

Auckland University of Technology

The Politics of Dreaming

***Exegesis submitted to
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies
Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy***

School of Art and Design

by Alexa Wilson

Auckland, New Zealand

2020

ABSTRACT

youtube.com/channel/UCDqWRuEJLIL5f--O-4s1m3Q/videos

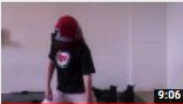
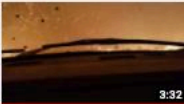
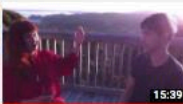



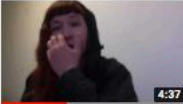











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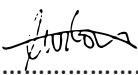
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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

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

Signed 
Date 25.02.2020

The Politics of Dreaming as a practice-based research project asks: *How might an inquiry into “political dreaming” manifest within my performance-video-based activist art practice?* The *political dream* infers collective ideals that do not tally with political realities and refers conversely to my literal dreams, in relationship to the collective ideal. The research is situated within a time of socio-political crisis amidst increased technologies, in which the urgency of *political dreaming* is collective. Presented as a YouTube channel live online, it explores within video works my own dreams, literally and figuratively, in contrast to and in conversation with the political context of the current Neo-liberal Capitalist Dream (or Nightmare). I do this between my two homes: Berlin and Auckland. Offering a YouTube channel to experience performance as video-internet-art non-chronologically, activates complexities in collective political dreaming in digital capitalism, as subversion and a form of agency.

My interconnected methods involve dream-journaling and analysis, activism across these centres and creative, embodied dance practices. This is how I explore the question of dreaming as political with video performance outcomes. This project is informed by the political, social, cultural and ecological issues currently in my life in New Zealand (NZ) and central Europe and online across borders. It promotes a methodological agency that can adapt to and from the similar political issues existing in my every day. I interweave dance practice as forms of movement and feminist agency, speaking to *nomadism*, *multiple pleasures* and embodied *rhizomatic* practice, framed by theorists.

The project engages with theoretical, literary and artistic influences, which are political and ecological. Rosi Braidotti's book *Nomadic subjects*¹ is offered as a decentering force displacing of hierarchical social power and nationalism. She embraces sexual difference as a strategy for generative agency from a feminist positioning as a nomadic project. This speaks to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*² with its notion of the *rhizome* as a non-hierarchical embodiment of disparate forces to generate alternative perspectives for agency. The video performances are informed by these notions. The YouTube channel offers a range of videos, which move across different forms of social media video satire and subversion accessible through national borders and refers to the activation of viral wildfire activity in an urgent political time. Adrienne Maree Brown's book *Emergent Strategy*³ and Naomi Klein's *No is not Enough*⁴ offer a political context for framing the project's question and activism, with an emphasis on intersectional care and social movements as *emergent strategies*.

¹ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

² Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (translation) (London/New York: Continuum, 2004).

³ Adrienne Brown, *Emergent Strategy* (Chico: AK Press, 2017).

⁴ Naomi Klein, *No is not enough: Defeating the New Shock Politics* (London: Penguin, 2017).

Naomi Klein's 2019 book *On Fire: A Burning Case for a Green New Deal*⁵ supports the metaphor of wildfire, within the project understood as an activating force, mirroring ecological crisis, viral internet activity, and emergent social movements. Donna Haraway in *Staying with the Trouble*⁶ can offer a bridging of these elements within the notion of the *chthulucene*. This encourages a non-Anthropocene (human-dominated) collaboration with nature, so embracing its mess. Wildfire can very much be seen literally as a mess for us to contend with as we enter 2020. Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which is Not One*⁷ offers the project a psychoanalytic feminist (political) approach to feminist dreaming as one of a complex embodiment involving multiple pleasures, which this project offers. Contradictions emerging through the research are supported by journalistic newspaper articles mapping this ecological and political crisis upon the individual and collective tensions within notions of *political dreaming*, between activism and self-care, or collective and individual, which consume the internet and global social sphere.

⁵ Naomi Klein, *On Fire: A Burning Case for a Green New Deal* (UK: Penguin Random House UK, 2019).

⁶ Donna Haraway, "Staying with the Trouble," in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. Jason W. Moore (Oakland: Cairos, 2016), 34-76.

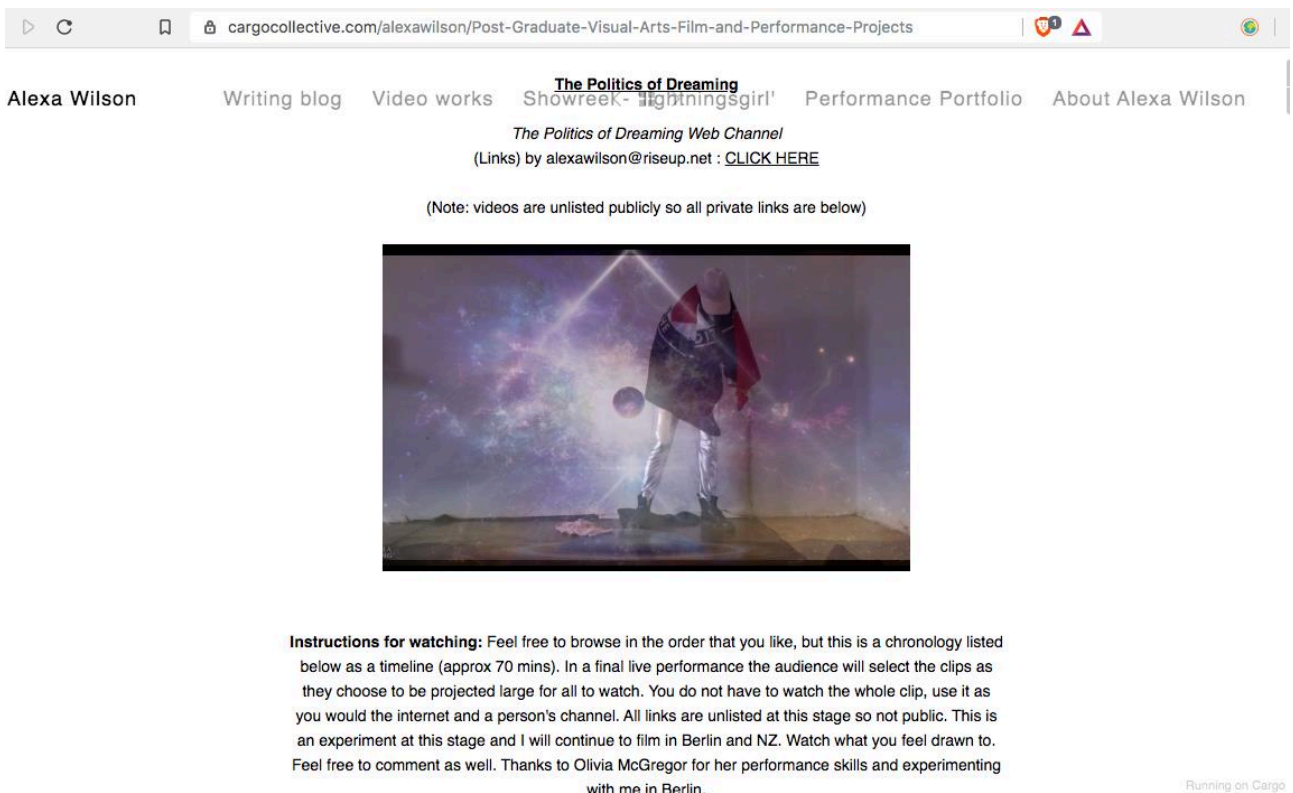
⁷ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

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1.

Introduction



Instructions for private watching:

Login to Google with email address alexawilson@riseup.net password "Changes 2020," to view YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDqWRuEJLIL5f--O-4s1m3Q/videos> Select videos to watch from the channel in the order you like, for as long as you like as you would on YouTube. Videos are all public, yet 2 are unlisted as they contain nudity, so logging in will help to see them all. Watching the link above without logging in means you will view 22 out of the 24. Please note all screenshot images from Youtube in this exegesis are from the above website.

The focus of my research project titled *The Politics of Dreaming* is on agency, movement, emergency, and individual as well as collective social transformations. It acts as a multifarious nomadic (moving) series of invitations. Activation, subversion, and intertextuality, are offered through a YouTube channel presenting a variety of modes of internet video performance, opening creative and discursive possibilities. The research question is *How might an inquiry into “political dreaming” manifest within my performance-video-based activist art practice?* Subsequent sub-questions are *Whose political dream am I dreaming? What is the relationship between conscious and unconscious political dreaming? How do I dare to dream in this political reality? How can activist performance video art politically dream?*

To contextualise *political dreaming* I have framed the project using political theorists, both feminist and ecological, to understand *political dreaming* as an idealisation, set against and in conversation with the current political reality. Manifestations within this video-performance-based activist art practice discovered discordant, but generative, tensions between activism and self-improvement in response to the questions. These unveil an activation or need for reconciling individual with collective concerns with neo-liberal capitalism. The project is open-ended, with questions leading further into resolving these tensions.

Political / Philosophical influences

Nomadic Subjects as theorised by Braidotti encompasses that which is plural and complex where this non-fixedness in an age of intersectionality is therefore intertextual. It displaces centrality, universality or linearity and creates a more generative subjectivity based on multiplicity. Braidotti says: “Politically, nomadic subjectivity addresses the need to destabilize and activate the center.”⁸ In my creation of a YouTube channel, I can traverse national borders, as the internet does, whilst uploading works from different parts of the world. The subversive political content then challenges the status quo of mainstream ideologies inside a mainstream platform, thus “destabilising and activating the center”. Her argument for sexual difference hinges upon a *nomadic subjectivity*, which includes complexity and processes of becoming “where discontinuities, transformations, shifts of levels and locations can be accounted for, exchanged, and discussed”⁹. Contradictory elements emerge within these exchanges online as videos, offering conversations with diverse communities, and intersectional activism.

Social movements are as fast as technologies. I interpret them as *rhizomatic*, which Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari suggest brings disparate, multidimensional forces into conversation with each

⁸ Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 5.

⁹ Braidotti, 165.

other in a non-hierarchical capacity for generating new connections. These connections are relational exchanges based on difference, which merge to potentially form collective intelligence as we see on the internet. This work is informed by these rhizomatic processes, where cross-currents of collective ideals meet with my disparate creative explorations through dance, text, activism and dreaming, and take on their forms and realizations without permission. Technologies like the internet can be interpreted through this lens as spreading virally like wildfire. Like the rhizome, through new technologies and the internet within digital capitalism we see the emergent nature of social movements through a globally interconnected web. Theorized by Adrienne Maree Brown in *Emergent Strategy* (2017), it is like that which is *emergent* in response to crisis (like certain animals), a form of collective intelligence using, like the rhizome, disparate elements to offer a practical guide for responding collectively to crisis in neo-liberal capitalism.

Positioning myself

I am positioned as an intersectional feminist, identifying as nomadic and anarchist both creatively and politically, moving between art forms and contexts with my roots in both (Aotearoa) New Zealand and Europe. This research positions me as an artist as researcher, where research primarily stems from my own activism, dreams both literal and figurative and my experiences of the world, my political observations and reflections upon it and my creative, performative and video and text-based responses to it. While I have at moments collaborated with performers in the project, the subject of this research is myself. With a 20-year history as an artist of interweaving performance, dance, video, socio-political, ecological and media commentary, and having done a BA in Women's Studies and Film, TV and Media Studies, the research builds on investigations and forms already explored.

Motivation for changing from the art form of live performance to a video-performance format inspired by and framed within social media as a non-linear YouTube video channel was aligned with the philosophical and political *nomadic*, *rhizomatic*, *emergent* underpinnings of the theoretical research. These engage with themes of activism and self-care in conversation in rhizomatic and nomadic processes across and in response to global contexts in Berlin, New Zealand (also NYC, Vienna, and Vancouver). This harnesses the immediacy of the internet's performativity and its multifarious subjectivities while aiming to critique and subvert the platform as a form of subversion and activation. I see the internet as strongly performative also politically, bridging individual and socio-political concerns, public and private, individual and collective, all interrogated in this project.

Poetic wildfire and activation within political dreaming

Contextualised by globalised neo-liberal capitalism¹⁰, in which new technologies offer the chance to connect and move with more ease globally, we also experience increased disparity between the im/mobile and the displaced, instability and ecological crisis. These are capitalised on by what Naomi Klein identifies as “*disaster capitalism*”¹¹. This can be interpreted in the context of *political dreaming* as an engineered dream of elites, becoming a living nightmare and reality for many. To distill current socio-political indeterminacy, already “destabilising and activating the center”¹² into a metaphor within a time of increasing volatility, I imagined the poetic image of wildfire in January 2019 as activating, generative and transformative. Naomi Klein has since used this metaphor in the same way in her book *On Fire* (2019). We also see an increase in both wildfires and social movements over this year. Brown's (2017) *emergent strategies* offer themselves as transformative counters to this reality in the form of social movements and decentralisation. This does not align with dreams for a fair or equal society.

Donna Haraway's (2012) notion of the *chthulucene*, which advocates for collaboration with Earth's untidy organism/s, relates also to the disparate yet holistic nature or intelligence of the *rhizome* and *nomadism*. If we are to survive, we need to face the crisis we have caused, learning from nature's complex biodiversity, rather than trying to exploit and control it. By using a YouTube channel of videos which engage with a rhizomatic flow of information and interconnection, the work embraces the messiness of a rather anarchistic internet, to question, critique and challenge dominant ideologies pervasive within it. Luce Irigaray's (1985) reclaim of feminine otherness within poetics in the form of multiple pleasures, like Haraway, also disrupts the power of masculine language in a complex way. Her idea of feminine multiple pleasures aligns within my desire to offer a video channel that, as a feminist dream, intersects with the dominance of a patriarchy digital culture in playful, non-rational, joyous (humorous) ways. In the lineage of psychoanalysis, stemming from Carl Jung¹³ and the capacity of the unconscious via dreams to illuminate the hidden, Irigaray uses poetics of language to emancipate the feminine subconscious. The political responsibility of the feminine to free herself from oppression in this light ironically includes her within conversations with the collective. Contextualising fire (of politics) in relation to this complexity, I relate this research to Haraway's view:

¹⁰ “Neoliberalism is the belief that there should be few or no legal restrictions on capitalism, but the only restrictions should be those of “the market”.” Stephen Hayes, “What is the link between Neo-liberalism and Capitalism?” *Quora.com*. 29th December, 2017. <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-link-between-Neo-Liberalism-and-capitalism>

¹¹ Klein, *No is Not Enough*, 2.

¹² Braidotti, 5.

¹³ Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (USA: Dell Publishing, 1968).

This Chthulucene is neither sacred nor secular; this earthly worlding is thoroughly Terran, muddled, and mortal. All of these stories are a lure to proposing the Chthulucene as a needed third story, a third net bag for collecting up what is crucial for ongoing, for staying with the trouble. The Chthonic ones are not confined to a vanished past. They are a buzzing, stinging, sucking swarm now, and human beings are not separate from the compost pile. We are at stake to each other.¹⁴

The analogy of wildfire interweaves through layers of inter-textual digital/video performance and text, often improvised but always conceptualised, a complexity of intimacy, personal/political dreaming, dance, and activism. Responding and speaking directly to political themes emerging from the questions of *political dreaming* during this precarious and volatile political climate, the work explores the often paradoxical and multiple positions engaged in both digital embodiment, and the slippage between signifier and signified, as outlined by art theorist Amelia Jones in *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject*.¹⁵

Methods

I investigate my personal, literal dreams through a dream diary, written and sometimes audio recorded, alongside either foregrounding or backgrounding political events and figurative political dreaming during the year. This exacerbates a generative tension between seemingly opposing conversations of activism or political protest and self-care/mindfulness, which heightens the multiple subjectivities implied by Jones (2006). Within the digitized embodiment of this era, particularly social media, slippages occur between personal and political, public and private, signified and signifier, viewer and viewed, through my own body and voice, implicating the viewer, their internet use and their political perspectives. Heathfield and Jones (2012) discuss the complexity of the embodiment between digital and performance forms.

Speaking to lineages of post-internet art, and video art in which digitised scenes are staged abstractly or conceptually as opposed to film, the work also has roots in performance art. Kristine Stiles¹⁶ on performance art conceptualises the reclamation of subjectivity focusing on the body as art, as well as complex subject/object relations as Jones (2006) argues. Post-modern dance has its foot also in this research project, stemming from my lineage as a choreographer for 20 years, which, as theorized by André Lepecki¹⁷, resists modernist simplification and beautification. The

¹⁴ Haraway, 59.

¹⁵ Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁶ Kristine Stiles, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

¹⁷ André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

notion of post-dance, as discussed by Marten Spangberg¹⁸, focuses on the semantics between dance, choreography, and improvisation as forms of existential embodiment of post-modern art practice. In Lepecki's 2008 publication with Ric Allsopp, "Editorial: On Choreography,"¹⁹ of the connection between different art forms and elements within dance composition, he says:

Contemporary dance discovers choreography as the polarizing performative and physical force that organizes the whole distribution of the sensible and of the political at the level of the play between incorporation and excorporation²⁰, between command and demand, between moving and writing, as those central elements for all performance composition.²¹

The agency within these improvisational, fluid and interdisciplinary aspects feed into a rhizomic and nomadic discourse, offering a complexity of subjectivity and embodiment. This provides an agency for this project's research as conceptual, given also my mature body of work across forms.

How to experience The Politics of Dreaming YouTube Channel

The YouTube channel is to be experienced in 2 ways, one as private links watched on the computer of its viewer in isolation as one would explore the internet on a private computer and one as a public interactive screening for the final exhibition. An audience is invited to select links to watch non-chronologically as a collective, like a YouTube party. This draws on conceptual elements of post-internet art, and moves between my history of video art, film and performance, whereby the final screening is to be experienced as a film screening, which is also performative. Images from the YouTube channel embedded in this thesis, are seen at the beginning of chapters as thumbnails in their accumulative, generational progression, showing what developed over the year and what also dropped away. Images from specific videos interspersed aim to intersect the formality of the thesis text with direct descriptions in an anarchistic way, poetically at moments, speaking to the writing contextualising the works. These are flanked by algorithmically-suggested videos to contextualise the practice conceptually and literally on the internet.

¹⁸ Marten Spangberg, "Post-dance: An Advocacy," *Spangbergianism* (blog), April 9, 2017, <https://spangbergianism.wordpress.com/>.

¹⁹ Ric Allsopp and André Lepecki, "Editorial: On Choreography", *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 13:1 (2008): 1-6.

