engage and work into the social in crucial ways, invoking the social as a "systematic whole" (p.5) and in doing so can question and reveal the contingencies of supporting "normative bodies" (p. 6).

The personal in this project is situated as inherently social. *Practices of Use* insists on acknowledging the local embodied circumstances of 'a subject' because these circumstances are the conditions in which the subject is forming and functioning. Personal is political expanded to 'and social too' is useful to articulate this attitude in practice. McLaren aligns the personal is political with Foucault's technologies of the self, through a similar emphasis on "the specific, the local, the concrete, the particular" and an insistence that "theory and practice are inseparable" (2004, pp .228-9).

Part Two explores the question of how our movements and positionings come to mean and matter through Foucault's discipline and Judith Butler's performative body acts. It considers how this knowledge is 'attached' in early film technologies, and discusses studio and home explorations of discipline as a relational practice.

In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975/1987) we gain understanding of disciplinary power as productive and relational, and as involved in the ongoing work of producing subjects and their positionings' through attention to the individual within the multiple. How we become situated is always a question of how we are positioned *in relation* to everyone and everything else. Disciplinary power is located in the individual body through modes of training and documentation. The body's movements and positionings are temporally and spatially attended to and a coercive visibility encourages continual regulation and maintenance by self and others. This situating produces the individual as subject through a circular action of power and knowledge inherent in normative practices. We are active rather than dominated in these processes, acquiring skills and aptitudes, as well as limits and restrictions. I was reassured after reading Foucault. I had 'felt' the significance of incorrect body and behaviour, and 'felt' the forces of measure, analysis, documentation. I 'felt' it to be contradictorily laid at the feet of 'an individual'. And I 'felt' this contradiction to be maintained and reproduced

seemingly without question. This project attends to this contradiction by proposing instead that we are all involved in processes of positioning body/subject.

Body acts in early film are also considered in this second section of the thesis to contextualise my practice in terms of how a body is known. Disciplinary technological attention and sharing iterative performances of the individual body are explored in early films such as *Sandow* (1894, Edison /Dickson) where we can see knowledges attached to bodies in early kinetoscope films. These early films of the moving body situate disciplinary training of the body as involving spatial and temporal articulations and alignments and requiring an audience. In *Sandow* (1894) and *Treloar and Miss Marshall, prize winners at the Physical Culture Show in Madison Square Garden* (1904, Edison/Dickson), we see body acts performing certain skills and aptitudes. Lisa Cartwright (1995 p.xii) points out early film technologies developed to record movement, and involve a disciplinary surveillance and physiological analysis of the body, and shift across science and amusement contexts. Tom Gunning calls them ‘Cinema of Attractions’, describing early non-narrative films that address the viewer through a “present tense” temporality (1995, p. 123). In *Sandow’s* case, this address is replicated in the kinetoscope peephole viewing device which physically locates the viewer within a wider social scene. The attachment of contexts to body/subjects is further explored through the gendered itineraries evident in the scene, prop and activity selection of Eadweard Muybridge’s studies of human movement (Williams, 1986). These early film performances are also briefly discussed as locating the viewer in ways that align with 1970s practices such as Hannah Wilkes *Gestures* (1974) and Lynda Benglis *Now* (1973), which imply a porosity between self and other, viewer and screen.

Part Two references Butler’s (1988) notion that body acts are performative everyday social practices that have an important dual dimension. How the body moves and is positioned both acts and enacts meaning, drawing upon and contributing to what Butler calls sediments, and potentially deviating from them. Butler (p. 526) tells us that body acts are “immediately public”; they have a “social temporality”, and act and enact meaning within shared social contexts and available understandings. This meaning is drawn from what precedes us, but at the same time, in our own enactments we contribute to these meanings and may open up the possibility for potential differences to occur. This performative process tends to hide its own

mechanisms, and therefore one may come to understand one's own body acts as fixed and belonging solely to oneself.

Part Two also discusses *Practices of Use* development of methods starting with training in the studio to explore disciplinary attention as between self and other through props, devices and locating a viewer. These methods focus on repetitive body activity and video documents and then develop into relational questioning between body and studio, structure, frames, sites, and others. Acknowledging the personal content of the project's questioning relocates the project to my home where sites such as the front door, dining room table and hallway floor can be incorporated. While practicing in private at home, I explore them as densely social and political situations, where I can reflect upon and work into something of what I felt of my mother's predicaments. I develop training tasks for body as hampered and unruly, focusing on my hands, mouth and tongue. The subject is in her home cements this project's focus in use, and also its understanding that contexts are inherently incorporated in any propositions of positioning a subject.

This focus though introduces questions around agency. How can one act under such regimes of discipline? What does agency mean here? I also realise that technology needs to be more usefully involved in incorporating subject and contexts as relationally productive. As this research project unfolds, it poses on-going frustrations in the relationships between doing the tasks, the training and recorded documents. A significant question emerged in this respect: what is the work here? Working into specific reflections, and understanding this use value, I come to understand the project as sets of practices rather than works. Questioning now acknowledges and is located within specific circumstances.

In Part Three I respond to the question: how do I acknowledge and act? Agency, rather than residing over there or looking on, needs to be located in the body and this body needs to be located in its producing contexts.

When the 'Subject' is in her house, personal histories are brought to the fore, alongside issues of gender and agency. For Lois McNay (2015), agency should always be considered as a "situated conception" that takes place within power relations and norms and therefore needs to be considered as "a situated, embodied, and relational phenomenon" (pp.40-1). This situated-ness of the research

incorporates everyday social processes of being particularised. By drawing upon feminist practices I draw attention to and incorporate my own local, embodied circumstances. Following McLaren (2002), I suggest that subjects and contexts cannot be separated. McLaren also situates the disciplinary body as not simply passive, but able to increase its forces. Butler situates disciplinary power as a strategy, which is productive and in constant activity as a network of relations (2004, p.183). She suggests this activity of a strategy can be considered as Foucault's concept of agency (p.186).

Part Three explores a productive relationality between body and spaces, structures and sites, self and others, in art and performance practices. These practices focus on body acts which explore agency within disciplinary frameworks. They propose modes of self-forming practices that can reveal, transform, and think one self differently to point to contingencies within subject/body understandings. Two main themes emerge: firstly body/subject and contexts as relationally forming; and secondly, body acts as social practices which require self and social work, assistance and supports.

Bruce Nauman's studio video *Wall-Floor Positions* (1968) explores taking up and holding a sequence of positions in relation to the wall and floor. Nauman's body exertions, and equally those that can be thought of as the force exerted by the wall and floor, are situated as productively in relation, as forming each other, drawing out an embodied, sensuous phenomenological interrelatedness. VALIE EXPORT in *Body Configuration Series* (1972-1976) takes up positions in relation to the architectural scene, inserting body into social public space, shaping and shaped, drawing attention to herself, at the same time becoming a kind of measure. EXPORT 'speaks back' through these self-forming configuration practices, finding and revealing resources for contingency in our embodied understandings. Trallas' *Written into space* (2010-11), which documents performances done privately in her own home, finds that, as Nealon (2008) suggests, normative practices within our everyday can have wrapped within them inherent modes of resistance. These practices incorporate local embodied circumstances and reveal a contingency within this relational productivity by remaining in processes of subjects and contexts forming.

In Laresa Kosloff's video documents of training the body, *Standard Run* (2007) and *New Diagonal* (2007), props and assistants support spatial and temporal discipline of the body. Kosloff explores body acts as performative and disciplinary social practices that require assistance and can enact difference. In Alicia Frankovich's *A Plane for Behavers* (2009), her stalled body requires to be carried, hoisted and held. Frankovich states that her body becomes a "sculptural problem" and "responsibility for the viewer", pointing out that all bodies require support (2011, Boenzi & Frankovich p.75). These relational ethical requests of body/subject positionings and understandings are further situated by Chris Braddock's *Repeating Silence 4* (2015) as a phenomenological sensing that remains in an instantiating becoming.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's chiasm is incorporated, as suggested by Butler, to situate the subject as produced through a "matrix of relations", which includes "the sensuous conditions of being sensed and sensing" (p.11). In this way Butler extends Foucault's norms through a phenomenological sensing, which informs one's thinking and feeling. Subjects and contexts are considered here as becoming, forming, and sensing, while body acts are revealed as individual, and more broadly as social practices requiring assistance and supports to exist. Through these practices we learn how the body/subject moves (or not) and the positions it takes up (or not) is implicitly social. Butler (2015) describes this as an ethical relationality.

Part Three also analyses the technology required to assist my self-forming practices. For instance I carry the camera lenses with me recording the performative scene and exertion of my tasks. These 'forming' embodied lenses assist me to incorporate contexts I am forming and functioning in. Technology, materials and documents also help me act. They assist me to exert the floor body press, to form an attachment, and record an act of fixing. Technology assists me to think myself differently. There are multiple modes in the technical processes; a haptic quality, that gets you in close and exerts a feltness: the hard floor, resistant wall, soft plasticine, breathing and gulps. As well as a personally saturated and messy record of exerting oneself, the recorded documents hold important detail, carrying and acknowledging contexts' discipline, recognising the scene. The haptic and optic work into each other, as Laura Marks explains; the optic allows us to recognise, to name, while the haptic does not allow any one definition to be reached (2002, pp. 12-18). In this case, the haptic felt content brings an exertion and recognition of the predicaments and vulnerabilities of

my body acts. Meanwhile, the optic content of the documents carries something of the scenes of these acts, of the local circumstances within which these body acts draw upon for their support and understandings.

Finally, I describe how I draw upon and enlist the care of others. Art and performance contexts and support become significant in offering this opportunity. I realise these must remain as practices, and shift across home and public contexts to remain useful. This is the wider dimension of the questioning process of research. As Butler (2014) tells us, all action or practice requires support, and agreeing with Jackson, she (2014) finds that performance art in particular provides and incorporates such support as moveable and expansive platforms, necessary spaces and social relations.

By engaging with these ideas and practices, I understand the complexity and problem of the disciplinary and performative body act as no simple matter. These questions cannot be understood from any singular point of view. *Practices of Use* explores body acts as tied up in producing potential subject body positions. Opportunities emerge to explore the significance of body acts' relational and social dimensions and to propose making them differently. Equally, the material 'documents' in *Practices of Use* explore the felt weight and density, the mass of sedimentation that continues to do its work, contextualising and supporting what these acts can be and how they can matter in an everyday political sense.

Practices of Use puts forward a set of self-forming practices that recognise a relational productive contingency between forming subjects and contexts. It is here, in this process of *relational becoming* that the resources and opportunities to acknowledge and act are to be found.

Part One: Practices and Approach

Practices and Approach – Introduction

Part One situates the project's questions and methodological approach. First this section introduces three practices of use: *Floorpress*, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing*. Each practice acknowledges and works into personal histories of discipline of the female body in the home. These are practiced across private and public contexts and encountered in various modes and forms.

The phrase 'practices of use' is situated through Foucault's technologies of self and feminist engagements with self-forming ethical practices. Self-forming practices may be required when critical attention needs to be paid in one's life to how we are required to understand ourselves, or when the practices that define us become untenable. They propose a contingency for how we understand ourselves and others, as always 'developing', or 'becoming', within normative frameworks. These are reflective, experimental and creative activities or practices that involve self and social work. In this project self-forming practices focus on thinking oneself differently, revealing and countering these personal histories.

The critical use value of Foucault's self-forming practices for this project is to acknowledge and act into these histories by keeping power relations in play (McWhorter, 1999, p. 208). In particular, this project aims to reveal and counter these personal histories in ways that insist on one's positionings as not one's work alone. Clark Moustakas's (1990) heuristic research methodology acknowledges one's personal relationship within the research question and puts forward an approach that draws on one's own experiences and accommodates the potential of "personal transformation" (1990, p. 14).

In the last section, the performances of Adrian Piper (*Catalysis Series*, 1970's) and William Pope.L's (*Crawls*, 1970s ongoing) are explored as self-forming practices which have a heuristic use value, draw upon and work into wider social infrastructures, and extend the personal to the political and social.

Floorpress



Figure 1. Ruth Myers, (2017, April), *Floorpress*, Hallway to St Paul Street Gallery Three, AUT. Photo Chris Braddock.

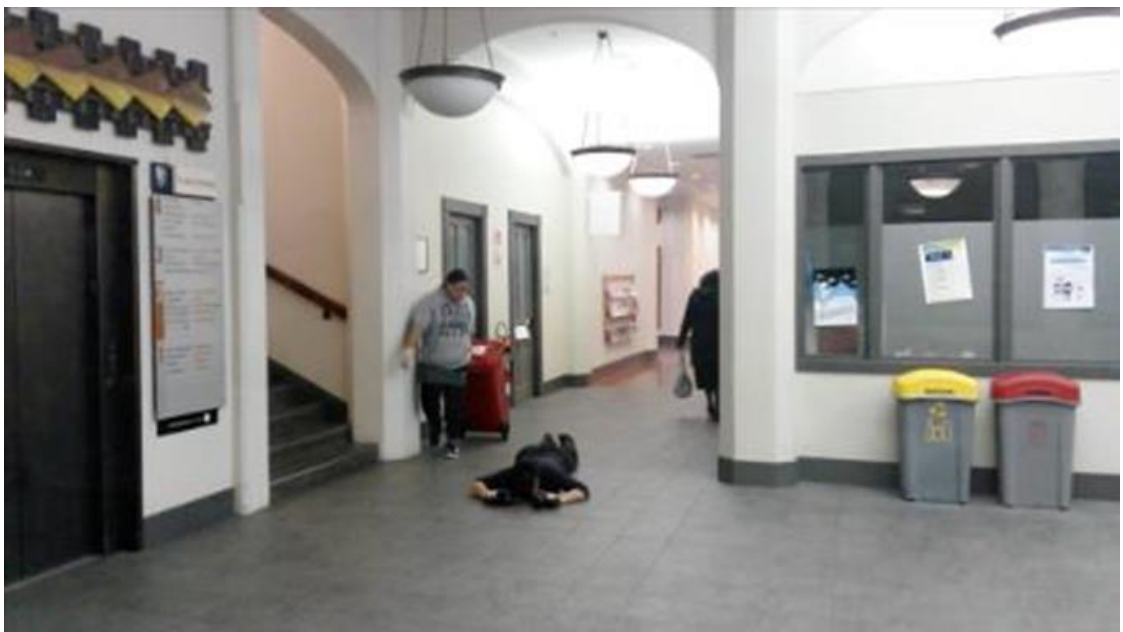


Figure 2. Ruth Myers, (2016, July), *Floorpress*, Hallway to St Paul Street Gallery Three, AUT. Photo Ziggy Lever.

A practice
Floorpress
I am the floor
You make the floor
I make the floor
The floor makes me
We make the floor
I press into the floor
The floor presses into me

In *Floorpress* (2016 ongoing) I practise moving through the hallway on my face, from the front to the back door. Two cameras held either side slide along the ground as props assisting my progress, but they also act, recording the scene of the task as located between body and floor, and recording my exertion, huffing and puffing, my reiterated effort. They incorporate context in my questioning, and ask how I am positioned in relation to this context. At home, they are a response to certain local particular and personal reflections, of spatial and temporal discipline and alignment, and offer the opportunity to ‘act’ into them. They are a practice of use. But the project ‘learns’ that the question cannot and does not stop here. It cannot be ‘left’ in my home. It travels, of course. How to attend to this? I realise that training prepares me to continue this act in a public environment. Practising *Floorpress* in AUT hallways, passersby happen upon me, and I find I can keep going. The floor becomes a question for them as well, and contexts continue to feed in as I inch past student services hubs, postgraduate offices, cleaning closets and stairwells.

I do not want to disturb anyone. During my April 2017 crawl along the hallway to St Paul St. Gallery Three, outside the student services office one of my supervisors held someone back from intervening. It is an interesting tension in the project: both wanting to solicit some care, such as the student asking during my January 2017 crawl “do you need me?”, and not wanting to disturb. While I am interested in drawing out the potentially heavier-handed interference just halted I am also fearful of such interventions. This is the necessary risk I take, and what I am practicing working into. This is what is required.



Figure 3. Ruth Myers, (2017, April), *Floorpress*, video loop 43.05 min, Installation view, Testspace, AUT.



Figure 4. Ruth Myers, (2017, April), *Floorpress*, video loop 43.05 min, Installation view, Testspace, AUT.

In *Floorpress* (video loop, April 2017) I finally realise that I cannot give you the floor. I shift my projection from the architecture of Testspace to two temporary screens. These screens, now slightly out-moded, were once typically used for family slide shows. The screens need repair to stand up, and only tentatively manage to provide a support for my screenings. Worn with ripples and tears they are vulnerable and tentative but their triangular bases stand, and they do support. This materiality feeds into the floors as clip after clip reveals the details of these scenes: shoes, containers, doorstep, cricket bag, washing, bedroom floor, lounge floor, slaters, sand, socks, underwear, bags, dog hair, dirty carpet, fluff, rubbish, fireplace, chair legs, table legs, edges of carpet, edges of lino, tin cans, sacks of potatoes, fly swat, dogs paws, waste bucket, concrete floor etc. Audio recordings convey the instructions I give myself for each task, recording the day, my focus, my aims: *Saturday, sunny day, carrying a heavy bag on my back, loops this time, butterfly, thinking the floor differently, Thursday Floorpress* etc.

Two cameras record the ‘scenes’ of *Floorpress* and my exertion. These scenes surround and impress, and work into each other like the doubling and detailed work of the performative disciplinary mechanism. This mechanism is replicated as the projections slide into each other on the screens, opening up a gap. The gap replaces ‘my’ presence; I am not figured, but the sound of my exertion is at work through two powerful speakers that squat on the floor, swishing into each other as I move from front door, along the hall, through the dining room and the kitchen and out the back.

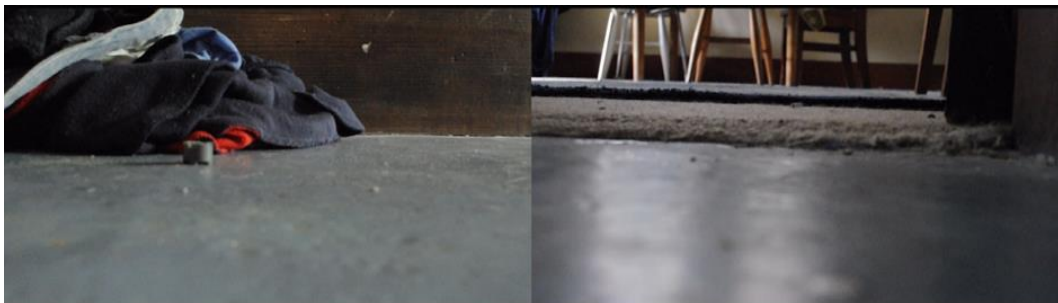


Figure 5. Ruth Myers, (2016-17), *Floorpress*, still.

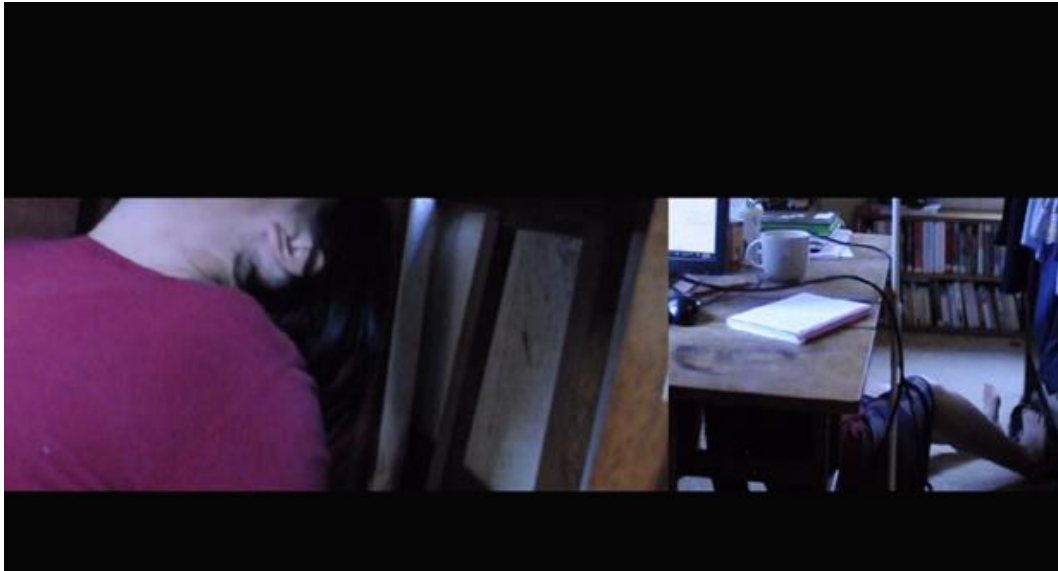


Figure 6. Ruth Myers, (2016-17), *Attach to the bottom of things*, still.

Attach to the bottom of things

I am frustrated. I look around my room. I look at the table, the bed, the chairs. What is it I want? I realise I can do this alone; I can form my own relations. I decide to attach to the bottom of everything. I get under my desk, the bed, the fireplace, the door. I find myself immediately asking the question, what is ‘at work’ here?

Wavering, one arm holding a camera close to where my face and the bottom surface of the desk meet and join, I try to capture this felt attachment. Arm shaking, dark compressed space, breathing and grunting, claustrophobic. I need something else. I want to record this joining up with the desk, connecting to it, this productive body-desk. I place my second camera to record the scene. Later when I review the footage this is the trophy shot, the achievement shot, it records the discipline of the scene, its sediments, its knowledges, its understandings, shoes, clothing, books, bedroom in use, and my productive body act, this ‘new’ relational body-structure- scene.

Multiple modes of ‘viewing’ are at work here. As theorist Laura Marks points out, haptic and optic relations work into, reveal, and undermine each other (2002, p. 12).

There is an agency in these body acts, encountered as propositions and viewed tethered, bent over a monitor one after the other. Our understandings are always relational.



Figure 7. Ruth Myers, (2017, April) *Attach to the bottom of things*, Video Loop 5.20 mins, Installation view, St Paul Street Gallery Three, Backroom, AUT.

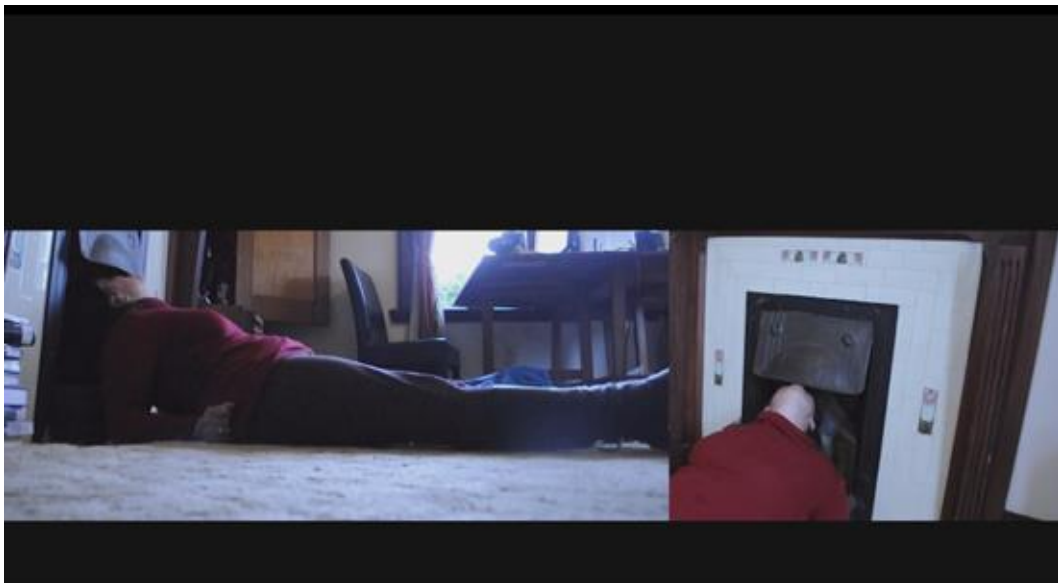


Figure 8. Ruth Myers, (2016-17), *Attach to the bottom of things*, still.



Figure 9. Ruth Myers, (2017, April), *The act of fixing*, Doorway, Installation view, St Paul Street Gallery Three, AUT. Photo Chris Braddock.

The act of fixing

These body acts are assisted, supported by props, plasticine, social scenes, and architectural structures. Contexts, the physical and social circumstances that I am currently situated in, are inherently involved. Right now I want to be silent; I have been instructed to listen. This is the right time. I fix myself by a plasticine plug to the door frame. I hold on and wait to see what is required. In the wider social scenes, I cannot know how I may be encountered and what may be needed of me. In this I draw upon and enlist the care of others.

Home Front doorway recordings

Are you hungry?

Do you want something to eat?

Do you want some cheese on toast?

Do you want some honey on toast?

Do you want some butter on toast?

Do you want some jam on toast?

Do you want a cup of tea?

Are you tired?

Did you have a good day?

How are you?

Are you hungry?

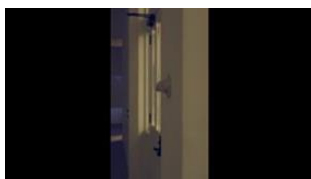
etc

You were not wrong

You did not require fixing

Practicing being silent

The recording *The act of fixing* (April, AUT 6.11 mins) involves edited excerpts from these three modes of practice: practicing being silent; practicing asking if you need something; practicing speaking to her. Noises at the front door, birds, wind, flies, and distant sounds interject with the noises of my mouth as I hold onto the plasticine. It is soft and responsive, it fills my mouth, but I can also bite into it, hold onto it. Odd, unruly noises generate themselves, gulps, slurps, sucking sounds. At home I am a little anxious as I practice at the open door with the possibility of my neighbours popping by. How would I explain this? But I insist on being accessible. Even editing these muffled recordings, I fight with what I can and cannot say for the use value in this practice.



Figures 10, 11 Ruth Myers, (2016-17) *The act of fixing*, Doorway (plasticine), St Paul Street Gallery Three, AUT.



Figure 12. Ruth Myers, (2017, April), *The act of fixing*, (audio recording, headphones 6.11 min), Installation view, St Paul Street Gallery Three, AUT.

I want to tell you about her and about her predicament, but I do not want to attach her to these histories. Therefore I struggle throughout the project: what to say, what can be said, what to be left out. I have made the decision to make these practices useful for myself. In this they need to do several things. They need to acknowledge the complexity of the positionings I am working into. Scenes are involved, others are involved, and various changing forms of supports and circumstances are involved. Local embodied contexts remain significant every time I practice. They inform, support, allow. I am insistent on this, so when art and performance conventions and procedures offer to impinge, I need to be careful. Are they helpful? Does an advertised moment, a celebrated event, an art object, performance, or exhibition assist? I resist this. The gallery can remain unpainted, the doors remain locked, I practice unannounced. These conditions are important to remaining in practice.

But I do rely on art performance gallery contexts to support, allow space, and room for these practices to occur and for a social scene to be available. They are, like

home, a set of walls, floors, doorways, momentary and unplanned meetings, passersby, interjecting sounds. Like at home, the plasticine holds me fixed to the front door as I await potential interruption. I can continue to practice. The scene of the gallery doorway is also interruptive and uncontrollable, and eventually someone does something, something drops to the floor, a noise reaches me that signals time to stop.

Perhaps then, I wonder, am I doing the ‘work’ for her? In another time, space, context where these acts are enabling? Is this the ‘test’ of the social? What is allowable, what is left alone, what is supported? Practice at home in private is about coming to the point where these tests can be made. When I finally do *Floorpress* for the first time in a public space, along Testspace hallway (June 2016), this home practice assists me. It helps me to ‘know’ what to do. Even so, I find about a third of the way along I feel myself collapse and be swallowed up by the floor, by the challenges it imposes, by the risks I feel I am taking. Someone else is here and knows about this, knows about ‘me’, can potentially locate me. What the work asks is to allow this practice, allow this test of risk and allow me to find supports, opportunities and possibilities within it.

Floorpress, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing* shift in contexts and remain as practices rather than ‘works’ to respond to this project’s struggle to not locate the subject, but to still acknowledge the local specific circumstances a subject is forming and working within. Whether as video projections on portable screens or my crawling along home or institutional hallways, these practices reveal that all bodies and actions require support. There is, after all, a life that is lived in these experiences encountered. Judith Butler (2014) suggests that all action or practice requires support, and agreeing with Shannon Jackson, she finds that performance art, in particular, provides and incorporates such support as moveable and expansive platforms, necessary spaces and social scenes that expand my private practices in the home and locate the wider dimension of my questioning. In the following sections we hear how Butler and Jackson point out the significance of such supports. We also turn to Foucault and feminist discussions of self-forming practices as both self and social work, and where one’s local embodied circumstances are inherently involved

in becoming located. We consider how performance art practices can find available spaces and supports to test out thinking differently, countering and revealing.