²⁰ Wikipedia says of this term: "Excorporation is the process through which mass cultural commodities are changed or remade into one's own culture. The theory of Excorporation was popularized by sociologist John Fiske, in order to explain the ongoing struggle between the dominant and subordinate groups in popular culture." Last edited 2 May, 2018. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Excorporation>

²¹ André Lepecki and Ric Allsopp, "Editorial: On Choreography", 5.

2.

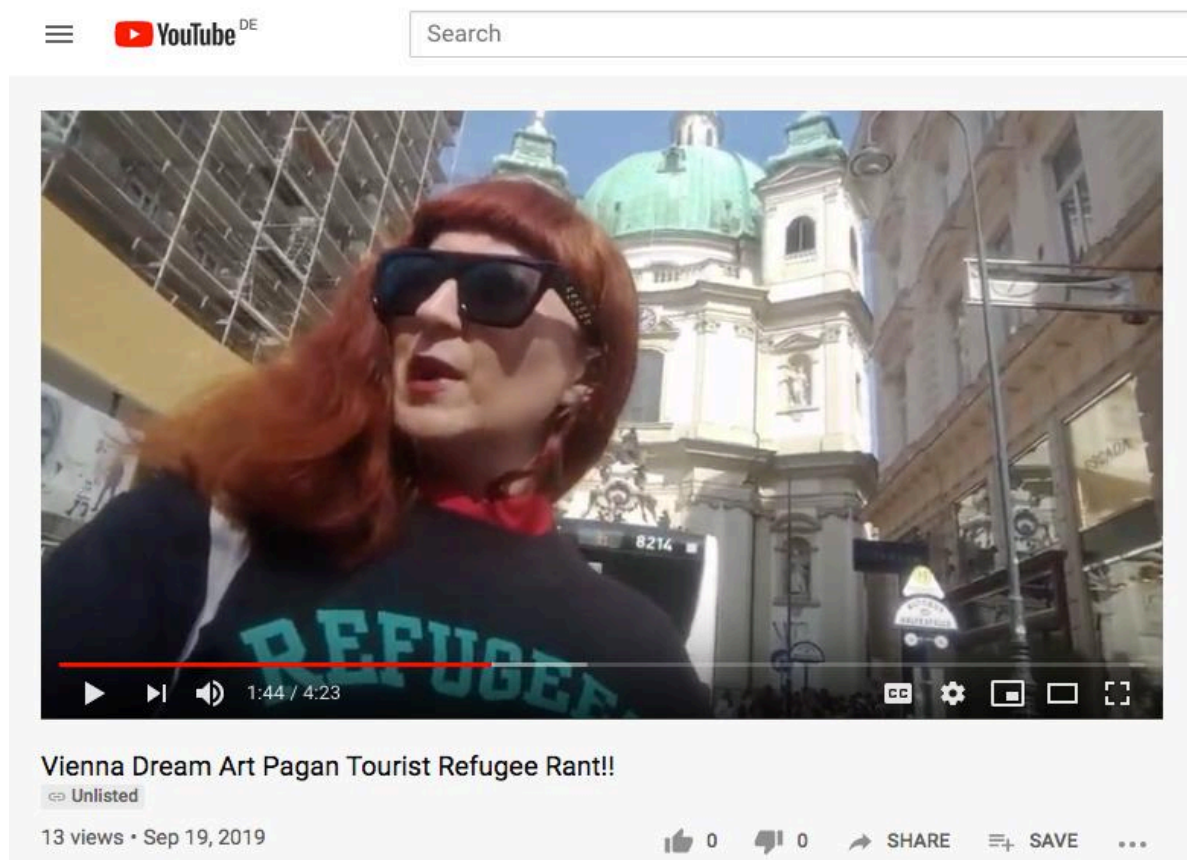
Position of Artist

The screenshot shows a YouTube channel page for 'Berlin Dream'. The left sidebar contains navigation links: Home, Trending, Subscriptions, Library, History, Watch later, Liked videos, SUBSCRIPTIONS (Popular on YouTube, Music, Sports, Gaming), and MORE FROM YOUTUBE (YouTube Premium). The main content area displays a grid of 12 videos. The top navigation bar includes a search bar and icons for Home, Library, History, Watch later, Liked videos, and a profile picture.

| Video Title | Views | Time Ago | Duration |
|---|-------------|--------------|----------|
| Berlin Shark Dream / Global Climate Strike Sept 20th... | 5 views | 1 month ago | 4:23 |
| The Politics of Breathing Meditation / Rant Director's... | 7 views | 1 month ago | 12:00 |
| Vienna Dream Art Pagan Tourist Refugee Rant!! | 12 views | 1 month ago | 4:24 |
| Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa 2019 Showreel, by... | 5 views | 2 months ago | 10:23 |
| 1 News Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa 2019... | 4 views | 2 months ago | 1:44 |
| 4. Berlin Anarchist Meditation / Green Cat Dream / NZ... | 10 views | 2 months ago | 3:18 |
| 2. House Fire Dream with Mother in German Forest | 11 views | 2 months ago | 1:36 |
| 1. Berlin Bonfire I had this dream Anarchists Breathing | 13 views | 2 months ago | 1:18 |
| [Unlabeled] | [Unlabeled] | [Unlabeled] | 6:47 |
| [Unlabeled] | [Unlabeled] | [Unlabeled] | 9:06 |
| [Unlabeled] | [Unlabeled] | [Unlabeled] | 2:59 |
| [Unlabeled] | [Unlabeled] | [Unlabeled] | 8:02 |

Alexa Wilson as an Anarchist: Nomadic, hybrid, political art practice

As an artist and researcher my political interests guide my intersectional feminism, locating me as a feminist practitioner with ecological leanings. My work has been informed by my undergraduate BA in Women's Studies and Film, TV and Media Studies which engaged with identity politics, my BPSA in Contemporary Dance, and my MA in Film Production. Yet I experience my work to be influenced outside of institutional learning. Among influential sources are notions of intimacy, provocation, ambiguity, vulnerability, collectivity, complexity, activation, agency and activism.



Description. Mode: *Tourist Video / Journalism Video* mixed with *Therapy Dream Video* and *Rant Video / Talking heads* in which I subvert a travel video in Vienna in front of a Church.

Within this we can also look at my 20-year art practice as a dance artist, performance artist, video artist, writer, choreographer and curator as highly interdisciplinary, blurring the boundaries between art forms in ways that have often, within reviews, been throughout the years literally described as “anarchist”. Conversations within and between art forms in a complex technological epoch can lend themselves toward taking multiple seemingly-contradictory positions. Paradox plays a role in generative authenticity within my approach to interdisciplinarity and multidimensionality. Of complexity relating to sexual difference and *nomadic subjectivity* Braidotti (2011) says:

What emerges from these new developments in feminist theory is the need to recode or rename the female feminist subject not as yet another sovereign, hierarchical, exclusionary subject, but as a multiple, open-ended, interconnected entity. To think constructively about change and changing conditions in feminist thought today, one needs to emphasise a vision of the thinking, knowing subject as not-one, but rather as being split over and over again in a rainbow of yet uncoded and ever so beautiful possibilities.²²

This refers to the ambiguities and complexities inferred in the theories of Deleuze, Haraway, and Irigaray in the sense of the generative and creative capacities, and political destabilisation (of a Eurocentric, patriarchal and *Anthropocene*), that multiplicity and intertextuality offer. Immediate conversations with the internet emerge in a variety of complex ways within this digital platform, referring to it's interactivity, immediacy, agency, participation, pop culture, and politics. Heathfield (2012) speaks of the complexity of interdisciplinarity and complexity interwoven within performance in a digital epoch:

Contemporary art scenes are now characterized by a complex diversity of live art practices, many of which can no longer be located unequivocally on either side of binarised drives toward exposure or concealment, the embodied or the textual, essence or appearance, reality or illusion, the figural or the literal.²³

By activating a digital performative space in this project with a YouTube channel that engages aspects of performance art, video art, post-internet art, dance and film through screening it interactively over 90 minutes, the work moves between these formerly "binarised drives" such as live/digital, embodied/textual, literal and figurative.

Video / performance work: Internet video performance

The choice to remain with multiple videos over one refined video is in keeping with the notion of the rhizome and its multiple forms, influences, and possibilities. This generates different dialogues and understandings, rather than one idea. By creating video art, which is also performance art and feminist, nomadic and anarchist in nature, it aims to offer a positioning that disrupts the norms of the internet. This draws attention to the mechanisms at work behind our engagement with these systems embedded visibly within the internet, and the ideologies emerging. It then draws attention to tensions between individual and collective responsibility within the context of questions around *political dreaming*. The Politics of Dreaming channel offers to mimic, critique, clash, dialogue and subvert aspects of online representation. This particularly applies to YouTube and videos within the mainstream around the themes emerging from this project and research (i.e. self-improvement vs activism). I use my own body and identity to do so, in keeping with performance art, but in doing so evoke a relationship with the viewer's own experience of these forms and ideas.

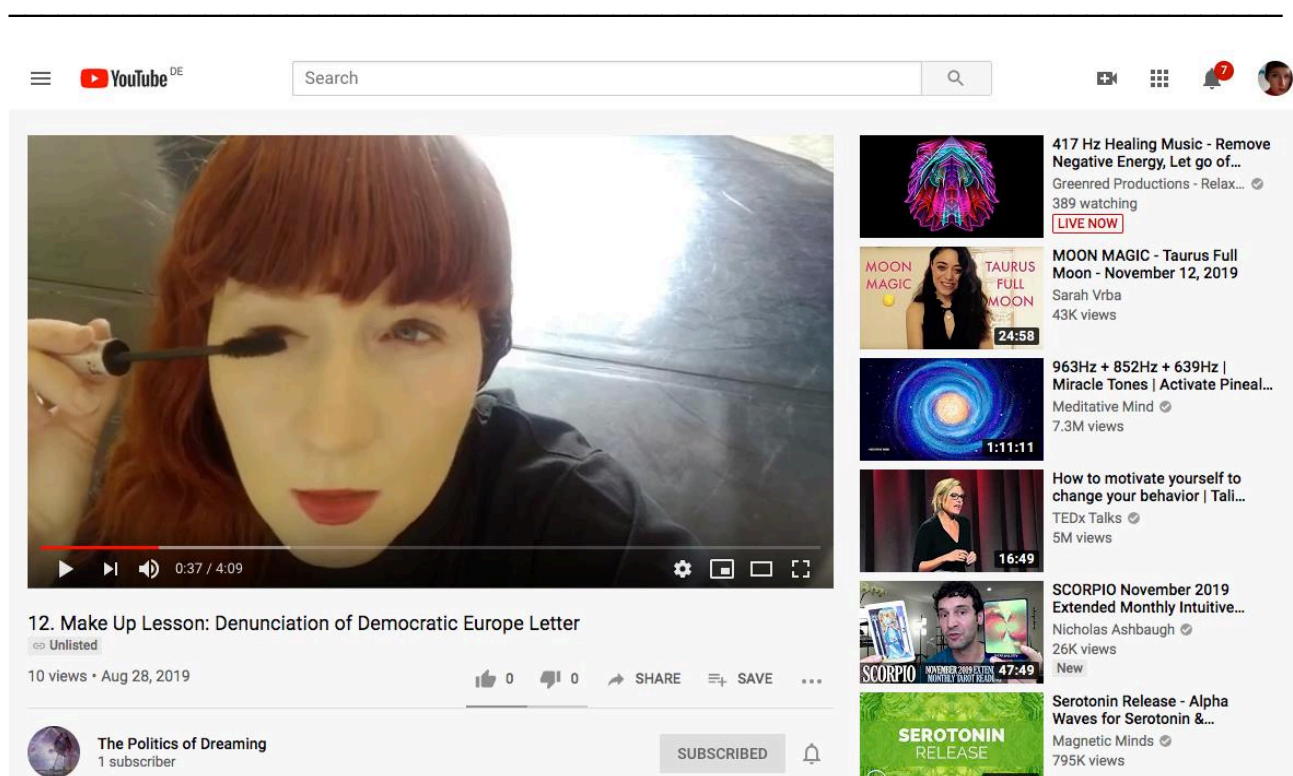
²² Braidotti, 150.

²³ Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, *Perform, repeat, record : live art in history* (Bristol/Chicago : Intellect, 2012), 31.

Jones (2006) writes about a range of artists of performance working with digital technologies and the televised body. Jones reflects upon the multiplicity of positions that such work evokes, in the sense of moving between identifications of viewed and viewing brought about by digitalisation. Movement away from theorising the postmodern subject through the notion of the gaze toward a more experiential, visceral multiple identification model, Jones states of this epoch of art:

...the core defining feature of postmodernism is precisely the collapse of the gap between signifier and signified into the frenzy of simulation in which the slippage of the signified precludes any fixing of meaning.²⁴

The importance of this in context is to understand the complexity of subject positions at play both within an intersectional world and online, whereby a white-washing social media platform cannot diminish or eliminate diversity or the multiplicity of identity positions both in our digital world and IRL²⁵. From Jones's identification of how specific artists work with these complexities, I understand this project to be in conversation with such slippages of both meaning and identities.



Description. Mode: Self-improvement / beauty video layered with Protest Activism video where I pretend to give a make-up workshop online while audio reads out a letter of resignation from Franco “Bifo” Berardi to the Diem 25 with Europe's fascism and xenophobia given as a reason.

²⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*, 18.

²⁵ IRL is an abbreviation of “In Real Life.” It is used in online chat rooms and dating sites to mean in the real world rather than internet world.

Art forms as nomadic: performance art, video, dance, writing

I relate to performance art and video art in both Berlin and New Zealand as well as dance and choreography in both contexts. Within New Zealand, I come from a lineage of Contemporary Dance Choreography and Film Studies, having a 20-year career in dance and performance art. Similar peers in dance who cross the borders of dance, performance art, and video include Sean Curham, Tru Paraha, val smith and video artist Karin Hofko. Sean Curham's work is highly complex conceptual performance that crosses a history in contemporary choreography with performance art, and conceptual art, similar to mine with often radical themes. Tru Paraha engages with a very physical choreographic practice that is abstract and political, while val smith works conceptually between somatic and relational performance, also stemming from dance with complex identity themes, while (German) video artist Karin Hofko works with video art in a playfully conceptual and performative manner. Many of these are aspects I work with, so I view them as peers.

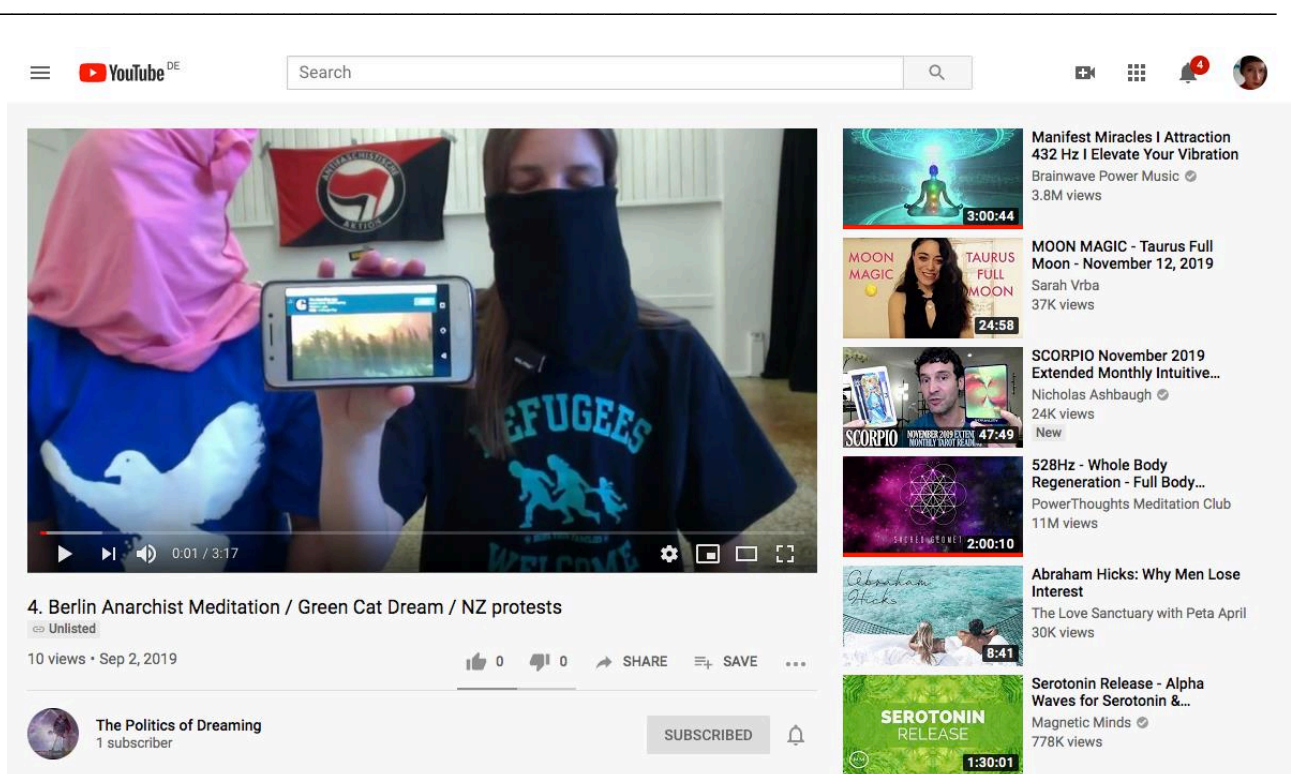
I affiliate with companies such as Footnote NZ Dance and Touch Compass, who invite guest choreographers, and with the Performance Art Week Aotearoa. I recently created Experimental Dance Week Aotearoa in NZ. In Berlin, I am connected to the Month of Performance Art Berlin, which is now Association for Performance Art Berlin, and related to the dance scene centred around Ufer Studios Sophiensaele and Hau and influenced by many choreographers based in Berlin or Europe such as Meg Stuart, Jerome Bel, Eszter Salaman and Ivo Dimchev, who work between theatre, dance, and audience interactivity. I work and collaborate across countries, from India and Europe to New York, China and, Canada, with artists and contexts which encourage radicality, somatic engagement, conceptual performance and, interdisciplinarity.