Self-forming practices: Feminism and Foucault

There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one thinks, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. (Foucault, as cited in McWhorter, 1999, p.187)

The term ‘practices of use’ draws on Foucault’s technologies of self, which proposes that self-forming practices may be required when we find how we have to explain or understand our self is not tenable. Foucault points out that at such times we can pay critical attention to these understandings and propose ways to think ourselves differently. John Rajchman identifies Foucault’s interest in revealing an often unrecognised cost in how we know ourselves and the moment of “critical thought” that occurs when we “analyse what we did not realize we had to say and to do to ourselves in order to be who we are” (1991, p. 11).¹ Rajchman tells us that Foucault identifies this analysis as “a particular kind of difficulty in thought” (1991, p. 13) when we can no longer accept “the practices that define” us (p. 9).

Self-forming practices involve work on one’s self, and are also social practices which draw upon and work into specific local contexts. Feminist theorists working with Foucault’s technologies of self appreciate the opportunity to acknowledge embodied concrete circumstances and the potential to exert, reveal, transform, counter, and think differently. Margaret McLaren (2004) explains Foucault’s technologies of the self as sets of ethical self-forming practices, while Ladelle McWhorter (1999) puts forward propositions of counterwork, and Cressida Heyes (2007) of thinking oneself differently.² Moya Lloyd (1997) points to practical ways to form oneself, and Jana

¹ Sawicki identifies this point in John Rajchman’s work (1994, p. 287).

² “Foucault suggests that the purpose of genealogy is to disrupt entrenched ways of thinking ourselves” (Heyes, 2007, p.23).

Sawicki finds revealing the contingencies for how we know and understand ourselves both acknowledge normative disciplinary frameworks and offer modes of practice, which Heyes tells us, can exert and “talk back”(2007,p.vii). This material arrived at a time I knew, but struggled to articulate, the significance of this project’s location in practices of use. It also strangely parallels modes of thinking I have taken on and lived through myself, when want for another way of thinking oneself was especially required. So while my engagement with these texts is new, their needs and propositions are not.

Foucault’s technologies of self contribute to his larger project of revealing histories of how we develop understandings and knowledges of ourselves. Focused particularly on the human sciences, Foucault suggests that these histories can be analysed as technologies, or techniques (1988, p.18). Foucault calls these understandings “truth games”, and states they should be given scrutiny (p. 18). Often working together, these technologies can be grouped into four main categories each having their own “practical reason” and involving the acquisition of certain skills and attitudes (p.18). These technological categories include production and sign systems, and the two that Foucault is most interested in, power and self (p.18). Shortly in Part Two we will look at Foucault’s disciplinary power to consider how the individual body is always in the process of being produced relationally within normative frameworks. But we start here with Foucault’s technologies of self, which provide understanding of how such frameworks can be exerted into and worked upon.

Foucault’s self-forming practices involve acting upon and developing ourselves (2003/1994, p. 26). He suggests that we can, with our “own means or with the help of others”, “transform” ourselves, our “bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being” (1988, p. 18). Foucault suggests self-forming practices were more significant and independent during Greco-Roman times and gives the examples of “writing, truth-telling, and living a balanced life in terms of one’s appetites” (2003/1994, p. 31). Nowadays, to take care of one’s self has been replaced with to know oneself, which implies an emphasis on self-rejection or self-sacrifice (Foucault, 1988, p. 22).

Foucault tells us that in taking care of oneself, one also takes care of others (2003/1994, p.31). McLaren explains that Foucault sees self-forming practices as inherently bound up in ethics. We are active in these processes, which include “ethical reflection” and communication (2004, p.226-7). McWhorter suggests that Foucault’s ethics can be thought about as an “activity...a set of practices...to create and enact a way of life” (1999, p.194). She draws our attention to self-forming as acknowledging contingency for how we understand ourselves and others, and acknowledging these understandings as always drawing upon normative frameworks which inform our specific circumstances. As McWhorter puts it, “the processes of self-overcoming and transformation that I undertake – must grow out of who I am” (1999, p. 197).

McLaren points out that for Foucault, “the formation of the subject is a social practice”, and that self-forming activities, rather than being individualistic, are inherently embedded in social practices (2004, p. 227). They are not “made up” but “draw upon the rules, methods, and customs of one’s culture” (McLaren, p.230). Our actions require others, contexts, power relations, and supports (McWhorter, 1999, p. 197). McLaren proposes, therefore, that self-forming practices can inform social change (2004, p. 228).

Jana Sawicki explains that it is important to remember Foucault is not speaking about an inner, authentic or essential self, or modes of self-absorption or self-discovery (1994, p.287). Rather Foucault’s technologies of the self question how we form ourselves through our own practices, and in this, reveal contingencies for how we know and understand ourselves, and can “open us to new possibilities of self-understanding”(Sawicki, 1994, pp. 288).

Moya Lloyd (1997) finds useful modes of activity for feminists in Foucault’s work. She looks to his technologies of self for practical ways to form one’s self and informs this understanding through Foucault’s essay “What is Enlightenment?”³ The essay explores critique to open out an historical contingency of limits for how we speak,

³ Lloyd tells us Foucault finds in Kant a concern with, citing Foucault “the history of the present” (1997, p. 290).

mean, and act. Here she draws our attention to Foucault's use of "limit attitude", which is to question boundaries, "experimentation" that involves required self-forming and transformation, and, what Lloyd calls, a "constant vigilance", a requirement to remain aware of normalising (p.290). Lloyd is interested in how practices of self have the potential to work into and transform norms, and suggests that Butler's theory of gender performativity is an example where one's self-forming practices contribute to producing and potentially subverting meaning (Lloyd, 1997, p. 296).

Dianna Taylor's and Karen Vintges's (2004) *Feminism and the Final Foucault* includes several key essays which usefully emphasise a "put[ing] into practice" (p.4) and, in particular, focus on feminist "self practices" (p6). The essays direct our attention to an emphasis on personal "critical and creative" ethos where "ethical self-formation" can counter normative modes of power (p.3).⁴ One such example is McWhorter's essay "Practicing Practicing" (2004).

McWhorter (2004) makes the point that the use of a philosophical act is not just about thinking but also about "self and being", and, as she explains, "to live it so" (p.159).⁵ She explains that it requires practice, and is about ideas being "enacted and incorporated" (p.159). McWhorter realised, for instance, that the essay she was currently working on, "Practicing Practicing", was "a philosophical exercise of self-transformation" (p.145). She states, "I needed to pay close attention to the nature and context of my own concern; I needed to take care of my self" (p. 146).

McWhorter positions the self as a "normalised self"⁶ stating that is how we are knowable (2004, 152-3). She asks "how can we possibly care for ourselves under these circumstances?" (p. 154). In response, she proposes that we can usefully think of ourselves within Foucault's normalising framework as "developmental", or as "becoming", rather than as "being" (pp. 155-6). Becoming focuses on thinking about

⁴ Foucault's ethos is described by Taylor and Vintges as "engaging the present, taking responsibility for oneself and the world, and further expanding the work of freedom" (2004, p. 4).

⁵ Issues rather than sorted on paper must be resolved in practice, by being "enacted and incorporated" "to live it so" (McWhorter, 2004, p.159). McWhorter talks about philosophy as a "physical, material practice" (2004, p.148).

⁶ Normalised selves, meaning, who we are can be defined in terms of norms and deviations from norms (McWhorter, 2004, p.154). McWhorter says Foucault's earlier term for normalisation may have been "a grid of intelligibility", basically a conceptual framework, where we are in process, and our individuality is in measurement/deviations to these norms (2004, pp. 152-3).

the normalised self as always in process, and through this process opens out how we navigate normative categories, allowing opportunities, if required, to resist, overcome or transform identifications (pp.152-3). Alongside this, McWhorter struggles with what can be both empowering and constraining in identifying ‘women’s’ affirming practices and considers whether self-affirming could be a useful approach via Foucault’s care of one’s self (p.152).⁷

McWhorter’s text, *Bodies and Pleasures; Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization*, (1999) provides further context to her questioning. In the first chapter she describes some of the medical interventions she had to endure when she was being ‘treated’ for her sexuality, for instance being studied, recorded, hospitalised, medicated, given gender identification treatment, and being made to confess. She speaks of a biology teacher taking enjoyment in tormenting her and notes she felt the need to warn people of her sexuality.⁸ McWhorter goes on to tell us that Foucault for her was “not a cognitive act so much as it was a re-cognitive act. His text [*The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*] changed the way I saw the world, but it changed the way I saw first of all” (1999, p.28). For McWhorter, Foucault was an encounter with a queer voice (p.28). Foucault’s text “showed me how to occupy a homosexual position while resisting the demand that I thereby be an object” (McWhorter, 1999, p. 30). Foucault’s genealogy revealed heterosexuality and homosexuality as constructed ideas that have an “existence”, and acknowledges their “historicity” and “inessentiality” (p.30).

McWhorter tells us her question becomes how to work into a struggle with the idea of sexuality being “my essential nature” and “deviance as my identity” (1999, p.194). She proposes that Foucault’s self-forming practices can work into normative regimes through a focus on remaining in “becoming other”, as both “our goal and our practice” (p.192). Through acknowledging such contingency, self-forming focuses on affirming processes of “becoming *other* than we are” (p. 195). This, she explains, aims at thinking of ourselves “as never fully captured within any normalizing regime” (p.195).

⁷ McWhorter talks of the significance of feminist practices, but also her suspicions of them as “re-centering” (2004, pp.148- 52).

⁸ I use to feel I had to warn people of my mother’s ‘female’ illness.

McWhorter's 'becoming' incorporates opportunities "to think differently" (1999, p.199). She cites Foucault: "to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimising what is already known...to explore what might be changed" (as cited in McWhorter, 1999, p.199). We need to consider what has been left out (1999, p.199). The creative aspect requires finding such omissions or "gaps" where possibilities for "thinking and living differently" can occur (p.199). Following Foucault, she suggests a kind of experimental work is required, where we "try new things, think new thoughts" (p.198).

McWhorter (1999, p.200) draws our attention to Foucault's idea of "counter memory", "counter remembering", and "counter attack" in his work on Herculine Barbin (*Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century French Hermaphrodite*). She proposes this work as a "counter memorial", a "counter history", and part of a "counter attack" on sexual norms (McWhorter, 1999, p.200). Describing the work as a "case book" (p.208) – a collection of official documents and reports – McWhorter finds Foucault's juxtaposition of material provides a "counter" and "creative" work (p.200) that reveals the "effort" in "enforcing" binary sexual divisions during the nineteenth century (p.208). She explains that while Barbin maintained an everyday struggle resisting norms of male and female, this resistance alone could not bring about a better life for Barbin (pp.204-8). What she suggests is that Foucault's assemblage and juxtaposition of material, moves beyond resistance to a counter attack where we can "*counter-remember* Herculine Barbin-as an injured and enraged minded-and-bodied man/woman who resisted sexual identification to the bitter end" (p.208). Counter remembering, she explains, moves beyond resistance to keeping "power relations in play" (p.208).

McWhorter tells us that her book *Bodies and Pleasures* is a "counter memory" of her being forced to identify her sexuality in ways she did not want to (1999, p.199). Counter memories are understandings of things from the suppressed or less dominant voice. They allow an escape from the "official truth" to "think again" and propose "alternative systems of meaning". They allow one to oppose, afford opportunities for self-transformation, and provide a "'place' from which to analyse and oppose oppressive forces" (p.199). "Counter remembering" involves gathering these

memories and can generate new “networks of meaning”, “alliances”, “capacities” and “ways of living” (p.199).

Heyes also explores Foucault’s disciplinary and ethical works from a position of use in her own life (2007). Drawing upon her own experiences with Weight Watchers, as well as her yoga practice, she explores questions around norms and gender “at the level of the self” (p.vi).⁹ Pointing to McWhorter, she notes that in such use of autobiography and personal accounts one can risk being made into “a case” (p.13). Regardless of this, she takes it on, insisting on a location in what one does (p.14).

Heyes argues that many feminist theorists use norms too flatly, and emphasises norms’ “double effect” (2007, p.vi); the potential to both hamper and increase abilities is important in understanding how and what agency may be here (p.7).¹⁰ She also points out that through aligning with collectives or groupings, one main gain associated identities that offers ways of identifying and increasing one’s abilities, but also “risk[s] constraint” (p.7).¹¹

Heyes draws on two main frameworks: pictures of self from Wittgenstein, and Foucault on thinking ourselves differently to challenge ideas about body and self-relationships, such as authentic inner selves and an inner and outer self (2007, p.15). She explains that notions of inner/outer self can “obscure the social contexts and processes of normalization” and “limit” potential for our self-forming (p.36). Foucault’s genealogical method is useful “to disrupt entrenched ways of thinking ourselves” and she suggests that feminists take this on “to theorize the contemporary micro-physics of power as they operate in constructing the gendered body” (p.36). The objectified body, she tells us, can “think itself differently”, and this can be considered as a form of practice (p.9). Heyes wants to “talk back ... that every time an author...thinks some body as an object, that object can, in fact, think itself differently” (2007, p.vii).

⁹ Heyes (2007) text is focused around three case studies in transgender, weight loss and cosmetic surgery.

¹⁰ Heyes states “in fact, Foucault offers a more complex account of normalisation, as a set of mechanisms for sorting, taxonomizing, measuring, managing, and controlling populations ...which is at the centre of an alternative picture of our history as embodied subjects” (2007, p.16).

¹¹ Support groups for instance offer assistance, yet they can impose their own norms (Heyes, 2007, p.7)

Summary: Self-forming practices

Foucault's technologies of self propose practices to develop and transform one's self as ethical self-forming. While requiring one's own work, these practices are inherently social practices which draw upon our local embodied contexts and available supports. Self-forming practices can, therefore, inform social change. The self here is understood as always a developing normalised self. Thought about as remaining "becoming" opens out contingencies for how we might understand ourselves and others. Self-forming offers practical assistance to question limits and boundaries, and contributes to producing and potentially subverting meaning and to do counter work. This offers not just resistance but the opportunity to think oneself differently, and "keep power relations in play" (McWhorter, 1999, p. 208).

Self-forming practices assist *Practices of Use* to both acknowledge disciplinary frameworks and act into them through situating a contingency for how one understands oneself and others. This informs the aim of *Practices of Use* to acknowledge and act into personal histories of discipline of the female in the home. The heuristic setting of this critical use value, its requirement to acknowledge local, embodied contexts and wider social scenes, as well the project's navigation of the term personal, are addressed next.

Of Use

In research practice we can encounter warnings against the personal, or use value. This may be because it does not fit the model of the "objective" researcher, or as McWhorter and Heyes point out, it can involve taking the risk that the personal ends up making oneself into 'a case'. But what if, as is clearly the situation for McWhorter and Heyes, such contexts and complexities of one's own experience and encounters are deeply and usefully embedded in one's questioning, and are absolutely central to the research question at hand? McWhorter, for instance, wrestles with formulating adequate responses to not just resist but to counter, because she has lived such questioning and continues to 'live it'. The counter work that McWhorter speaks of involves ongoing sets of required practices.

During my Masters project, *Performing the Loop* (2010), I began thinking about art and performance practice in terms of being relevant and of use to me. In *Performing the Loop* I state, “This project begins with the drive to bodily look in response to the loss of my mother. This embodied looking, first in objects and places, then to the body/self have guided this project” (2010, p 13). Driving this emphasis in use was dissatisfaction in practice that held too little relevance to my own circumstances. *Practices of Use* addresses this dissatisfaction through bringing use value and relevance to the fore.

Heuristic methodology

Accepting my own life experiences and encounters as part of the research process is informed by Clark Moustakas’s heuristic methodology, which locates the research question within such personal use value. Moustakas’s *Heuristic Research* is an approach that emphasises the researcher’s personal relationship with the topic (1990). The researcher must have “actual autobiographical connections” and the heuristic research question should be “one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives” (p.14-5). The question focuses on a critical interest, search or concern “that calls out to the researcher” (p.27). Methods draw on tacit knowledge and locate wider contexts within which the questioning sits (p.20). The research process involves processes of “incubation, illumination, explication” and “creative synthesis”, which shift across modes of focusing, reflection, creative processes, making discoveries and developing understanding (p.27). Through this process, the researcher encounters potential “personal transformation” (p.14).

Acknowledge and act

So what is this aspect of my life that requires such critical attention? What is the question that has probed and pressed me, in this case since I was a child? What is the use value this project is working into, responding to? When I was growing up, my mother was subjected to many medical treatments that in effect rendered her un-enabled. They affected her speech, movement and memory. At this time, the medical issue was addressed as a particularly ‘female problem’, and the potential risk of also

requiring treatment was told to myself and my sister. Growing up alongside this, I was sensitive to how the body moves, means and matters, and the social complexities situating these understandings. The individual I knew was not responsible alone; it involved institutions and modes of thinking, social expectations, and roles, and this involved specific complex contexts. But it seemed to me that the individual, in this case my mother, bore the brunt of this attention. McWhorter tells us that she found in Foucault a voice that explained what she had lived through, and so have I. In Part Two we will look at Foucault's discipline, which explains for me much of what I felt of this attention to the individual body. Feminist engagements with Foucault's self-forming practices, as discussed here, reverberate with my decision while young, to take care of myself. Use value in these practices is the opportunity to reflect on and act into these personal histories through sets of practices of body acts that reflect upon the predicaments I felt about my mother's situation and "put power relations back into play" (McWhorter (1999, p.208).

But exactly how to acknowledge, exert and explore this contingency for how we understand ourselves raises challenges for this project's approach and methods; critical attention is required to locate these personal histories and the positioned body as not one's work alone. Working at home I think about the discipline of specific sites and my body, and consider what can be done. Home encourages a heuristic indwelling, reflecting upon these personal memories. This is emotional work requiring a search for how to materialise these complex circumstances without locating a subject to a history.

I develop training tasks at home to explore how I am positioned in relation to everything and everyone else as an ethical request, continually made. I find this is the hard work of the project, and it becomes obvious that this work needs to be tested further through shifts in contexts. I recognise the sites of door, floor, wall, table etc are available elsewhere and make the decision to continue to practice in wider social scenes. *Floorpress*, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing* are self-forming ethical practices that request of others, to be able to appear, to crawl, to get under things, to fix to a point. They propose subject positioning as always relational, social practices that draw upon and contribute to cultural, social and political practices and conventions of our times. These practices incorporate my embodied

local circumstances and I find within them opportunities to take care of myself, where I can acknowledge and act through relational questioning to think myself differently. To do this these practices require the wider social scene. I look to the practices of Adrian Piper and William Pope.L to explore self-forming practices that respond to a heuristic questioning by drawing upon and working into wider infrastructures of social scenes, and in doing so extend the personal is political and social too.

Performance art: sociality and support

Piper's *Catalysis Series* (1970s) and Pope.L's *Crawls* (1970s onwards) have a heuristic use value. Piper through altering her appearance, and Pope.L through crawling on the ground, explore their social relational positionings to draw attention, reveal and counter in ways that are useful and that draw upon their own embodied circumstances situated within the wider social scene.

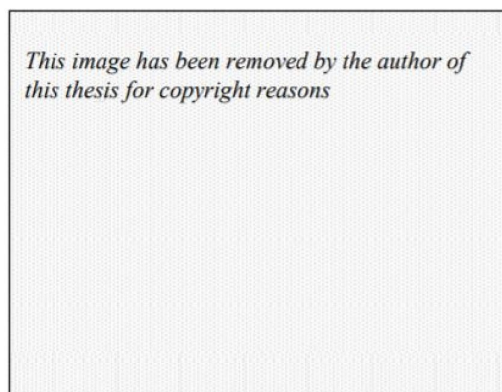


Figure 13. Adrian Piper, *Catalysis Series* (1970s)

Adrian Piper

Adrian Piper (1996) talks of the need to make work more relevant to her own world. During the 1970s, Piper's *Catalysis Series* marked a shift in her art practice from the figurative work she was doing at art school (1996).¹² She states that she thought about her own circumstances: "my position as an artist, a woman, and a black...I saw that there were in fact no absolute standards of art which I had to meet... And that it was therefore up to me to define or develop my own". Piper says that to do this she

¹² Piper tells of several events during the 1970s that drove this including the invasion of Cambodia, the womens movement and the closing of The City College of New York during a student rebellion (1996, p. 30).

required “larger and more complicated spaces and temporal sequences” than she could find in, say, sculptural materials (pp.29-31).

In *Catalysis Series* Piper alters her body appearance and actions in everyday public situations. These alterations include wearing clothes soaked in “vinegar, eggs, milk and cod liver oil” on the train, having a bath towel stuffed into her mouth while riding on the buses, subways and elevators, and being in a bookstore with recordings of a hypnosis tape playing (Lippard & Piper, 1972). She did these performances unannounced two or three times a week “in different kinds of situations; wherever I find myself” (1996, p.77). She tells us she does not want an “audience separation” (1972, p.78). Rather, the contexts, the scene, the passersby who meet her on the street, bookshop, bus, gallery, shop or mall are required, as encountered, in the questioning (p.77). Piper wants to act as a catalytic agent that may “induce a reaction or change in the viewer” (1996, p. 32): “My activity changes the world. It adds a new presence that must somehow be assimilated into the perceivers world view” (1996, p.52). Piper’s self-forming practices acknowledge and incorporate her embodied local contexts, and make an ethical request of the required audience as passerby to incorporate her ‘new’ presence.

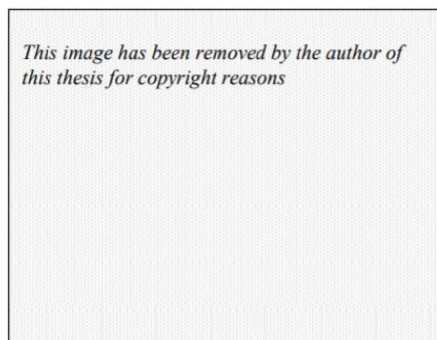


Figure 14. William L.Pope, 2002 (ongoing), *The Great White Way*.

William Pope.L

William Pope.L’s practice of *Crawls* (1970s ongoing) responds to experiences of homelessness in his wider family, and requests passersby to accommodate his presence and pay attention to the site of his questioning, the ground. His *Crawls*,

which are done alone and with others, are an ongoing practice. Examples include the first *Times Square Crawl* (1978 ongoing), *The Great white way: 22 miles, 5 years, 1 street* (2002) where Pope.L is in a Superman costume carrying a skateboard on his back, and *Shopping Crawl (crawl with Balloon) Tompkins Square Crawl* (1991) where a passerby intervened angrily at Pope.L's white cameraman recording the crawl (Carr, 2002, p.48).

Pope.L's *Crawls* aim to draw our attention to the situation and struggle of homelessness. They do this by bringing the question to its level, the ground, to what Pope.L calls "a troubled site" (Stiles, 2002, p.40). He tells us that his *Crawls* aim to show "the struggle inherent in those bodies" and the "dormant...skills and knowledge...and "tensions" between their "stillness" and "recklessness" (Carr, 2002, p.49). Stiles suggests that Pope.L's work "belongs to those artists who hope to heal, or in Pope.L's words, 'bring attention to' " (2002, p.41).

Pope.L situates his *Crawls* as both a performance that references a "heightened experience of the proscenium stage" and as working into acts and "event[s] of the everyday" (Sims, 2002, p.65). Pope.L tells us "I'd call it a practice; like I'm always preparing for something because I have to do it. In order to better myself or something or some other; or solve some problem" (Sims, p.65).

Piper and Pope.L's practices work into wider social infrastructures and are encountered by passerby audiences as an ethical relational questioning. Piper asks to be absorbed as a 'new presence' while Pope.L requests we pay attention to the situation of homelessness. Their self-forming activities draw upon and work into their local embodied contexts. This is the critical point of these practices; one's understandings are always a social and relational situation, which, as McLaren explains, can be invoked and worked into (2004).

In *Practices of Use*, while initially developed and practiced alone, *Floorpress*, *Attach to the bottom of things*, and *The act of Fixing's* use value, their exertion, and their 'critical' agency, require the opportunity to be practiced within wider social scenes. Recognising self and social work are inherently intertwined, and body/subject need

to be both evoked and worked upon in the social and physical contexts they are forming and functioning in, is important as this is where contingency for how one understands oneself and others can be found.

Butler notes that performance art in everyday spaces such as Pope.L's *Crawls* and Piper's *Catalysis* can carry more risk than acts in a theatrical setting. She explains that acts in a theatrical context have a set of conditions that reduce risk; they are recognisable as happening in a certain place and time while performance art may on the other hand happen unannounced, working into sites such as the street, invoking "moveable platforms"(2014).

Sociality, Shannon Jackson

Jackson considers the significance of sociality within the performative, and in particular how art performance can invoke the social as a "systematic whole" and in this can question and reveal the contingencies of supporting "normative bodies" (2011, pp.5-6). Jackson tells us that the social in art performance practices draws on a diverse range of heritages: theatrical, visual art and performance. What she is particularly interested in is "when we foreground performance as a site of group coordination in space and over time" (pp.2-3); that is, performance art, as social and relational practice, draws on infrastructures and the wider social systems and in doing so can reflect on and reveal contingencies within them.

Jackson gives us the example of the Turtle Walk from Petra Kuppers's introduction to her 2007 text, *Disability and Performance*, which draws upon Walter Benjamin's reading of Charles Baudelaire (2011, p.5). Kuppers relays how flaneurs around 1840 took turtles on their walks to slow their pace. Through this practice "a new 'dialogue of being in space' is created by the change of pace" which incorporates the passerby into new, but already available possibilities (p.5). Jackson is interested in how critical incorporation of sociality in performance art can work into 'systemic wholes' so that through provocations, or breaks, (such as the turtles' pace), the "...wider apparatuses of labour and infrastructure [which] support our self-figuration" are revealed and potentially worked into (p.7).

This links to both Piper and Pope.L who incorporate the social scene to request audiences to accommodate and absorb their new positionings, appearances and

movements, and in doing so work into normative frameworks, as McWhorter (2004) suggests, by remaining ‘becoming’ or ‘in process’ (p.155). Piper and Pope.L actively form themselves in these social relational practices. McLaren points out that self-forming practices are not ‘made up’ but draw on and contribute to the cultural and social settings developing subjects are forming and functioning in (2004, p.227).

Piper and Pope.L’s self-forming practices carry with them a social request of support, which could be thought of, as what Jackson describes as a “tolerating resignation” (2011, p.30). Jackson explains that “performance both activates and depends upon a relational system”, which includes a requirement of support. She explores a 1382 meaning of support as “to bear, to hold up, to prop up... put up with, tolerate” (p.30). From this she draws our attention to support’s structural qualities, endurance and tolerance. She also shares an 1868 meaning, which includes further development of the “social character” of this support and its relationship to sustaining a life (pp.30-1). Jackson points out that these definitions imply a “commitment”, and that “a tolerating resignation might well be what it means to offer enduring support” (p.30). Piper’s and Pope.L’s requests to be accommodated and supported can be considered as extending Jackson’s understanding of social support to one of an ethical relationality (Butler, 2015).

Butler tells us that the body is “always supported (or not unsupported)” (2015, p.14). Supports are not “simple passive structures” they “must *support*, and so must both be and act” (p.14). Supports are “both relational and agentic” (p.14). Therefore, becoming subjects, as Butler puts it, being “recognised” or “called a name” should always be considered as an ethical relationality (pp.11-4). The ethical “characterises a way of understanding the relational framework within which sense, action, and speech become possible” (p.12).

Testing out Butler’s ethical relationality, Piper’s and Pope.L’s practices and my practices in *Practices of Use*, require these social scenes to be able to make such requests. These self-forming activities, through embodied positionings and appearances in given situations, reveal, counter, and think oneself differently. For instance, in *Floorpress*, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing* the hampered and exerting body carries and reveals specific circumstances the subject

positioning is developing and functioning in, across home and the institution. This allows these forming subject positionings to be positioned as shared work, and in doing so (as McWhorter puts it) puts power relations in play and proposes alternative understandings (1999, p.208).

It matters that these proposals are made in social scenes because acknowledging the locating and positioning of subjects as a shared process reveals their potential contingencies. Yes I find I can crawl along the institute's hallways and stand fixed by my mouth to its doorways, as Piper finds she can ride the buses with towels in her mouth and Pope.L can crawl along the city streets. This is significant because the fuller complexities of one's own situated power relations remain in play. Piper and Pope.L's bodies carry wider social and political questioning of ethnicity, as mine does of gender and home, which in these self-forming acts are also made available to be worked upon.

Personal is political and social

While inherently social, one's own body/self is involved in these self-forming practices. The personal, as in 'belonging to a person', is significant in *Practices of Use* because it acknowledges the local embodied circumstances of 'a subject', and in particular that these circumstances are involved in forming 'this subject', and are the conditions in which this forming subject is developing and operating in. Piper's and Pope.L's practices call upon and work into wider social and political infrastructures through the propositions they make themselves. Pope.L's crawling body and Piper's made smelly body are at work here, revealing and countering embodied understandings and positionings. My interest here is in recognising as McWhorter suggests how Piper and Pope.L keep power relations critically in play. These self-forming social practices critique and work into local embodied circumstances, body/selves making requests to accommodate difference, to provide the necessary tolerance and supports. The success of these self-forming practices is to be able to make adequate propositions within specific circumstances which do not marginalise as personal, or as one person's problem, but to extend, as Jackson suggests, "critical incorporation of social" to work into the wider infrastructures (2011, p.7).