The multiple homes for performance art or this kind of intertextual performance practice make it inherently nomadic. It moves between the gallery, the theatre, public spaces, film, online or to music or poetic spaces. It is never comfortable anywhere and no one is comfortable with it anywhere. I have therefore embraced this as an inherently nomadic, displaced, and a migratory aspect of interdisciplinary practice, working between public spaces, the internet, the studio, home, protests, private spaces like dreams, and the institution. I invite others to collaborate in these spaces. My work in Europe has more often been identified as "performance art", although my lineage comes from dance and film. Kristine Stiles (2012), a contemporary and performance art theorist, summarises performance art history and its myriad of qualities:

Emphasising the body as art, these artists amplified the role of process over product and shifted from representational objects to presentational modes of action... Performance artworks vary from purely conceptual acts, or mental occurrences to physical manifestations that may take place in private or public. Performances could comprise simple gestures presented by a single artist, or complex events

and collective experiences involving widely dispersed geographic spaces and diverse communities. They could be transmitted by satellite and viewed by millions, and take place in virtual reality. Performances could occur without witness or documentation, or they might be fully recorded in photographs, video, film, computers.²⁶

Working with an emphasis on the body as well as multiple subjectivities implied by Jones (2006) between viewer and viewed, signifier and signified, the project mimics “presentational modes of action” in virtual (internet social media) space, playing with notions of public and private space, as well as performance as documented in public space (internet). Dance, performance art, dreams and protest are interwoven between “talking heads” videos to refer to the performativity of all these gestures used widely on the net. Lepecki (2006) talks about the “possibilising” aspects of post-modern 21st Century dance going beyond its exhaustion. These tend toward breaking modernist and neo-liberal notions of dance as pure spectacle.



Description: Mode: *Self-improvement Video* layered with *Protest Activism*, meditation process led by a performer with anarchist outfits on while playing a phone screen of the Arctic fires in 2019.

Background works

Solo work has been a practice I have explored for 20 years, and can dive deeper into ideas from a personal position. Over the last decade, living internationally during an economic crisis, I have deepened into interactivity in an attempt to counter the overwhelming isolation, disconnection, and fragmenting objectification experienced in our society with the onset of technologies/internet/social

²⁶ Kristine Stiles, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 679.

media coinciding with an economic crisis facing humanity. Generating intimacy in opening spaces for both vulnerability on a personal level and connection with audience members via their sharing or thoughts has been a mode to help counter the alienation experienced socially in our times.

I am positioned within an entire movement of artists doing this kind of work at this time within performance, theatre and dance, helping to connect people and reflect collectively in times of increased political turmoil and economic disparity. Other such artists during these times are Sean Curham, Val Smith, locally, and internationally, Berlin-based choreographer Jeremy Wade and choreographer Ezster Salaman. My work engages with a range of generative provocations central to the performance offered via movement, text, video and performance art. These works also moved toward being collaborative and directed choreographed projects. Subversion is used as a strategy to draw attention to a platform or mode of social interaction, which in the case of this research is social media internet use. YouTube videos are specifically a device for sharing alternative views and information within mainstream media contexts. The commentary is complex and often points toward the contradictions inherent for consideration within our political climate.



Weg: A-Way, Auckland Fringe, photo from video still by Anna Bate, 2011.

The platform deconstructs, for example, a talk show (*Show Pony*, 2012) offering the paradox of self-love/social media narcissism, or a voting platform which exposes the choice to make the same or limited political choices (*The Status of Being*, 2014), or a “workshop/therapy circle in self-exploitation,” which offers both the chance to self-exploit or to understand our role in exploitation (*Weg: A-Way*, 2011). Or “Intersectional feminist meditation/yoga” (999, 2018) is given social weight and then questioned from different angles. These provocative, activating modes can playfully open generative understandings.

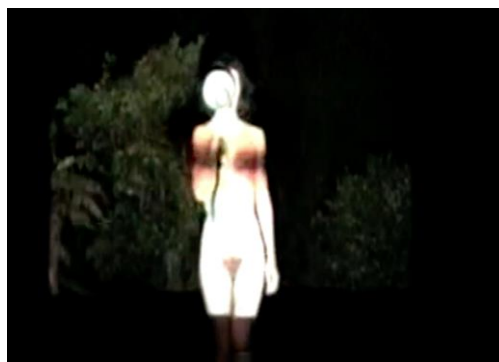
Background in environmental works: Performance and video

Video art and performance have had a long-standing history of being intertwined. Artists such as Arthur Jafa, Ana Mendieta and Sandra Bernhard, whose works I mention later as subverting video through performance, and many others have worked between performance and video over the last 50 years. *Extraordinary Aliens*, a full-length experimental documentary I created between 2013-2015, completed on a residency in Beijing, interwove migration stories from people around the world with performance art footage shot in different parts of the world. *Extraordinary Aliens* integrated nomadism with issues around belonging, otherness and environmentalism. The interviews in this documentary ranged from personal stories of what makes one belong to more political stories of rejection from borders, highlighting that money moves through borders more easily than particular (marginalised) demographics. The morphing of landscapes between Europe, the US, China, and NZ and interweaving of interviews aimed not to privilege any particular voices or stories, breaking down filmic narrative conventions in and highlighting humanity's inherent nomadism. In doing this, more radical stories did spring out.



Extraordinary Aliens, Berlin, video still by Matthew Ward, 2013.

Danger, 2001, was a video performance stemming from a live-work called *Noah's Artifice*, overlaying video projected images of animals in zoos and sharks in aquariums of my own "femme fatale" naked female body holding a megaphone dancing in my back garden at night, to music like a karaoke "Stand by Me". Conceptually, it looked at the preservation of endangered animals as a metaphor for the sexism of psychoanalysis and film from a satirical and personal perspective.

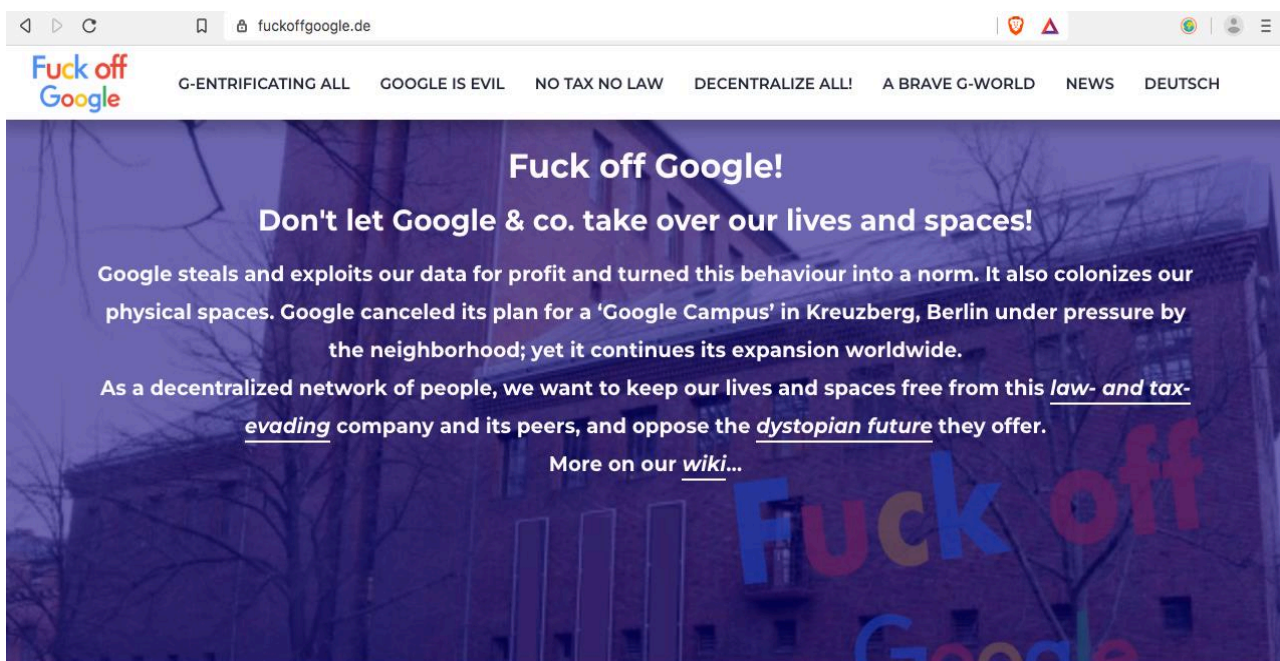


Danger, video work, Auckland, 2003.

Transformation acts as a large element of each of the works, and the inner and outer change manifest as political, in that issues are confronted and the need for changes noted. Performance art in the 10 years since I've moved to Berlin has had a huge re-emergence in response to the global economic crisis of 2008. This resurgence reflects an existential response to a crisis, which imbues a breakdown and restructuring of identity, not just inter-culturally, but also globally. Tijen Tunalı in the chapter "The Paradoxical Engagement of Contemporary Art with Activism and Protest" in *Rhetorical Social Value and the Arts: But how does it work?*,²⁷ says of political art:

The aesthetic dimension of the recent political protests, revolts, and uprisings not only challenges and reformulates what is acceptable as politics in the society but also problematizes what is acceptable in society as art. Moreover, the contemporary activist -artist not just participates in protests and uprisings he/she joins the community programs, and works with educators, social workers, and even with scientists.²⁸

Locating myself politically #Fuck off Google/Anarchism:



From *fuckoffgoogle.de* website page, Berlin, 2018.

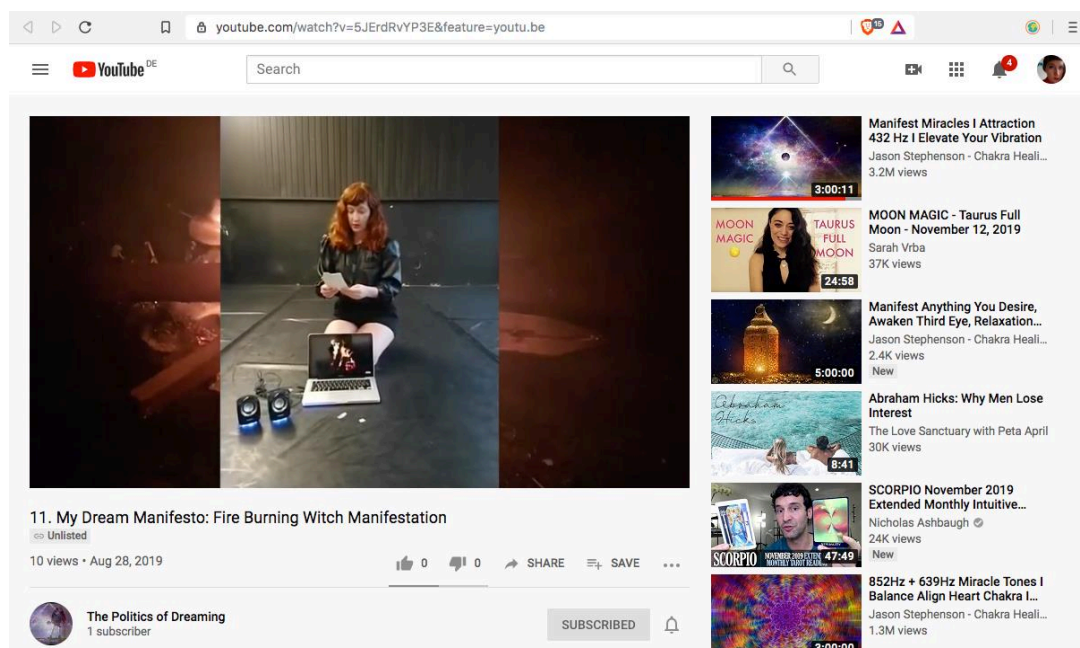
I position myself as a *nomadic subject*, as an intersectional feminist artist, and as a political and creative anarchist, committed to left-wing activism. The Antifascist (Antifa) anarchist scene in Berlin has a deep history of activism stemming also from the socialism of 100 years in Berlin. It identifies as anti-sexist, intersectional, and fighting injustices and for equalities identified as made imbalanced systemically by capitalism, patriarchy, and colonisation. The far-left activist scene in Berlin kept a Google Campus from being built in Kreuzberg in 2018, which I reference because of

²⁷ Tijen Tunalı, "The Paradoxical Engagement of Contemporary Art with Activism and Protest", *Rhetorical Social Value and the Arts: But how does it work?* Charlotte Bonham-Carter, Nicola Mann (eds) (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017).

²⁸ Tijen Tunalı, "The Paradoxical Engagement", 78.

the post-internet nature of this project. This is a political community I have supported, been part of and influenced by in protests over 10 years in Berlin.

I identify that anarchism breaks the rules of hierarchy, much like Braidotti's *nomadic subjects* and Deleuze and Guattari's *rhizome*, as I relate to them within a creative context with art forms cross-fertilising ideas and practices. This brings together non-linear elements of the research and methods of dream-journaling, activism, travel, working with communities, and other performers, which are reflected upon in writing and studio practice, with online engagement as a form of critique that is performative. These layers are non-hierarchical, with no element being privileged over the other and always in dialogue.



Description. Mode/s: Subversion of *Self Improvement Video* in which I read out my “dreams” of a world I want to live in as a Manifesto, which I pretend to “cyber burn”.

3.

Literature Review

youtube.com/channel/UCDqWRuEJLIL5f--O-4s1m3Q/videos

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Death Dance Dreams 2019 Berlin/Aotearoa!
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German Bonfire Story / Naomi Klein Interview On Fi...
4 views • 1 month ago

Research Question and Political Focus

The research asks questions emerging from this project between my different locations of residence as well as my online residence. The project's research questions pertain to tensions between the rise of social movements/activism and self-improvement concerning the urgency of Climate Change and intersectional social-political crises. These political backdrops inform my thinking and process around *political dreams* in Europe, New Zealand, and North America. The framing research question is *How might an inquiry into "political dreaming" manifest within my performance-video-based activist art practice?* Because this research leads my practice toward an internet and social media (YouTube) based performance-video-based activist art practice as a trajectory, gaps in my contextual literature between performance and internet art appear.

Current political themes and issues which I am interested in feed this project's agency for *political dreams*. Themes are feminism and ecology concerning tensions and paradoxes as they currently exist within a digital capitalist context. Philosophers Rosi Braidotti, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and Donna Haraway speak to these themes within a contemporary context with notions of nomadic subjectivity, sexual difference, the *rhizome*, and *chthulucene*. The rise of political conservatism across the world sits upon a significant background of global instability and specifically the European refugee crisis, climate crisis and displacement in relation to neo-liberal agendas of late capitalism. Cultural theorists Naomi Klein and Adrienne Maree Brown address the urgency of our political times with understandings of *emergent strategies* and manifestos for intersectional care. Global displacement, cultural hierarchy, and exploitation are understood to be an ongoing manifestation of the ideologies of neo-liberal capitalism, addressed through themes of ecology and feminism within the research.

Political philosophers

My primary academic text is Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2001)²⁹, which speaks to the project's disruptive nomadic capacity to engage with *political dreaming* from between countries physically, displacing national subjectivity and decentring social power structures, conducted also through a subversive use and presentation of the project through an online YouTube channel. Braidotti's stance takes a specifically feminist nomadic angle on sexual difference as embodying a generatively diverse multiplicity:

²⁹ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 5.

The nomadic subject I am proposing is a figuration that emphasizes the need for action both at the level of identity, of subjectivity, and of differences among women. This multiplicity is contained in a temporal sequence whereby discontinuities and even contradictions can find a place. In order to sustain this process, a feminist must start from the recognition of herself as not-one- as a subject that is split time and time again over multiple axes of differentiation. Paying attention to these multiple axes calls for suitably diversified forms of practice.³⁰

This multiplicity is supported by Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the *rhizome* in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (2004)³¹, which finds lines of connection between disparate elements like a rhizome and generates conversations in a non-linear and non-chronological way. This supports both the complexity of Braidotti's *nomadic subjectivity* also within sexual difference and offers a space for her notion of "diversified forms of practice" (Braidotti, 2011) to be present within my artistic practice within its interdisciplinary, complex yet interconnected aspects. It brings together non-linear elements of the research and methods of dream-journaling, activism, travel, working with communities, and with other performers, which are reflected on in writing and studio practice, with online engagement as a form of critique that is performative. These layers are non-hierarchical, with no element being privileged over the other and always in dialogue.

Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016)³² denotes the importance of humanity working collaboratively with the Earth and prioritising the notion of the *chthulucene*, rather than *Anthropocene*³³, as an Earth-centred relationship with a complex and chaotic bio-diversity. This has directly informed my decision to focus on the metaphor of fire for *political dreaming*, in a volatile climate that is directly activating as well as linked to both *nomadic subjectivity* and the *rhizome*. Fire knows no borders and generates many complex and contradictory forces, which Naomi Klein has similarly later in 2019 conceptualised also as a metaphor for ecological activation and social movements in her book *On Fire: A Burning Case for a Green New Deal* (2019)³⁴. I refer also to Youth Climate Strike leader Greta Thunberg within the metaphor of fire in an article she wrote for *The Guardian* called "Our house is on fire."³⁵

³⁰ Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 164.

³¹ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London/New York: Continuum, 2004).

³² Donna Haraway, "Staying with the Trouble," in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. Jason W. Moore (Oakland: Cairos, 2016), 34-76.

³³ Term implying a period impact of humanity on Earth's geology, first named by Vladimir Vernadsky, 1938.

³⁴ Naomi Klein, *On Fire: A Burning Case for a Green New Deal* (UK, Penguin Random House UK, 2019).

³⁵ Greta Thunberg, "Our house is on fire": Greta Thunberg, 16, Urges Leaders to Act on Climate," *The Guardian*, January 25, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/25/our-house-is-on-fire-greta-thunberg16-urges-leaders-to-act-on-climate>

Because the current political climate is ecologically unstable, economically and socio-politically, Naomi Klein's *No is Not Enough: Defeating the New Shock Politics* (2017)³⁶ informs my current political questions in a global populist era. Klein frames our epoch as one in which *disaster capitalism* reigns in neo-liberal capitalism, but can be countered with an intersectional manifesto of care. Similarly, Adrienne Brown emphasises in *Emergent Strategy* (2017)³⁷ the importance of elements of social movements, likened to *emergent strategies* in which animals form collectively in crisis, as intersectional. Interrogating contradictions emerging between collective activism and individual self-improvement as commentary via video-internet-performativity, this research draws on articles on protest and care by Jess Marcyk in "Why Non-Violent Protests Work" in *Psychology Today*³⁸, and Syrus Marcus Ware's article "How to fight Activist Burn Out" in *Now Toronto*³⁹. Building on this commentary, philosopher Slavoj Žižek critiques a Western Capitalist adoption of Eastern spirituality in *Event: Philosophical Journey Through a Concept* (2014)⁴⁰. Brigid Delaney in *The Guardian* toward the end period of my research in early 2020 in an article "We need to move on from self-care to something that cannot be captured by Capitalism," argues for a collective understanding of care to avoid being "self-care" being co-opted by neo-liberal capitalism⁴¹.