Expanding the personal is political to ‘and social too’ is useful in articulating this attitude in practice. Butler explores such an expansion of personal to acknowledge the social and political terrain informing one’s individual acts. Our individual acts, in turn, can contribute to these wider shared structures (Butler, 1988, pp. 522-3). In this proposition, one’s own experiences can be thought about as producing and produced within these wider domains. What is important for Butler here is that the notion that the personal is political acknowledges the enactment of “concrete and historically mediated acts of individuals” (p.523). Individual body acts enact available positions (p.525). Recognising these individual acts as situated within wider social frames can offer visibility and be enabling, but Butler warns, these acts can allow the division between personal and public to remain which can dilute the political effectiveness of one’s acts (p.523). That is, locating these acts as belonging to the personal alone can marginalise and limit any social and political responsibility.

McLaren links “the personal is political” with Foucault’s technologies of the self (2004, p.228). McLaren finds a similar emphasis on “the specific, the local, the concrete, the particular”, and insistence that “theory and practice are inseparable” (pp. 228-9). She reminds us that Foucault’s subjects are always developing within social, historical and cultural frameworks, and therefore “self transformation” can bring “social transformation” (pp. 228-30). Self-forming practices are therefore useful for feminist inquiries that aim to acknowledge local embodied circumstances of the individual, and offer practical assistance and the potential for social and political change.

Practices of Use navigates the personal and social throughout the project and finds that, rather than isolated terms, the personal and the social sit inside each other. For instance, we will learn in Part Two in Foucault’s discipline the individual is always relationally produced, and that Butler’s body acts’ are never one’s work alone but rather require a social temporality and reiteration of understandings. In Part Three we will look at how art and performance practices attend to the sociality of the body act in ways that explore a productive relational agency.

Part One: Practices and Approach – Summary

A practice of use describes this project's approach. Practices require practicing, and the project learns that art and performance contexts offer support, space, opportunity and moveable platforms for these practices to be able to draw on and work into in critical ways.

Floorpress, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing* resist any temptation to perform unattached. They are contextually bound to local circumstances whatever they may be. They acknowledge disciplinary frameworks, and they offer opportunities to exert into these. The floor, wall, door becomes a task, a parameter and a measure, and an opportunity to think myself differently.

Foucault's self-forming practices are "ethics work", "activity", "actions and choices" and "set of practices" (McWhorter, 1999, pp.194-5). They acknowledge and work into disciplinary frameworks and one's local embodied circumstances and, as McWhorter's "becoming" points out, they propose an inherent contingency which incorporates opportunities "to think differently" (1999, p.199). Piper's *Catalysis Series* and Pope.L's *Crawls* are explored as self-forming practices responding to a heuristic use. Jackson shows how such performance art practices both draw upon and work into wider social contexts. They also require supports which Butler tells us have an agency and act themselves (2015).

Practices of Use wrestles with how personal and public are thought about usefully, questioning what is required to explore how one's positionings are not one's work alone, while at the same time proposing ways to acknowledge one's local embodied circumstances. The project resists giving you the subject, giving you 'her' or 'my' story, as I do not want to risk marginalising the personal in this way, or infer one's positionings as one's work alone. Rather the personal in this project is considered as inherently social. *Floorpress*, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing* explore a contingency through relational, social and self practices, which can usefully counter remember and put power relations back in play.

In Part Two I explore the question of how the individual body's movements mean and matter through Foucault's and Butler's understanding of the body-subject as

performative and disciplinary, as incorporating contexts, as in process, and as self and social work.

Part Two: Body Acts

Body Acts – Introduction

Reflecting on personal histories of particular body movements, positionings and alignments that are potentially read as unruly, a pressing question becomes: how do our movements and positionings come to mean and matter? Why for instance are a sticking out tongue, a swaying body, or bent backwards hands read as ‘wrong’ and perhaps requiring attention? Part Two engages with Foucault’s discipline and Butler’s performative body acts to explore how the individual body performs meaning, and explores how these meanings are got to through shared, iterative performances in early film. It also discusses my explorations of disciplinary attention as between self and others, and as relationally incorporating one’s physical and social contexts, in training activities in the studio and at home.

First, two chapters of Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975, 1987), ‘Docile Bodies’ and ‘The Means of Correct Training’ are explored. Through these chapters, disciplinary power is understood as productive and relational, and involved in the ongoing work of producing subject-positionings through attention to the individual within the multiple. This situating produces the individual as subject through a circular motion of power and knowledge inherent in normative practices. I then explore disciplinary attention through spatial and temporal body articulations and alignments, and modes of exercise, training and documentation. I argue that body movement and positioning mean and matter as social and relational practices.

Butler’s performative body act – how I walk, sit, or position myself in relation to others and in specific contexts – is drawn through and understood from what is available, and through my own enactment. Butler points out that the social dimension of this iterative process, where our understandings enact and contribute to sediments, scenes and scripts. She reminds us that our body acts are “immediately public” requiring social understandings for recognition (1988, p. 526). Therefore, we all contribute to these practices, thought about here as self and social work.

Disciplinary attention to the individual body is explored in early films of bodies performing skills and aptitudes, such as *Sandow* (1894, Edison /Dickson), where we can see knowledges attached to bodies. These early film performances locate the viewer in ways that align with 1970s practices, such as Hannah Wilkes *Gestures*

(1974), which imply a porosity between self and other, viewer and screen. The attachment of contexts to body/subjects is explored through the gendered itineraries evident in the scene, prop and activities of Muybridge's studies of human movement.

My own training in the studio locates disciplinary attention between self and other through props, devices and the viewer. A focus on repetitive body activity and video documents develops into relational questioning between body and studio, structure, frames, sites and others. Acknowledging the personal content of this project's questioning, training shifts from the studio to my home. This incorporates home contexts and sites such as the front door, dining room table, and hallway floor. I develop training tasks for body as hampered and unruly, focusing on my hands, mouth and tongue. A video installation, *The subject is in her house* (2015), in which I move along the hall on my face, reveals questions of gender and agency and points out that technology can be more critically involved in how subjects and contexts are productively involved in each other.

Discipline, Foucault

“power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (Foucault 1975/1987, p.194).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains discipline as a modality of power that is productive, relational and establishes norms. Within Foucault's modality of power, becoming a subject involves a process of being situated and understood as a specific knowledge. This circular mechanism of knowledge and power focuses on distributing the individual within the multiple. Specific disciplinary techniques and strategies, such as observation, training, examination and documentation, are employed to form and evaluate normative categories and to establish limits. This productive attention is to the individual's body and incorporates surrounding physical, spatial and temporal fields and projections that a subject functions within.¹³

¹³ McLaren (2002) clarifies Foucault's use of the term body, as meaning body-subject.

Discipline contributes to Foucault's overarching focus on how the human being is made into a subject.¹⁴ He (1982) explains:

There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (p.781).

In discipline, power produces subject positions through dividing practices, which categorise and “imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him” (Foucault, 1982, p.781).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1975/1987) maps shifts in body and power relationships from public execution and torture to disciplinary power.¹⁵ These shifts accompany social changes in parts of the Western world during the eighteenth century such as population growth, illnesses and industrial innovations (p.138). Disciplinary power located in the individual body is less costly and is able to have a more pervasive spread. Foucault analyses specific examples of disciplinary institutional practices and techniques developed in schools, hospitals and the military, which inform modern day prison and wider society. While these practices and techniques are already evident, what is significant for Foucault is how they are “combined and generalised”, so that knowledge and power in a “circular process” cross the “‘technological’ threshold” to become a mechanism for both producing and subjecting (p.224). This is what Foucault means by productive. The individual body is produced and situated through these regimes as a knowledge (p 155).

Foucault tells us that discipline “normalises” (1975/1987, p.183). Norms align with the human sciences (p.137) when the “natural body” is established (p.155). The natural body is a positioned and located body, a ‘type’, available for analysis and measure, and requiring training (p.155). Norms compare and differentiate an individual's actions to a “whole” and to “a rule” (p.182). Through this process

¹⁴ As Foucault states in his essay *The Subject and Power* (1982) his work can be divided into “three modes of objectivising which transforms human being into subjects” (p.777) These include those that utilise the sciences, those that employ dividing practices, such as discipline, and through making oneself into the subject (pp.777-8).

¹⁵ Foucault opens with an account of a 1757 public execution, and follows this with discussions of shifts over time in how the body (and soul) of the prisoner is attended to.

individuals are separated, measured, evaluated and assigned value as to their “level” and “nature” (p.183). This establishes conformity, sets limits, and establishes the normal and the abnormal (p.183). In these ways norms distribute the individual within the multiple. This process is performed at the micro and macro level. It is also done ‘invisibly’; that is, its very mechanisms and actions are synthesised, or read as “natural” (p.155).

Foucault points out that norms generally function in a “double mode” of “binary division and branding”, such as “normal/abnormal” and “coercive assignment, of differential distribution” detailing who, where, how and in what ways an individual is recognised and supervised (1975/1987, p.199). This particular mode of production, tying body/subjects to power/knowledge, aligns with Butler’s notion of gender performativity, where assignment for Butler employs a simultaneous doubling of acting and enacting (2015).

Disciplinary power produces forms of individual. Foucault refers to the moment in the late eighteenth century when soldiers became understood as able to “be made” (1975/ 1987 p.135), rather than conceived as “born already formed” in the previous century. Now one could obtain through training and exercise, the necessary posture and movements required of a soldier (pp.135-6). This idea of ‘making’ individuals requires careful consideration. Some read Foucault’s notion of docile bodies as literally treated as docile. This misses the point. Power’s productivity for Foucault is not applied from the outside, but is inherently lived at the level of the individual and their navigation of the world, which includes others in similar but different navigations. It is in this way that disciplinary power must be considered as a productive modality of power. It produces reality, objects and truths (p.194). It produces subject possibilities.¹⁶ This production explains how a kind of agency, which I will come to in Part Three, can be at work in Foucault’s concept of discipline.

The individual body’s movements, alignments and articulations are spatially and temporally organised and regulated within sites, spaces, and in duration. In

¹⁶ Note for Foucault there is a difference between domination or oppression and discipline. This is discussed in Part Three.

Discipline and Punish Foucault is particularly interested in practices within institutional settings that spatially and temporally train and discipline the individual body. Spatial discipline in these settings focuses on the distribution of the individual. Specific techniques are employed to do this such as the use of an “*enclosure*” (p.141). These are self-contained sites, such as military barracks and boarding schools, which provide a “disciplinary monotony” (p.141). Foucault points out that discipline employs a range of approaches to organising individuals spatially (p.143). An important technique is “*partitioning*” through which individuals have a specific place where their presence can be identified and supervised, reducing “diffuse circulation” or problematic grouping (p. 143). In such spaces, individuals inhabit what Foucault calls “*functional sites*” (p. 143). These are a “useful space” that aligns the individual’s body, equipment and activity (pp.144-5). The individuals’ place in these spaces is changeable; they occupy a “*rank*”, which “distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations” (p. 146). These spaces both allow the individual to be ‘fixed’ to a specific place, value and use, a category, and also to be reallocated within space, value and use (pp.145-6). Foucault speaks about these spaces as both “real” and “ideal” as architectural spaces overlaid with a projection of “characterizations, assessments, hierarchies” (p.148).

Another important distributing technique of the eighteenth century is the use of tables and charts (Foucault, 1975/1987, pp.148-9). Tables and charts distribute the individual through organising and ordering in a “technique of power and a procedure of knowledge”, such as the example of organising botanical species (p.148-9). Again, this double action both characterises the “individual as individual” (p.149ck), and one could say, using Foucault’s phrase produces the individual within a ‘grid of intelligibility’.¹⁷ Alongside charts, timetables regulate activity and establish rhythms and cycles in institutions such as the school, the hospital and the army (p.149).

Timetables govern activity, but time does more than this; it “penetrates the body” (1975/ 1987, p 152).¹⁸ Foucault outlines what he means by this temporal discipline of the body in a series of sub headings.¹⁹ Firstly, there is “*the temporal elaboration of*

¹⁷ Thus providing “distribution and analysis” and “supervision and intelligibility” (1975/1987, p. 148)

¹⁸ Through the “principle of exhaustive use” Foucault suggests that discipline fragments and details time to obtain a maximum efficiency, which is “ever more detailed” (1975/1987 p.154).

the act” and “*the correlation of the body and the gesture*” (pp.151-2). Here the entirety of gestures or body acts are given a temporal “programme” (p.152). Body positioning and limbs are given a defined sequence of movement, order and duration with an emphasis on “*the correlation of the body and the gesture*” (p.152). As an example, Foucault discusses the detailed “rigorous code” of handwriting for a school child which orchestrates body movement’s temporal, spatial and relational components from the feet to the fingers (p.152). The body, therefore, has a “correct use” of time and duration, what Foucault calls a disciplined “gymnastics” (p.152).

Secondly, there is a defined “*body-object articulation*” (p.152), which Foucault describes as a “meticulous meshing” of object and body through an “instrumental coding” that identifies parts of the body to be used and parts of the object to be manipulated (p.153). Foucault suggests that it is the appearance of “synthesis” that is the “coercive” force in disciplinary productiveness (p.153).²⁰ Giving the example of gun exercises, “fastening” of body and object “over the whole surface of contact between the body and the object it handles, power is introduced, fastening them to one another...constitut[ing] a body-weapon, body-tool, body-machine complex” (p.153).

These body object and spatial alignments are explored in my practice, adopting a terminology of fastening, tasks and training and self-discipline that signals Foucauldian understandings of the disciplined body. For Foucault, tasks are exercised in temporal and “graduated” segments (1975/1987, p.161). The individual is continually assessed against a “term...other individuals...or in relation to a type of itinerary”. In this way exercise focuses on “bending behaviour towards a terminal state” (p. 161) and “tends towards a subjection that has never reached its limits” (p.162).

Disciplinary power’s main function is to “train” (1975/1987, p.170). This training is achieved through three “instruments” that focus on the individual within networks of power relations (p.170). These are “hierarchical observation”, “normalising judgement” and the “examination” (p.170). Hierarchical observation situates the

²⁰ An ‘invisible’ synthesis is also explored in Judith Butler’s performativity.

individual within a continuous, compulsory and coercive visibility (pp.170-7).²¹ This “relational power” works as an “integrated ‘system’” and “anonymous power”, which is “less ‘corporeal’” than “subtly ‘physical’”, and which “functions like a piece of machinery”(pp.176-7).²²

Normative judgement and punishment work together (1975/1987, pp.177-8). Institutions subject the individual to “micro-penalty” where even the smallest deviation is attended to (p.178).²³ For instance, Foucault points out that specific aspects within one’s time keeping, behaviour, speech, appearance, gestures, sexuality and approach to required activities may be penalised (p.178). Punishment aims to both “reduce gaps” and offer correction or further exercise (p.179). He gives the example of someone who has not written enough might be given the punishment to write more (p.180). Rewards also have a double effect. They differentiate and align, for example, assigning higher grades or rank “marks the gaps” and also “hierarchises qualities, skills and aptitudes” (p.181). Disciplinary processes also have a double dimension of both limiting and enabling, which will be discussed in Part Three.

The examination performs a “normalizing gaze” making the individual visible and able to be qualified, classified, punishable, differentiated and judged (1975/1987, p.184). Examination “holds” subjects “in a mechanism of objectification” (p.187) and enters them as individuals into “the field of documentation” (p.189). In doing so, examination documentation produces an “archive ... of bodies and days” (p.189), which situates and “fix[es]” individuals (p.189). Involving “correlation”, “accumulation”, “seriation”, and organising “comparative fields”, disciplinary documentation makes it possible to classify, categorise, identify averages, and “fix norms” (p.190). This “apparatus of writing” produces and maintains the individual as a specific object who is able to be described and analysed within a body of knowledge (p.190). This produces specified groupings within which the individual can be distributed and measured (p.190). In such ways, through the “arranging acts” of tables, building files and making notes, Foucault points out that the individual enters “into the field of knowledge” (p.191). Through these processes, disciplinary

²¹ Through this observation individuals are distributed in a “permanent and continuous field” (p.176).

²² Foucault “also to certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network ‘holds’ the whole together...”(p.176)

²³ School, military, workshop (p.178)

examination and documentation make individuals “a case” whose “very individuality” can be “described, judged, measured, compared with others...and... trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded etc.” (p.191).²⁴

In alignment with Foucauldian thought, disciplinary “detail” and attention in *Practices of Use* are exercised on both a macro and micro level, from ‘exercising’ my tongue, to exploring my body as an “aptitude”, a “capacity” (1975/1987, pp.138-9). Discipline is both the mechanism for and the production of subject positionings within normative frameworks. Temporal and spatial interrelationships between body, things, site, space, structure, lead to a coercive appearance of “synthesis” within the “natural body” (p.155). This is a body of “exercise”, of “useful training” with “natural requirements and functional constraints” (p. 155).²⁵ The docile body, Foucault tells us, is the “natural body” (p.155). In my research, self-forming practices explore relational alignments of body to reflect on constraints in the home, which, as practices, become both incorporated and continued to be worked upon.

Discipline: Summary

Foucault’s analysis of discipline points out that the individual body/subject is relationality produced. We can also understand the inherent sociality of disciplinary normative attention. Discipline incorporates social and self work, and acknowledges the local and particular circumstances within which one develops and operates. In turn, this allows us to understand our own and other’s positionings, alignments and articulations as contributing to and potentially exerting upon disciplinary frameworks.

Disciplinary power produces and attends to the individual within the multiple. The position we take up, the rank we hold, is orchestrated spatially and temporally.

²⁴ Disciplinary Power marks a reversal of attention to an “everyday individuality” (p. 191) and even more so “the child, the patient, the madman, the prisoner” (pp.192- 3). Foucault tells us “all the sciences, analyses or practises employing the root ‘psycho-’ have their origin in this historical reversal of the procedures of individualisation.

²⁵ Some argue that Foucault backtracks on ideas in *Discipline*, and he does offer varying takes on its relevancy, from contained to a particular historical situation, and also as relevant today. What is useful to remember is all Foucault’s projects explore how human beings are made into subjects. Foucault also talks about his work as offering a toolbox which one can take from when required (Nealon, 2008).

Architectural spaces include an overlay of hierarchy and observation, and the body's movements and alignments are overseen on a micro and macro level as 'time enters the body'. The pervasiveness of social disciplinary apparatus informs this project's consideration of how the body/subject is positioned. What is sticky here, and eventually prompts shifts in practice, is how to explore discipline as not imposed from the outside but taken on and lived through by oneself. This implies a certain kind of agency in this productive modality, which will be discussed in Part Three where the individual thought, through Foucault's account of discipline and his self-forming practices, can be thought differently.

This next section discusses studio exploration of disciplinary attention as between self and other through a focus on repetitive body activity, documents, props and devices, and locating a viewer. These activities develop into relational questioning between body and studio, structure, frames, sites and others.

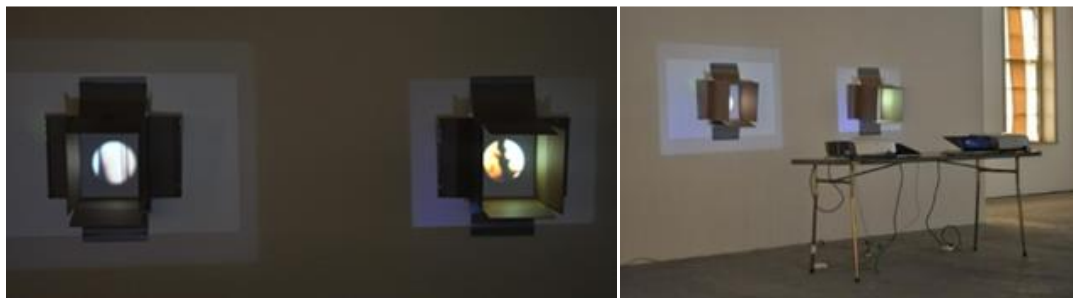


Figure 15, 16. Ruth Myers, (2013), *Hole projection*. Installation view, St Paul Street Gallery Three, (Symonds Street) AUT.

Training in the studio

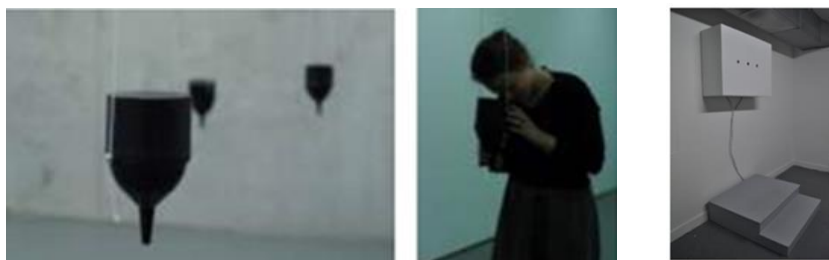
Training in the studio involves body activity, documenting, drawing and props to explore disciplinary attention as involving self and others. I explore physically locating the viewer via peepholes and viewing structures and test out ambiguities in body movements and positionings. Explorations develop a focus on orientations and alignments of the exerting body within defined frameworks. As I do these activities, I begin to see relationships between my body and the floor, chair, wall, or frame as up for grabs. This develops a relational questioning of the body, sites and structures, and wider social scenes. Secondly, these solitary explorations provide time to recognise

disciplinary body questioning on a more personal level. But they raise problems. These reflexive private activities in the studio allow my own questioning of positioning body, but how can I prompt such questioning for others? What is the work here? *Practices of Use* starts to consider much more critically the disciplinary body as an inherently relational proposition. This consideration eventually requires shifts in methods, approach and audience relationships, so that contextual situations can be acknowledged and incorporated.

Training focuses on repetitive body activity. I clap, flap, slap, and bend over to explore spatial and temporal processes of being positioned. I explore attaching myself to a point within these movements, acknowledging a disciplinary fixing, to an action, to a certain limit. Body is thought about as active as it exerts and re-exerts potential positionings. There is a kind of ineffectiveness in these movements, which I realise later tentatively reflects on the kind of repetitive and non-sensible medicated movements of my mother.

As I do these body movements I think about them as both a self-performance and acknowledging another's involvement. But this is not 'got' in the video documents that come from these activities; rather they position a viewer as looking on at a subject. Too much about being a body positioned was left out. The questioning requires a location in one's own particularised momentary positionings, and would eventually make demands on practice, such as incorporating wider social contexts as significant in these meaning-making processes.

I try to locate the viewer as involved in these disciplinary processes. Peephole projections and physical situations that require the viewer to navigate e.g. climb stairs, walk on stage, hold onto a viewing device, aim to physically locate the individual act of giving attention and being attended to within a wider social scene.

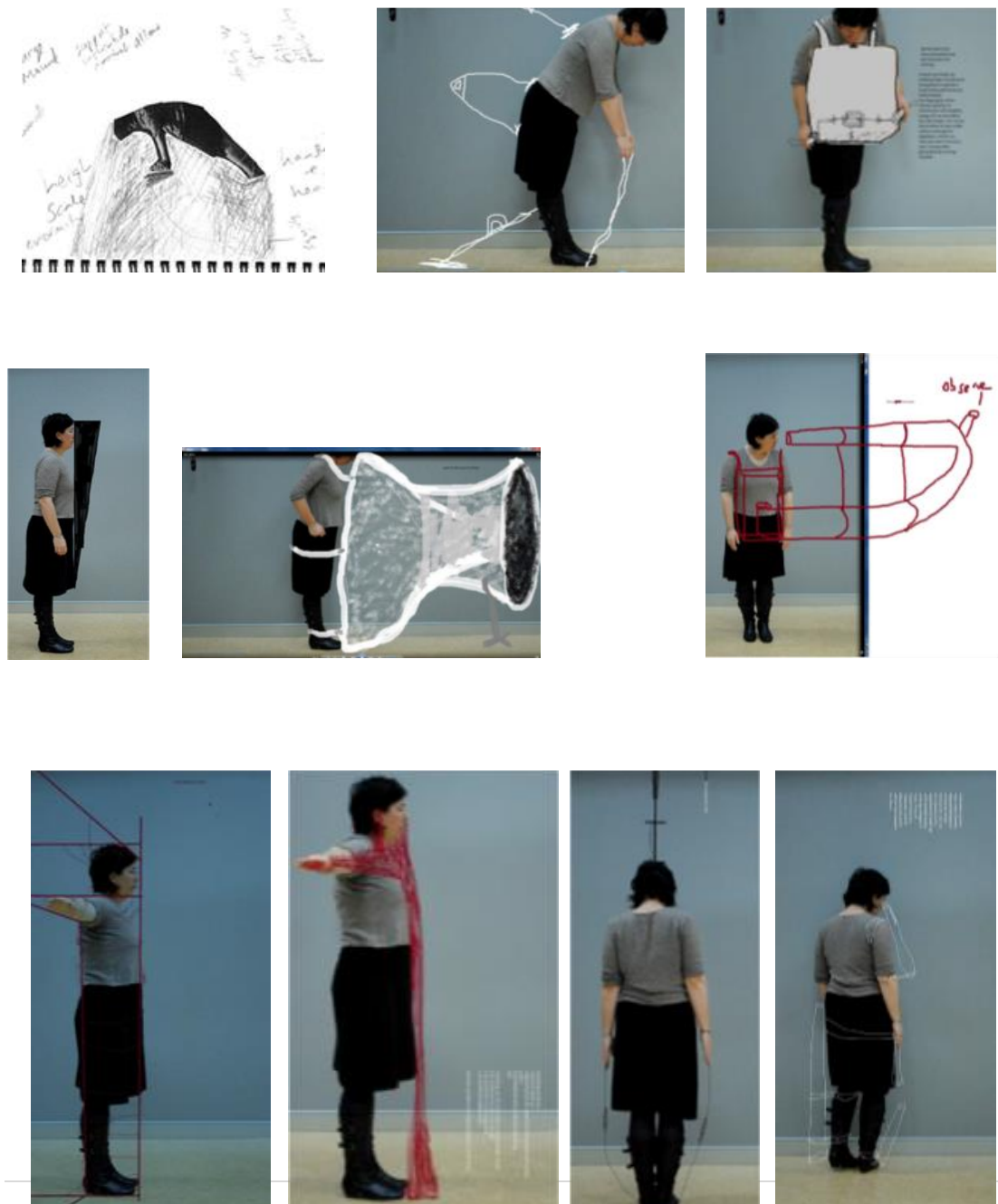


Figures 17, 18, Ruth Myers, (2014) *being made*, video in suspended containers, projection, Installation view, Testspace, AUT.

Figure 19. Ruth Myers, (2012) *being made, the other is you*, Installation view, Blue Oyster, Dunedin.

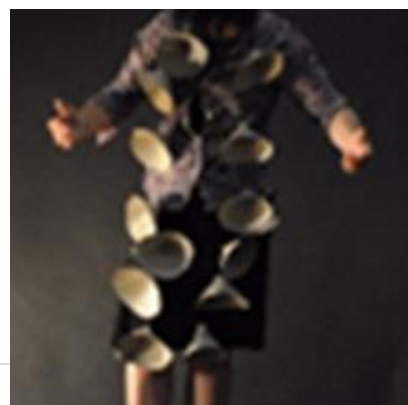
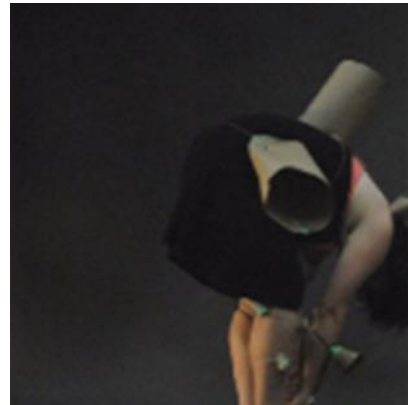
Drawings, props and devices explore disciplinary attention to the body in the form of restraints, limits and connections. Along with makeshift pulleys and harness-like devices I make plans of disciplinary mechanisms that could potentially be built. These are machine-like instruments and adaptations with a functional use. They explore a disciplinary vacillation between enabling and hampering, assisting and limiting. They are mobile and adjustable and target specific parts of the body, such as neck press, mouth brace, arm and feet supports, and bending-over mounds.

Figures 20. Ruth Myers, (2014) *Training in studio, locate the viewer*.



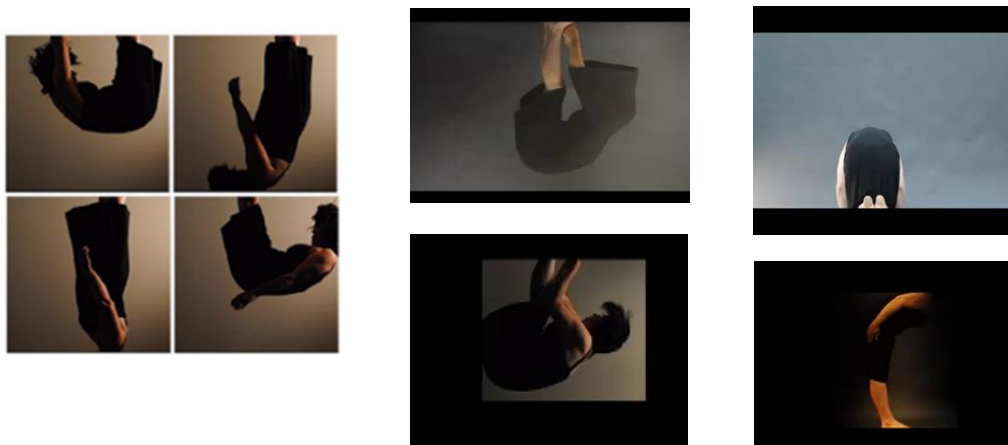
A second set of drawings and devices explores disciplinary visibility of the body as both observing oneself and an ‘opening of the body to the input of others’. To test this out I attach paper cones and funnels to myself and make plaster double-viewing devices to look in and through. By wearing these devices, both literally in the paper and card tests and in the photographic drawings, I can reflexively be the location of the questioning. Working directly onto ‘myself’ I recognise the significance of the personal and emotional content driving the project’s questioning of the disciplinary body.

Figures 21. Ruth Myers, (2014) *Training in studio, props and devices*.



These body activities explore a relationality of alignments, for instance a relation to the studio floor and imagined onlookers. Although practised in private, they keep in mind an inherent social involvement. Activities are focused through instruction: bend as flat to the floor as I can, bend over and turn. Practice is interested in how body is exerting to, for, against, or with something. Practicing and privacy allow for phases of proposing, testing, and developing tasks, and also ‘a thinking’ with the body. Redoing an activity, getting better at it, and developing how the task is approached, involves refining body movements, clarifying instructions and parameters and requiring guides, props, conditions and durations.

I explore ways of being and doing body differently, for instance practicing potentially being thought ‘wrong’ and as requiring attention. These activities also explore ambiguities in meaning. What is it to bend over for instance? Contextually- and historically-bound, meanings attached to body movements are continually in the process of being formed and reiterated. Studio and video activities explore these movements as a momentary taking up of a position.²⁶ Editing explorations shifts my relational focus from body and studio to body and frame where I explore a technological forming of body within the frame’s limits, realigning and altering the speed of body movement.



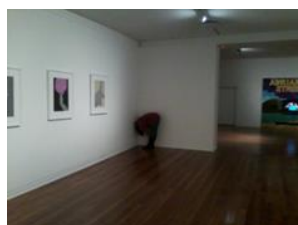
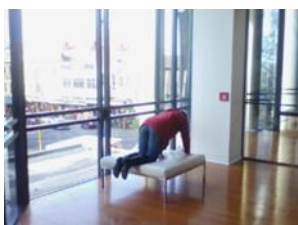
Figures 22. Ruth Myers, (2014) *Training in studio, body/frame*.

²⁶ This exerts a form of address, such as in the early nineteenth century to be looked at body performances of Eugene Sandow and Miss Marshall.

Early one morning I move outside the studio and continue to practice activities in the hallway when a colleague walks by and into the scene. I understand that the passerby and shift in context are important, and start to explore my bending over practice in other parts of the building, and elsewhere such as galleries, sports facilities and museums, but at this stage I remain focused on the video or image out of training as the ‘work’.



Figure 23. Ruth Myers, (2014) *Training in the studio, interrupted*.



Figures 24,25. Ruth Myers, (2014) *Training in the studio, gallery, bending*.

Studio activities explore my relational alignment to surfaces, sites and structures. Boxes, chairs, solid and open frames, provide a ‘something’, a prop as disciplinary framework made visible, to contend with and to navigate ways to exert into. For instance, in chair training, Figure 27, I explore expanding the terms of my relation to the chair, its use, alignment, what I do to the chair, and in turn what the chair does to me. If body is here then what does the chair become, and vice versa? In these studies I start to feel ‘we’, that is myself and surrounding structures, and sites, both resist and absorb each other in this questioning. As Foucault’s genealogies offers us, the frame can move. Bodies ‘not fitting’ and frameworks not containing is what this set

of questioning is getting at. Attention here is on acknowledging frames of reference and disciplinary understanding as contingent but as also exerting a presence. These foreground an emphasis on a productive questioning, which in Part Three will be linked to Butler's discussion of agency within Foucault's notion of discipline.



Figure 26. Ruth Myers, (2015) *Training in the studio, framing*.



Figure 27. Ruth Myers, (2015) *Training in the studio, chair*.

Training in the studio: Summary

Training in the studio develops a focus on body activity and viewing encounters to explore disciplinary attention. It leads to exploring discipline as an inherently relational practice. The significance of this relational focus becomes more clearly understood through acknowledging personal history underpinning the project's questioning. This personal content also raises questions about the relevance of the studio context, and dissatisfaction with an abstracted 'separated out' body, questioning what is the work here? In *The Subject is in her House* (2015), which will be discussed shortly, personal histories bring to the fore questions about agency and incorporation of contexts. Before we get to this, I examine a form of discipline in early film, which has informed my studio training. In early filmic movement studies, disciplinary visibility in the individual body becomes apparent.

Discipline and early film body performance

An important question becomes what is 'knowable' about individual body movement and gestures, and how is this 'knowledge' arrived at? Early films of the moving body offer a type of iterative practice that momentarily particularises the body as 'this or that'. In *Sandow* (1894, Edison /Dickson) and *Treloar and Miss Marshall, prize winners at the Physical Culture Show in Madison Square Garden* (1904, Edison/Dickson), for instance, series of poses are held, one after another, that perform certain ideals of gendered bodies. Marshall's strikingly ineffectual moves remind me of the social and political contingency of locating these bodies as displaying a particular capacity. Williams shows us the gendered particularising of the body through the selection of scene, prop and activity in Muybridge's studies of human movement.

Lisa Cartwright (1995) suggests that these early films situate a physiological disciplinary gaze that shifts across science and amusement contexts. These shifts reveal something of the contingency for how these performances are situated and knowable, and the attachments of certain audiences to certain subjects, and certain subjects to certain framings – with an insistence on a viewer. Tom Gunning points to a "present tense" temporality where performers nod and gesture to an implicated

audience (1995, p.123). The kinetoscope, a peephole viewing device, waits for the individual viewer. Such acknowledgement of the viewer stands this early material apart from the cinematic self-enclosed gaze found in the narrative films that follow. Our very involvement is inherent in both the performance and technologies. This implied 'sharing' is useful, given the sociality of the disciplinary individual distributed in a network of power relations.

Theorist Jonathan Crary in *Techniques of an Observer* (1990) considers visibility and the individual body in Foucault's disciplinary power. The individual is "made visible" and is both observer and observed (Crary, p.79). Crary points out that this focus is accompanied by the development of optical viewing devices, such as the 1820-30s thaumatrope, phenakistiscope and zootrope, which contribute to discipline through organising and regulating bodies in space (pp.109-11).²⁷ The individual's visibility is supported by mechanisms of recording and viewing, which contribute to normative dividing and locating practices.

Secondly Crary (1990) tells us, accompanying disciplinary power is a different type of observer. This is a shift from the Cartesian ideal of the "decorporealised" and "isolated" observer (Williams, 1997, p.7) as in the camera obscura model of vision of "ideological mastery" in which the observer is prevented "from seeing his or her position as part of the representation" (Crary, 1990, p. 41). In the individual as observer, vision is "relocated in subjectivity of the observer" and their movements and temporalities are involved (p.150). The observer can be considered as implicated in these disciplinary dividing and locating processes.

Technological discipline of the body is thought about further through early film technologies and body performance encountered in the nineteenth century kinetoscope. This individual viewing device developed alongside very early films of moving bodies. Of interest here is how these early technologies contribute to normative disciplinary work situating a physiological gaze that shifts across scientific and amusement contexts, and which physically addresses the viewer and locates them in a present tense temporality.

²⁷ For Linda Williams Crary's "corporeal visibility" implicates the body, blurring boundaries between body, image, viewing machine (1997, p.7).

Cartwright explores relationships between early film technologies and Western medical science and considers how the body has been disciplined through these technologies, which can “analyse, regulate, and reconfigure” (1995, p. xiii). Her first chapter “rereads” early film through considering the significance of this physiological relationship (p.xiii). These technologies involve “surveillant looking and physiological analysis” (p.5) and can be seen as the regulatory practices that attend to Foucault’s “natural body” (p. 37).²⁸ Cartwright (p.xii) points out significance of physiologies in the development of technologies to “record and represent” the moving body as requiring “a mode geared to the temporal and spatial decomposition and reconfiguration of bodies as dynamic fields of action in need of regulation and control”(p.xi).²⁹ Nineteenth century optical and recording devices, such as the kinoscope, contribute to normative work of measuring and regulating moving bodies by revealing unseen processes of bodily movement and providing the ability to replay and scrutinise (p.xii).



Figure 28. William Dickson, *Kinoscopic record of a sneeze*, 1894, photographic print, Dimensions 17.8 x 12.7 cm, Courtesy of Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-536. (W.K.L. Dickson.)

Cartwright is interested in how these early technologies shift across scientific and amusement contexts (1995). For instance, the film *Kinoscopic record of a sneeze* (1894,Dickson/Edison) of Edison lab assistant Fred Ott sneezing is given the same attention as physiological motion study documentation of the time (pp.13- 6). A

²⁸ Examples such as neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot’s hysterics studies, (Cartwright, 1995, p.67).

²⁹ As well as biology

Scientific American article dated May 20, 1893 of the “first public exhibition of Edison’s Kinetograph” (Musser, 1991, p.36) documents the viewing by “400 scientific people” (p.38) at the Department of Physics in the Brooklyn Institute. While originally featured as scientific apparatus, kinetoscopes were soon in use for entertainment and amusement in street arcades.³⁰

These early technologies function as “an intertext between popular and professional representations of the body” (Cartwright, 1995, p.4). In *Sandow* (1894, Edison /Dickson) we encounter “scientific looking” given to a popular act of the day (p.45). Eugene Sandow, “the strongest man in the world”, and popular stage performer was Edison’s first famous subject and the film was important publicity for them both (Spehr, 2009, pp.33-5). Charles Musser references the isolation of figures and actions against a black background as in *Sandow*, as similar to modes of early experiments (1991, p.32). Such shifts across science and amusement in this early technological attention point out the contingency and movability of framings which inform how body is knowable and located, and how body is encountered and by whom.

Tom Gunning notes the range of subjects in kinetoscope films is “nearly encyclopaedic” (1995, p. 125). Ray Phillips includes an Edison catalogue of films produced between 1892 and 1896, which divides into groups of dances, descriptive scenes, fights and miscellaneous (1997, pp.53-7).³¹ Within these headings are diverse titles, such as lady fighters, lasso thrower, clown in grotesque tumbling, and so on.³² Most are performances of skill and aptitude, involving body tasks and training. Gunning draws a comparison between the focus on recording “repetitive tasks of disciplined bodies”, such as Eadward Muybridge’s “work and exercise” studies, and early kinetoscope films’ interest in the “regulated rhythms of highly trained bodies”, such as dancers, contortionists and acrobats (2001 p.90).

³⁰ Muybridge and Marey recorded body movement for supposedly “scientific reasons”, while Edison, Gunning states presented this technological scrutiny of body movement as “fascinating in itself, a completely modern spectacle” (2001, p.79).

³¹ See Griffiths, A. (2006). *Wondrous difference*, cinema, anthropology, & turn of the century visual culture. New York, NY: Columbia University Press for detailed discussion of the early ethnic and cultural subjects of these films.

³² Spehr notes fight films popularity due to the illegal status of boxing fights in most of America (2009, pp. 36-38). Musser suggests that the kinetograph camera gave similar attention across a range of subjects in the approximate 135 known kinetoscope films, causing a consistency of depiction, which Musser states “is a remarkable moment” and as having the potential to subvert or at least flatten out hierarchies (2004, p.26).

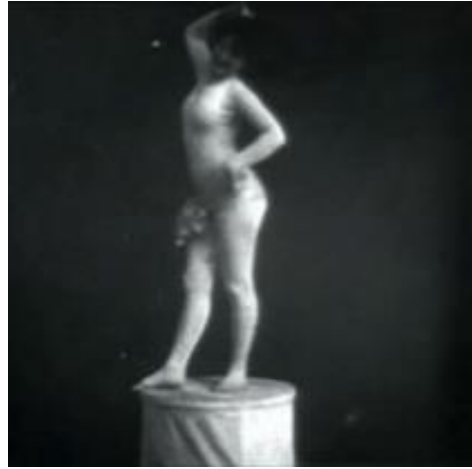


Figure 29. Dickson/Edison (1894). *Sandow*. 1894, 35mm film, 0:40 at 16 fps. Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/item/00694298/>

Figure 30. Edison/Dickson (1904), *Treloar and Miss Marshall, prize winners at the Physical Culture Show in Madison Square Garden*. 35mm film, 2:10 at 16 fps. Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/item/96516402/>

Gendered iterative practices

In *Sandow* (1894, Edison /Dickson) we see a trained and exercised body perform a series of acts of skill and aptitude. What is of particular interest here is how early film body performances require and locate an audience in their iterative practices. *Sandow* performs a series of poses up close for the camera, positioning the viewer as front row spectator in a performance directly for them. Miss Marshall of *Treloar and Miss Marshall, prize winners at the Physical Culture Show in Madison Square Garden* (1904, Edison/Dickson), performs various ‘feminine’ poses.³³ Marshall’s series of rather ineffectual faint-hearted sweeps to the brow and canting like positions illustrates the point made by philosopher Iris M Young (1980) in her essay on feminine body comportment, that females may not use the full potential of their body (p.146). Young’s essay explores how body gestures, movements and comportment perform gender.³⁴ While arguing against the notion of a feminine essence, and also indicating her comments are not to be generalised, Young suggests

³³ The third prize winner in the best-developed woman competition of New York City.

³⁴ *Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality* (1980)

that we should not deny there can be differences between men and women. Young focuses particularly on task-orientated movements, such as throwing a ball as well as basic movements such as sitting, standing and walking, and outlines how females may not use the full potential of their body, but rather may think an “I can”, with an “I cannot” within the same act (1980, p.147). It must be remembered that Young states she is writing from the perspective of women living in a “patriarchal society” where she suggests that women live in an “objectified bodily existence” living “her body as object as well as subject”(pp. 153-4).

Lauren Rabinovitz foregrounds the visible practice in early films in which gender is performed as a part of subjectivity, as a “cultural construction and something that must constantly be reworked, remade, rewarded” (1998, p.11). This is evident in the content and reception of early film. Miriam Hansen suggests that the emergence of early film coincides with transformations in the public sphere, particularly the increasing mobility of women (1991, p.2). Kathy Peiss discusses shifts in labour and work for women, and that pre-1905 film content, such as women disrobing, glimpses of ankles and kissing, echo content of the late nineteenth-century mixed sex working class leisure amusements such as concert halls, and dance and variety shows (2006, p.142). Peiss states that this type of sexual content declined when the kinetoscope disappeared and shifted towards “flirtation and suggestiveness” (p.110) during the nickelodeon era and development of a “female audience” (p.155).

Musser points out that kinetoscope attendance required a middle-class disposable income. These early Edison films drew on homosocial amusements such as “risqué woman”, blood sports and semi-legal fights, which became unexpectedly accessible to women through exhibition in the kinetoscope parlours (Musser, 1991, pp.42-4). Censorship and closures were threatened by councillors for the display of “indecent” views, such as glimpses of underwear of the dancer Carmencita, and court proceedings around the legality of prize-fights soon followed (Mannoni, 2000, p.404). The Edison team quickly produced what they called “tamer views”, such as the apparently unpopular *Highland Dance* (1894, Edison /Dickson) and *Organ Grinder* (1894, Edison /Dickson), (Musser, 1991, p. 43).

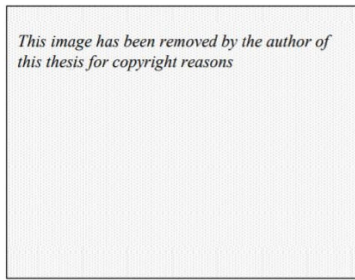


Figure 31. Eadward Muybridge. (1887) *Woman turning around in surprise and running away*.

Williams (1986) draws our attention to the gendered itineraries evident in Eadward Muybridge's studies of human movement. She points out his human figure in motion series, divided into men, women and children, show noticeable gendering determinations (1986).³⁵ The studies are organised to demonstrate basic to more complex movements, so males are shown walking and jumping to eventually trade-specific tasks e.g. sawing. Meanwhile, the women's activities are located in "feminine contexts", "picking up and putting down", serving tea to each other, and blowing a kiss (1986, p.512). Williams points out that the female gestures, scene and props have "added detail". For instance narratives are provided: a woman lies down in a fully made bed, or reads a paper, while the male lies down on a blanket on the ground (p.514). The focus on the male body is on "more purely motor activities" (p.518).³⁶ Williams suggests the gendered "details" in these early "scientific studies" (1986, p. 512), both in selection of activity and specifics of props and scenes to contextualise body movement, "over determines" gender differences (p.515).

Locate the viewer

The direct address stages a specific kind of relationship with the viewer that Tom Gunning describes as 'the cinema of attractions'. The notion of attractions is drawn from Sergei Eisenstein and points to thrill-seeking and curiosity-arousing devices of the fairground (1996, p.73). Gunning identifies this exhibitionist address of the

³⁵Women were artist models, while male's were linked to their occupations e.g. fencing instructor (Williams, 1986, p.520)

³⁶ Linda Williams (1989, p.38) identifies four factors that drove the desire to reveal unseen processes of bodily movement; a growing consideration of the body as a mechanism, a doubting accuracy of human eye observation, the development of new measuring and recording machines, and the pleasure derived in viewing lifelike moving bodies, propelled by a desire to 'see and name' (p.53) that is bound up with disciplinary practices. Williams locates this power/knowledge/pleasure relationship through discussion of Muybridge's work, suggesting his audiences came to learn, but stayed for pleasure (pp. 38-9).

viewer and “present tense” temporality as prevalent in films prior to 1906 and 1907 (1996, p.76). Governed by a temporality of “here it is, look at it” (1996, p.76), these non-narrative to-be-looked-at performances locate the viewer in the act of looking (Gunning, 1995). Performers nod, bow, gaze and smirk and address the viewer in “an intense form of present tense” (Gunning, 1996, p.76). This heightened awareness of looking and the performers’ awareness of being looked at, Miriam Hansen situates as a “theatrical voyeurism” of “reciprocity”, an “active complicity...of seeing and being seen” (1991, pp.34-5).

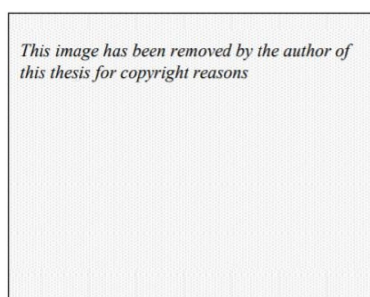
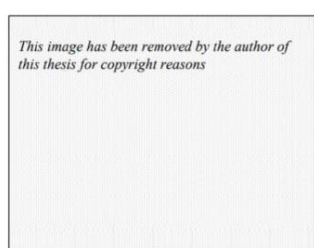


Figure 32. Kinetoscope

Figure 33. Kinetoscope Acarde circa. 1894–95

This viewer address is replicated in the kinetoscope peephole viewing device which physically locates the individual viewer within a wider social scene. The first kinetoscope parlour opened in 1894 in an old shoe store in New York City.³⁷ The parlour was laid out with ten kinetoscopes lined up in rows of five, which “one by one” customers “bent over and looked at the movie through a slot in the top” (Spehr, 2009, p.23). Erkki Huhtamo positions the kinetoscope within a tradition of “peep practice”, which emphasises an intensified visuality through the mechanism of “hiding & revealing” (2012, p.35). Highlighting relationships between the social and private, and site and function, peep technologies’ various forms range from nomadic, handheld and travelling peep shows, to shared large-scale peeping devices such as the Kaiser Panorama in the early 1880s. These technologies were followed by the

³⁷ Developed by the Edison Company during the late nineteenth century, the kinetoscope was a commercial enterprise, which Edison felt would be more profitable than shared projection (Spehr 2009, p.39). But due to its expense, it only had a short ‘boom’, before its decline around 1896.

late nineteenth-century phonograph parlours (aural peeping devices) and kinoscope parlours, which functioned as an extension to street life (2012).

Amy Herzog's (2008), essay on 1960-70s pornographic peep show arcades in Chicago draws attention to the social and physical dimensions of individual viewing within contexts such as the arcade or parlour. Herzog suggests that in these types of settings both film bodies and viewers' bodies are "open to display" in what is often a "self-conscious web of exhibitionism, surveillance, and social exchange" (p.30).

While explicitly locating the viewer publicly, peeping requires the viewer to disengage optically from their surroundings to focus on the provided attraction. This viewing experience is never completely immersive though, disruption and interruptions from other peepers, site visitors, as well as stoppages from the devices themselves bring tactile and noisy intrusions emphasising an embodied physical viewing encounter (pp.34-5).

Hannah Wilke and Lynda Benglis

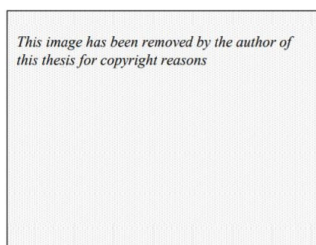


Figure 34. Hannah Wilke (1976) stills from *Gestures* (1974) 35.30 min video performance.

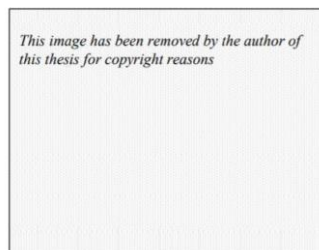


Figure 35. Lynda Benglis (1973) still from *Now*, 12 min video performance.

What drew me initially to the early film body performances was a viewer acknowledgement which I felt bears relationships to certain 1970s video body performance practices.³⁸ Amelia Jones discusses body art practices as exploring a technological mediated body performance that implicates the viewer (2006). For instance, Jones (2006) discusses Hannah Wilke's *Gestures* (1974) as provoking

³⁸ Laura Marks, discussing haptic and optic viewing modes, points to early films' physical address of the embodied viewer and Gunning's cinema of attractions (2000, p.170).

porosity between viewed and viewing subjects. In *Gestures* Jones (2006) outlines how Wilke enacts her subjectivity as in process through a “televisual relation” (p.150) where Jones argues we are not positioned in an objectifying stare back but rather a less stable position, where body and screen mesh as “hole/flesh/screen” (p.149) where the work enacts Wilkes’s gendered body as shared performance. Jones’s discussions of such mediated body performances as “open[ing] the screen” (2006, p.149), reiterates gendered body through insisting on the subject’s positioning as in processes and between us. Jones also points to the “thingness” of the viewing encounter, televisual referencing the television monitor, which engages the viewer in movement and activity around the screen (2006, p.151). A similar request of the audience’s presence is enacted in Lynda Benglis’s *Now* (1973). Employing her multiplied self-responding profiles through a vocalised layering of ambiguously directed instructions, such as “now”, “start recording” “no”, “do you wish to direct me”, Benglis performs, according to Anne Wagner, a “coercive posture towards the viewer” that demands and contests viewers’ required attention (2000, p.79).

Discipline in early film performance: Summary

As Cartwright points out, early film technologies are involved in a disciplinary, normalising gaze. The kinetoscope’s individual encounter, and cinema of attraction’s present tense, acknowledge and implicate a viewer. The individual is the disciplinary subject of observation of analysis, and also an observer involved in these relational networks. This productive relationality between self/other is similar to what Jones’s discussion of Wilke’s *Gestures* as porous is getting at. The subject is in continual process of being located between us.

Williams points out that the body is particularised through the selection of scenes, props, and execution of activities in Muybridge’s studies. This demonstrates the significance of contexts for body/subjects’ potential positionings. It is quite clear to us in hindsight, looking at Miss Marshall’s poses, how these actions are laid upon, supported, and mapped in understanding. That is, how historically, socially and politically contingent they are. I am interested in thinking about these complexities as attachments, and how these early films and sets of images can carry such contexts. This becomes significant in thinking about how *Practices of Use* can acknowledge local circumstances of the subject, and is discussed in Part Three through

performative scenes and exertion which incorporate the local embodied situation the subject is forming and exerting in.

The iterative performances of *Sandow* and *Miss Marshall*, the attachment of props and scenes in Muybridge, and our requested involvement in these performances, link with Butler's performative body acts. Butler's performativity informs how meaning is iterated and potentially redone in different ways. Her discussion of body act's embodied meaning making practice as performative is significant for *Practices of Use* in its incorporation of one's local embodied circumstances and the opportunities to work into them.

Body Acts: Judith Butler

Judith Butler's notion of body acts informs understanding of how the individual exerting body is located as an iterative practice that has an ongoing temporality carrying with it an inherent social dimension, contributing to, formed by and participating in a disciplinary and performative scene. This section situates body acts as performative; they act and enact meaning, which we as individual actors take up, and which we can and do work upon and potentially do differently. What is significant for *Practices of Use* is that although body acts occur on an individual level with and through our bodies, they require a social temporality and occur in a social scene for legibility and recognition. Through this process, body acts can be considered as involving both simultaneous self and social work. This section briefly overviews Butler's notion of gender performativity, and then engages more closely with the performative body act.

Butler explains in her lecture, "When gesture becomes event" (2014), that John L. Austin's speech theory includes the notions of illocutionary or performative and perlocutionary utterances. Performative speech acts, Butler explains, enable the utterance to act; to bring about what it names e.g. the Judge's utterance marries. Authority supports this ability in what Butler calls the "socially generative" and "creative dimension" of the performative (2014). The perlocutionary speech act does not produce what it names, but it may produce effects (2014). Butler gives the example of calling fire in a movie theatre, while not producing a fire, may well

encourage people to exit the theatre (2014). The performative utterance that produces what it names allows Butler to challenge the idea of an interiority “that ‘causes’ gender” (Bell, 2007 p. 17). She suggests that the idea of gender as a binary construction is “a performative achievement” maintained through “production and repetition” of bodily signs (Bell, 2006, p.217).

Butler tells us that historicity, citational and iterability, are important to the operations of the performative speech act (2014). She refers us to Derrida in *Signature context and event* who points out Austin’s ‘act’ as citational (2014). It invokes authorities, and a historicity “that we did not make” (2014). At the same time through our enactment, it both “draws upon and breaks with its prior iterations” (2014). What is particularly important within performativity is the possibility of deviations. Butler points out that Eve Sedgwick understood that speech acts could deviate “from their aims” and produce “unintended” “consequences” (2014).

Butler thinks about the performative speech act as “authoritative name calling”, and asks how does this has a “bodily dimension” (2014). Speech acts, such as being named a gender or a nationality for instance, that is being “summed up by a name” cause us to ask “am I that name?” (2014). Butler suggests that the speech act “calls upon an account of social embodiment and its relation to power” (2014). She proposes that actions read as proof of one’s gender as essential, both “create and circulate” these gender “ideals” (2014).

Butler found that gender performativity could be misunderstood as “a choice”, or as something “that completely determines us” (2014). She tells us that we need to understand performativity firstly as “assignment”, and secondly that within this, deviations from norms can take place (2014). She reminds us that performativity has dual dimensions. It both describes “the process of being acted on, and the conditions and possibilities for acting” (2014). Enactment therefore is both how “gender norms precede us and act upon us”, and secondly, how “we are obliged to reproduce them” (2014). Butler tells us her work’s aim here is not to “transcend all norms, but relax the coercive hold of norms on gendered life” (2014).

Butler describes how speech acts have embodied effects, and points to the way certain body movements are involved in gendering, such as “smiles, turns, bends, stretches, how one leans, etc” (2014). Body acts are discussed in her 1988 essay, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” where she extends the phenomenological constituting act to a performative act. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological constituting act locates the body as historically contingent and in this as gaining meaning through an active constant “materialising” within available “cultural and historical possibilities” (Butler, 1988, pp. 520-1).

Simone de Beauvoir’s statement that “one is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman” (cited in Butler, 1988, p. 519) situates gender within a similar temporal materialising. Gender is a “performative accomplishment”, and “an attachment of meaning” which Butler explains as “an identity tenuously constituted in time” (pp.519-22). What is important in this proposition is that, rather than being an essence, gender is performed and sustained through repeated body acts that materialise one’s own gender performance within the possibilities available in any given historical moment or cultural setting (p. 522).