Given the psychoanalytical and therapeutic and feminist nature of the project, my practice touches on the work of psychoanalyst, philosopher and feminist Irigaray and her text *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985)⁴². This utilises feminist strategies and discourses circulating around manifold feminine desires, poetics, and language, which is inclusive of fluidity and difference. The multiplicity and non-linearity of her poetic feminine language speak to the project's rhizomatic non-hierarchy, a counter to masculine language and power structures. I refer to Irigaray also in the lineage of psychoanalysis and an understanding of the unconscious via dream analysis instigated by Carl Jung (1968)⁴³ in his work on dreams, as a political way to look at dreaming. How the unconscious reflects the repressed conscious experience of the external (political) world has a feminist tone within the context of Irigaray's feminine languages.

³⁶ Naomi Klein, *No is Not Enough: Defeating the New Shock Politics* (London: Penguin, 2017).

³⁷ Adrienne Brown, *Emergent Strategy* (Chico: AK Press, 2017).

³⁸ Jesse Marcyk, "Why Non-Violent Protests Work". *Psychology Today*, February 13, 2017.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pop-psych/201702/why-non-violent-protests-work>.

³⁹ Syrus Marcus Ware, "How to fight Activist Burnt out". *Now Toronto*, August 7, 2019.

<https://nowtoronto.com/stage/theatre/activist-burnout-syrus-marcus-ware/>.

⁴⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *Event: Philosophical Journey Through a Concept* (London: Penguin Books, 2014).

⁴¹ Brigid Delaney, "We need to move on from self-care to something that cannot be captured by Capitalism," *The Guardian*, January 30, 2020. <https://amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/31/we-need-to-move-on-from-self-care-to-something-that-cannot-be-captured-by-capitalism>.

⁴² Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁴³ Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (USA: Dell Publishing, 1968).

Art theorists

Amelia Jones as the main art theorist for this research specialising in performance, the body and video argues, in *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject* (2006)⁴⁴, for televised art and digital subjectivity which challenges binary notions of the viewer and viewed, signifier and signified, public and private. This speaks to the work's movement between performance art, dance, film and video art as an online digital embodiment and presentation of the themes. As well it is in conversation with the theories of Braidotti, Deleuze and Guatarri, and Irigaray in its generativeness. Kristine Stiles (2012) on performance art⁴⁵ describes its emphasis on the body as art, which this project also plays with. I myself as the performance artist embody and subvert video platforms online using an intimate (personal) tactic within The Politics of Dreaming YouTube channel. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield in *Perform, repeat, record: live art in history*⁴⁶ write and edit together a collection of texts understanding the complex relationship of performance to archiving and technologies, which speaks to the project's interweaving of live and digital performance.

André Lepecki in *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2016)⁴⁷ writes about the generative opportunities of this century's contemporary dance by its rejection of Eurocentric 20th Century modernist traditions. He also writes alongside Ric Allsopp in "Editorial: On Choreography" (2008)⁴⁸, paving a way for writing and making dance that questions a post-dance context. Marten Spangberg's online writing "Post-dance: An Advocacy" (2017)⁴⁹ argues for the liberation of dance through improvisation, and the separation of dance from choreography, which speaks to this project's subversive use of dance/improvisation within its internet video form and Irigaray's political and multiple pleasures. Raivo Kelomees in an article on post/internet art called "From Net Art to Post-internet Art"⁵⁰ quotes a range of cultural critics on what determines post-

⁴⁴ Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁵ Kristine Stiles, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 679.

⁴⁶ Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, *Perform, repeat, record: live art in history*, (Bristol/Chicago: Intellect, 2012).

⁴⁷ André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁸ Ric Allsopp and André Lepecki, "Editorial: On Choreography", *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 13:1 (2008): 1-6.

⁴⁹ Marten Spangberg, "Post-dance: An Advocacy." *Spangbergianism* (blog), April 9, 2017, <https://spangbergianism.wordpress.com/>.

⁵⁰ Raivo Kelomees, "From Net Art to Post-internet Art", *Estonian Art*, 2017, Issue 1, 43-49.

internet art, which this project embodies. Within it, Esther Choi defines it as “a set of modalities and sensibilities that self-referentially respond to the internet’s advent and cultural influence.”⁵¹

Tijen Tunalı in his chapter "The Paradoxical Engagement of Contemporary Art with Activism and Protest" within *Rhetorical Social Value and the Arts*⁵² draws upon other theorists to address paradoxes inherent in art's relationship to activism through examples of art. He asserts that these embody Ranciere's notion of dissensus, causing a disruption in the sensible in art as well as resistance to neo-liberal capitalist ideologies, which relates to the project's art activism. Post-internet art frames the project in a manner whereby mainstream capitalist ideologies are disrupted and the conventions of video art, performance art and dance are broken or liberated within their recontextualisation in this form, as outlined by the above theorists.

Art practitioners

Arthur Jafa and his 2016 video work *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* is an artist I am influenced by for this project which relates largely to the realm of discourse in video art and post-internet art. This work cuts together videos of black Americans through the last century from the internet, most of which interweave oppression experienced, civil disobedience conducted, and entertainment forms created by African Americans. The power of this work is its direct relationship to the internet, and subjectivities experienced, expressed, archived, consumed, and manipulated there. While the work is video art, it engages with post-internet critiques in which we experience social relations impacted by the internet and acts as a performative gesture in the sense of its focus upon the embodiment of black identity and experience.

The performance and video work of Ana Mendieta from the 1970s-80s has also inspired this project, which sits between video and performance. Her work is considered performance art and focuses largely on the relationship between the female body (her own) and the Earth, and makes critique of otherness also as a Cuban-born artist based in the USA, where she experiences that, like Earth, her body is always displaced, without voice or its own identity outside that which is prescribed to her by patriarchal Western culture. The interest for me in her work is the nuanced relationship she cultivates in her work between video and performance, both ephemeral art forms and that between the natural and the technological and cultured worlds, where the slipperiness of identity is existential and finds voice in its fluidity. I refer to a text on her work in C&AL, “Ana

⁵¹ Raivo Kelomee, “From Net Art”, 49.

⁵² Tijen Tunalı, "The Paradoxical Engagement of Contemporary Art with Activism and Protest", *Rhetorical Social Value and the Arts: But how does it work?* (eds) Charlotte Bonham-Carter, Nicola Mann (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 67-86.

Mendieta in Berlin” in *Contemporary And* (2018)⁵³.

US Artist Sandra Bernhard relates to the aspect of satire present in my project. In her 1990 film *Without You I'm Nothing* in which she, as a queer Jewish singer and actress, performs a lengthy number of songs from different cultures in a range of outfits with long personal and satirical monologues, often self-effacing, which critique cultural and gender politics as well as the culture of American Hollywood. Of interest to me is her range of performative skills, and her cutting humour used to offset the uncomfortable provocations. These are contrasts I work with also in this project, and appeal to the multiple pleasures (Irigaray) of feminist humour.

These artists inspire and contextualise my own work specific to this proposed research, which is political, activist, provocative, satirical, embodied, digital, and multi-positioned. These works all address current political themes as they emerge in the world and as they personally impact me as a human in the world. My performance practice spans 20 years of making solo and group choreographies as well as collaborative projects. While I place my own politics and narratives centre stage in all these works as things that politically affect me, I employ tactics for opening up the work to others through abstraction, improvisation, and poetics.

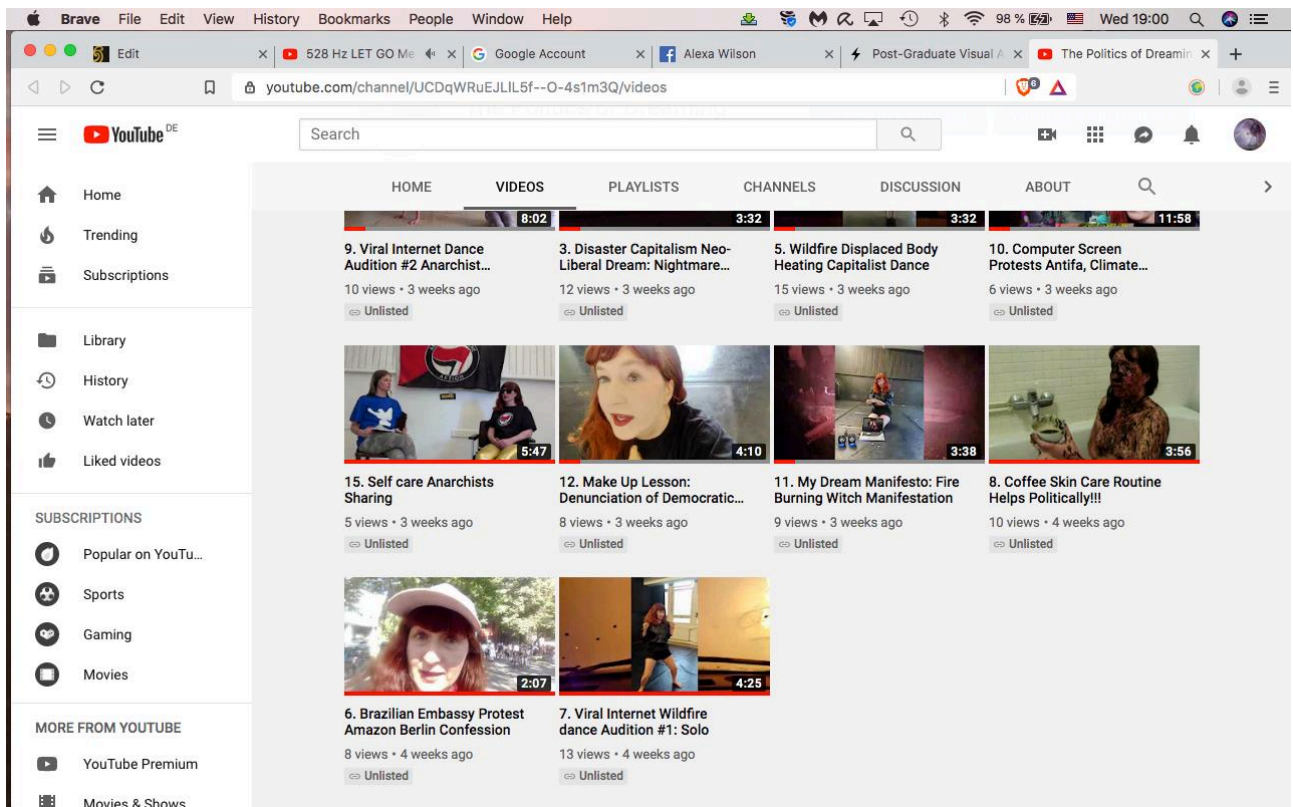
Gaps in literature

My perceived underrepresented literature within this research exists in the realm of a coherent relationship between post-internet art, performance, and dance-related or influenced. In such a rapidly changing decade like the one we have just exited, my experience entering the 2020s is that the kind of interdisciplinarity which moves between "post-dance", "performance art" and the internet, social media commentary, is challenging to find in literature. In my experience of international performance, there has been a huge resurgence in political performance in response to political upheaval across dance, theatre, performance, and post-internet work. While there is a visual art-led discourse utilising dance, the interweaving of dance with other forms of media, including online and new media from the choreographic direction that applies to my direction and practice is underrepresented.

⁵³ C&AL, “Ana Mendieta in Berlin”. *Contemporary And*. June 1, 2018.
<https://www.contemporaryand.com/magazines/ana-mendieta-in-berlin>.

4.

Research design



Research Question: How might an inquiry into “political dreaming” manifest within my performance-video-based activist art practice?

Sub-questions: What is Political Dreaming?

In unpacking the original question as a research problem, I have identified that the *political dream* implies collective ideals that do not tally with political realities. Further sub-questions emerge from this, such as *Whose political dream am I dreaming? What is the relationship between conscious and unconscious political dreaming? How do I dare to dream in this political reality? How can activist performance video art politically dream?* Within the broader context of the project's research including theoretical influences, these questions have emerged: *How can nomadism, the rhizome, wildfire, sexual difference, chthulucene, emergency, and intersectional care disrupt the neo-liberal dream/reality to generate agency? How can we integrate rather than separate self-improvement and activism, individual and collective, as a political dream?* These elements are addressed and interconnected within the seemingly disparate but rhizomatic aspects of this video/performance/post-internet art project and research, with the sub-questions being unpacked within the larger body of my research knowledge and questions in the next chapters.

Methodologies

Art Contexts / Performance / Video / Internet

The MPhil project incorporates art practice methods generated through psychoanalysis, dream therapy, interdisciplinarity, activism, and feminist political philosophy. This work is situated as political and activist video and performance-based work. I contextualise political questions into the work, making commentary and questioning the *politics of dreaming* in our global climate. The main methodologies for this research are artistic, working across the mediums of video and performance, including dance. The outcome of this project and research is a video performance art project presented as a multiple video YouTube channel, which involves performance art, text and dance.

The research is conducted between Berlin and Auckland over the course of the one-year MPhil and involves conceptualising, dream-journaling, studio practice, activism in the prospective cities, occasionally collaboration with performers and reading theory in and around the themes of *The Politics of Dreaming* as they arise. The project is framed within visual arts practice in this context, despite a long history of choreography and performance because it is presented as a video art project, which crosses interdisciplinarily into also performance art and post-internet art. The

complexity and multiplicity of the art forms and conceptualisation are grounded by a solid studio practice, which brings the work into the body via dance and performance embodiment. The work has a video performance outcome presented as a YouTube channel for an audience to select from in an order of their choice. This is informed by the complexities of discourse, subjectivity, and signification between performance, video and the internet, particularly in regard to bodies/identities/actions, as Jones (2006, 2012) and Heathfield (2012) suggest:

One answer to such operations within the logic of the archive that this volume follows is to produce archival forms whose containment is questioned by their evident divergence and fragmentation, by their presentation of paradox, forms that present their inevitable contingency, opening themselves to what they are not.⁵⁴

My practice has moved extensively between performance, dance, film, and text for the past two decades, and has also been influenced by an undergraduate study in film, media, and feminism. This informs my decisions to move toward the immediacy of the internet as a playful performative space to explore digitised feminist performance and media critique. My interest in the relational has a huge history and this self-reflexivity between myself and my communities has moved me toward a post-internet art practice within this research.

The research furthers its methods of engagement through (my continued) attendance at real-life protests, activist events and engagement with politics within both NZ and Europe. The research brings aspects of protest and activism into my video performance work. It does this to construct contemporary political issues and activism structures within video and performance, as well as on the internet. As the notion of *political dreaming* is two-fold and ambiguous, so “what we dream” politically can be seen within activism and the aim for a more equitable society. Activist art or protest art can be seen here as that which provides key reflective social commentary on *political dreaming*. Much has been written about activist art in recent years. Natasha Jessen Peterson in “The Power of Performance: Art as Political Activism” (2012) suggests, “a political element is atomic to performance art and this is because it is confrontational.”⁵⁵

Politics and philosophy

Politics that are feminist, ecological, refugee supportive, anti-capitalist / anti-fascist, and community supportive will be embedded into the methodologies. Klein's analysis of populist politics as *disaster capitalism* offers an insight into the tactics of the powerful in our current political system as a frame for the political reality as neo-liberal “dream”, with also an intersectional manifesto to combat it as a

⁵⁴ Heathfield, *Perform, repeat, record*, 33.

⁵⁵ Natasha Jessen Peterson, “The Power of Performance: Art as Political Activism,” *Tufts Observer*, October 22 2012, <http://tuftsoobserver.org/the-power-of-performance-art-as-political-activism/>

political dream. Emergent strategy theorised by Adrienne Brown (2017), offers similarly practical steps to sustainably maintain activism as inspired by political sci-fi and examples of animals in crisis responding collectively, which mirror social movements. According to Brown says:

Emergent Strategy was initially, a way of describing the adaptive and relational leadership found in the world of Black science fiction writer Octavia Butler, then it grew into plans of action, personal practices, and collective organizing tools that account for constant change and rely on the strength of relationship for adaptation. With a crush on biomimicry and permaculture.⁵⁶

Here complex yet practical knowledge of emergent social relations is formed out of range of generative elements, often rhizomatic in connection in my understanding. It forms a relationship to this research in its interest in social movements and the wildfire metaphor as activation in an emergency. The research draws on Braidotti's notion of nomadic subjectivity within these art forms' interactions also on the internet, which speak to social movements and viral activity on collective and social individual issues through and across national borders. The internet displaces notions of nationalism and decentralizes social power, like nomadic subjectivity, offering, as Braidotti mentions, a complex and generative feminist sexual difference in their most idealistic.

Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) understanding of the *rhizome*, generating a non-hierarchical interconnection between disparate forces, relates to the project's *nomadism*, and its rhizomatic fluid subjectivity within its interdisciplinarity. The elements disruptive to hierarchies and chronologies and generative of newly forged connections in the research cause a cross-fertilisation of processes, expressions, questions, and ideas. As the project is presented non-chronologically as a video sequence of the viewer's deciding, it relates to the *rhizome* in being able to link to and begin anywhere within itself in its different elements. They describe the metaphor:

A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes. Plants with roots or radicles may be rhizomorphic in other respects altogether. Even some animals are, in their pack form. Rats are rhizomes. Burrows are too, in all of their functions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion, and breakout. The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers. When rats swarm over each other. The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couch grass, or the weed. Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order.⁵⁷

Elements here informing my making process are like the bulbs or tubers, as opposed to the hierarchy of roots or trees, drawing together in non-chronological ways aspects of research and methods of travel, working with communities, and other performers, as well as dream-journaling, activism, reflective gathering of experience in writing and studio practice, and social media online engagement as performative critique. This fracturing is horizontal, each element as important as

⁵⁶ Brown, *Emergent Strategy*, 29.

⁵⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 6.

and in conversation with the other.

Methods

Site: Transnational and familiar

I have been working between Berlin and Auckland, what I consider my two homes. With Auckland my home-town, I have been based in Berlin for the past decade, and resided there for the first half of this research before returning to Auckland. I have spent time during the year between both countries and have been conscious of political activity in both countries, cities, continent and island. What is happening in these places informs and also frames to some extent my understanding of what is political there during this time, also impacting my dreams (subconscious). For example, how the climate crisis is affecting my dreams in Europe and the rise of political division and uprising of social movements this year alongside conservatism and populism (surveillance/technology) have been a political context. In New Zealand my dreams reflect a climate of intersectional politics, also relating to climate change (natural disasters), the economy, and community. I also travelled to New York for a sponsored theoretical course at Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art and to Vancouver for a paid collaborative residency called Space to Fail, both of which fed into the political research.

I have been mindful of how my attention to dreams can inform my understanding of politics. I have seen a path to what is dreamt literally within the subconscious individually in these places and also figuratively as aspirations collectively as a way to inform my work and outcome. I observe a relationship politically emerging within the project and politics in both places, reflected online as a generative tension between activism and self-care, collective and individual. I am the main subjective position politically within the research project, while collaborating with performers for the video in moments and giving the audience agency to choose an order for watching the videos.

I have been interweaving as an artistic practice of dream-journaling, attendance at protests and social movements with improvisational and choreographic dance practices. I have filmed, in the studio and at protests, dances or rants to the camera to mimic a variety of internet videos relating to some of the themes of this work. The aim of this is to discover a conversation between political and personal dreaming via my private dreaming, dancing body, public sharing space of the internet, self-care and social movements to find where these dialogues intersect and emerge as generative. This research project assembles itself around a series of video performances uploaded to a YouTube channel for engaging in the philosophical question of *political dreams* as manifest through my video and performance-based activisms between my two homes over the past decade in Berlin and in Auckland during the past year.

1. A creative performance video project *The Politics of Dreaming* to be performed and filmed between Berlin and Auckland (as well as other centres I inhabit during this year, e.g. NY, Vienna, Vancouver) mostly of myself as a performance artist, and with performers at moments.
2. The video performance project will be presented as an interactive work in a public showing in Auckland's Audio Foundation as well as available for private viewing online as guided in the introduction.

Questions

The research question and sub-questions have helped shape an overview of my arts-related research and practice. Within the process I have journaled both my literal dreams and the political climate, particularly around Climate Change politics. As the year unfolded, the seemingly dualistic focus on collective activism vs individual self-care became apparent as a generative tension within neo-liberal capitalism as our political reality. Answering aspects of how *political dreaming* manifests within the video-performance-based activist art, the project brings about further questions as mentioned. Brown (2017), Klein (2017) and other activists such as Ware, (2019) suggest that both self-care and activism can work together, collectively, rather than being placed into extreme opposition as they have been even online. Irigaray and Braidotti offer a feminist multiplicity which feeds into connecting the individual and collective dream.

The rhizomatic and nomadic elements within this video project support a *political dream* which has an intersectional agency, while the commentary emerging from it about a tension between the personal and political is inferred and addressed across and in a conversation between accumulative and generational aspects of the video-performance works. This is politically and philosophically framed by theorists who offer agency in the form of intersectional multiplicity and complexity, also some grounded within intersectional (political) care. In terms of my research question into “how an inquiry into *political dreaming* manifests”, my month to month journal of political events as I attended protests throughout 2019 became effective in terms of understanding the activation and importance of social movements in response to ecological crisis as both forms of wildfire inferred by myself and then Klein (2019) in her book *On Fire*, released later in the year.

Gaps and challenges in research

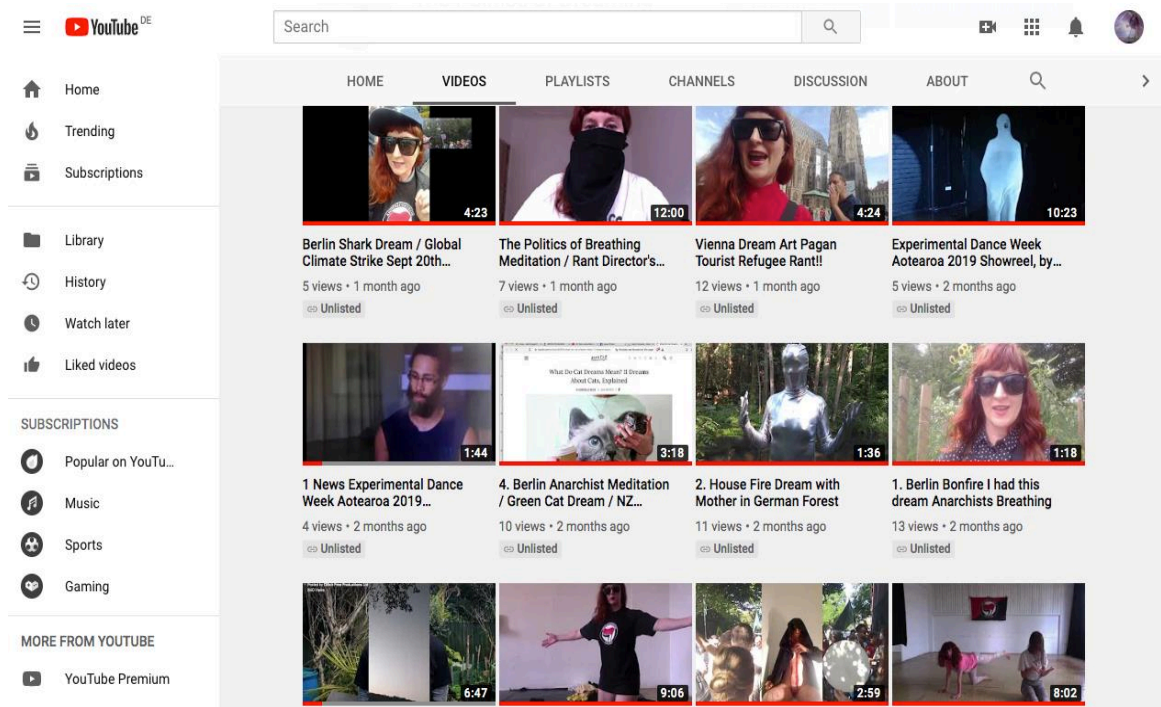
Challenges in answering my research question and the problems responding to it result from many aspects of the project. The tendency or allure to over-identify with theory and philosophy is strong,

potentially silencing the practice-based aspects. Personal engagement with protest movements can tend toward being overly emotional, which made it difficult to remain objective within the project. I see these as both a paradox and a generative tension within the context of the themes emerging. The added contradiction of me working with *nomadic subjectivity* as outlined by Braidotti, as a form of political agency with a subject like Climate Change, which is caused by planes and mobility based on fossil fuels, is one reflected all around me by those political leaders and activists who fly to global climate summits. The irony of this in a time of the internet, exposed entering 2020 in Australia with wildfires out of control, is in urgent need of change – that is, the type of geo-engineering required is vital for a societal overhaul. I also do not address the politics of mobility vs displacement in terms of privileges within nomadism within this particular research, having done this before my prior video work *Extraordinary Aliens* in 2015.

As a mature artist, many of these questions pervade my practice, and the question of where I am based at times still eludes even me. Balancing personal political interests with an art practice has been one that has been ongoing since my BA in Film TV and Media Studies and Women's Studies. However, both degrees were highly interdisciplinary, and the complexity of identity theory, new technologies, and performance interdisciplinarity has given rise to always an openness to experimenting and perceiving different or deeper ways to engage with politics as well as my personal creative investigations. The DIY nature of this project reflects all aspects of the limitations of doing an MPhil distally without any funding but reflects a spirit of zeitgeist through its immediacy and concentration on contemporary issues (also financial). My interest in collective and individual responsibility and care is of ongoing interest politically, while a generative agency offered by open-ended creative explorations remains curious. Most engaging for me is the feminist agency of manifold pleasures offered by a rhizomatic and nomadic approach.

5.

Review of knowledge & anarchist artist's research questions



How might an inquiry into “Political Dreaming” manifest within my performance-video-based activist art practice?

Anarchist Artist's Mappings

I define my approach and framework for *political dreaming* based on autobiographical processes in and around video and performance art, relating also to internet art, informed by key theorists as mentioned: Braidotti (2011), Deleuze and Guattari (2004), supported by Haraway (2016) and Irigaray (1985). Central are notions of nomadic and rhizomatic influences on my practice, mapping a non-hierarchical connection between elements of the research. I refer to other contemporary practitioners who have worked in some aspects in a similar way, such as Arthur Jafa, Ana Mendieta and Sandra Bernhard. The work is influenced by internet social media engagement, accessible political literary sources Klein (2017), and Brown (2017), as well as youth climate activism, antifascist activism in Berlin; and with an objective towards subversion, action, activation, political protest and social commentary in online sources. I work with my own body and subjectivity to slip between and activate those (bodies/subjectivities) of viewers, as art theorist Jones (2006) suggests, in order to embody signifier and signified to subvert one fixed position. Processes outlined in this section expose tensions between self-improvement expressed through dream journaling, dance, and activism, exemplified through journaling of political events and protests as they unfolded. The interweaving of these processes of research into online videos in the form of a YouTube channel offers the complexity of *political dreaming* within this early 21st Century epoch. I use sub-questions identified already from the research question to frame sections of the research.

What is Political Dreaming? Whose “political dream” am I dreaming?

Klein (2017) articulates the disjunct of *disaster capitalism* as being the current engineered political dream and design of neo-liberal capitalism, at the expense of most of the population:

Trump and his top advisers are hoping for the sort of response, where they are trying to pull off a domestic shock doctrine...It's a program so defiantly unjust and so manifestly corrupt that it can only be pulled off with the assistance of divide-and-conquer racial and sexual politics, as well as non-stop media distractions.⁵⁸

Countering this political ideology as a non-hierarchical model is that of both Braidotti's *nomadic subjectivity* and Deleuze and Guattari's *rhizome*, which are decentering of power and embracing of generative multiplicity;

⁵⁸ Klein, 3.

The rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*. Make a map, not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious.⁵⁹

My research relates to these aspects by “mapping” rather than “tracing” in how I identify my YouTube channel. Working with “experimentation in contact with the real” in my attendance at activist events, and my reflections within the studio as an advocate of the nomadic, within a history of performance art practice, video art and choreography, I situate an intention for why I have created this YouTube channel as a rhizomatic map. Within these processes, I am able to allow conversations and commentary to emerge within and around a generative creative investigation into notions of *political dreaming* from where more pointed questions emerge.

What is the relationship between conscious and unconscious political dreaming?

A relationship between literal and figurative dreaming within the research leads me toward understanding a split between the conscious (figurative) and unconscious (literal) dreaming state and seeing how psychoanalysis, dream journaling, and dance feed into self-improvement, or self-help aspects of my research. One method for me, aside from attending protests and studio practice, was to record my literal dreams over this year and consider the ways in which my unconscious was engaged with my conscious understanding of figurative political dreaming, and to contextualise dreams in a political light. These dynamics relate to the discourse emerging around tensions between activism and self-care, that is public and private, political and personal. Jungian psychoanalysis within *Man and his Symbols* (Jung, 1968) extensively theorises dreams to be a form of communication with the self. The tension between the individual self-realisation and the collective responsibility communicates here with political subjectivity. At the same time dreams, if they do communicate with the self, and if the dreams are collectively distressing, are somehow aligned and a call for action.

Methods for dream journaling

- Writing down every literal dream I have and reflecting upon its meaning in a paragraph.
- Including it in my online videos as part of their accumulative journaling throughout the year alongside protests.

⁵⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, 12.



Description. Mode: Therapy Dream Video and Protest Activism Video where I relay a dream I had about escaping my parent's house on fire in a silver suit in a German forest to the audio of speeches in NZ post-Christchurch Muslim Terror Shootings of 2019.

Politicising dreaming

Some questionable aspects emerging within this research have been that of the self-help industry within a capitalist context, which places emphasis on the individual with pacifying effects, soothing people to feel as if everything is fine in a time of crisis, when actually as Youth Climate Activist Greta Thunberg says “Our house is on fire.”⁶⁰ Here people are encouraged to turn away from forms of political collective activity and empowerment toward individual self-realisation. Dreams and dream analysis can be considered a form of therapy, yet dreams under Jung can be illuminating and guiding for the individual in their dealings with the real world. This contrasts with a pacifying way that for example mindfulness meditation is offered under capitalism within the workplace to make people more functional workers. Conversely, to be effective in the world even politically to avoid activist burn out, we can look toward self-care as a valid practice to complement it. Looking into dreams as a form of self-care, Jung (1968) says of their importance:

There may be certain events of which we have not consciously taken note; they have remained below the threshold of consciousness. They have happened, but they have been absorbed subliminally, without conscious knowledge... It may appear, for instance, in the form of a dream. The unconscious aspect of any event is revealed to us in dreams, where it appears not as a rational thought, but as a symbolic image. As a matter of history, it was the study of dreams that first enabled

⁶⁰ Greta Thunberg, “Our house is on fire”, 2019.

psychologists to investigate the unconscious aspect of conscious psychic events.⁶¹

Lacanian psychoanalysis focusing on language as power and our entrance into the power of the Symbolic order, from our pre-Oedipal phase where we are immersed in our own self-absorbed world as infants, understands this world to also be hierarchically gendered as prescribed or innate by Freud, but rather from societal conditioning. This is taken up by French psychoanalyst and feminist philosopher Irigaray (1985).

How do I dare to dream in this political reality? Feminist dreaming

Irigaray (1985) claims that within a masculine-defined Symbolic Order which is rational and linear, and in which women are othered and excluded from power, emancipation lies in woman's multiplicity and her ability to create an alternative, poetic and potentially non-linear language, and multiple desires:

What she says is never identical with anything, moreover; rather, it is contiguous. *It touches (upon)*. Within themselves means *within the intimacy of that silent, multiple, diffuse touch*. And if you ask them insistently what they are thinking about, they can only reply: Nothing. Everything... Woman derives pleasure from what is *so near that she cannot have it, nor have herself*. She herself enters into a ceaseless exchange of herself with the other without any possibility of identifying either.⁶²

A creative, poetic feminine voice, also present within non-binary discourse as posed by Irigaray, disrupts patriarchal power structures at the centre of language and embodiment, by challenging their right to linear dominance. This lack of linearity is represented and built on as mentioned by philosophers Braidotti on sexual difference, and the displacing *nomadic subject*, Deleuze and Guattari, and the non-linear *rhizome*, and recently Haraway reconsidering the ways to interact with the nature world in its multiplicity and organic non-chronology. Braidotti (2011) says:

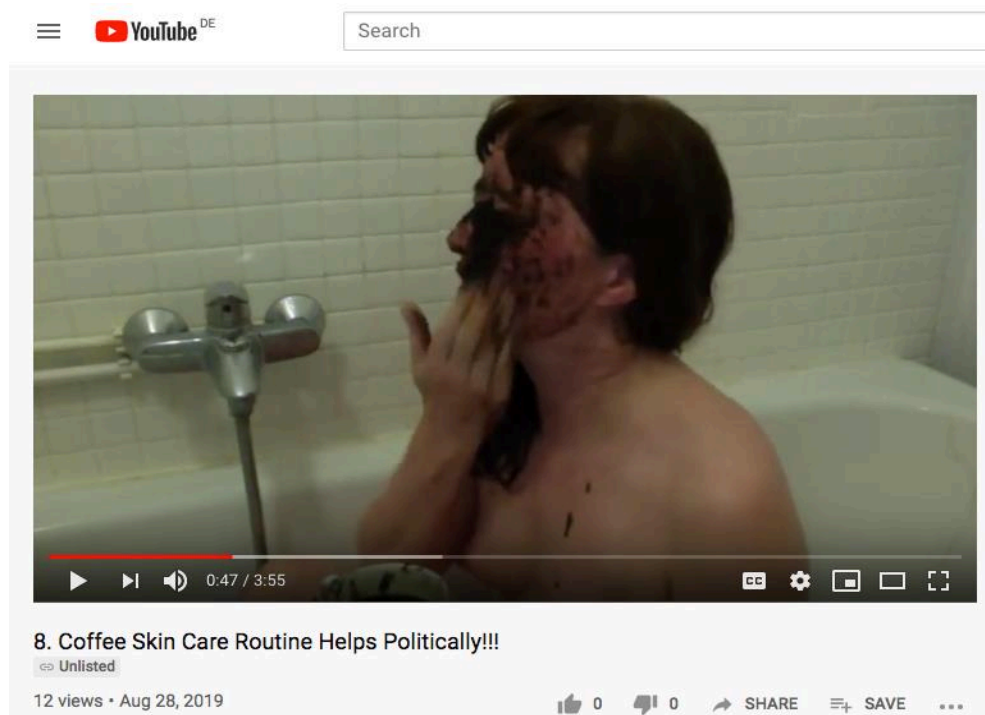
I think, along with Irigaray and Deleuze, that there cannot be social change without the construction of new kinds of desiring subjects as molecular, nomadic, and multiple. One must start by leaving open spaces of experimentation, search, transition: becoming-nomads. This is no call for easy pluralism either- but rather a passionate plea for the recognition of the need to respect complexities and to find forms of action that reflect that complexity.⁶³

⁶¹ Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, 5.

⁶² Irigaray, *This Sex*, 29-30.

⁶³ Braidotti, 164.

The feminist agency and pleasure/s of this resistance to normative and masculinist linearity finds itself realised in multiple aspects of this project, interweaving the *rhizome* with *nomadism*. Art theorist Jones (2006) proposes a resistance to notions of the body as an object by embracing Vivian Sobchack and Laura U. Mark's theory of the "haptic"⁶⁴ within film and new media "where the screen image is apprehended through a synesthetic visual encounter... counter-posed to optic visibility".⁶⁵ She observes a connection between haptic visibility and the feminist theorising of Irigaray:



Description. Mode/s: Satirical subversion of *Self-improvement video*, covering my face in organic coffee_ grinds to demonstrate how my consumerism helps the world from Climate Change, war and trafficking.

(woman) touches herself all the time... for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact", which "as boldly essentialising as it is, brings us felicitously back to Mark's idea of haptic opticality as encouraging the subject who experiences the cinematic work to open herself profoundly to otherness."⁶⁶

How can nomadism, rhizomes, wildfire, sexual difference, chthulucene, emergent strategy, and intersectional care disrupt the neo-liberal dream/reality to generate agency?