These acts may take place on a large scale as well as in our everyday (1988, p. 524). Their residues cause “sedimentation” which establishes the “idea” of gender as binary (p.524). That is, it is the “*stylized repetition of acts*” (p.519) everyday, the “bodily gestures, movements, and enactments” (p. 519) that produce and reproduce gender (p.520).

While considering how individual body acts “embed and enact social cultural possibilities”, Butler reminds us that we need to acknowledge the “social conditions”, “contexts and conventions” that make these acts knowable and possible (1988, p.525). This importantly situates body acts as always a shared act, produced in and through a “*social temporality*” (p.520). Body acts are enacted by individuals and their “‘action’ is immediately public” (p.526).

Butler (1988) recognises that both phenomenological and feminist projects emphasise one’s lived experience and the constituting act (p.522). One’s individual acts are both structured by, and contribute to, wider shared structures (p.522). In this, one’s own experiences can be thought about as producing and produced within these

wider domains (p.522). Butler extends the constituting act through theatrical terrain (525). Theatrical terms such as “script”, “scene” and “act”, are employed to situate body acts as “shared and collective” (pp.525-6). As she points out, gender acts are “clearly not one’s act alone” (p. 525). Rather, gender can be viewed as a script, requiring individuals to enact and reproduce. There is a “scene” of available possibilities, “actors” and “stage” (p.526). Butler situates gender as a “performance which is performative”, and which “constructs the social fiction of its own ...interiority” (p. 528).

Alongside this proposition she considers the losses and gains for feminist theory. Butler works us through a feminist struggle with enabling and empowering woman at a cost of essentialising woman (1988). The bigger cause for Butler is to loosen ties between gender and subjects that are potentially limiting and constraining. Feminist projects that situate woman as a universal can threaten to restrict, for instance. Butler admits a feminist collective grouping may well profit those associating with the term ‘woman’ in terms of visibility and empowerment. But the cost of this may not be too far from the problematic universalizing of the category ‘man’. She suggests that rather than proposing one point of view for women, feminist theory could engage in a “critical genealogy” of the term, women (p.530).

Body Acts: Summary

Butler’s performative body acts inform understanding of how the body’s movements and positionings mean and matter, as both self and social work. They draw upon and contribute to scenes, scripts and sediments of understandings. Our body acts are not our work alone, rather they are social practices we enact and can potentially do differently. This lays the ground for how *Practices of Use* explores body acts as social and relational practices produced within specific contexts, which can therefore test, provoke and propose the making of one’s own terms.

Practices of Use explores the felt weight and density of sedimentation in such constructing processes as layers and stacks of scenes and their details, which continuously do their work contextualising and supporting what these acts can be and how they can matter. The circumstances subjects are forming in matter. Foucault’s

functional spaces, organisation of time and disciplinary details, and Butler's sediments of stylised body acts inform how we are understood.



Figure 36. Ruth Myers, (2015) *The subject is in her house*, training stills.

The subject is in her house

The subject is in her house introduces a shift from studio to home and locates personal use more clearly. From this point on I reflect on and respond to the discipline of my mother while growing up. I develop tasks which explore modes of hampering and restricting and, at the same time, make requests of myself. These tasks aim to explore, reflect and potentially reveal something of the struggle I perceived of her disciplined body. Body becomes much more invested, singular and complex, disciplinary and performative, and a feminist contested site. Alongside this, body and the reflections I am working on more directly carry a lived emotional content, which I think about as a 'feltness'. This correlates with Butler (2015) recognising that norms inform our feeling as well as our thinking. We will look at this further in Part Three.

The move home marks a focusing in approach from exploring body and training as involved in *making* a work, to a focus on work as a verb, a *required practicing*. Body/self is not separated out, or takes on a specific role, but rather it engages in a particular practice that allows for a critical and required questioning in my own life. Emphasis is on tasks that develop body acts that are useful in reflecting, revealing

and working back into these accounts of particular disciplinary framings, and in doing so reveal contingency within processes of body/subject positioning.

Foucault's discipline, Butler's body acts, and early film research point out that contexts matter in how we are positioned. This was first made clear to me in Williams's discussion of gendered itineraries in Muybridge's studies, which drew my attention to how body/subject positionings are arrived at and come to. In these early studies the clunky attachment of contexts to bodies speaks to the significance of the circumstances of the subject. There are a set of possibilities laid out here, as Butler's tells us. Scenes, scripts and sediments inform what a subject may take on, while Foucault's discipline conditions spaces, functional sites, temporal penetrations and real and ideal projections. These sediments and projections contribute to our embodied circumstances and actions. So how can practice explore the complexities of these productive relationships of forming subjects and contexts? As a first step, contexts are acknowledged through locating the project at home where sites, spaces and temporalities inform and work into subject possibilities and limitations.



Figure 37. Ruth Myers, (2015) *The subject is in her house, training stills*.

Home contexts introduce home architectures and sites. The furniture and architecture carry meaning and in constant daily use, keep generating meaning. They have attachments. I know very well the significance of these scenes and sites, their

disciplinary weight, their overlaid projections. My point is that the table, for instance, can support, inform and assist and also impose, restrict and limit. These sites and structures contribute to the ongoing processes of positioning and locating subjects. Home training develops tasks that take on parameters and details of context, including tables, chairs, floor, doors, hallways and rooms, the 'in use' home environment. In these places I focus on specific body sites and activities, tongue, hands and feet training, becoming horizontal, becoming quiet, being occupied, being under duress, being fixed to a point.

Tasks explore relationships between home and body e.g. tongue and table, face and ground and recognise the dense social, personal, and political sites of the dining room table, the hallway floor and the front door. These sites are inherently relational; they make demands. Tasks explore a hampered body continuing to meet requests and commitments, such as talking with my tongue out, and moving through the house with my face flat to the ground. Guidelines and instructions, such as scripts, lines, circles and grids, provide something measurable to practice, and makeshift supports are drawn from about the house. Reusable plasticine props make quickly formed supports to wedge, fix, or rest my tongue. It is also responsive, recording and exerting back. This is a personal endeavour and I insist on training in private, orchestrating work moments when the family is out. But this leaks out, I find myself plucking plasticine from between my teeth while at a meet-the-teacher interview, and my children comment on the swept over but not fully removed training lines drawn on the hallway floor.



Figure 38. Ruth Myers, (2015) *The subject is in her house, training still*.

An important set of questions happens when the subject is located in ‘her’ house. Home context brings to the fore aspects of gender and agency in my questioning. This move raises all sorts of problems and also supports. There is a large amount of feminist material that foregrounds personal, local, embodied circumstances that I can call upon. I leaf through journals, personal records and photographic surveys and find practices, propositions, collaborations and demonstrations, and making space. Feminist practices that reveal and draw attention to, and methods that incorporate one’s own contexts, are useful in acknowledging local, embodied situations. Theorists who insist on acknowledging gendering within questioning and exploring questions of what agency can be within specific circumstances, informs *Practices of Use*’s exploration of body acts as fraught practices not outside of norms, but rather as acknowledged and work into. Feminist practices navigate this terrain, including topics such as the personal is political, domestic labour, document and a ‘messy problematic’, all of which make useful links to wider social, public and political repercussions.³⁹

While these feminist practices give me assistance, I have to find out how to take these complexities on in my own project. This was part of the question that needed to be worked through. Where and how could gender be addressed here? I refused to make this a gendered problem, as the institutions in my childhood did. Somehow the

³⁹ Particularly useful sources include, Lucy Lippard (1995) *The Pink Glass Swan Selected Feminist Essays on Art*, Marian Evans, Bridie Lonie & Tilly Lloyd, (Eds), (1988) *A Women's Picture Book: 25 Women Artists of Aotearoa (New Zealand)*, and Amelia Jones, Editor, (2010) *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*.

particular and the ongoing process of contextualising needed to be located within these body acts with the contingency required.



Figures 39. Ruth Myers, (2015) *The subject is in her house, training stills*.

Technology involved

I am not practicing these tasks ‘alone’. Cameras record what I do. They accompany me. They become an important means to reveal and also to act. Technology has many questions to explore: what can be ‘seen’, what can be heard or felt, where to record from and how? Initially, the lenses ‘look on’. Multiple cameras explore recording from several viewpoints, distances and heights. A close up lens records saliva drops, and camera microphones record talking and other sounds. Editing explores spatial and temporal disruption and reorganisation of body movement and positioning. But these video and image documents raise questions for the project:. What is the work here? Are they a record? A performance? A demonstration?



Figure 40, Ruth Myers, (2015) *The subject is in her house, still*.

The Subject is in her house (2015) is developed for the Dunedin Public Art Gallery’s Rear Window site. This is a video installation of the task of moving from the front to the back door of my house following a drawn chalk line with my face on the floor. The task is recorded in multiple sequences and filmed via three cameras lined up

together on the ground, recording segments of around half a metre of the journey at a time. This process means that the task took several hours to complete. In the final work, it translates to shifting through a series of rooms or scenes, as the task is performed through the three monitors set in the divisions of Rear Window. The chalk marks and my face align with the ground of the installation and passersby on the footpath. Through these parallel performances, the work aims to provoke thinking about how we participate in each other's embodied positionings.



Figure 41, Ruth Myers, *The subject is in her house*, still (2015) Installation view, Rear Window, Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

The subject is in her house (2015) raises important issues and marks a turning point for the project. This work was an attempt to re-perform the task through the positioned monitors, but in doing this it could be read as problematically passive and literal. Firstly, I recognise a certain kind of agency is required and that gender is inherently involved in this. Secondly, I realise I need to consider more critically how technology is of use in these practices. Why are the cameras ‘looking on’ given that I am not wanting to locate body acts meaning in the individual alone, and the viewer as ‘over there’? My body acts need to be situated as between us and everything else and technology needs to assist in this. I realise I am not getting to where the ‘work’ of the questioning is. The point here is to not situate meaning in the individual subject. Where and how then is this meaning to be encountered?

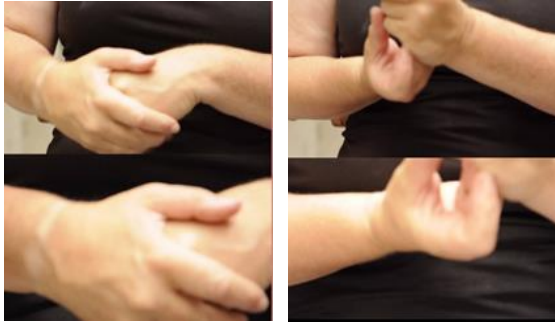


Figure 42. Ruth Myers, (2016) *The subject is in her house, training, double camera's, still.*

Exploring how technology can better incorporate contexts and relational questioning, I work with multiple camera positionings, recording tasks from different views and positionings. But this material still disconnects from the required body/context questioning. I return to the project's aim and use value to be able to acknowledge and exert. Thinking about disciplinary body as active in its production, and in this as governed by an inherent doubling action, I start to focus specifically on two cameras and explore how they can record a simultaneous acting on and to.

The subject is in her house: Summary

The subject is in her house cements this project's use value and its understanding that contexts are inherently involved and incorporated in any idea of a subject. Home contexts, rather than the studio, are relevant to this project's questioning, and offer the sites and scenes required to develop tasks that work into reflections of discipline of the female in the home. Specific home and body sites become important: the hallway, the front door and the table, as do my mouth, tongue, hands, and body in relation to and in activity in these sites. While practicing in private, I explore these as densely social and political situations. Efforts to share documents and recordings made from this private training raise questions about agency and gender, and I realise that technology needs to be involved in different ways. Working into specific reflections, and understanding this use value, I also realise that these explorations are practices rather than stand-alone artworks.

Part Two: Body Acts – Summary

Part Two situates how our individual body's movement and positioning means and matters via Foucault's disciplinary attention and Butler's performative body acts. Foucault's discipline attends to the individual within the multiple, through spatial and temporal attention and normative doubling action, which is relationally productive. Butler's performative body acts are social practices, which draw upon scenes, scripts, and sediments of understandings, and may repeat these with difference. From Foucault and Butler we establish that the meanings of our body positioning and movement are not ours alone, rather they are shared relational practices that require self and social work, and are inherently involved in the contexts they are forming within.

Early film practices draw attention to body acts' iterative performances, which address and locate the viewer in an embodied viewing encounter and present tense temporality. Shifts in how these bodies are located, for instance as scientific knowledge or for amusement, point out attachments of understandings to these body/subjects. Such attachments are also clear in the gendered itineraries evident in Muybridge's assignment of bodies to scenes, props and activities. What these early mediated practices draw attention to is both a required involvement of other/viewer, and the significance of contextualising the body/subject in one's iterated performances of being 'this or that'.

Training in the studio explores disciplinary attention as between self and other and develops into a focus on relational activity. But these explorations also raise questions of what is the work here? Practice acknowledges the significance of personal and heuristic use in the questioning, and makes a shift from studio to home where I can work into useful sites and contexts to reflect upon and develop ways to act and counter personal histories. In developing tasks to do this, I come to understand the project as sets of practices rather than works. I also realise that technology needs to be more usefully involved in incorporating subject and contexts as relationally productive. Questioning now acknowledges and is located within specific circumstances. This though brings questions around gender and agency. How can one act under such regimes of discipline? What does agency mean here?

Part Three discusses how *Practices of Use* develops work across contexts and embodied modes of material and technical recording. Subjects are positioned as ‘becoming’ within disciplinary contexts by acknowledging and exerting into the local, social and contingent circumstances of self-forming practices. Part Three engages with feminist explorations of agency within Foucault’s discipline, and a focus on body acts in art and performance as both self and social work. These acts involve a relational productiveness which both acknowledges the local embodied circumstances the subject is forming and functioning within, and incorporates contingencies for how one may understand oneself and others. In these ways my self-forming practices find there is an agency to be found in such circumstances, and that our understandings are not our work alone, but rather taken up and worked upon as shared social practices.

Part Three: Practicing

Part Three: Practicing – Introduction

An important question for the project is what kind of agency can happen within disciplinary frameworks. How can and does one act? *The subject is in her house* (2015) brought several important questions to a keen focus. Agency, rather than residing ‘over there’, needs to be located in the exerting body and this body needs to be located in its producing contexts.

This section considers two important concerns. One is to explore how one is positioned, as not an individual’s ‘problem’ or performance alone, but rather as a shared effort, involving everyone and everything. And secondly, to explore self-forming practices, as social and relational, and as incorporating local embodied circumstances, to propose something useful as able to appear here. This has been the difficult but significant struggle in the project; what this ‘appearance’ can be and how it can occur in ways that produce a questioning that is located contextually anew each time. Both of these concerns are explored first in this section through engaging with feminist discussions questioning agency in Foucault’s disciplinary body.

Agency is firstly considered as “a situated, embodied and relational phenomenon” via Lois McNay (2015, p.41). McLaren (2002) explains the disciplinary body as active, and both enabled and constrained and, along with McWhorter (2013) and Sawicki (1994), defines differences between notions of oppression, domination and discipline. McLaren points out feminist uses and disagreements with Foucault’s disciplinary body, and emphasises Foucault’s body as “grounded in real, historical, material practices and institutions” (2002, p. 80). Butler (2004) puts forward an account of agency within discipline as a productive relational activity.

Productive relational activities that acknowledge one’s circumstances and offer opportunities to reveal, think oneself differently and counter are explored next in art and performance practice. Bruce Nauman, VALIE EXPORT and Mare Tralla consider how body acts can explore a contingency of body/subject and their contexts through forming, shaping and working into each other. Laresa Kosloff and Alicia Frankovich reveal body acts as requiring assistance, support and props, and as “not one’s act alone” (Butler, 1988, P. 525). Chris Braddock’s sensing performs Merleau-

Ponty's chiasm, and Butler's relational thinking and feeling surrounds and impresses upon us, forming from all sides.

I conclude by discussing the responses of *Practices of Use* to the key questioning of how do I acknowledge and act to reflect on and work into personal histories of discipline of the female in the home. Performative scenes and exertion explore subjects and contexts continually involved in becoming as a relational materialising. This requires a rethink in technology so the double action of discipline and performativity is encountered through detail and sensing, thinking and feeling, scene and exertion, working into each other through haptic and optic modes. This questioning to remain useful requires that I practice across home and public contexts. It also demands art and performance audiences as fundamentally required in the questioning, which is inherently social and requires the wider infrastructures to make requests for support and tolerance.

A certain kind of agency

Foucault's body "is the very condition of subjectivity" which takes, "cultural difference and historical specificity into account; subjects cannot be divorced from the contexts in which they develop and operate". (McLaren, 2002, pp.83-4)

This section considers agency in Foucault's disciplinary body. This is first explored through developing an understanding of agency as "a situated, embodied, and relational phenomenon" via McNay (2015, p.41). Questions are asked of how agency may appear, or be, in a disciplinary mode. Butler situates agency as a strategy which implies certain expansiveness within relations, while McWhorter (1999) proposes an idea of agency within discipline as 'becoming' rather than 'being'. McLaren (2002) emphasises the disciplinary body as active and able to increase skills and forces. Alongside discussions of agency, this section explores associated terms of dominance, oppression and resistance through McWhorter (2013) and McLaren (2002). Secondly, this section briefly situates wider feminist engagements with Foucault's disciplinary body, including feminist struggles with Foucault's lack of a universal norm and an indication of how feminists theorise the discipline of the female body.

McNay (2015) tells us that agency is a significant yet problematic term in feminist theory. It can generally be thought about as “to be able to act with effect in the world”, but that this ability to act can mean many different things socially and culturally (p.39). McNay suggests discussions about agency should always include discussions about power (p.39). She points out that descriptive modes of feminist thought on agency can have problems with essentialising female experience whereas normative modes, like Butler’s performativity model, can be “more inclusive” (McNay, pp.39-40).⁴⁰ For McNay, agency is always a “situated conception” that takes place within power relations and norms (pp.40-1), which inform the “concrete circumstances of lives” (p.41). Therefore, she proposes that agency needs to be considered as “a situated, embodied, and relational phenomenon” (p.41).

For *Practices of Use* McNay’s “situated, embodied, and relational” notion of agency is significant in considering how to reflect and respond to my own experiences of discipline and the female body in the home (2015, p.41). Agency that is located in one’s own concrete situations links to self-forming practices. As McWhorter points out, locating contingency in how we understand ourselves and others draws upon and works into normative frameworks of our own circumstances. Therefore Foucault’s subjects, as discussed by McLaren (2002) as embodied, socially constituted and historically and culturally specific are particularly useful for feminist inquiries which require acknowledging local embodied circumstances (pp.53-4). She explains that Foucault reveals an “historical contingency” (p.165) in norms which provides opportunities for resistance and transformation (pp. 53-4).

In Foucault’s discipline it is also significant to understand the individual as active in its production. That is, there is a certain kind of agency within this model that needs to be taken on if body here is not to be read as literally ‘docile’ or completely dominated. Foucault’s point is that the production of the subject occurs within a network of power relations that both inform its possibilities and locate it, as a kind of ‘loop’ or mechanism. It is in this complex understanding of the productive that the individual subject within its forming contexts can be considered as having some form of agency and being able to exert resistance or transformation.

⁴⁰ McNay discusses agency as resistance through Butler’s performativity model (2015).

This clarification is important for *Practices of Use* as it underpins decisions in practice. For instance, in *The subject is in her house* (2015), visual representation of the subject at work problematically proposed readings of passivity and situated the subject's agency as somewhere 'over there'. What is discovered is that subjects are always 'in process' in disciplinary frameworks and in this, can and do exert pressure and act. This needs to be relationally located in the individual body's exertion, in the very mechanisms of disciplinary power, its temporal and spatial alignments and sequences, and productive relations and networks, which can be invoked and worked into for one's own cause. This is discussed in Part One through Foucault's self-forming practices.

Jeffrey Nealon tells us that he used to respond to concerns about agency in Foucault's work by stating "it's all agency all of the time", referencing the fact Foucault discusses practices, "doing things" (2008, p. 101). But he found this was not a satisfactory response. What people were getting at was how can subjects act in ways that affect self and or others (p.102). Nealon reconsiders his stand, and looks at resistance within Foucault and proposes that Foucault's genealogy of power is also a genealogy of resistance (p.107). Stating "in the norm-process, resistance comes first quite literally; resistance is what power works on and through" (p.104). Rather than insisting resistance is scarce, Nealon suggests that we could consider resistance as tied with power in our everyday, local level (p.106). The everyday is a place of "proliferation, saturation and intensification of power relations" and therefore of resistance (p.108). He suggests that Foucault's later work is an "intensification" or "extension" of this mid-1970s work in this regard (p.108).

It is important to remember that self-forming practices occur "within, not outside of, power relations" (McLaren, 2002, p.55). Therefore Foucault's discipline does not mean that the subject is a totally "subjected docile body" or completely "passive", but both active and passive (p.56).⁴¹ McLaren explains further by telling us Foucault's subjects are both "constituted by power" and "play an active role in their

⁴¹ "Subjects thus produced are likewise complex, both she who is speaking and she who is spoken of, both dominated and resisters, both constrained and enabled by various disciplines, practices, and institutions" (McLaren, 2002, p. 59).

own production” (p.58).⁴² “Discipline...functions ambivalently” (p.107). It both “enables and constrains” (p.59) within which one can both “be shaped” (p.56) and “limited” (p. 58). The subject is active within discipline and develops abilities, skills and strengths, and is also restricted by discipline, and can be “limited” and potentially “damaged” (p.58).

McLaren extends the view of Foucault’s body from a “social inscription model” e.g. “written on the body” (2002, p.105) to considering the disciplinary body as vacillating between “inscription, internalization and interpretation” (2002, p.106). She explains that these models better describe the complexities of a “body shaped through normalising disciplinary practices” and also able to “resist those practices” (p. 83). McLaren points to Foucault’s use of verbs in discussing the effect of power on the body, such as marked, engraved, moulded, shaped, trained, responds and increases its forces, and states that these verbs suggest “interplay between body and power” and an active body (p.106). She admits that Foucault would himself dislike the term ‘internalization’ but suggests it is useful to consider how Foucault describes a body produced by disciplinary power as able to become skilful and increase its forces (p.106). “Training and discipline”, repeating and taking actions on, fits a model of internalization rather than inscription (p.106).⁴³

McWhorter (2013), McLaren (2002) and Sawicki (1994) explain the differences between Foucault’s disciplinary power relations and domination or oppression. McWhorter considers Marilyn Frye’s use of the term oppression in feminist theory and asks if this can be accommodated in Foucault’s account of power (2013, p.54).⁴⁴ Following Iris M Young, McWhorter points out that oppression cannot have any one definition (pp.59-60). In addition she positions feminist claims of resistance and oppression as problematic, as it “holds us in the mind set of direct opposition to power whereas Foucault’s view is that we are always formed in networks of power and cannot directly oppose them” (p.55). This aligns Frye’s “double bind”, unable to move, “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” with Foucault’s idea of domination

⁴² McLaren argues to fully take account of Foucault’s ideas about subjectivity one needs to look across both his genealogical and his later works such as technologies of the self, which incorporates self constituting practices (2002, p. 60).

⁴³ McLaren overviews Foucault’s discussions of disciplinary space and refers to her own experience navigating disciplinary spaces during a hospital visit (2002, pp. 88-9). McLaren states “power operates through disciplines to normalise behaviour”, as a “widespread feature of all institutions in modern society” (2002, p.90).

⁴⁴ Marilyn Frye, (1983) “Oppression,” in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, edited by Marilyn Frye Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press.

(p.56). For Foucault, power relations are “mobile, reversible and unstable” where domination is a situation where one cannot move or alter the situation (2003/1994 p.34),⁴⁵ whereas McWhorter points out that Fyre suggests those oppressed “can take action” (2013, p.58).

Jana Sawicki agrees that Foucault’s power incorporates resistance or freedom, whereas domination allows no room for struggle (1994, p 310). Sawicki suggests agency within this model as “enactments of variation[s]” (p.301) within norms, such as “oppositional strategies and new forms of experience” (p.294) which is done, reminds Michael Kelly, at the level of practice (as cited in Sawicki, p.310). McLaren (2002) also puts forward that Foucault’s discipline is not domination since his account of power incorporates the potential for freedom. Without this potential would be, what Foucault would call a situation of domination (McLaren, 2002, p.49). She suggests it is a misreading of Foucault to suggest power as domination and as inescapable (pp.48-9) and points us to Foucault’s words, “Should it be said that one is always ‘inside’ power, [that] there is no ‘escaping it, [that] there is no absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is always subject to the law in any case?...*This would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships*” (as cited in McLaren, 2002, p. 49).

Feminists disagree on the usefulness of Foucault’s disciplinary work, and some struggle with what is seen as Foucault’s lack of attention to the gendered body (McLaren, 2002, p.17). It is pointed out that Foucault does not pay attention to differences between male and female disciplinary practices, and that when Foucault does talk specifically of a body disciplinary practice he uses male examples (p.17). Some feminists suggest, therefore, that Foucault has an androcentric focus and state he “neglects the issue of sexual difference” (p. 17).

Feminist theorists also hold concern over Foucault’s “refutation of universal norms” that support, for instance, the idea of the category of a female universal (McLaren, 2002, p.7). As McLaren points out, feminism is generally interested in assisting

⁴⁵ Foucault defines domination, “‘domination’ situations or states of dominations in which the power relations, instead of being mobile, allowing the various participants to adopt strategies to modifying them, remain blocked, frozen. When an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of power relations, immobilising them and preventing any reversibility of movement by economic, political, or military means one is faced with what may be called a state of domination”(2003/1994, p.27).

females where they are subordinate to males (p.19).⁴⁶ Therefore, some theorists find it necessary to propose the category of a female universal to provide a political grouping to argue from. Feminists who do employ Foucault's productive power tend to disagree with this, arguing as does McWhorter (2004), that the universal female is restrictive, while Butler suggests it runs the risk of replacing the male universal (1988).

McLaren (2002) suggests that feminists do make use of Foucault in considering disciplinary practices and the female body specifically. Sawicki summarises that feminists tend to do this in two ways: by exploring how women are situated as both "subjects and objects" through "norms and competencies"; and through a focus on ideas around domination and resistance (1994, pp. 290-1). Key theorists, such as Susan Bordo (anorexia), Sandra Lee Bartky (fitness, beauty) and Heyes (eating), use Foucault's discipline productively to address specific female embodied practices and experiences. McWhorter (counterwork), Butler (gender performativity), Heyes (transformation) and McLaren (relational embodied practice) incorporate Foucault's accounts of normativity into modes and models of practices that offer resistance or opportunity for difference.⁴⁷

The relational character of discipline and self-forming practices is inherently a social one, drawing on one's specific local embodied circumstances, cultural, historical and social contexts, and one's ongoing understandings and positionings within these contexts.⁴⁸ McLaren tells us that Foucault's genealogical work considers a subjectivity that sees the self and social as inclusive of each other (2002, p.59)⁴⁹

⁴⁶ McLaren reminds us that Foucault shares with many feminists an interest in "political interventions that are specific to the situation" (2002, p.50).

⁴⁷ Sandra Lee Bartky extends Foucault's discipline to investigate female identity and subjectivity particularly cosmetics, fashion, and incorporation of bodily norms, Susan Bordo applies Foucault's ideas to specificity of women's experiences, and explores ways "culture constructs and pathologies femininity" (p.94) in particular looking at hysteria, agoraphobia and anorexia (McLaren, 2002, pp. 94-7).

⁴⁸ McLaren points out Foucault's technologies of self includes "a view of self that is socially constituted and capable of autonomy and engaging in practices of freedom' and 'resistance'" (2002, p. 54).

⁴⁹ McLaren tells us for Foucault "power pervades the social body" (2002, pp.64).

Strategy as Agency: Butler

Judith Butler asks the question: how in Foucault's discipline does power both act upon a body and "craft and form" a body? (2004, p.183). She responds by situating disciplinary power as a strategy, which is productive and in constant activity as a network of relations (p.183). She puts forward that, within Foucault's disciplinary power, there is "the activity of a strategy, where the strategy consists of the activation of the materiality of the prison on and through, and in tension with, the materiality of the body" (p.186). Foucault refers to this process, she tells us, as a "moment, a site, a scene" (p.186). This "activity of a strategy" can be considered as Foucault's concept of agency (p.186). She says:

In the place of a theory of agency located *in* a subject, we are asked to understand, in different contexts, and through different venues, the way that power is compelled into a redirection by virtue of having the body as its vector and instrument...the conceptual point at issue here is to think agency in the very relation between power and bodies, as the continued activity of power as it changes course, proliferates, becomes more diffuse, through taking material form. (Butler, p.187)

Productive relationality, art and performance practices

How might such an agency and productiveness in body acts be explored? How might disciplinary frameworks which inform what the body can be and how it is understood be acknowledged? And how can performative exertions with difference be proposed? I look to a group of art and performance practices that explore a productive relationality between body and spaces, structures and sites, self and others.

These practices foreground a particular kind of agency within discipline and body. They acknowledge contexts and incorporate them in the very forming of the body and its positioning. Whether talked about by Amelia Jones as chiasmic foldings in Bruce Nauman's studio activities, or as passive provocations and performing space in VALIE EXPORT'S Configurations, or as revealing home limits in the performances of Mare Tralla, bodies and contexts develop and operate in relation to each other. Laresa Kosloff's spatial and temporal discipline of the body emphasises that body acts require support, props and assistance, while Alicia Frankovich's stalled body gives over responsibility to another to move. Both Kosloff's and

Frankovich's practices show us Butler's point, that body acts are "not one's act alone" alone and require support and assistance to come forth at all (Butler, 1988, p.525). Butler (2015) also tells us that norms circulate us, acting on us from all sides, informing our thinking and our feeling. This circling is performed in Chris Braddock's *Repeating Silence 4* (2015), which holds us physically, impressing upon us in a productive sensing where we cannot get to any 'whole'.

These practices work with the body/subject, scenes, and others and incorporate them in ways that reveal, think differently, form and transform. They do this through various modes of action and record, finding ways to 'materialise' these acts. Here, body/subjects are positioned as McWhorter's "becoming", and as always in process relationally in the contexts in which they develop and operate (McLaren). They are active within norms (McLaren) and in these body power relations their acts materialise forming (Butler).

Bruce Nauman

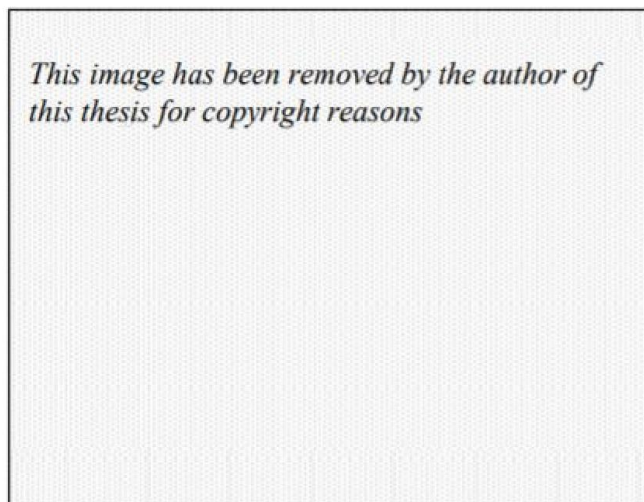


Figure 43. Bruce Nauman (1968), *Wall-Floor Positions* 60 minutes, black & white, sound.

Bruce Nauman's drawings, sculptural objects and video performances of body tasks in the studio during the 1960s explore questions of how body can be located or

positioned in space.⁵⁰ These are physical, material, temporal and spatial disciplinary questions; body paces around the perimeter of a square, takes up positions between the floor and wall, or by implication is held in place by a wedge or some other form of device. Body is measured, and this very act performs as critical method, materialised into cast and constructed objects and structures, such as works which cast from arm to ear, or the space under a chair. Body also becomes a self-reflexive questioning as Nauman pinches his neck, squeezes his thighs, and bounces his testicles.

Using what is available demands turning to one's resources and contexts in useful ways. Whether the studio here for Nauman, or contextualising spaces for feminist practices which critique, for instance women and labour such as the kitchen in Martha Rosler's video *Semiotics of a kitchen* (1975), the contextual 'scene' can be incorporated in/as the work. For Nauman this entails the artist in the studio 'doing' work, or in the case of *Body Pressure* (1974), the art viewing context. The incorporation of local contexts that one is forming and functioning in recognises, as McNay and McLaren point out, agency as occurring within normative frameworks rather than being external to them.

Of particular interest here is Nauman's video works of body acts that propose a relational questioning between body and site in ways that work into disciplinary frameworks and reveal a contingency. This relational questioning is considered in Nauman's *Wall-Floor Positions* (1968) and *Body Pressure* (1974). These works involve the artist body or instructions given by the artist to another.⁵¹ They are task-related, involving the body in a specific activity and, like many routine tasks, they work with the context given and use what is at hand.⁵²

Nauman in *Wall-Floor Positions* (1968) explores a relational questioning. Taking up and holding a sequence of different positions in relation to the wall and floor, such as standing, leaning, bending, sitting and so on, Nauman, according to Slifkin, explores

⁵⁰ "The camera becomes a "touching" eye – caressing, truncating, and inverting the artist's body – measuring and situating it against the architecture of the studio" (Snyder in Slifkin 2002, p.8). Slifkin also suggests Nauman associated video with privacy (p.24).

⁵¹ See also *Instructions for a mental exercise*, which according to Slifkin (2002, p16), were written in 1969 and are the "foundation for the two 'floor melding' videos".

⁵² As has been often told, Nauman just out of art school had a studio and little else, and so resorted to his body and studio to make work.

body and physical barriers in such a way as to “incorporate the subject” (2012, p.31).⁵³ What I think Slifkin is referring to here is a productive relational agency that Butler recognises within Foucault’s disciplinary body. Incorporating context, Nauman and the wall and floor are not outside of norms, but explore a productive relational exertion into them. Nauman’s body exertions, and equally those that can be thought of in terms of the force exerted by the wall and floor, are in relation to each other, in the process of forming and producing meaning of each other. Nauman questions what the floor and wall are in relation to his body and, in turn, what his body is and can be in relation to these sites. Like McWhorter’s discussions of counterwork, Nauman, in this sequence of body acts asks questions of these structures and frameworks and proposes “alternative systems of meaning” (McWhorter, 1999, p.199) through thinking the possibilities of himself and the wall and the floor differently. In doing this Nauman remains, as McWhorter puts it, always ‘becoming’, continually developing within disciplinary frameworks.

This productive relationality can be thought about as an interrelational process that incorporates a phenomenological sensuous dimension. Amelia Jones (2010) discusses these works and Nauman’s *Failing to levitate in the studio* (1966) as enacting hinges. Jones explains this relational notion as similar to Marcel Duchamp’s *infra thin* which is “a *process* that implicates the passage of one possibility to another”, and links the body and its surrounds, giving the example of a warm vacated seat (p.148). These examples of Nauman’s work, whether propositions or performances, explore “interrelations among bodies, subjects and spaces” (p.149) in the process of producing each other (p.146).

Jones discusses the relational production in Nauman’s work through Merleau-Ponty’s chiasm where the concept of the body is opened up into a continually negotiated encounter with the world. Vivian Sobchack explains this as my body is able to perceive and express, and at the same time to be an object for others to perceive and express. In this I am both subject and object (1992).⁵⁴

⁵³ “Nauman’s distinctive concern with barriers (walls, floors, and screens) marshalling them as sites to be transcended and yet which can also incorporate the subject” (Slifkin, 2012, p.31)

⁵⁴ “...the idea of the *chiasm*, that is: every relation with being is *simultaneously* a taking and a being taken, the hold is held, it is and inscribed in the same being that it takes hold of.” (Merleau-Ponty, (1968/1975), p.266).

Jones (2010, p.156) discusses the chiasm as an “interrelated opening” in Nauman’s *Body Pressure* (1974). This work consists of a set of instructions on the wall so the audience can press their body into, and remove the wall, contesting, as Jones points out, art audience, art work and site divisions (pp.153-5). Such productive relationality points to particular audience encounters incorporated in *Practices of Use*. Like *Body Pressure*, *Floorpress*, for instance, focuses on the relational opening between bodies and floor to point to a contingency in processes of locating and positioning subjects, which involves wider scene and audiences.

For tasks such as *Floorpress* to work, in order to think oneself differently, one needs to believe in them. Nauman explains his attitude in a 1970 interview with Willoughby Sharp:

If you really believe in what you’re doing and do it as well as you can, then there will be a certain amount of tension- if you are honestly getting tired...there is a certain sympathetic response in someone who is watching you (Nauman & Kraynak, 2003,p.148).

We can learn something about how Nauman might go about believing in these tasks through considering the set of instructions⁵⁵ he leaves for his audience in *Body Pressure* (1974):⁵⁶

Body Pressure

Body Pressure

Press as much of the front surface of your body (palms in or out, left or right cheek) against the wall as possible.

Press very hard and concentrate.

⁵⁵ Allan Kaprow’s *Help is always welcome* (1990) instructional text points to discipline and the individual body as between us, friends propose and move her, and instructions contain the idea of ‘right directions’. “A woman agreed that she needed guidance. Her friends proposed to give it by moving her in the right directions. So she just stood and waited to be moved. Her friends had a discussion and decided on some right directions for her; that is, out the door, down the stairs, along a river... They moved her by pulling, shoving, dragging, and carrying her in the right directions. They set aside some days for this, as their decisions were quite serious. And, naturally, there were some disagreements. But the woman was patient and just waited until they agreed on what to do”.

⁵⁶ Jones (2010, p.145) says this is printed on a pink sheet of paper in plain font. “The artist plays the role of directing the visitor to press her or his body into the gallery wall: the three elements involved in what we call ‘art’ are co-articulated in an almost violent intertwining”.

Form an image of yourself (suppose you had just stepped forward) on the opposite wall pressing back against the wall very hard.

Press very hard and concentrate on the image pressing very hard.

(the image of pressing very hard)

Press your front surface and back surface toward each other and begin to ignore or block the thickness of the wall. (remove the wall)

Think how various parts of your body press against the wall; which parts touch and which do not.

Consider the parts of your back which press against the wall; press hard and feel how the front and back of your body press together.

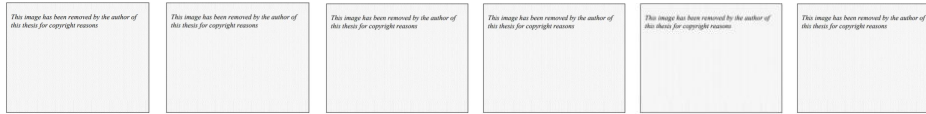
Concentrate on tension in the muscles, pain where bones meet, fleshy deformations that occur under pressure; consider body hair, perspiration, odors (smells).

This may become a very erotic exercise. (as cited in Jones, 2010, p.145).

Nauman says it for us, “remove the wall”. Notice the stair-casing of instructions, starting with the immediately do-able “press all of front of body into the wall” to the more conceptually complex, “press your front surface and back surface toward each other”. Notice the demand to concentrate, the press, imaging, and help with removing the wall: “begin to ignore or block the thickness of the wall”. This work reveals Nauman’s instructional process of body and site incorporation. It is a set of instructions intended to ‘work’. It recognises a felt bodily presence, “perspiration, odors...erotic” for instance; it recognises the discipline of the wall (the need to press hard) and it opens out an opportunity, a space for the body-wall relation to be thought differently (remove the wall).

What Nauman’s detailed instructions demonstrate is how one’s local embodied contexts can provide the resources to think one self differently. McLaren and McWhorter show us agency is to be found in locating contingencies within one’s circumstances rather than outside of them. Nauman explores agency as the relational productive strategy that Butler locates as between developing body/subjects and their contexts.

VALIE EXPORT



Figures 44. VALIE EXPORT, Body Configuration Series (1972-1976)

There is a kind of agency at work in VALIE EXPORT'S *Body Configuration Series* (1972-1976). EXPORT acts, inserting and shaping in public space, as her body bends, folds, aligning in similar ways to the architectural structures, kerbs, steps and ground she performs into and with. In these activities EXPORTS body acts explore a situated and embodied agency and draw on readings of passivity, intervention and exertion.

Feminist discussions of agency in Foucault's discipline make it clear that the body/subject is active in its production. This activeness, as McLaren and Heyes point out, is conditioned by a disciplinary double effect of enabling and restricting. *Body Configurations* reveal contingency in body/subject positionings through working into parameters and limits, through vacillations of passivity and confrontation in ways that acknowledge and incorporate questions about gender and agency.

Amy Herzog discusses *Body Configurations Series* as "confrontational passivity" (2015, p.91). She situates acts by Yoko Ono (*Cut Piece*, 1965), EXPORT (*Touch Cinema*, 1968), and *Body Configurations*, 1970s) as "feminist work" that explores both confrontation and vulnerability as "political tools" (p.91). Both Ono and EXPORT perform encounters that foreground gender constructions (p.86). For instance, performances of acquiescence acknowledge participation in such constructions and propose opportunities to perform differently (p.86). They do this by drawing attention to our own and others' "materiality" as a "tactic", which may be put to use "disrupting existing systems" (p.91). Ono and EXPORT'S practices work across a "pliancy" and "confrontational passivity" which open up these spaces' meanings in a "mutual vulnerability" (p.83). Herzog reads this as a "political strategy" that works into questions of agency (p.89).

Body Configurations Series explores a relationally productive questioning between body, things and spaces and others, provoking performative “enactments of variation[s]” (Sawicki, 1994, p. 310). Consider lying along the kerb, crossing the road on your knees with bottom in the air, folding your body up the stairs, stretching out along the curve of the road. These are public acts in public scenes, performing as do the architectural balustrades, line markings and architectural walls that EXPORT works into. One speaks to the other and the other speaks back in constant negotiation. In doing this, these body acts carry a sense of personal effort and potential risk.

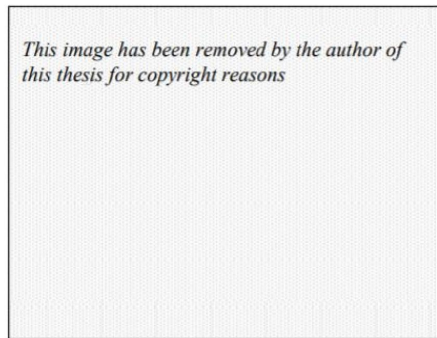


Figure 45. VALIE EXPORT, (1976) *Aufstellung*

In *Aufstellung* (1976, street crossing configuration) EXPORT is bent over with bottom in the air moving across a street crossing. Gender situates as part and parcel of this provocation. We can see passersby looking on, reminding us that body acts are inherently social practices that carry the risk of being attended to. EXPORT’S alignments point to French sociologist Marcel Mauss’s essay ‘Techniques of the body’, which discusses body movements and gestures as a “constant adaption” of assembled actions through education and society rather than through the individual alone (2005/1936, p.74). Mauss stresses the role of education in body techniques, for instance learning polite and impolite ways of sitting at the table, and suggests there is an emphasis on composure, which Mauss calls a “retarding mechanism” (p.76) that inhibits “disorderly movements” (p.75).

EXPORT speaks back to such training, implicating the disciplinary scene and sociality inherent in gendering body acts. Markus Hallensleben (2009) discusses

EXPORT'S body configurations, and suggests that EXPORT performs "alterable public space" as a series of feminist acts (p.30). Discussing the significance of EXPORT in Austrian Body Art, Hallensleben draws our attention to Ulrike Muller's *Mock Rock. Austria* (2004). In this three minute super eight footage transferred to video, a woman's body "encounters the stone", a large rock on the side of the road, accompanied by singing "I am a rock, I am an island" (p.39). Hallensleben (p.40) links EXPORT'S performing possibilities within public space to Muller's body act, and to Butler's gender performativity, and also to Merleau-Ponty, who states, "space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the positing of things becomes possible" (cited by Hallensleben p. 46). EXPORT'S insistence in these proposals of modifying body and space taking place in specific circumstances, reminds us, as McLaren (2004) points out, that Foucault's processes of becoming subjects always occurs in social relational frameworks, and can therefore potentially contribute to social and political change.

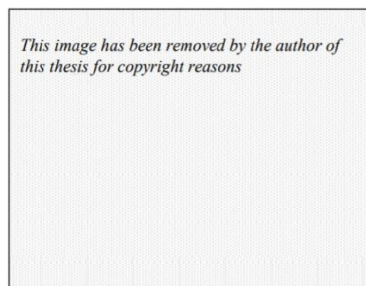
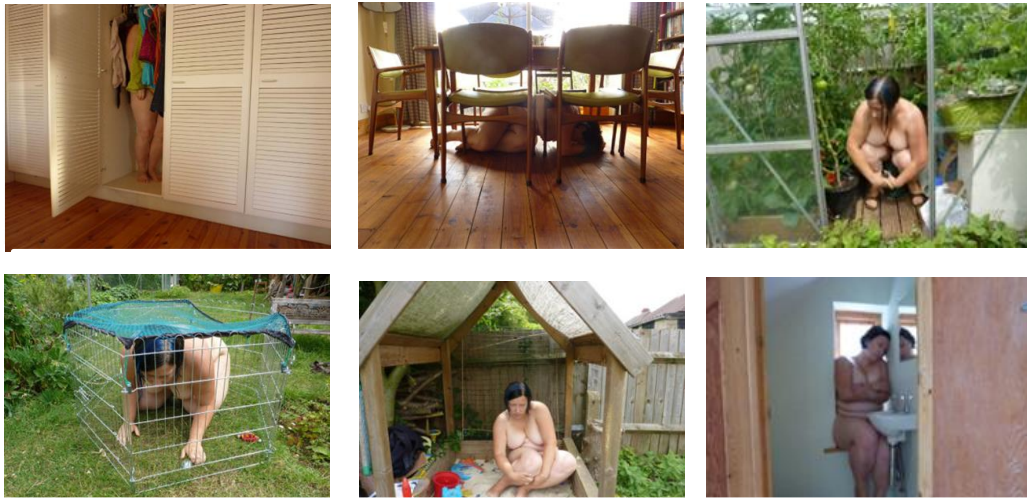


Figure 46. Ulrike Muller, (2004) *Mock Rock*, 3 minutes. Super8 film transferred to video.

Mare Tralla



Figures 47, Mare Tralla, (2010-2011), *Written into Space*. Photo series.

Mare Tralla's *Written into space* (2010-11) explores home limits through relational body and site questioning in performances done privately in her home. Squished into cupboards, play pen, glasshouse, bathroom spaces, and under beds and tables, Tralla (n.d) responds to a point in her life when her struggle to fit in with normative family life needed acknowledgment.

Jeffrey Nealon explains Foucault's normativity as an everyday practice that equally includes opportunities to counter or resist (2008, p.102-6). Working in home and public contexts, Tralla states that "the most important aspect of feminist art is its critical relationship with everyday social reality" (Kreivyte, Sarkisyan, Tralla, & Varblane, 2014, p.60). In what she calls "lived moment(s)" Tralla makes herself "visible" through unconventional dress, "disregarding taboo's", and exerting into norms (Kreivyte et al., 2014, p.60) For instance, in "alien peasant women" wearing felt boots walking along the street (p.60), the reactions of passersby influence Tralla's performances. She finds the everyday context has "political potential" through such "provocation and interactivity", whereas the gallery audience in expecting the "act of art" (p.60) can "de-politicise" her actions (p.66).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Oxana Sarkisyan in the same conversation makes the point art institutions "function as specially allocated places for the representation of the marginal and the excluded...but they neutralise the political contents, focusing the attention on the formal qualities of the work...activists tend to prefer cultural and symbolic spaces to the neutrality of the white cube [which] can be either public or private spaces" (Kreivyte et al., 2014, p.60).

Tralla contests the usefulness of thinking in terms of public and private, stating that there are no clear demarcations. Butler (1988) also suggests that relegating certain experiences or issues to the personal can marginalise the political effectiveness of one's actions. Tralla points out the meaning of public and private are culturally, socially and politically complex. For instance, she shares that after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s women in Estonia could become housewives if they wanted (whereas previously they could not), and through this the "private sphere became visible" (p. 63).⁵⁸ Tralla suggests personal experience is always embedded in social circumstances and issues; therefore while her work may draw or situate within the personal, it is always speaking about wider political concerns. In this she interrogates the political content of these terms for her own practice. For instance, Tralla tells us the term public in her practice references to how accessible her work is rather than a physical space (Kreivyte et al., 2014, p.60). Tralla's gives the example of how her private home performances, such as *Secondhand love stories* (1996) or *Written into space* (2010-11), are made public through online access (p. 67).

Nauman's, Tralla's and EXPORT'S body acts are in process, relationally producing themselves and their forming contexts in ways that both acknowledge local embodied circumstances and exert into them. They manifest self-forming practices that draw attention, reveal and counter. Tralla brings our attention to the limits of home through revealing what Nealon describes as normative and resistance practices being 'tied together'. Nauman removing the wall enacts Butler's material relational strategy in ways that incorporate a phenomenological sensuousness, an embodied feeling, and knowing. EXPORT's configurations in public space counterperform, finding the resources, as McWhorter suggests one can, in her own embodied contexts to perform "enactments of variation[s]" (Sawicki, 1994, p 310). These self-forming practices reveal the disciplinary body as active in its production, and agency as an ongoing relational and productive activity between forming body and its contexts. Next we will look at Laresa Kosloff's and Alicia Frankovich's performances, which reveal that body acts require assistance and support and are not our work alone, and Chris Braddock's relational experience of being sensed and sensing.

⁵⁸ Tralla (p.63) states, "making critical feminist art about private issues in the 1990s was not the easiest choice [this has changed] far more female (feminist) artists now ... use public spaces for radical actions" (Kreivyte et al., 2014, p.60).

Laresa Kosloff



Figure 48. Laresa Kosloff (2007) *New Diagonal* Video production still, 3:00 duration.



Figure 49. Laresa Kosloff (2007) *New Diagonal* Plinth, painted dowel sticks and television monitor.

Laresa Kosloff's *Standard Run* (2007) and *New Diagonal* (2007) explore body acts as disciplinary and performative. We are shown spatial and temporal disciplinary attention as the body is moved and shaped into sequences and alignments. Training, examination and documentation follow one another, drawing upon references to normative procedures of measure and analysis. In *Standard Run* for instance, the sports-like setting references a place of practice where one might work on developing a certain skill. A painted soccer net in the background references Eadward Muybridge's use of the grid to measure, evaluate and contribute to disciplinary norms and standards.

While pointing to the spatial and temporal dimensions of body acts, these practices draw our attention to two things. Firstly that body acts are performative, that they reiterate and can be done differently; and secondly that body acts are social practices that require support and assistance. In *New Diagonal* (2007), a triangular structure supports and shapes Kosloff's body as she practises moving into a 'new' position. The video records Kosloff's repeated efforts and varying attempts and successes at holding this new positioning, which is only available due to her effort in training and the prop itself. In these performances Kosloff draws on physical relationships between props and bodies in early comedic films by Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. She draws out a "slapstick methodology" from an analysis of "techniques, tendencies, attitudes" in these early films and explores the temporal and spatial qualities of physical humour located in the body (2010, p. 12). Here, Kosloff's

slapstick methodology, as physical humour located in the body, “talk[s] back” (Heyes, 2007, p.vii) to processes of disciplinary training to reveal that, as Sawicki suggests, body acts can performatively “enact” “variation[s]” (Sawicki, 1994, p. 310).



Figure 50. Laresa Kosloff (2007) *Standard Run* Super 8 transferred to video, 1:36 duration.



Figure 51. Laresa Kosloff (2011) *Agility Drill* HD Video (silent), 5.45 duration.

Standard Run and *New Diagonal* reveal body acts, as Butler tells us, require assistance and supports, and are “not one’s act alone” (1988, p. 525). In *Standard Run* (2007), Kosloff manipulates her performance partner (Alicia Frankovich) into a series of poses that emulate running, shifting from staccato movements, to both performers running on the spot. There is a physical slapstick humour in this assisted training, with legs and arms moving not quite in sync. Kosloff points out that in *Standard Run* what is made evident are the differences between how each performs their run (2010, p.63). Butler tells us that “all actions require support” (2014). These may be architectural, material, spatial, and also “social conditions and conventions” (2014). An action has a temporal dimension, and a relationality, it takes place with and for someone or something. It requires a...social world, “to come forth as performance at all” (2014).

In *Agility Drill* (2011), Kosloff explores this sociality, working across shifting modes of performance and screen in a gallery context. Performed at Anna Schwartz Gallery, Kosloff moves her co performer in *Agility Drill* over the hurdle like props. Charlotte Day (2011) suggests the “out of sync” “arms and legs” and “protracted and clumsy process of learning” in this training reference Buster Keaton comedies, and that a

similar fragmentation of body movement is echoed in the video of the performance which points to Muybridge's human movement studies.

The hurdles and video performance remain in the gallery space, as do sport-like rods protruding on the plinth supporting the screening monitor in *New Diagonal*. These props, as in the kinetoscope and my up-turned monitor in *Attach to the bottom of things* (2017), work to continue to locate an embodied audience.

Alicia Frankovich



Figures 52. Alicia Frankovich, (2009) *A Plane for Behavers*. First two photographs taken by Sam Hartnet.

Alicia Frankovich's *A Plane for Behavers* (2009) tests out a relationality that we might call, following Butler, "ethical" (2015, p.11). What Butler suggests is that all body's require (although may not get) support. This is a social request, and implicates each of us in regard to each other's possible positionings. In *A Plane for Behavers*, Frankovich's body is mobilised by the actions of others. Her body is harnessed and held suspended by the gallery director, as well as held and passed around by participants/audience for about an hour at the opening event. A recording of the performance is also screened on television monitors held on the lap of rostered participants.

Alicia Frankovich's work assists *Practices of Use* to consider critically how art and performance contexts and audiences can be invoked in relational ethical questioning. In *A Plane for Behavers* (2009), participants/audience are inherently involved in Frankovich's body acts. She states that her body becomes a "sculptural problem" for which she hands over "responsibility" to the viewer (2011, Boenzi & Frankovich

p.75).⁵⁹ Intertwined in the activities that make up the performance, the audience's responsibility for Frankovich is both the risk and testing in the work, and draws upon and works into the social scenes that art and performance contexts offer.

Her stalled body also points to what Butler describes as body acts losing their aim and temporal sequence. Butler, with reference to Walter Benjamin, refers to an example of 'denaturalism' in Franz Kafka's literary work in which a "leg no longer functions but has to be lifted and placed on a surface" (2014). Body movements and parts losing their aim become what Butler calls an "incomplete performance" which can draw our attention to the "utterly usual", and "utterly wrong" (2014).

Frankovich's request, whether in gallery performances, or in encounters with published images and documents, incorporates 'us' in her stalled 'incomplete' body in ways that point out we are already involved; that is, how the body/subject moves (or not) and the positions it takes up (or not) is implicitly social.⁶⁰

These performances of stalled body acts have a relationship to Frankovich's earlier years of training to be a professional gymnast. In an interview with Francesca Boenzi (2011, p.63) Frankovich tells us about her childhood experiences striving for perfect routines and having weaknesses exposed. She explains, "Gymnastics was an authoritative body over mine" (p.63). This training has informed her thinking in performance about body, object, space, architecture and movement, and explorations of "the shortfalls of the body" and body object relationships in terms of "apparatuses" (p.63). During the New Zealand National Championships in 1992 Frankovich shares, "I failed to perform my tricks and ran away from my coach, and from the sport...I did not want to keep training in yet another area of my life and I didn't want to perform for people" (p.63). She tells us that art allows "doing something badly" as a "research focus, or a method" and suggests that she has, to some degree, taken on the gallery as the gym (p.66). This critical incorporation of use value in how art and performance audiences and contexts could assist Frankovich

⁵⁹ Frankovich explains "...*A Plane for Behavers*, which included, among others, a piece where a gallery crowd received my body as a 'sculptural problem', taking responsibility for it (me) during the exhibition opening. This piece was played out in a new form every day of the exhibition, with one-hour 'sittings', in which four people held monitors on their laps showing footage of the performance from the four corners of the gallery. For the viewer my gesture was doubled: the human being holding the monitor echoed the footage of the crowd holding my body aloft, and for those who had been at the opening, their encounter with a body was re-presented and reworked" (Boenzi & Frankovich, 2011, p.75).

⁶⁰ See Irit Rogoff's challenge to rethink participation and involvement in each other's positioning's as "already implicated". Rogoff references this idea back to Foucault's subjectification in Irit Rogoff, (2011) *Looking Away - Participating Singularities*, Ontological Communities.

in her questioning assists my decision to ask for similar assistance in *Practices of Use*. In *A Plane for Behavers* (2009), Frankovich's 'failure' is thought differently by revealing embodied disciplinary routines and training, not as a performance of gymnastic skill and aptitude, but as a "talk[ing] back", (Heyes, 2007, p.vii) where Frankovich's ethical requests work into a wider "systematic whole" (Jackson, p.2011).

Chris Braddock



Figures 53. Chris Braddock, (2015) *Repeating Silence 4*.

Chris Braddock's *Repeating Silence 4* (2015) is a performance with livestream video that I encounter through online video.⁶¹ Braddock is standing in the middle of a busy walkway alongside a river bank in inner-city Melbourne. He stands with his eyes shut, while a camera moves slowly around him, in a loose rhythm, ebbing forward and slightly backwards in each move. As I watch *Repeating Silence 4* it locates me relentlessly in what feels like a seemingly singular 'physical' movement of circling and being circled. During this encounter I am not able to map any entirety of the paths, passersby, journeys or conversations that appear and leave in this circling.