In drawing upon an array of influences and art forms this process relates to Deleuze and Guattari's

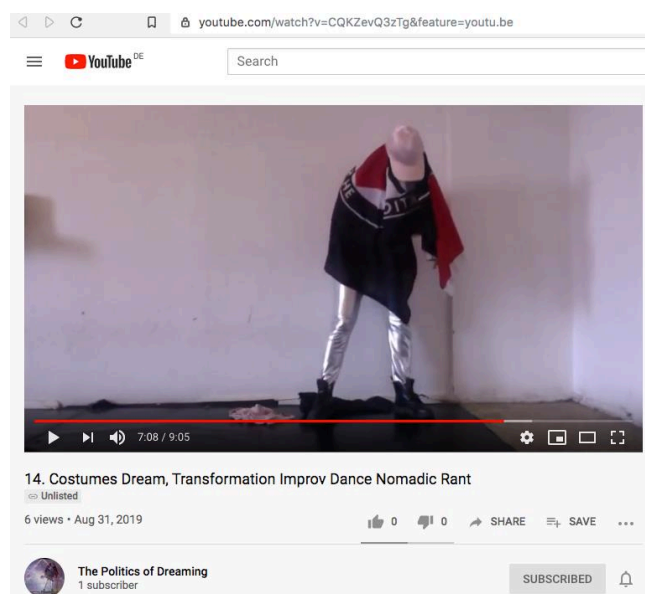
⁶⁴ Notions of the "haptic" are theorised in their work *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, The University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

⁶⁵ Jones, 143.

⁶⁶ Jones, 143.

notion of the *rhizome*, also in its media critique and subversion of internet video forms stemming directly from YouTube in practice and presentation. As mentioned Braidotti theorises contemporary embodiment and sexual difference as being impacted by *nomadic subjectivity* in a vast range of ways, which disrupt and decentre power structures with their lack of fixedness and complexity in the sense of movement and subjectivity always becoming. This speaks to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the *rhizome*, which connects disparate forces in a non-hierarchical way, displacing a centre and locating multi-positionality as a creative force, which gives rise to generative forms. In this commitment to rhizomic modes, which can cross-pollinate, using natural inter-special connections as examples, such indeterminacy can open be generative and decentre hierarchical ideologies and processes:

...unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with new dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency... The rhizome is an antigenealogy. In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states.⁶⁷



Description. Mode: *Dance Video* layered with *Therapy Dream Video* and *Rant* video in which I dance in a Berlin studio in anarchist and party outfits, which transforms into a rant about the politics of nomadism and Europe's colonisation history.

Cultural worker and activist Brown (2017) also draws upon divergent processes, largely derived also from nature, and offers a practical and intertextual vision of how to co-create collectively a more respectful way of existing together on Earth. Brown weaves together the “complex movement

⁶⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

crew”⁶⁸ of *emergent strategies* as things in the natural world (ants, ferns, mycelium, starlings), her own body, the development of her family, social movements like Occupy and Black Lives Matter, in stories about her grandmother's survival in the US Deep South, and the survival of her ancestors. *Emergent strategy* is predicated on the notion of collective intelligence that arises from a state of crisis, seen in nature and in social movements. Within “interdependence and decentralisation”⁶⁹ as key to collaborative capacity toward generative and relational and co-authoring collectivity, Brown points to love and being seen as examples of elements to emergent processes. In her manifesto she says:

Small is good, small is all.” (The large reflects the small)
Change is constant. (Be like water).
There is always enough time for the right work.
There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.
Never failure, always a lesson.⁷⁰

Her notions of “non-linear and iterative”⁷¹ as central to the complex movements of *emergent strategies* in nature relate to Deleuze and Guattari's nature metaphor and their notion of the *rhizome* as well as similarly Haraway's *chthulucene* in the sense of forging new pathways through complex non-hierarchical systems organically.



Description. Mode: Satire of *Music Video* layered with *Protest Video* in which I write on Piha Beach, NZ, *Burn Capitalism, Burn Patriarchy, Burn Colonisation Not Earth, to Greta Thunberg's NY speech as metal.*

⁶⁸ Brown, 45.

⁶⁹ Brown, 83.

⁷⁰ Brown, 41.

⁷¹ Brown, 103.

Political Context: Burnt/Spent + Nomadic Subjectivity of Personal Transitions

A hugely defining aspect of this research became my journaling of political events, protests, and global events as I moved through my year and the world. Attending and journaling protests throughout 2019 became useful in terms of understanding the importance of social movements in response to the environmental crisis. The metaphor of wildfire became more prominent as the year wore on, and was then contextualised by Klein (2019) in her book *On Fire*, published later in the year. How time intersects and contextualises this journaling of events is linked to personal transitions:

March: In the first week of my MPhil, while preparing to leave New Zealand for Berlin end of March 2019, the week of the first global Student Climate Strike for Climate, overshadowed by the Christchurch shootings in a Muslim mosque killing 50 on the same day, I read an article in that week's *NZ Listener* called "*Code Red*"⁷² The front page reads: 'Life on Earth; Food Shocks, Raging Fires, Lethal Floods'. It has been the driest year that I can remember living between Berlin and Auckland, counting perhaps on only 2 hands the amount of rain falls experienced across the Northern and Southern Hemisphere Summers that I moved as a *nomadic subject*.

April: I arrive into Berlin between seasons (Spring/Autumn) from New Zealand the week that Greta Thunberg (16-year-old climate activist igniting the Student Strike for Climate Movement) protests at the weekly (Friday) march with Berlin students and there is a protest for refugees and one against rent increase in Berlin, which has the fastest-growing rents in the world.



May 1st, Rigaer St, Berlin, 2019.

May: I attend the May 1st anti-capitalist protest in Berlin. Berlin's anarchist movement supports refugees, with the slogan "No Borders, No Nations", having a nomadic view of humanity's mobility, not just for elites, but for all people. "No person is illegal" is another main anarchist far-left European slogan. During my 10 years based in Berlin I have been part of many protests, marches,

⁷² Joanna Black, "Code Red", *New Zealand Listener*, March 9th, 2019.

vigils, strikes for refugees, against gentrification and neo-liberal capitalism as with the TTIP march in 2015, which had 250K people against a trade deal between the US and Europe similar to NZ's TPPA. These movements, much like Occupy and #MeToo are like wildfires, creating solidarity and connecting people within common causes to fight for justice and to protect humanity and the Earth. Klein (2017) ends a left-wing intersectional Manifesto created together with activists, scientists, indigenous groups, and academics to say in a section titled "Lead with Values, not Policies":

Acting with care and consent, rather than extractive with force, became the idea binding the whole draft together, starting with respect for the knowledge and inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, the original caretakers of the land, water and air. While many of us had originally thought we were convening a list of policy goals we realised that this shift in values was at the core of what we were trying to map.⁷³

Student Strike 4 Climate Action: Nomadic wildfire movement

June: Watching online videos about wildfires around the world and the terror and devastation they cause, I notice an activation of community and in response to disasters and how it generates empathy, and a coming together of communities and families, whereby strangers empathise with each other. I observe people caring for each other, animals and becoming concerned for the environment. This is what a fire crisis can activate at a community and human level. The response to Greta Thunberg's activism, to strike from school each Friday, has gone viral, the equivalent of an ignited wildfire or revolution, as a unifying action among fearful and disenfranchised youth about their own and the planet's future. It is something to care about and to fight for in their generation, which sees through a neo-liberal dream of capitalist individualist growth in a technological time. Here they are responding to a very real climate change, which causes among things, wildfires.



First Global Youth Climate Strike, March 2019, Auckland, photo by Alexa Wilson.

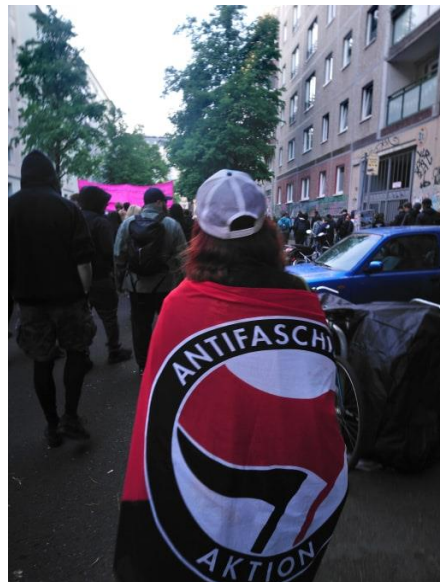
⁷³ Klein, 241.

Of activism Haraway says:

...global capitalism has made the depletion of resources so rapid, convenient and barrier-free that that 'earth-human systems' are becoming dangerously unstable in response. Therefore, the only scientific thing to do is: Revolt! Movements, not just individuals, are critical.⁷⁴

September: Arctic and Amazon wildfires break out, giving rise to massive global protest. Klein (2019) releases her new book *On Fire: A Burning Case for a Green New Deal* speaking about eco-fascism in relation to the Christchurch Muslim Terror Attack, and using the same parallel I am using to support this research of the literal wildfires of our planet as an activating force alongside the motivation of the Youth Climate Movement as viral, led by Thunberg:

Thunberg is the first person with tremendous moral to yell “Fire!” in the face of climate crisis. Thunberg is quick to point out that climate strikes themselves were the work of thousands of diverse student leaders, their teachers, and supporting organisations, many of whom had been raising the climate alarm for years. As a manifesto out by British climate strikers put it, “Greta Thunberg may have been the spark, but we’re the wildfire.”⁷⁵



May 1st protest against capitalism, Berlin, photo by Oliver Connew.

Art Forms Dreaming

Dreaming body in movement: Improvisation from May 2019 Berlin-Auckland 2020

Irigaray's (1985) poetics for feminine “otherness” embodied, as a way to speak outside patriarchal subjectivity from which the feminine is already excluded anyway, I started doing improvised dance movement as a process in the studio. As a form of self-care, the studio practice of dance is one of

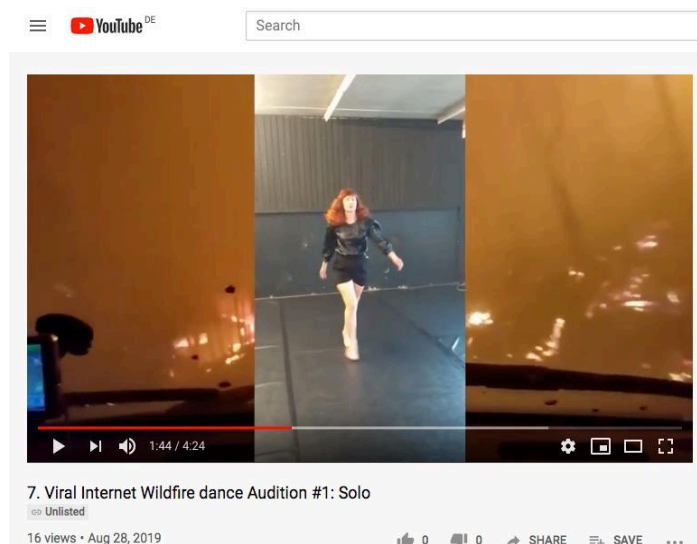
⁷⁴ Haraway, 50.

⁷⁵ Klein, *On Fire*, 15-16.

my developed methods of embodied and holistic creating, and serves as well as a form of reprieve from the world. I can develop works in sanctity, and generate improvisations within studio which feed into the *rhizome* of this project.

She” is indefinably other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious... not to mention her language, in which “she” sets off in all directions leaving “him” unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a full elaborated code in hand. For what she says, too, at least when she dares, woman is constantly touching herself. She steps ever so slightly aside from herself with a murmur, an exclamation, a whisper, a sentence left unfinished... When she returns, it is to set off again from elsewhere. From another point of pleasure, or of pain.⁷⁶

The focus of Stiles (2012) on performance art as emphasising the body as a subject rather than an object is present in post-modern dance of the 21st Century. The embodiment of dance and its inclusion of movement relates to Haraway's *chthulucene*, and Irigaray's sexual multiplicity and their essentialisation of the body with the disorder of nature.



Description. Mode: *Dance Video / Music Video* and *Journalism Video* where I mimic everyday movements in life/online as an “audition” dance over the top of a video of a man escaping by car a wildfire in Southern America to Lana Del Rey's Cola and Yanis Varoufakis talking about Capitalism and how to fight it.

The body is, therefore, a site of its own somatic knowledge and generates thought. European choreographer Marten Spangberg (2017) says of choreography in “Post-dance, An Advocacy” at his writing blog *Spangbergianism*:

If we consider choreography a knowledge, a choreographer is not, any longer, only somebody who makes dances, nor a person who puts together a book or makes a film, nor a competence approaching certain—which can be many—expressions into the world, but is the opportunity to

⁷⁶ Irigaray, 29.

enable forms of navigation in the world. If choreography can be understood as knowledge it becomes a way of approaching and conducting life. Any structure can be recognized as a kind of semiotics, and subsequently, choreography is a semiotic opportunity and it becomes evident that choreography is languaged, which certainly is nothing good or bad but enables only certain opportunities. Choreography remains in the realm of the possible and thus in the last instance consolidates the world, humanity, and life as we know it.⁷⁷

I bring these experiences of political actions and gestures back into the studio with me where I dance, and I embody ideas and processes toward videos and at times record videos in the studio. This process is fluid and one which I am used to, with a long history of performance, and also being in the studio feels like a form of self-care, where I process the world. I then turn my performance ideas and work back into activism and find a way to create performative videos to place online. These processes mimic those of dance videos, music videos, and self-care videos. All the while, finding agency as a feminist dreamer and a *nomadic subject*, also in humour and improvisation, as anarchist artist involved in rhizomatic interdisciplinary practices. Improvisational aspects of the work can be referred to as breaking away from the conventions of dance as Lepecki suggests:

Indeed, it is known but seldom theorized how a dancers have to subjugate themselves to the commands of all sorts of choreographic and para-choreographic imperatives – from dieting to gender roles; from strict physical discipline to the precise enactment of positions, attitudes, steps, gestures, but also words, all for the sake of exact repetition. No wonder then that 'choreography' initiates, immediately and alongside its project, all sorts of resistances and counter-moves, anti- and counter- and meta- and conceptual- and carnal-choreographies. We could call these acts 'Improvisational' – not at all to invoke a particular dance style or school, but in the sense William Forsythe once defined it, as an exact technology made to destroy choreography.⁷⁸

Connections can be made between the joy of Irigaray's (1985) multiple pleasures as a subversive feminist force as I relate it to my art-making and Braidotti's (2011) complex feminist agency in the form of sexual difference, particularly given the influence upon Braidotti by Irigaray. My practice has roots in Irigaray's philosophical sexual difference, and the agency of poetics not always logical or chronological, given its influence on my 20-year art practice. These complexities can be seen across my works, often interdisciplinary, and the manifold subjectivities influencing my practice.

How can activist performance video art politically dream? Performance to video art to internet art

My interest as a feminist performance/video artist in working with the internet and video performance art developed out of a response to these viral internet events and social movements,

⁷⁷ Spangberg, "Post-dance".

⁷⁸ Ric Allsopp and André Lepecki, "Editorial: On Choreography", 5.

which are crossing borders and therefore nomadic in subjectivity, as outlined by Braidotti (2011):

Making ourselves accountable for both categories and practices is the first step in the process of developing a nomadic type of feminist theory... So that our differences can engender embodied, situated forms of accountability, of storytelling, of map reading. So that we can position ourselves as feminist intellectuals- as travelers through hostile landscapes, armed with maps of our own making, following paths that are evident, often, to our eyes alone, but ones that we can narrate, account for, and exchange.⁷⁹

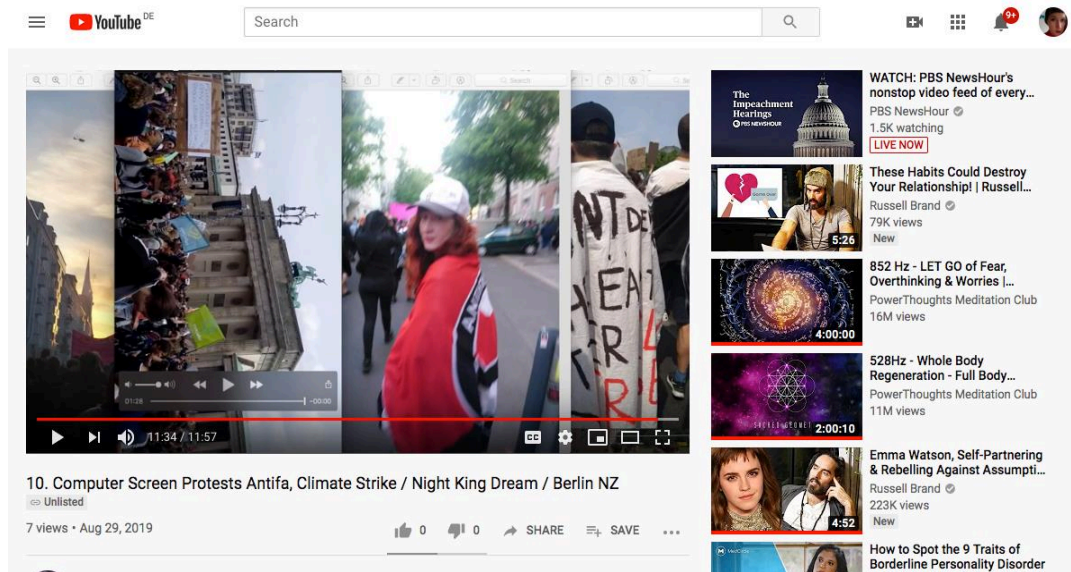
I am, as a female artist and intersectional feminist, using my own body within the video and performance work, as well as being behind the camera, also as a feminist documentary film artist. This and its relationship to notions of preservation of the natural world, along with that of women's bodies via activism speaks to the video performance work of artist Ana Mendieta. I experienced a retrospective exhibition by Mendieta at Berlin's Martin Gropius-Bau Gallery in 2018, which had a range of video artworks of her performances and photographs which inspired me. What relates particularly to this project is her mixing of video art and performance art to create works that are also sometimes ritualistic and working with natural elements. I can see a relationship between what I am doing and what Mendieta did in some of her video performance artworks by creating video performance as ephemeral in its relationship to identity, connected with digital and Earth-based politics (i.e. viral/wildfire/*rhizome/nomad*).

Subversion as agency

The Politics of Dreaming YouTube Channel speaks directly, by being positioned within a mainstream platform online, to the impacts of the internet and social media on our personal, political and social climate. Attention is drawn to how these are all interwoven at this time in online engagement, subjectivity, and behaviour. Subversion is a key strategy that I have worked with in my art and is further utilised in this project. Now very mainstream platforms, occupying spaces that are both entrenching normalcy at the same time as diverse voices, social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram and Facebook have a rhizomatic capacity.

There is potential for disruption of mainstream perspectives and politics, due to its accessibility to upload on a channel. To intersect mainstream platforms with art critiquing culture is considered online activism, also part of "post-internet art" outlined later in this chapter. At the same time, we see such platforms conversely used to broadcast live horrific crimes like the Christchurch Muslim shootings, and other violent and alt-right-wing videos. Anything online and in public is therefore in conversation with all political discourse including misogyny as well as left and right-wing dialogue online and can be satirising or disruptive to mainstream or conservative views.