I am interested here in the detailed normative productive swirling, as excerpts are 'heard' and 'seen', in momentary 'touches': *motor bike accelerates, deaccelerates, announcements, a race perhaps? breathing, a bird, mummy, move out a bit, just a weeny bit chilly, cough, bikes, birds, boats, be careful ok, (your eyes are shut) life going on around, all this movement, few years ago, only you have this, even manually, kids, music, maybe silence, birds, talking, yeah I know, wind, laughter,*

⁶¹ Repeating Silence 4, 2.30-3.00pm 11 Oct 2015, performance with live stream video, in 'Performing Mobilities', performance location riverside by Federation Square, RMIT & VCA, Melbourne. Camera: Travis Cox, <http://www.christopherbraddock.com/artworks/repeating-silence-2015/#more>
11.11 vimeo clip

groups of noise, dog barks, yeah yeah, maybe we could just ride over, yeah, wheels, pram, cell phone, I didn't bring, get you there, ok cool, bye

Like these excerpts, I am not able to grasp any 'whole'. I am not able to do this because a certain physicality 'holds' me in this productive forming. Scenes circle 'us', mundane, happenstance, vulnerable, and hold us in this relentless knowing and unknowing, 'not getting to', or rather being held, as Butler might call it, "partially undone" (2015, p.16). Norms, Butler says, "circulate" us, they "act on us from all sides...they act upon a sensibility at the same time they form it; they lead us to feel in certain ways", they inform our thinking and feeling (p.5). We are continually being formed, and our "'own self-fashioning'" becomes part of that ongoing formative process" (p.6), which Butler suggests we can think about as a simultaneous "acting on and acting" (p.6).

Butler tells us we need to understand "chiasmic conditions" of the subject's "formation" and the ethical within this relationality (2015, p.16). She incorporates Merleau-Ponty's chiasm to situate the subject as produced through a "matrix of relations", which includes "the sensuous conditions of being sensed and sensing" (p.11). She explains that this process is always in relation to "encountering the condition of otherness" (p.16) and points out that in these relations we are not "simply formed" nor "fully self-forming", rather "still being formed" (p.6). Butler extends Foucault's norms through a phenomenological sensing, which she describes as the "relational dimensions of embodiment: passion, desire, touch...the sensuous conditions of being sensed and sensing ...that continues even in the most self-sufficient postures of thought" (2015, p.11). Butler refers us to Merleau-Ponty when she states, "the possibility of touching and being touched [is] a condition that actively structures what it also makes possible" (p. 37). Our seeing and touching "recoil" and "imply one another". She concludes, "we are thus always, in some way, done to as we are doing...as Merleau-Ponty insisted, touched, invariably, in the act of touching" (2015, p.62).

A productive, relational and ethical experience of being sensed and sensing is encountered in Braddock's *Repeating Silence 4*. Butler's elaboration of the spatial and temporal dimensions of norms, as "groupings [that] circulate" us (2015, p. 5) are "already at work" (p.6) informing our thinking and feeling. Detailed excerpts of sound and scenes and collateral experiences collide, compressing, releasing and forming us, in a phenomenological 'tactility', also evident in the detailed excerpts, sounds and scenes of my hallway and the Institute's floor in *Floorpress*. Like Braddock with his eyes shut, and Frankovich's stalled body, with my face to the wall or the floor I am not able to, and do not want to control, but rather to propose an ethical request of being flat on the ground, attached to the bottom of things, or fixed to a point.

Carrie Noland (2009) also refers us to Merleau-Ponty, pointing out that his notion of body as "*structuring*" as well as "*structured*" recognises a kinaesthetic focus, which can provide a "glimpse" of the body as "a structuring force" (p.49). Noland notes that Merleau-Ponty found Mauss's essay *Techniques of the body* important because, "it shows even the deepest, most private introceptive experience cannot be considered a solipsistic event ... it is the result of a social process" (p.47) and "it predicates kinesthesia-the introceptive experience of one's own moving body – on intersubjective relations involving a tactile, aural, or visual contact with the body of another" (p.48).⁶² Noland develops the notion "performative gestures" (2009, p.16) which, following Butler, can "signify and accomplish" (Noland, 2009, p.2) and suggests that felt sensation in the body – kinaesthesia – can exert pressure on understandings and bring innovations (p.2).⁶³

Through remaining in an insistent instantiating of Braddock, passerby, scene, and future audiences, *Repeating Silence 4* exerts a kind of 'collaborative' felt pressure, which can be thought about as structuring and structured that requires our relational "tactile, aural" and "visual" touching (Noland, 2009, p.48). Braddock with eyes shut,

⁶² Noland (2009) also makes the point that every act, no matter how 'personal' one may situate it, is inherently social. Through Marcel Mauss's work on gestures as culturally embodied ways of moving, Noland explores how the body "becomes a social fact" (Noland p.19 citing Mauss). Situating the "I cans" and "acquisitions" a body takes on as "habitus" Mauss, Noland tells us, reflects well the "temporality" of the "sudden ownership of a capacity" which is "always one's own" and "something one obtains" (p. 24).

⁶³ Performative gestures as iterative acts involve "re-enactment" and "re-experiencing" of social understandings, and Noland points out we can gain "a critical distance" through "re-experiencing a meaning" (2009, p.191). In this Noland suggests we can develop understanding of how our acts both produce and support meaning (p.191).

practices a kind of private introspection in public. But there is no subject, no distinct and completed 'self' or 'whole', ourselves included, to be found here, rather it is social relational forming which passersby, and further audiences, continue to both not access and instantiate at the same time. As Butler states, "Acted on, I act still, but it is hardly this 'I' that acts alone, and even though, or precisely because, it never quite gets done with being undone" (2015, p.16).

Summary: Practices

These practices work across various modes of art and performance to explore body acts as self-forming practices, which can reveal, transform, and think one's self differently. Two main themes emerge: firstly, productive relational body/subject and contexts as relationally forming; and secondly, body acts as performative, disciplinary and social practices, which require self and social work, assistance and supports. Across these examples self-forming practices point to contingencies within subject/body understandings.

Nauman draws out an embodied, sensuous, phenomenological interrelatedness, as body and wall and audiences press into each other, thinking each other differently. EXPORT 'speaks back' through self-forming configuration practices that locate an embodied agency through finding and revealing resources for contingency in our embodied understandings. As Nealon suggests, Tralla finds that normative practices within our everyday can have wrapped within them inherent modes of resistance. These practices incorporate local embodied circumstances and reveal a contingency within this relational productivity by remaining in processes of subjects and contexts forming.

Kosloff explores body acts as performative and disciplinary social practices that require assistance and support and can enact difference, and Frankovich insists on our responsibility for her stalled body, pointing out that all bodies require support. These relational, ethical requests of body/subject positionings and understandings are further situated by Braddock as a phenomenological sensing that remain in an instantiating becoming.

Through modes of self and social work – incorporating contexts, insisting the personal is social, and remaining in processes of forming – these practices propose a relational questioning where Butler finds agency is the “activity of a strategy” of a productive constant materialising within a network of relations (2004, p.183). This relational activity, extended through phenomenological ‘touch’, acknowledges feeling and thinking as we are in continual process of instantiation. As Butler suggests, these are ethical relations where all bodies require, although may not get, support. This is a social request, and implicates each of us in regard to each other’s possible positionings.

These practices work with the body/subject, and wider social scenes and incorporate them in ways that reveal, think differently, form and transform. They do this through various modes of action and record, finding ways to ‘materialise’ these acts. Here, body/subjects are positioned as McWhorter’s “becoming”, and are always in process relationally in the contexts in which they develop and operate (McLaren). They are active within norms (McLaren) and in these body power relations their acts take material form (Butler).

The final section explores decision-making in *Practices of Use*, so as to be able to act and exert, acknowledge and work into personal histories of discipline of the female in the home. This is done through a focus on self-forming practices that incorporate local embodied contexts to counter, reveal, and think myself differently and remain *becoming* within normative frameworks.

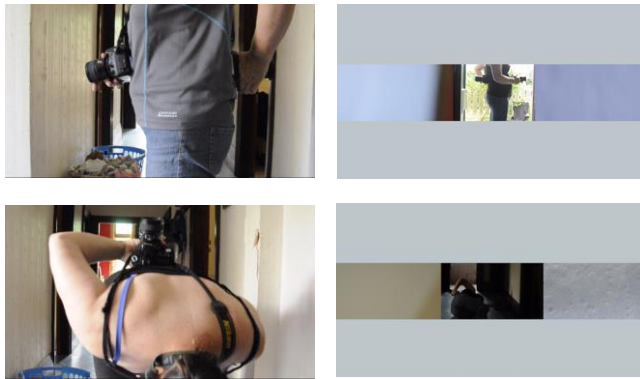
Acknowledge and act

I return to the questions—How do I acknowledge and act? What is the ‘work’ here? Central to this project’s significance is that body acts are relational and social practices that acknowledge local embodied circumstances. Body acts as shared relational practice proposes two significant questions for this project. How can I acknowledge these circumstances and exert into them to develop modes to think myself differently, reveal and counter and, as an associated question: how do I situate these body acts as not mine alone?

In answering these questions, I return to Butler's suggestion to think agency as a relation between body and contexts, or as my practices propose, between scenes and exertion. I think about the contingency offered by McWhorter's (1999) emphasis on remaining in the process of becoming within normative frameworks. I embrace McLaren's (2002) emphasis on local embodied circumstances, and that "subjects cannot be divorced from the contexts in which they develop and operate" (p.84). My training tasks develop to incorporate contexts as critically involved in the ongoing processes a subject is forming and functioning in. In doing this they require a reconsideration of how technology can assist me in this relational productive questioning.

Embodied lens

In considering 'how I might act', Carrie Noland's reference to the body exerting pressure encourages me to think about what my body is capable of in my practicing. In *Floorpress* I feel the floor with my body and I can understand myself as producing the floor. Productiveness, as we have seen in Foucault's discipline, involves body, surfaces, structures and sites, relationally working across and into each other, spatially and temporally. I develop how to incorporate these relational productive complexities between body and contexts through embodied lenses. Held onto my body, the outward facing lenses seem to 'feel' or sense the relational contexts and body as forming, and acknowledge both the individual and the social within these processes.



Figures 54. Ruth Myers (2016) *Training, embodied lens*.

In the hallway and at the front door, I hold the two cameras with me as I practice bending over, turning, crawling and swaying. The cameras assist me as I move in thinking about space shaping me through and via each lens. I realise that what I am looking for is located between myself, my body exertion, and the wider scene. This is where the productive pressure and materialising strategy is at work. Now the cameras are of use as disciplinary tools, and for recording the performative scene of body, space and architecture. Body and context can remain in process, shaping and reshaping.



Figure 55. Ruth Myers, (2009) *Hand/glove walking*

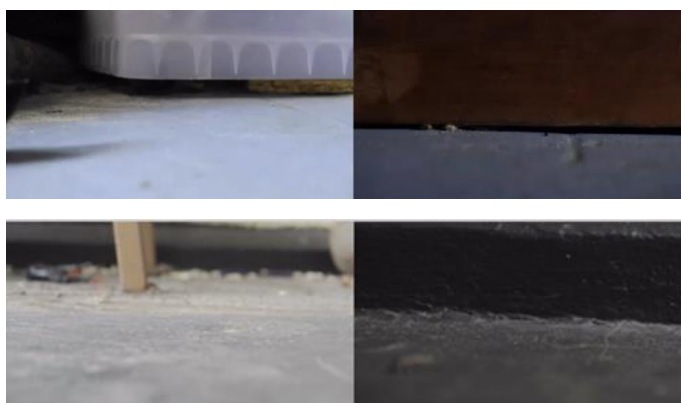
Noland's reference to Merleau-Ponty returned my method to holding the cameras as I had done in my Masters project, *Performing the Loop* (2010). In this earlier project,

the lens held with me explores body as a continual chiasmic opening. In *Hand/glove walking* (2010),

the lens, held in close to my body by my other hand, became a crucial tool to physically and conceptually fold, the subject object loop of my body/self. The resultant images or stills selected out of images taken within the activity, perform the lens from this embodied, spatial, and physically (rather than visually) prioritised positioning (Myers, 2010, p.10).

These ‘forming’ embodied lenses assist me to incorporate the contexts the body/subject is forming and functioning in. McLaren recognises this relationship acknowledges one’s own embodied circumstances (2002 p.80), and reminds us that self-forming activities are inherently social practices, which “draw upon the rules, methods, and customs of one’s culture” (2004 pp.227-30). Agency occurs within these forming circumstances, McNay reminds us, as “a situated, embodied and relational phenomenon” (2015, p.41).

The lenses record the scene and my embodied exertion as I move, breath, sway and bend. The disciplinary body is active in these processes and, as Heyes points out, is conditioned by a normative “double effect”, which enables as well as constrains (2007, p.7). I explore my body/subject positionings as relational, social self-forming activities that draw upon and work into local embodied contexts. Here I find, as Nealon (2008) suggests, resources are available in my everyday to draw upon. The embodied lenses assist me to remain *becoming*.



Figures 56. Ruth Myers (2016) *Floorpress developments*

I am the floor, I am in relation to the floor, I am formed by the floor, I am forming the floor, the floor is forming me.

In *Floorpress*, thinking myself differently I try to establish a different relationship between my body and the floor. The camera recording devices help me move and record the scene of this relation. Edited together in a fold, they ‘remove’ my literal, figured body but indicate the body movement and effort in doing the task. The figured body needs to be removed because the training is not about ‘me’ and my abilities, but rather about exerting pressure on this scene to think relations differently. This fold, replicated between two dilapidated domestic- like movie screens, becomes crucial to the ‘publication’ of this ‘disciplined’ female body in its ‘private’ training tasks, where the fold, as a removal of my figured self, calls attention to the on-going contingency of becoming a subject.

In these ways, technologies of lens, sound and screens exert pressure on the scenes and potential expansions. They record processes of productive forming, attaching, pressing and fixing. There is a kind of agency in these body acts. The individual body is understood as not completely dominated, but actively exerted as a shared social practice. We have seen agency can be found in Foucault’s disciplinary power at this level, incorporating and productive as a material relational strategy.



Figures 57. Ruth Myers (2017) *Floorpress*. Installation view, Testspace, AUT

Productive Attaching



Figures 58. Ruth Myers (2016) *Attach to the bottom of things, drawing developments*.

Self-forming, these tasks are productive. In *Attach to the bottom of things*, for instance, I explore forming new relationships with things and sites around my home. This is first thought about in drawings, and photographic montaging of myself to the bottom of things, such as the table, basketball, washing basket etc. I am interested in producing a new relation. I then squeeze under the desk, under the bed, chair, bench, planters, door, baskets, and shelves etc. As I do this I feel these 'acts', I feel their production, and sense my agency in this. I am encumbered by the circumstances, but still I can act.

To record both the scene and exertion of these tasks I need a double record. Two cameras produce and record these attachments: the details of bedrooms, living rooms, and record these newly formed attachments: body-desk, body-shelf, body-bench etc. There is also a 'felt' 'sensing' encounter from a second camera held in close with me, recording the exertion, breathing, limits and restrictions, of these difficult spaces. I bring these together in editing, exerting and expanding into each other.

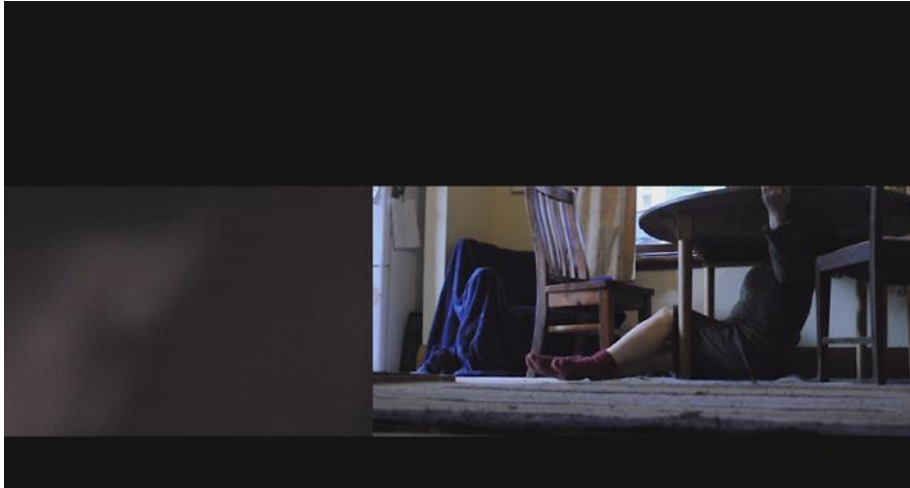


Figure 59. Ruth Myers (2016-17) *Attach to the bottom of things*, still.

Haptic and optic: Laura Marks

Technology assists me to exert the floor body press, to form an attachment, and record an act of fixing. It assists me to think myself differently. In this there are multiple modes. A haptic quality that gets you in close. This exerts a feltness: the hard floor, resistant wall, soft plasticine, breathing and gulps. This is a personally saturated and messy record of exerting oneself, as I go about the task of thinking myself differently. Documents hold important detail as well, carrying and acknowledging contexts' discipline, recognising the scene. The haptic and optic work into each other, reveal and undermine each other. As Laura Marks explains, the optic allows us to recognise, to name, while the haptic does not allow any one definition to be reached (2002, pp 12-18). In this case, the haptic felt content brings an exertion and recognition of the predicaments and vulnerabilities of my body acts. While the optic content of the documents carries something of the scenes of these acts, of the local circumstances, which these body acts draw upon for their support and understandings. The three practices demand this kind of optic and haptic encounter, paralleling the double work of Foucault's discipline, which limits and enables, produces and 'knows', and Butler's performative simultaneous act and enactment. As Marks points out, there is a productive tension between haptic overly close and optic knowing (2002, p.12).

Excerpts and details of scenes and sound circulate across these two modes. As we have learnt from McLaren (2002), body/subject positionings must be understood in the contexts in which they develop and operate (2002, pp.83-4). We are not dominated in these forming processes rather, as McWhorter (1999) suggests can remain in processes of ‘becoming’. These practices acknowledge the normative frameworks that all body/subjects continually contend with, but also exert, keeping “power relations in play”, as McWhorter suggests (1999, p.208). Within this productive relationality, subjects and contexts in *Practices of Use* are considered here as becoming, forming and sensing.

The act of fixing



Figure 60. Ruth Myers (2016) *The act of fixing*, development still.



Figure 61. Ruth Myers (2017) *The act of fixing*, development still.

The act of fixing is a practice of attaching my mouth to a lump of plasticine on the front door of my home. Holding on, the plasticine is worked upon, formed and forming; it remains pliable and I can use it over and over again. At home I practice speaking alone. I wait, attached to the doorway, and practice greeting, asking questions, offering my care. This practice has grown out of my earlier tongue training of using plasticine props and devices to explore hampering my ability to communicate clearly. But here I am required to be able to communicate. The front door is a heightened social scene, a threshold between my house and more public space. I wait to see what is required of me.

The plasticine fills my mouth, and I shape it a little each time I speak. My exertion is recorded materially, as the plasticine both holds me and is formed by me, and through two cameras which record my requests, my scripts and the scene's sounds such as birds, the faint noise of cars and the wind, circulate and momentarily 'touch'.

3.00

Are you hungry?

Did you have a good day?

Do you want some cheese on toast?

What did you do today?

Are you feeling ok?

Are you tired?

Etc

This is a list of requests. Like Nauman's instructional *Body Pressure* (1974), which Jones points out works into the gallery context to explore "interrelations among bodies, subjects and spaces" (2010, p.149) in the process of producing each other (p.146), these requests work into the scene of the front door of my home. The requests, as well as my body 'fixed' by plasticine, hold me physically aligning, like EXPORT'S configurations, in complex social space where normative frameworks both constrain and enable. Here, unable to speak clearly but required to assist, I explore my mother's predicaments and mine, exploring body/subject "talk[ing] back" and think[ing] itself differently" Heyes (2007, p.vii)

Plasticine, the doorframe, the floor, the walls, the room support me. They also form me and I form them. These circumstances enable and limit. These practices do not exempt local conditions; they do not forget limits and supports, opportunities and closures. Rather they insist on finding ways to carry these contexts, acknowledging the circumstances the subject is forming in, and working into them.

Acknowledging circumstances is important. Butler (2015, p.14) tells us that supports act, they exert and allow, and in this bodies may or may not get the support they require (p.12). Therefore, becoming subjects, as Butler puts it, being "recognised" or "called a name" (pp.12-4), should always be considered as an "ethical 'relationality'" (p.11).

Practicing

It is hard work keeping these practices useful. That is because they work into areas of my life that require this critical attention to think about how I am understanding myself and others, how I have come to these understandings, and how I may think these understandings differently.

Body acts draw upon physical and social contexts, which I think about as performative scenes. This, in turn, draws on Butler's social temporality and sedimentation and Foucault's disciplinary power and normative practices, as a productive contextualising involved in the processes of becoming a subject. Within this scene it is important to acknowledge that there are both limitations and assistance, coercions and supports, and sedimentation of understandings. Performative scenes acknowledge local circumstances, incorporate contexts involved in producing subject positionings, and contribute to the potential to propose alternatives.

Performative scenes incorporate the "sensuous conditions of sensed and sensing" (Butler, 2015, p.11). Our thinking and feeling occur within such dimensions where norms as "groupings" "circulate" us, and "act on us from all sides" (p.5) In this, details and excerpts of sound and scene and body/subjects in process explore a phenomenological instantiating 'tactility' of "still being formed" (p.6).

Practices draw on a task focus which explores body relations with surrounding site and circumstances. Held cameras and their microphones incorporate the wider scene of these relational propositions and include particularising disciplinary details. The tasks develop body acts that incorporate and exert a pressure on these scenes, and propose a possible expansion through relational propositions to 'think myself differently'. They incorporate a social relational thinking. The scene, such as the floor, is involved in this production and is something we contribute to. Accordingly, I want you to hear my breath, my grunts, my struggles, my effort. I want you to hear my hampered speech, and see my awkwardly located body, my untidy alignments, and unruly movements. The speakers, headphones and screens, do a good job recording and sharing the complexities and details of this effort and exertion.

I recognise this effort as a form of personal endeavour that is at work across the project, whether the repeated acts of attaching to the bottom of things, crawling or becoming the floor, or proposing acts of fixing. These practices are counter work that reveal through my exertion and incorporation of contexts, the ‘felt’ attention and responsibility laid at the foot of the individual I have lived alongside. As Foucault’s discipline and Butler’s performative body acts show, it is simply not correct to situate any one individual’s knowledges and positionings as their work alone.

My counter is to recognise the attachments, the detailed scenes from home and institution alike that a subject is forming in (as in Muybridge’s props, scenes and activities attached to subjects for instance), and to also feel and sense the exerting subject. We are thus reminded of Butler’s ethical relationality, to show tolerance and care in the complex social, political, and ethical work of positioning of one’s self and others.

This proposal, following other feminist enquiries that struggle with becoming subjects within normative regimes, requires Foucault’s creative and experimental self-forming ethical practices. These practices not only question the infrastructural situation of subjects, but they practice living this questioning. By practicing becoming formed with and by the floor, under things, and attached to door frames, I am able to contest other potential positionings through bringing critical attention to becoming a subject through these acts of self-forming. I am also able to acknowledge, recognise, and counter the particular circumstances and predicaments of a certain subject – of my mother at home – and rethink her positioning as not her work alone.

For these practices to remain ‘of use’ demands a fundamental rethinking in approaches to ‘making art’ or ‘publishing it’. What can appear here? This has been a key question that I have asked throughout this Ph.D. project. I find support in performance art, which provides required social scenes, spaces and supports, as Jackson points out, to incorporate wider infrastructures and to accommodate my requests. These are not performances and not art exhibitions; rather, they remain as practices, allowing something useful to appear. Significantly, this allows local

embodied contexts to be continually acknowledged, recognised and incorporated in body/subject relational productivity.

These body acts require sociality to come forth as acts at all. And that is exactly the point. To make this request to continue to practice informs the modes of how these are ‘published’, to appear and become accessible, within the local circumstances made available at the time, which support and inform what these practices can be. Critically these are not outside of this social necessity. Private home recordings are revealed not as one individual’s work alone, not as a subject figured, but a subject sensing, as forming, fixing, becoming. To keep practicing, thinking and feeling, testing how I will be encountered, intervened, acted upon, and able to act, to keep power relations in play, are necessary risks in response to the use value of this project’s questioning.

I learn that when the student asks ‘do you need me?’, and performance art spaces and audiences give me space and support to act, one’s understandings, what we mean, are always an ethical request within a social and relational situation. This is, in the end, the whole point of these practices. While developed and practiced alone, their exertion, their ‘critical’ agency, their action, requires the opportunity to be practiced and positioned socially. Every act requires support, an inherent sociality, which carries an inherent ethical request.

Self-forming practices incorporate contexts in forming relational and productive propositions of thinking oneself differently. It is here that the resources and opportunities are to be found if and as required, such as in the body acts of EXPORT’S shaping, Nauman’s folding, Tralla not fitting, Kosloff’s assisting, Frankovich supported, and Braddock’s sensing bodies reveal.

Part Three: Summary: Practicing

In Part Three I respond to the question, how do I acknowledge and act?

In feminist discussions of Foucault's disciplinary body I find agency is available within normative frameworks through a materialising relational productive strategy between body/subject and its forming contexts. I recognise the significance of Foucault's discipline and Butler's performativity for acknowledging the circumstances one's body/subject is forming and functioning within, and that the individual body act is "not one's act alone" (Butler, 1988, p.525). McLaren's emphasis on the significance of local embodied contexts informs the decision in *Practices of Use* to remain as practices so this relational productivity can be acknowledged and worked into.

Foucault's self-forming practices encourage an experimental, critical and creative working into one's own understandings, and these understandings are acknowledged as always social practices continually forming in conjunction with specific contexts. Nauman, Tralla, and EXPORT inform how *Practices of Use* can explore relational questioning in ways that incorporate contexts in one's own body acts. Kosloff and Frankovich situate these body acts as inherently social, requiring support and assistance and as "not one's act alone" (Butler, 1988, p.525), and Braddock's sensing, impressing and folding, remains in a productive physical relational request.

Practices of Use, pressing, fixing, attaching, body and contexts are continually in the process of *becoming*. Local embodied contexts must be acknowledged, for these are the contexts the subject has available for forming and functioning within.

Significantly too, the subject's exertions are recorded and allowed to appear, to be sensed. After all, this attention does in fact attend to 'an individual's' life.

Floorpress, *Attach to the bottom of things*, and *The act of fixing* acknowledge and act through incorporating local embodied contexts and opening a contingency. They remain becoming, where one can counter, reveal, and think oneself differently. They acknowledge the predicaments and circumstances of the personal but insist on not

giving you the subject, not giving you ‘her’ story. The personal is inherently social, and one’s understandings and positionings are not our work alone.

Conclusion

Practices of Use asks the question, how can I reflect on and work into personal histories of discipline of the female in the home in useful ways that allow me to acknowledge local embodied circumstances and act into them? How can I, as Ladelle McWhorter suggests, reveal, counter and put power relations back into play? How can I acknowledge local contexts as significant in these processes? And most importantly, how can I not locate a subject as being located or fixed as this or that, but rather, remain *becoming*?

Our body acts, our movements and positionings are inherently relational and social practices, which attend to us as ‘an individual’ in certain ways. Foucault’s discipline involves the ongoing relational practice of locating the individual within the multiple: assigning a rank distributes and categorises, for instance. How we become situated as a specific subject position is always a question of how we are positioned in relation to everyone and everything else. This positioning or taking up a place is continually in process. Butler’s performativity explains that the individual when ‘called a name’ both acts and enacts these social meanings, and as body acts, reveals these processes have embodied effects.

Butler and Foucault work to reveal that there is no inner or authentic self that tie these meanings to us. Discipline and performative processes tend to hide their own mechanisms and therefore one may come to understand one’s own body acts as fixed and belonging solely to oneself. For instance, Butler explains that gender, as a binary construction, is maintained through stylised repeated acts, which can infer our actions are proof of our gender (2014). In discipline, bodies’ movements and positionings are temporally and spatially attended to, and while a coercive visibility encourages continual regulation and maintenance by self and others, disciplinary power itself remains ‘invisibly located’ in the individual body. We are active rather than dominated in these processes, through the double effect of acquiring skills and aptitudes, as well as limits and restrictions.

Butler and Foucault locate an agency within forming relational subjects and their contexts. Body acts meanings are drawn upon from what precedes us, in scenes, scripts and sediments, but at the same time in our own enactments we contribute to these meanings and may open up the possibility for potential deviations and

differences to occur. Foucault's disciplinary power involves sites and spaces as well as the individual body in continued relational activity, where, for instance, the prison has a 'body' whose surfaces and spaces exert upon the individual's body (2004, p. 187). Butler suggests that within this activity agency can be found as a productive relational strategy (p.183).

Understanding Foucault's discipline and Butler's performativity informs understanding of why and how one's body acts are not one's work alone. This is significant for this project because it aims to reflect upon, and counter ideas of a subject's positioning as 'belonging' solely to themselves.

Secondly, the relationship between body and contexts Foucault and Butler propose, and McLaren also points out, suggests that subjects cannot be separated from the contexts they are forming and working in. This is significant because it is in such relational productive processes that one can reveal contingencies, and the supports and resources for these contingencies.

I propose this is particularly useful for understanding and drawing upon Foucault's ethical self-forming practices that are required when how we are to understand ourselves is untenable. Foucault's self-forming practices bring a critical attention to our understandings of ourselves and others, and through creative and experimental practice suggests we can propose ways to think ourselves differently, reveal and counter these understandings.

The productive relational strategy Butler locates in Foucault's discipline is particularly useful for *Practices of Use*. Training in the studio develops a focus on relational activity between body, studio, site, structures and others as productively forming each other. Tasks are then developed at home, engaging the context of my questioning through the socially complex sites of the front door, dining room table and hallway. In these tasks I can acknowledge local circumstances and work into them to develop a set of body acts, as self-forming practices that test out and take risks in my own positioning. In doing these practices I develop an insistence on the personal as inherently social, so as to not locate the subject as their work alone. Personal acts, Butler's body acts, and Foucault's self-forming practices, are inherently social practices; they draw upon social understandings and conventions of our own circumstances and cultures. As Butler warns us, the personal, as a location,

can be marginalised to one person's problem. My project resists this. Rather, by remaining as practices that work across private and public contexts, the practices insist on producing body/subjects as shared, social and self work.

These self-forming acts need to shift from home to public contexts so I can continue to incorporate and acknowledge local embodied contexts. I can also reveal something of my mother's predicaments, and I can act and counter them. Technology helps me to do this. Technologies exert and record my pressing, fixing, attaching, and record disciplinary detail, as well as a haptic 'felness'. They record the performative scene, local contexts and my exertion. There is a body/subject forming here, but these practices do not reveal them as *her*, or *my*, or *anyone* individual's work alone.

Looking back at early film performances we can see the attachment of contexts, scenes, props and activities to subjects. As Williams points out, this reveals gendered itineraries evident in these attachments. Early film technologies also reveal blurs across science and amusement contexts and audiences for these body/subject knowledges, demonstrating the construction of these embodied subject locations as this or that. These early films insist on a viewer. The kinetoscope physically locates the viewing encounter through a peephole, while the performers address the viewer through a present tense acknowledgement, including winks and nods. The requirement of a viewer aligns with 1960-70s video body performance, such as the coercive nod to the audience in Lynda Benglis's *Now* (1973) and porous screen in Hannah Wilkes's *Gestures* (1974). But also, this requirement of the viewer aligns with a performative and disciplinary, social and relational locating of subjects.

Practices of Use aims to not locate the subject but acknowledge the local circumstances the subject is forming and functioning in. It aims to recognise the subject's positioning as becoming in productive relational processes with the opportunity to think differently and counter within these processes. Much like Butler argues for gender performativity to not remove gender but relax its coercive hold, this project argues not to remove the idea of subject's positioning but to acknowledge within this positioning the social and relational dimensions, and provide resources for one to work into these if and so required.

I find that in the art and performance practices of Bruce Nauman, VALIE EXPORT and Mare Tralla, body acts are in process, relationally producing themselves and

their forming contexts in ways that both acknowledge their circumstances and exert into them. These are self-forming practices that draw attention: such as Tralla to the limits of home (thinking one's self differently); such as Nauman removing the wall (and countering); such as EXPORT'S propositions of new configurations in public space. Laresa Kosloff's assisted and supported body acts, and Alicia Frankovich's performances of stalled body, reveal, as Butler points out, that body acts are not our work alone, while Chris Braddock's technologically mediated relational experience of sensing performs Merleau-Ponty's fold.

Butler states norms act on us, circulate us from all sides and impress upon us, and inform our thinking and our feeling (2015). This feltness is significant for Carrie Noland (2009) who puts forward performative gestures as a way to account for how the body, through felt sensation, can exert agency. Both Noland and Butler draw on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological instantiating touch, which implicates us in each other's positionings.

Adrian Piper's and William L. Pope's body acts work into wider social scenes. In her *Catalysis Series*, Piper aims to "add a new presence that must somehow be assimilated" (1996, p.52) while Pope.L's *Crawls* aim to "bring attention" to the experiences of homelessness (Stiles, 2002, p. 41). Jackson recognises performance art can incorporate and work into wider social infrastructures and "systemic whole[s]" (Jackson, 2011, pp. 5-6). *Practices of Use* requires art and performance support, assistance, spaces and audiences, to test out and take the required risks of continuing to practice in useful ways.

These practices of use can be further developed and worked upon, including shifts in contexts and forms of encounter. Practicing could certainly take on, for instance, more public contexts than AUT alone. Further research could be done to investigate self-forming practices that explore relational productivity between subjects and their contexts, particularly in areas of gendered subject mappings. More specific research and practice could be taken up in considering medical management of females, and the embodied, social consequences of this attention. This exploration could also be addressed specifically within early film histories as well as in contemporary and creative modes of practice. Further attention could be given to considering use value within art and performance practices as a methodology that can critically shape

research methods and questions. This seems particularly fruitful given artists' practitioner/researcher positioning within the overall practice-based research project.

In *Practices of Use* complex problems are asked of practice. Acknowledging and acting into these personal histories cannot be addressed by locating an individual subject. To do so could relegate the required questioning to the personal, as if that could both define and resolve a problem. Rather, demands are made on practice to acknowledge the individual's ongoing subject positioning as not the individual's work alone. Practice is asked to understand that the locating and positioning of the subject is a relational and social process where scenes, spaces, temporalities, ourselves, and our relations with each other are always involved. These processes incorporate disciplinary frameworks, assign certain knowledges and understandings. Within these processes there is a contingency in our *becoming* subjects, to think ourselves differently, and to counter. There is no subject that can be made whole; rather, a set of circumstances and an exertion that eventually cannot be sustained. So as Jackson says, perhaps this involves a 'resigned tolerance', 'not to judge' (Foucault) and 'to take care' (Butler). My practice has listened. Supported by art and performance contexts, *Floorpress*, *Attach to the bottom of things* and *The act of fixing* proposes a body thinking itself differently, and able to remain a set of practices of use.

There is no doubt that this project's personal value is clear. To find adequate ways to redress the circumstances I felt were unfairly laid at my mother's feet and to reveal these circumstances as social relational practices that can be rethought. But I suggest also—much like I found when encountering McWhorter's work of countering, Foucault's self-forming and Butler's performative body acts—that encounters with these practices of use can propose usefully that one's understandings of one's self and others, if required, are able to be worked upon and thought differently.

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Appendix

Practices of Use, 3rd April 2017, AUT

Floorpress (April, 2017), Installation Views, Testspace, AUT

Attach to the bottom of things (2016-17) Screenshots

Development Drawings

Working Diagrams

The Subject is in her house (2015-2017), supporting developments
(tongue and hand training)

The subject is in her house (2015) Rear Window, Dunedin Public Art
Gallery

Critiques (2016, June & July), Body acts and documents, AUT

Supporting Exhibition/Paper List

Practices of Use

Ruth Myers

10.30am Monday 3rd April 2017

ST PAUL ST Gallery Three

Floorpress. Hallway.

The act of fixing. Doorway (plasticine)

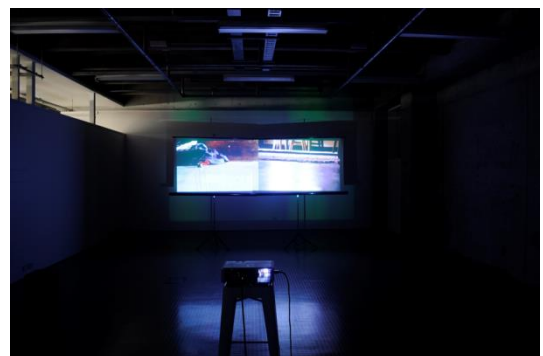
The act of fixing. (audio recording, headphones 6.11 min)

Attach to the bottom of things. Back room (video loop 5.20 min)

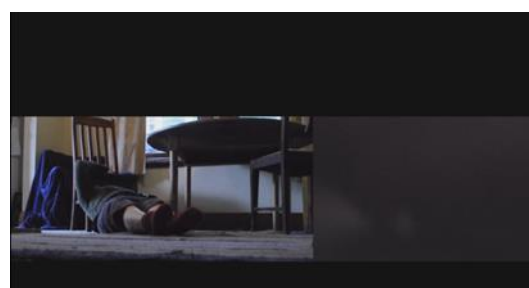
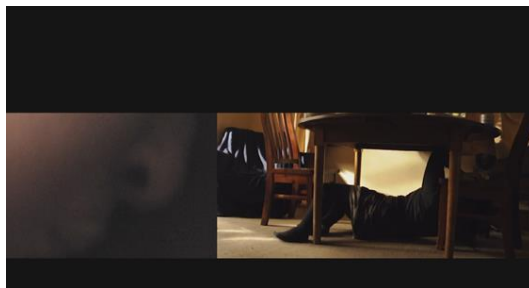
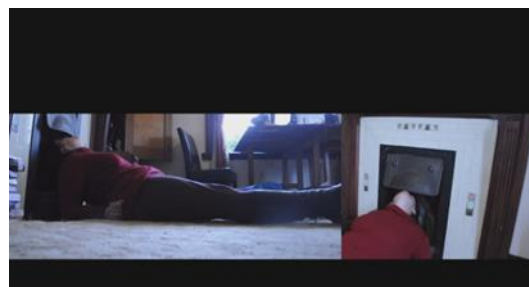
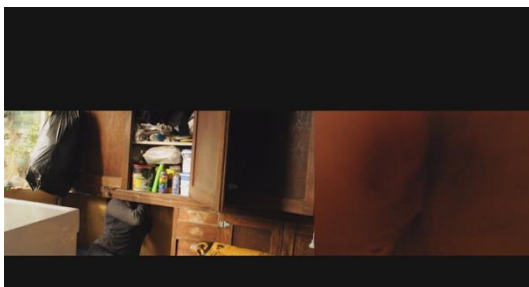
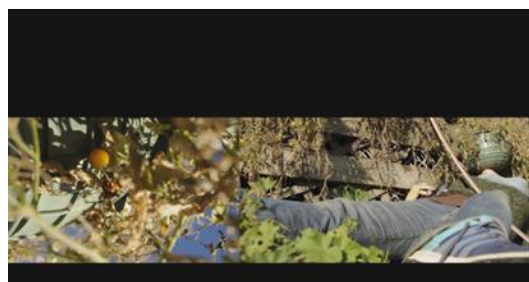
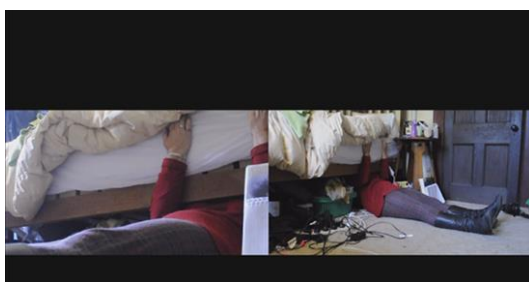
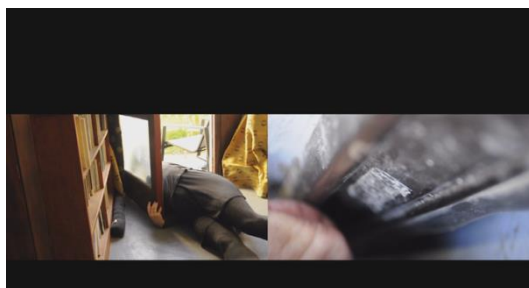
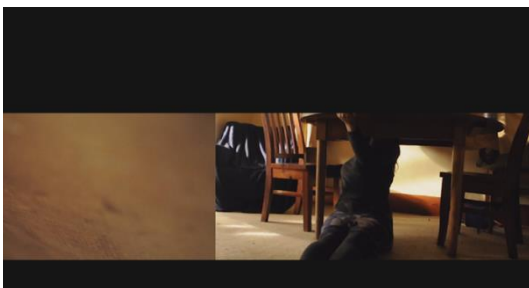
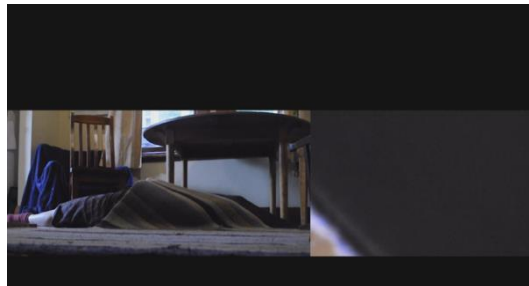
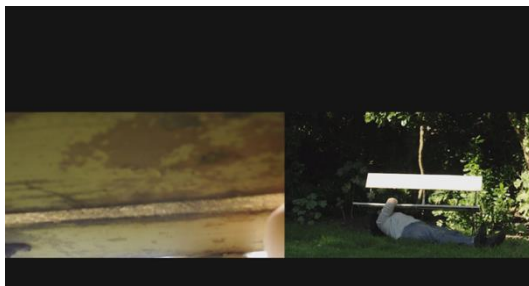
Testspace (WM201)

Floorpress. (video loop 43.05 min)

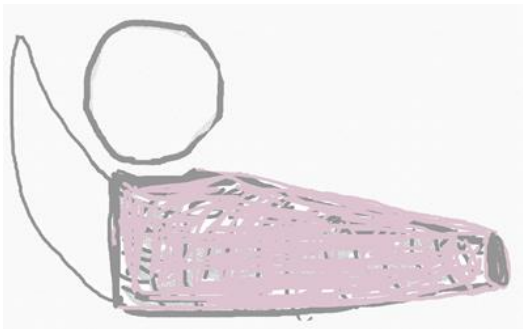
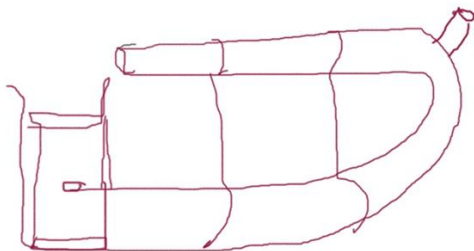
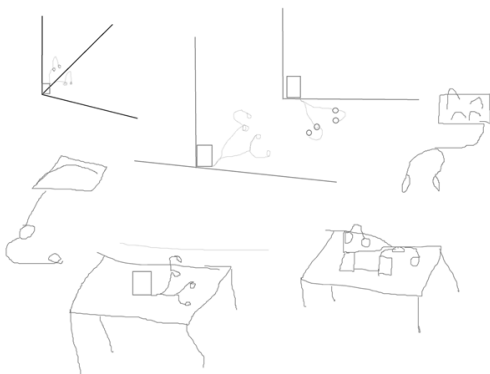
Floorpress (2017, April) Installation Views, Testspace, AUT.



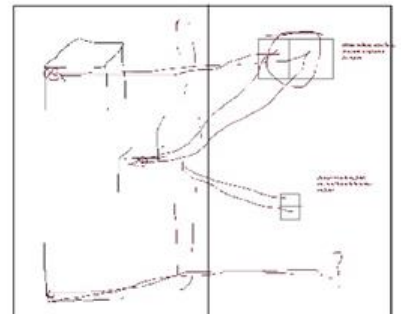
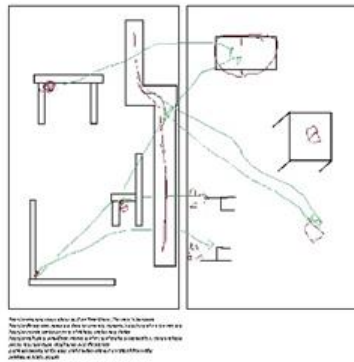
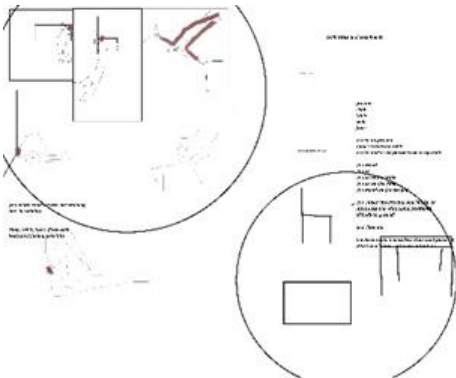
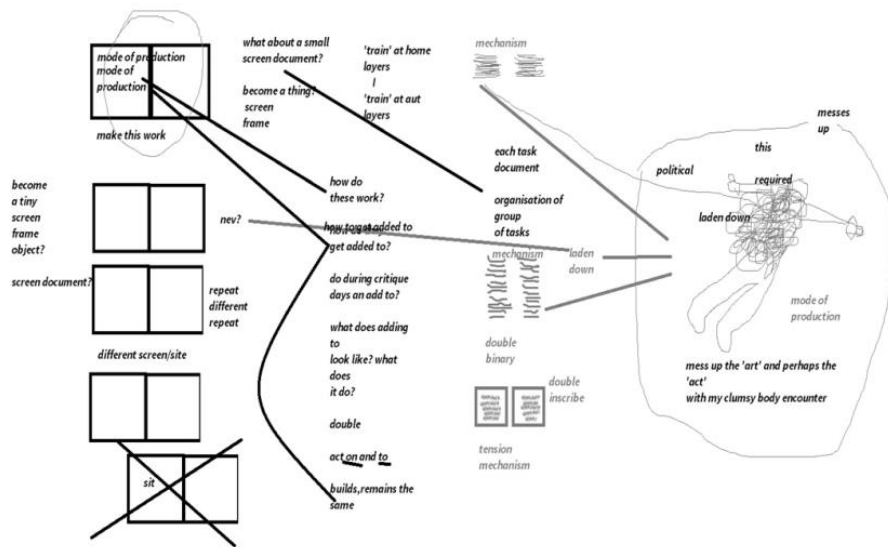
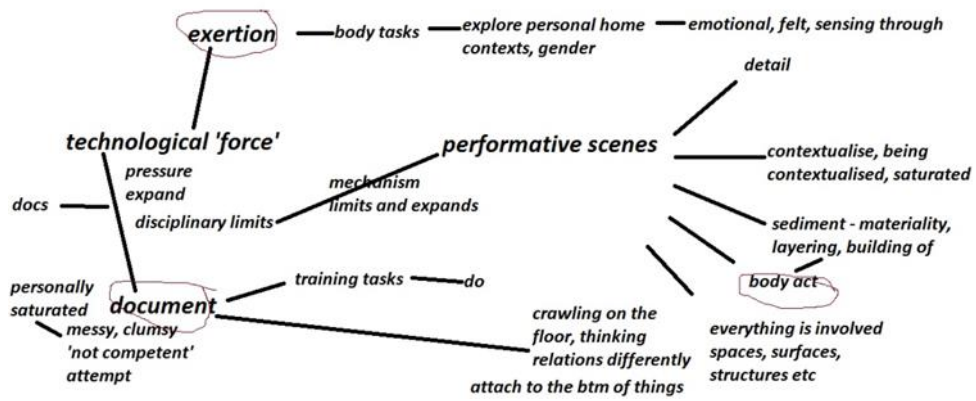
Attach to the bottom of things (2016-17) Screenshots



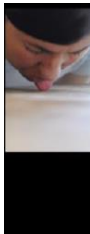
Development drawings

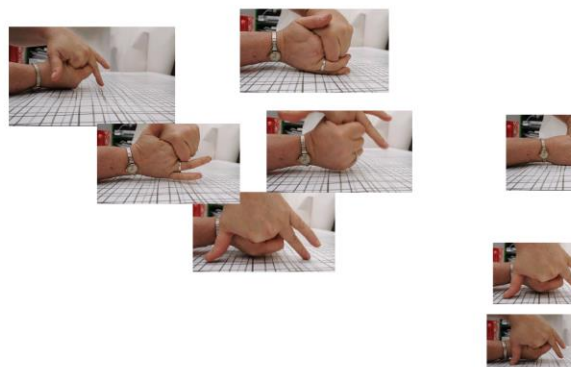
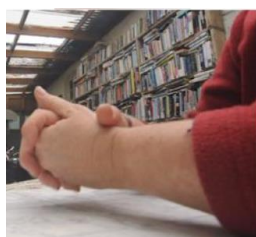
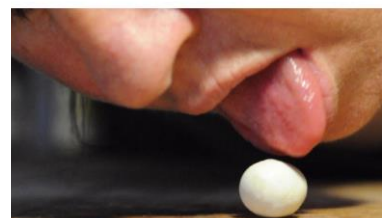
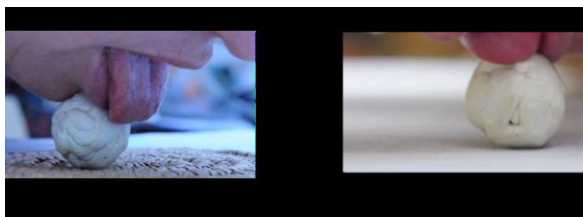


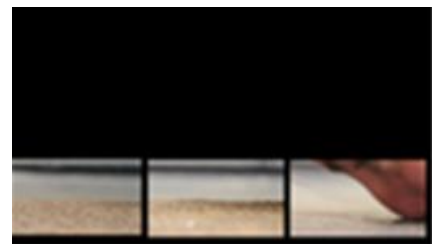
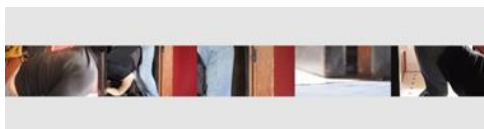
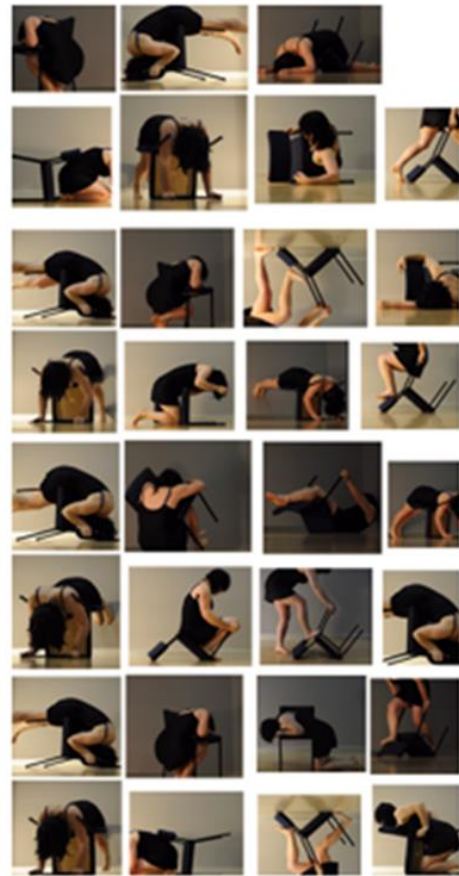
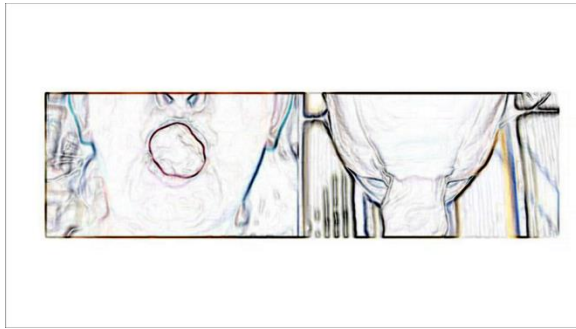
Working diagrams



The subject is in her house, supporting developments (tongue & hand training)





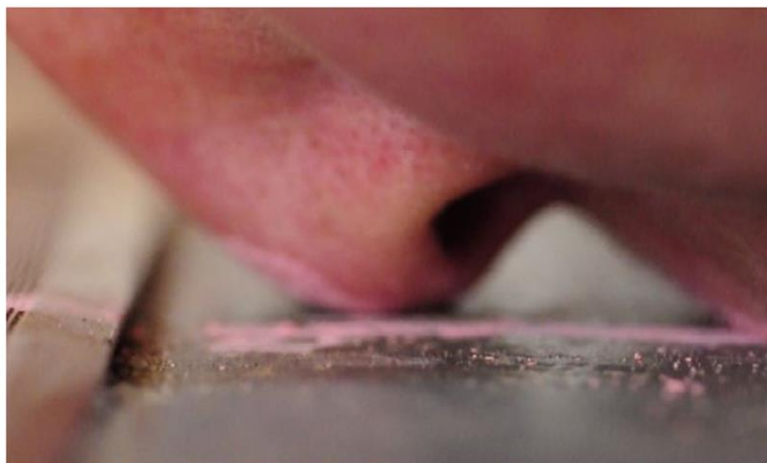




exhibitions now showing



- ▶ The subject is in her house
- + FUTURE exhibitions
- + PAST exhibitions



R MYERS

The subject is in her house

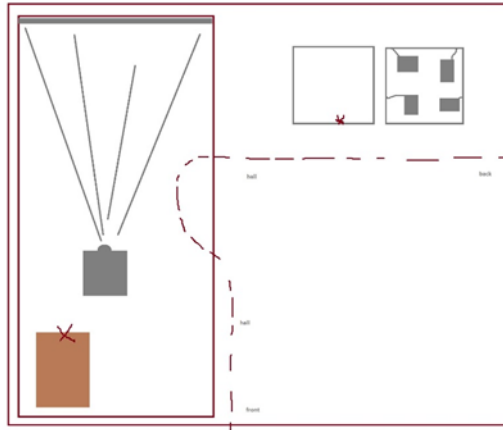
6th Nov 2015 - 13th Dec 2015

A REAR WINDOW PROJECT: *The subject is in her house* documents the artist on a journey from the front door to the back door of her home, as she follows a chalk drawn line on the floor with her face, tongue out. This task is documented via three cameras lined up on the floor. Each segment of the task is recorded sequentially, revealing a series of rooms or scenes as Myers moves slowly but steadfastly through the house. Viewers are invited to follow Myers from the front door, down the hall way, through the dining room and kitchen, out to the back porch – ultimately pulling the audiences into their own performance of looking.

This work is a component of Myers' current PhD project *being made, performing disciplining bodies*. Her research explores the performing body mediated through various technologies where different spatial and temporal modes organise and interrupt the body's gestures. *The subject is in her house* aims to provoke questions about how we participate in each other's embodied positionings, how we live, and to situate these as contextualised, particularised and political.

Myers is currently completing a PhD with Auckland University of Technology and teaches sculpture and studio research practice at the Southern Institute of Technology, Invercargill.

RELATED EVENTS



Body Acts and Documents, Ruth Myers

July Visit

Floorpress

Attach to the bottom of things

The act of fixing

Thurs 21 July 10-10.30 Gallery Three

Body acts and documents draws on personal content, historical filmic body performance and feminist video art practice with a specific emphasis on training and particularising the body through repeated tasks and acts. Disciplinary and performative positioning of body is explored through documents and performance exploring personal endeavour as a model for not denying disciplinary frameworks, but exerting pressure on them. Working across home and institutional contexts as performative scenes, and utilising technological 'double acts', the work explores this mode of production proposing and provoking a 'sensing of the subject'.



Body Acts and Documents, Ruth Myers

June Visit

Tuesday 14 June- Wednesday 15 June, various sites

Thursday 16 June 10-10.30, Test Space

This project explores body acts and their documents as performative scenes which emerge through and are conditioned by disciplinary frameworks and performative mechanisms. Specific training tasks drawing on home and personal contexts, and technological mediation explore expanding or exerting pressure on this 'scene' to think relations differently.

Supporting exhibitions, critique and papers

2012 *being made*, video and cabinet/stage, Riverton Arts Centre, Invercargill.

2012 *being made, the other is you*, video and mirror installation, Blue Oyster, Dunedin.

2013 *Hole projections*, Test space, Talk Week, AUT.

2013 *Hole projections and boxes*, Critique AUT, ST Pauls Street, Gallery 3.

2013 *Hole projections and Chatter*, video, SIT RAW Gallery, Invercargill.

2013 Talk “Technologies of Early Film and Interdisciplinary Performances” in The Art Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) 2013 Annual conference, Melbourne: University of Melbourne.

2014 *being made*, video in suspended containers, projection, Art and Performance Research Group Critique, Test Space, AUT.

2014 “Technologies of early film and interdisciplinary performances”, AAANZ 'Inter discipline' conference proceedings | December 2014, <http://aaanz.info/aaanz-home/conferences/aaanz-inter-discipline-proceedings>

2014 “Here and now, this and that’: temporalities of display and interruption in encounters with the filmic body” Action and Delay: temporality in performance and media arts Symposium, 30-31 May 2014, AUT University Auckland.

2015 *The subject is in her house*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Rear Window.

2016 *Body Acts and documents*, AUT, ST Pauls Street, Gallery 3, Art and Performance Research Group Critique, June.

2016 *Body Acts and documents*, AUT, Testspace, Art and Performance Research Group Critique, July.



Floorpress, (2017, April), Hallway to ST PAUL ST Gallery Three, AUT. Photo Chris Braddock.