⁷⁹ Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 165.



Description: Mode/s: *Protest Activism video* layered with *Therapy Dream Video* layered with *Rant* layered with *Music Video* pastiche. Video recording of computer screen as I improvise opening photos taken at protests; with audio recording of my dream of riding on water to kill unknown Evil to hip hop beat.

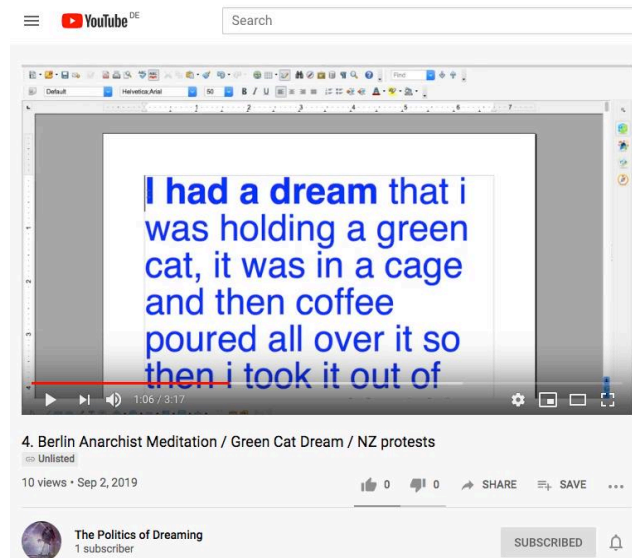
Tensions between the individualism of capitalist consumerism and collective responsibility have emerged within the research as well as that of placing individual self-improvement into conversation with collective political responsibility and activism. Framed satirically and seriously within this context, The Politics of Dreaming YouTube Channel addresses these tensions, through subversion in the form of mimicry in a range of online video modes. Jones (2006) reflects upon the contradictions inherent in artists working consciously with digital technologies and the body, often their own, by suggesting that they move beyond Baudrillard and Debord's post-modern notion of a signifier/signified paradox into one which embraces the leaks of these contradictions further:

Artists tend to push at the seams of these apparent contradictions, getting inside the image in order to keep these various tensions (the image versus the thing itself; the subject constituted by culture versus the subject constituting culture) in place. The image of the artist tells us precisely that, while we now (in our late capitalist postmodern era) “know” that everything is a simulacrum, an image, a representation (and thus, per Heidegger, circulable as a commodity), we “know” that this simulacrum world leaks. Something always escapes the image (the image is again, never enough to contain the bodies it renders).⁸⁰

Mendieta's work plays with contradictions of this nature, by offering traces of the (female) body left in the Earth as a form of displacement/deterritorialisation, through video technologies which are also ephemeral. The work of artist Arthur Jafa inspires this project by depicting the contradictory and complex politics of African American identities and bodies in online videos. His YouTube video

⁸⁰ Jones, 23.

Description. Mode: Therapy *Dream Video* layered with *Protest Activism Video* in which I write my dream to the viewer on my videoed computer screen, then searching meanings of dreams online to a speech by Maori Politician Marama Davidson post-Christchurch Muslim shootings in Aotea Square about racism.



could see how generative and fertile the internet could be as a place to both intersect with like video and performance art as well as to ideologically be in dialogue with it. Jafa's work cut together footage of Black Americans found online throughout the last century, which showed in a less than 8-minute video the oppression inflicted upon achievements of African American people, layered with Kanye West's song "Ultralight Beam".⁸¹ This work inspired and motivated me toward a more video art and post-internet art-related performance direction for this project, which speaks to contemporary themes, subjectivity and embodiment on the internet itself. It is post-internet art, which I have been engaging with also over the last decade in my practice in a variety of performance/video works. Art investigating internet behaviour has a history of 10-15 years. "Post-internet Art" is contextualised at Artsy.net:

Post-Internet refers to a current trend in art and criticism concerned with the impact of the internet on art and culture. While Net Art of the late 1990s used the internet primarily as a medium, post-internet practices use both online and offline formats to engage with digital culture, corporate culture, and the effects of ubiquitous networking.⁸²

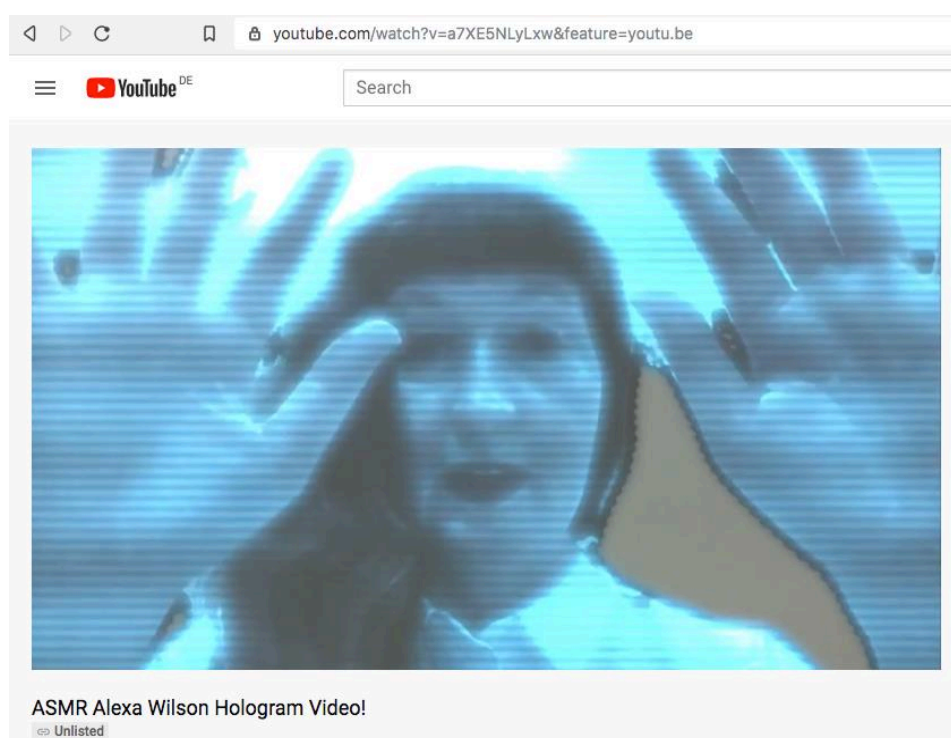
In terms of this intersectionality and playfulness of female artistry and subversion, another influence for my work is the queer Jewish actress, performance art, singer and comedian Sandra

⁸¹ Kanye West, "Ultralight Beam", *The Life of Pablo*, produced by Kanye West, 2016.

⁸² Artsy, "Post-internet Art, Artsy, 2019. <https://www.artsy.net/gene/post-internet-art>.

Bernhard. Her film performance work *Without You I'm Nothing* (1990) influenced me 25 years ago in my BA and inspired me to explore performance art. This contentious work has continuous self-deprecation and intersectional satire as a “hit one-woman show,” interweaving song covers, of both white and black singers, with personal stories both real and fictional, in a humorous performance artwork that is boundary-breaking. Playing on her insider experience of Hollywood she critiques media, gender, class, racism, sexism in a cutting satire which was never mainstream. My use of satire and self-representation which is performative layered with references to political context are influenced by the playfulness of Bernhard's monologues and performances. Braidotti on the agency of feminist humour as pleasure says:

What feminism liberates in women is also their desire for freedom, lightness, justice, and self-accomplishment. These values are not only rational political beliefs but also objects of intense desire. This merry spirit was quite manifest in the earlier days of the women's movement, when it was clear that joy and laughter were profound emotions and statements.⁸³



Description. Mode: Subversion of a *Self-improvement Video* layered with *Talking heads/ Rant Video* where I mimic an ASMR video for audience relaxation and read out quotes from a “Mindfulness Conspiracy” article from my thesis, combined with a quote from a “How to fight Activist Burn out” article to counter it.

Return to Global Events: Transition to Aotearoa (NZ), Late 2019

September-October: Transitioning back to Aotearoa occurs for me shortly after the biggest Youth for Climate Strike in September, which I attend in Berlin with 270,000 people and 5 million globally and the UN Climate Summit in NY where Greta Thunberg takes centre stage in Climate politics

⁸³ Braidotti, 160.

with powerful and impactful speeches which go viral on the internet. I even have heavy metal and dance music remixes of her “we’ll be watching you” and “we will never forgive you” speeches to global leaders. In the move to New Zealand, I am already following Tamaki Makaurau Anarchists’ online network and become aware of Extinction Rebellion (with violent London protests) as a movement taking a more radical approach and gaining attention globally. Increasing conversations between New Zealand Climate activism and de/colonisation with Ihumātao protests as a form of peaceful resistance to land confiscation modeled by Parihaka continue. I become increasingly aware of the tension between in my critical commentary mapping that of the world between activism and self-care as collective and individual responsibility, with many of the YouTube videos I create.

Within the theory I utilize, such as Brown (2017) and Klein (2017) who both advocate for activism, a paradox seems to emerge as they focus on a manifesto of care or aspects of intersectional care, which can be antithetical to protest. However, rather than conflicting as my commentary suggests within Neo-liberal capitalism, which thrives on conflict and disaster, these aspects can also be complementary to one another. An obvious connection is to that of non-violent resistance or peaceful protest. I begin thinking about the recent history also of New Zealand being so-called “pacifist” with its “No Nuclear” stance from the 1980s, which forbade nuclear from its shores or military ships from entering its waters. Many very recent social movements employ non-violence as a strategy, such as Occupy, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, Ihumātao, and the Youth for Climate strikes. The tension between the effectiveness of non-violent versus violent protests like that of the Yellow Vests in France fighting taxes and state oppression, or the antifascists in Germany against Google, capitalism, gentrification, and neo-Nazis or that of the Arab Spring in 2011, is interesting to this project. There is a long history of peaceful protest from Gandhi to Rosa Parks and the suffragettes.

December 2019-January 2020: Wildfires break out in Australia in NSW and Victoria at the beginning of Summer and are still burning a month later in January, as Richard Flanagan in an article “Australia is Committing Climate Suicide” from the *New York Times* reports: “Australia is a burning nation led by cowards,” wrote the leading broadcaster Hugh Remington, speaking for many.”⁸⁴ Climate Change talks take centre stage by 2020 across the world because of Wildfires globally and the Youth Climate Strikes in 2019.

⁸⁴ Richard Flanagan, “Australia is Committing Suicide”, *New York Times*, January 3, 2020.
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/opinion/australia-fires-climate-change.html?fbclid=IwAR0GjUSY8JOG68weAj2zvjlweCEjf8AZRQJ_ZirTfHpFTPbtDHSNbM8hArQU



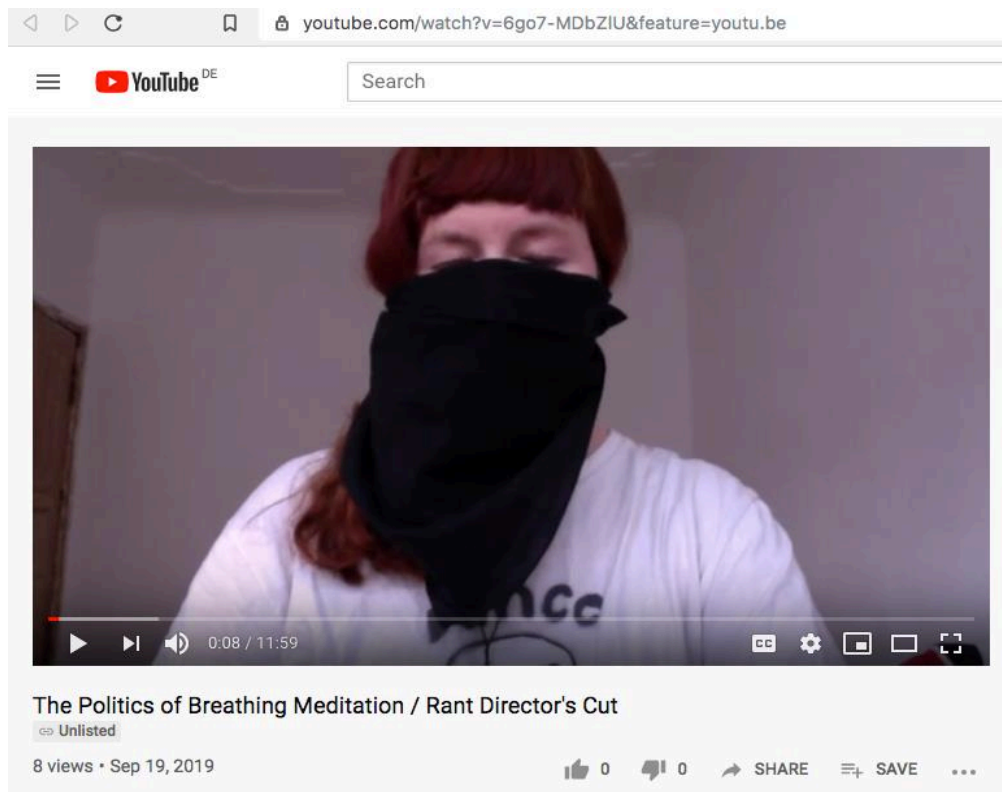
Description. Mode: *Self-improvement Video* layered with *Protest Activism Video* where I stand in stillness and silence as a standing pose, in a monkey mask in Times Square NY as people in costumes and passersby just go about their day.

Toward Critical Commentary

The immediacy of the internet and current events and news suits a performative approach, which is also about immediacy. The accessibility and intimacy of social media and the internet with its contradictions and self-consumerism has fascinated me over the past decade, and the rhizomatic nature of social movements thriving because of the internet aligns with my desire for social change. The branding of individuality, self-help and social activism within the frame of a consumerist neo-liberal digital data mining age, leads me in the direction of consciously intertwining the personal/private self-improvement aspects of the internet, and its facilitation of social activism both within a wider milieu of political, economic and ecological crisis. Ronald Purser in an article titled “The Mindfulness Conspiracy” in *The Guardian* (2019) critiques the mindfulness movement for being a useful tool for capitalism by selling the idea of a way to cope with the perils of capitalism and keeping an inward focus rather than collective, which can be seen as the “enemy of activism”:

By failing to address collective suffering and systemic change that might remove it, they rob mindfulness of its real revolutionary potential, reducing it to something banal that keeps people focused on themselves... It is not the nature of the capitalist system that is inherently problematic; rather, it is the failure of individuals to be mindful and resilient in a precarious and uncertain economy. Then they sell us solutions that make us contented, mindful capitalists...Neglecting shared vulnerabilities and interdependence, we dis-imagine the collective ways we might protect ourselves.⁸⁵

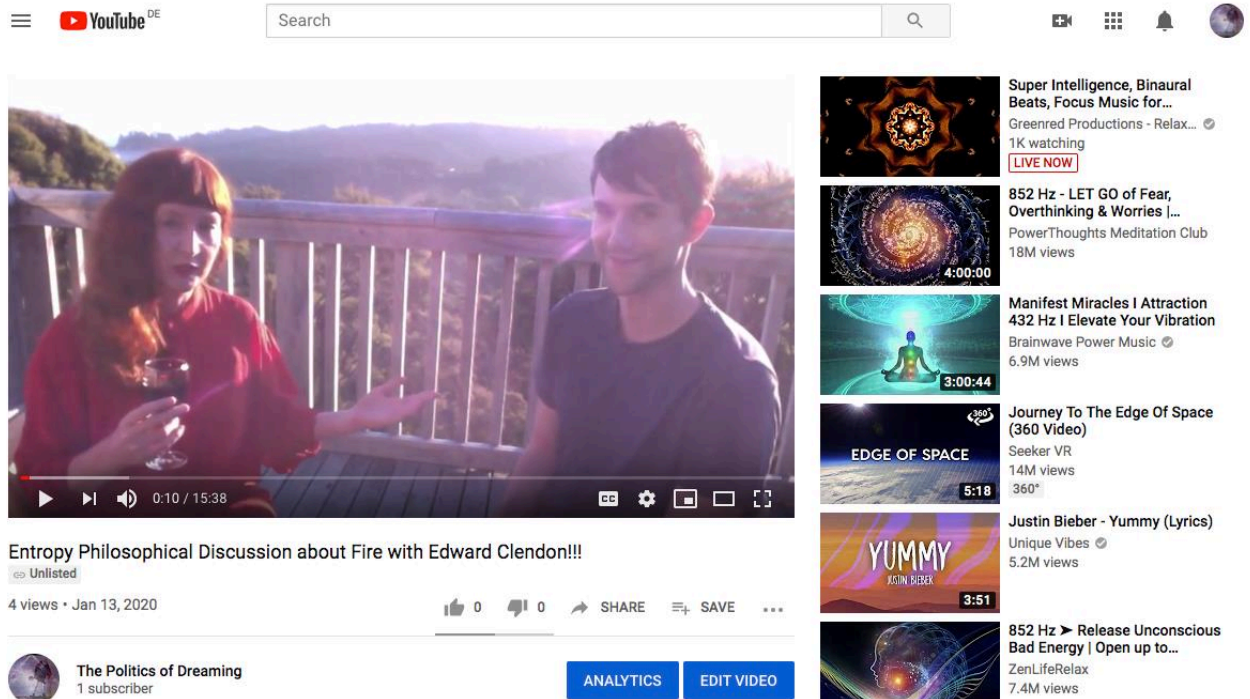
⁸⁵ Ronald Purser, “The Mindfulness Conspiracy,” *The Guardian*, June 14, 2019.
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jun/14/the-mindfulness-conspiracy-capitalist-spirituality>.



Description. Mode: Satire of *Self-improvement Video* layered with *Protest Activism Video* where I take the viewer through an online breathing meditation which moves into a play on “mindfulness” politically and an activist rant about the politics of breathing.

6.

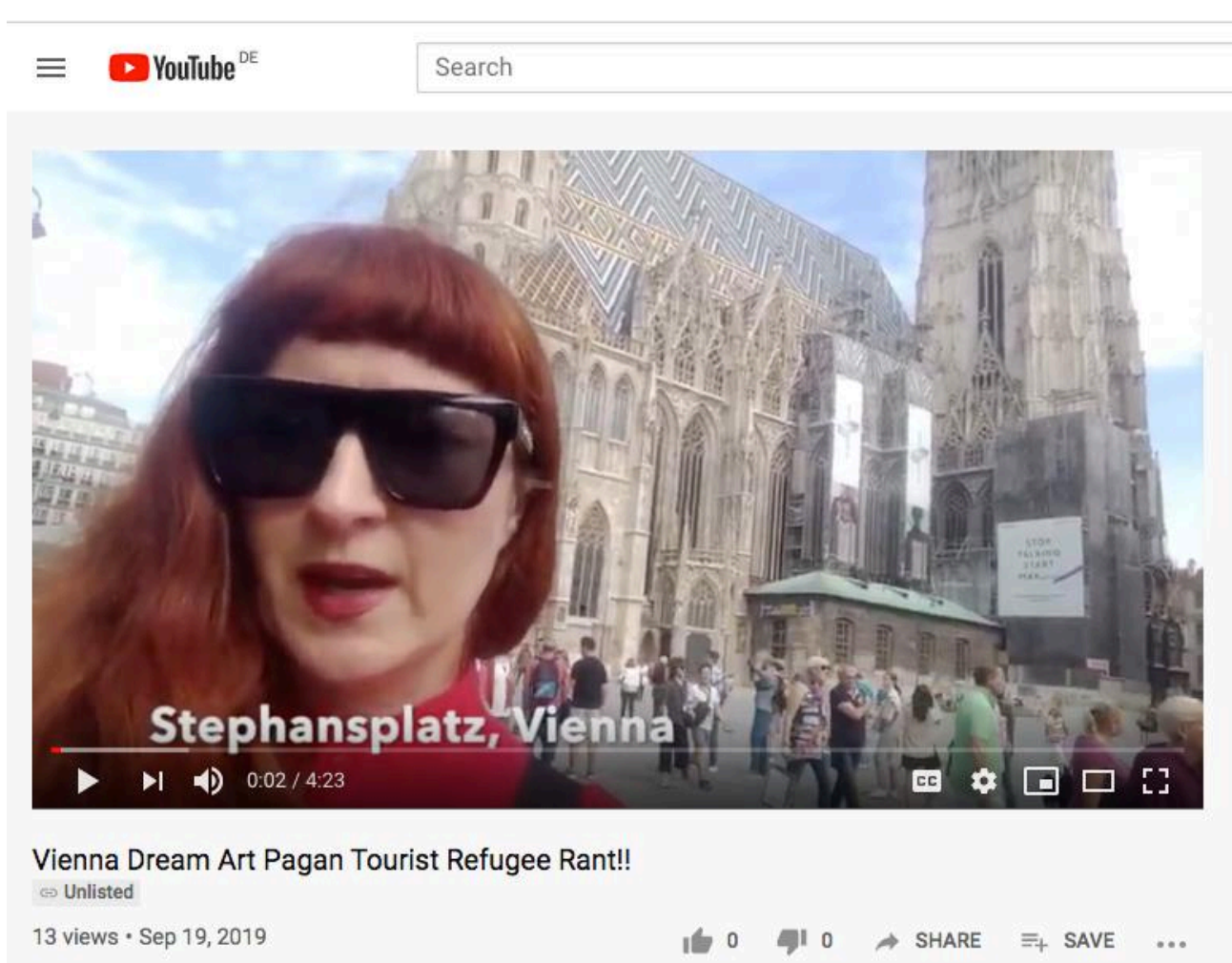
Critical Commentary



Description. Mode: *Talking Heads/Interview/Discussion*. Fake philosophical interview with Edward Clendon about Entropy and Fire.

Video-performance-based activist post-internet art as politically dreaming

The videos I have been uploading have used the performance art and video art disciplines, which have been linked historically with prior examples (Ana Mendieta, Arthur Jafa, Sandra Bernhard) to subvert the norms and politics of internet videos. I have observed in recent years that YouTube has become a platform for entrepreneurs of the self-help industry to do tarot readings, offer advice, healings and guided meditations. Similarly, anyone can create a channel to talk about anything that interests them, whether it be a TV series, philosophical conversations, or offering their political opinions on anything they choose to talk about. There are audiences for every mundane and spectacular thing on the internet, so it is a powerful site for ideologies.



Description. Mode: *Tourist Video / Journalism Video* mixed with *Therapy Dream Video* and *Rant Video / Talking heads* in which I subvert a travel video in Vienna in front of a church.

Inherent in social media behaviours on the internet (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) are transgressions between public and private spaces. Slavoj Žižek in his book *Event* (2014) refers to the collapse or invasion of public spaces by private gestures rather than the obvious focus

politically on an invasion of private spaces by big data corporations spying on individuals.⁸⁶

Wrapped within notions of *political dreaming* inside this video performance project satirising social media platforms are the complex subject positions implied by Jones' (2006) reading of performance and the digitised body. It aims to dissolve boundaries between spectator and viewed, signified and signifier, public and private, personal and political, body and identity, that we see particularly within these social media digital forms by investigating personal and political dreams.

The merging of my dreams with public politics within a platform actively encouraging a breaching of public and private, by televising oneself to the world, mimics and subverts some of these mainstream media modalities to explore themes emerging from the collective. These reemerge repeatedly as conversations activated by, potentially engineered by and certainly in response to capitalist consumerism. Most prominently they interrogate the terrain between activism and self-care that in this case is metaphorically and literally activated by fire and disaster. This subverts and calls into dialogue some of the contradictory aspects of contemporary political embodiment between these. We may call activism and self-care *actions* representing ideologies, which, as I have explored sometimes, complement one another and at other times contradict and oppose one another. Purser (2019) referencing Lauren Berlant's book *Cruel Optimism* as mentioned previously- in the article "The Mindfulness Conspiracy" says:

Despite the emptiness of nurturing fantasies, we continue to cling to them...The cruelty (Berlant describes) lies in supporting the status quo while using the language of transformation. This is how neoliberal mindfulness promotes an individualistic vision of human flourishing, enticing us to accept things as they are, mindfully enduring the ravages of capitalism.⁸⁷

The tension between the therapeutic and the political has been theorised to some extent in the last decade, but with some skepticism in a digital capitalist climate. Žižek claims that the modern day turn to new age spiritualism, and its incorporated numbing effects of ancient religions like Buddhism in an era of extreme political crisis such as now, manufacture at its worst a form of exempting detachment that is in its worse form sadistic or psychopathic. He writes:

One should, instead, 'let oneself go', drift along, while retaining an inner distance and indifference toward the mad dance of accelerated progress, a distance based on the insight that all this social and technological upheaval is ultimately just a non-substantial proliferation of semblances which do not really concern the innermost kernel of our being. One is almost tempted to resuscitate here the infamous Marxist cliché of religion as the 'opium of the people'. The 'Western Buddhist' meditative path is arguably the most efficient way for us to fully participate in capitalist dynamics while retaining the appearance of mental sanity.⁸⁸

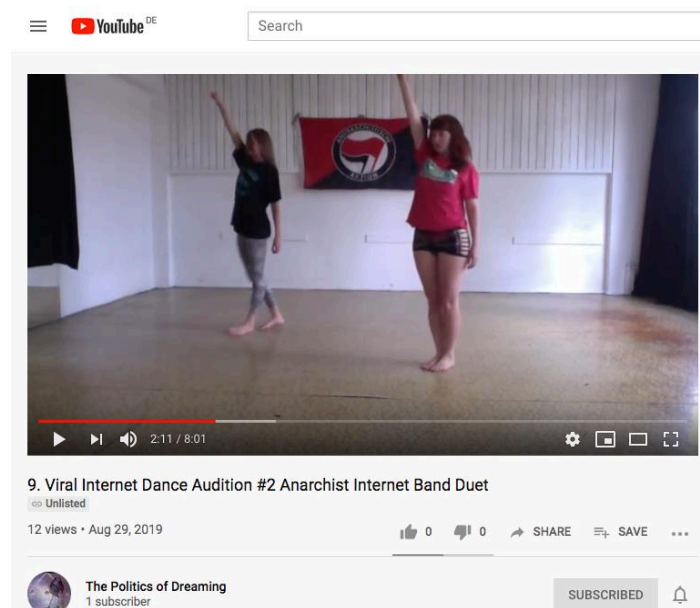
⁸⁶ Žižek, *Event*, 181.

⁸⁷ Purser, "The Mindfulness Conspiracy."

⁸⁸ Žižek, 66.

On the converse side to this polemic, but not also contradicting it entirely, is the point made by Brown (2017), Klein (2017) and many others that a climate of social care and individual self-care are interlinked also with activism, and the sense of looking out for each other should also be part of a practice of self-care in which one finds strategies to take care of oneself, which speaks to mental health, the impacts of the political climate and collective responsibility. In an article called “How to Fight Activist Burn Out” in *Now Toronto* Syrus Marcus Ware (2019) advocates both reprieve and love for activists for them to continue creating social change. She says:

It's been decades since we've seen the kind of political divisiveness we are experiencing today. We have never needed our artists and activists more. But what happens if we burn them out? These days, my work explores what life during revolutionary times might become, assuming this revolutionary moment is just the beginning, and the post-revolutionary moment will bring the real work. When the fires of change burn out, and we have self-determination – then what? Will we be able to live with each other? Handle conflicts with each other? Or will we all be too burnt out? How will these left-over conflicts plague us once we are done fighting?⁸⁹



Description. Mode: Music Video, Dance Video Protest Activism video interweaving gestures of solidarity and satire in relation to the internet and popular activity as gestures morphed into what might go “viral”.

Ware turns to her community and collaborators in art and activism for answers. Her collaborator choreographer Rodney Diverlus says:

The life of an activist is a life of perpetual burnout,” he told me. “Most of us come into our activism already burnt out from living life in the margins. We fight injustice out of a need, we fight each other out of unresolved trauma, a fight that burns what little fire we have left from living. We burn, and we are burned. This endless burning of things and self guts movements of our fiercest warriors. It leaves community ties in tatters, lives shattered and relationships that cease to matter. “Taking breaks from

⁸⁹ Ware, "How to fight activist Burn-out".

the fight has been the only way to stop this endless cycle,” he continued. “Remembering that life is more than what I’m up against. Life is what I have to live for: love, family, art and community.”⁹⁰

In collaborating with performers (Olivia McGregor in Berlin and Edward Clendon in NZ) in a series of joyful subversions at moments, and involvement with protest communities, this project does work with an individual (feminist) agency within a collective context. The activation of fire as a metaphor inclusive of literal events globally entering into 2020 mobilised environmental activism, is countered and/or supported by a new age movement aiming for mindfulness, peace, meditation, and prayer. It could be argued both of these positions are man-powered and fueled directly by Western capitalism or if not at least in response to neo-liberal *disaster capitalism* and the multiple widespread crises facing us. Social movements like Youth for Climate Strike and Occupy are so successful because not only are they viral and global, but they are peaceful and inclusive.

Internet Video Performance: Forms of criticality

The major modes of subversion and interwoven forms of agency regarding internet videos between these ideologies that I have been creating in my video performance art uploads to a private YouTube Channel (interspersed as images throughout this thesis) are as follows:

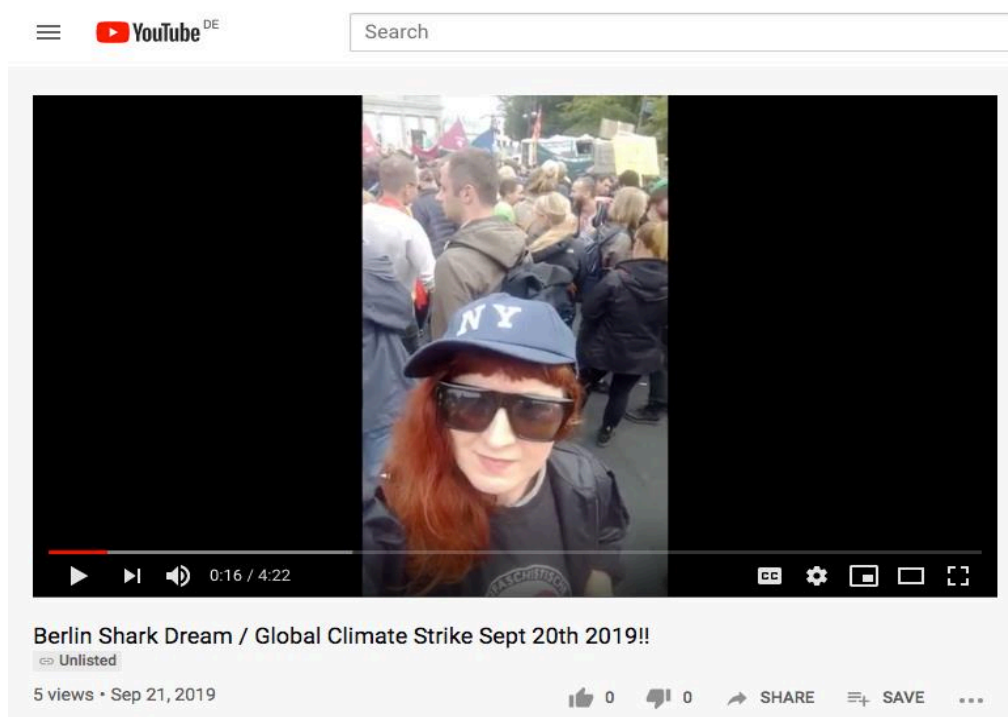
1. Talking heads opinion/rant videos
2. Self-improvement videos (e.g. beauty care, or mindfulness)
3. Music videos/Dance videos
4. Protest/activism videos
5. Journalism/interviews/discussions videos
6. Therapy/dream videos

The videos overlap some of these modes to merge conversations in a nomadic and rhizomatic fashion to allow seemingly disparate “lines of connections” to be forged in this chaotic moment of internet complexity and layers of political crisis. It takes the form of conceptual and video art performance disruption of filmic and video norms, using political commentary to play on the notion of “political mindfulness”/awareness. Examples I use in my internet video performances are an Anti app, critique of self-improvement and narcissism, distraction, self-care and Western or privileged political delusion, philosophical detachment, genuine protest, emotion, identification, collectivity, empowerment, dreaming, expressing, sharing, caring and laughing. These are deliberately DIY and low-fi, they are sometimes too long, or sometimes too short, as we find with videos online, which are often hastily uploaded for millions of viewers. A YouTube channel may have hundreds of videos on it, or it may have 5, as the channel continues to delete them as they move through time.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

How can we integrate rather than separate self-improvement and activism, individual and collective as a political dream?

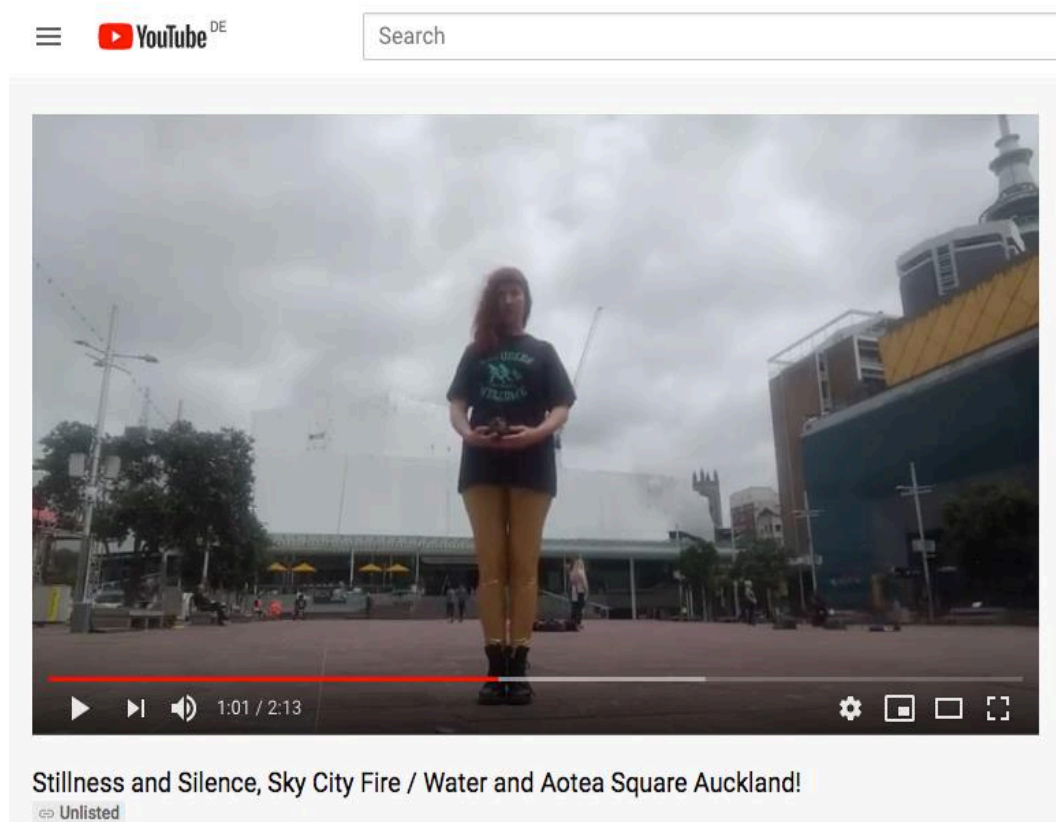
Many of these paradoxes or contradictions are mirrored within the practice, which as a video performance art YouTube channel, highlights generative tensions between activism/social movements and self-care/preservation, the self and other, body/fluid identity, intersectional tensions, the internet and the “real”. Movement is offered as a nomadic force, as literal dance and movement between countries and transformative like wildfire. Dancing as a viral expression of embodiment, sensuality, and sexuality in sometimes viral YouTube dance videos/music videos can be viewed also as activating movement, giving agency, self-care, nomadism, expression as fire or life force, which is rhizomatic and like the *chuthulucene*, relating to natural elements and the body. The sensuality of dancing can be both playful and sexual, evoking movement and fire. Irigaray's multiple pleasures (as self-care) are embodied as a form of political subversion.



Description. Mode: *Protest Activist Video* layered with a *Therapy Dream Video* and *Rant / Talking Heads Video* at a 270K Global Climate March talking about a dream of a shark installation in a pool of my NZ peers.

The accumulative effect of the videos I have recorded often conceptualised and then improvised over time in Berlin (Vienna, Vancouver, NYC) and New Zealand, aim to create a rhizomatic and generational layering. This enables the complexity of times and spaces across borders and conversations during this year to linger, layer and converse. As the year continues and social protest movements gather momentum and converse, so too does wildfire literally in prominent parts of the world such as the Arctic, Amazon, and Australia. The voices of minorities, children,

indigenous, POC, women, disabled, enter this year into direct conversation and discourse with figureheads of power over the climate crisis in 2019 in the movements mentioned throughout this thesis.

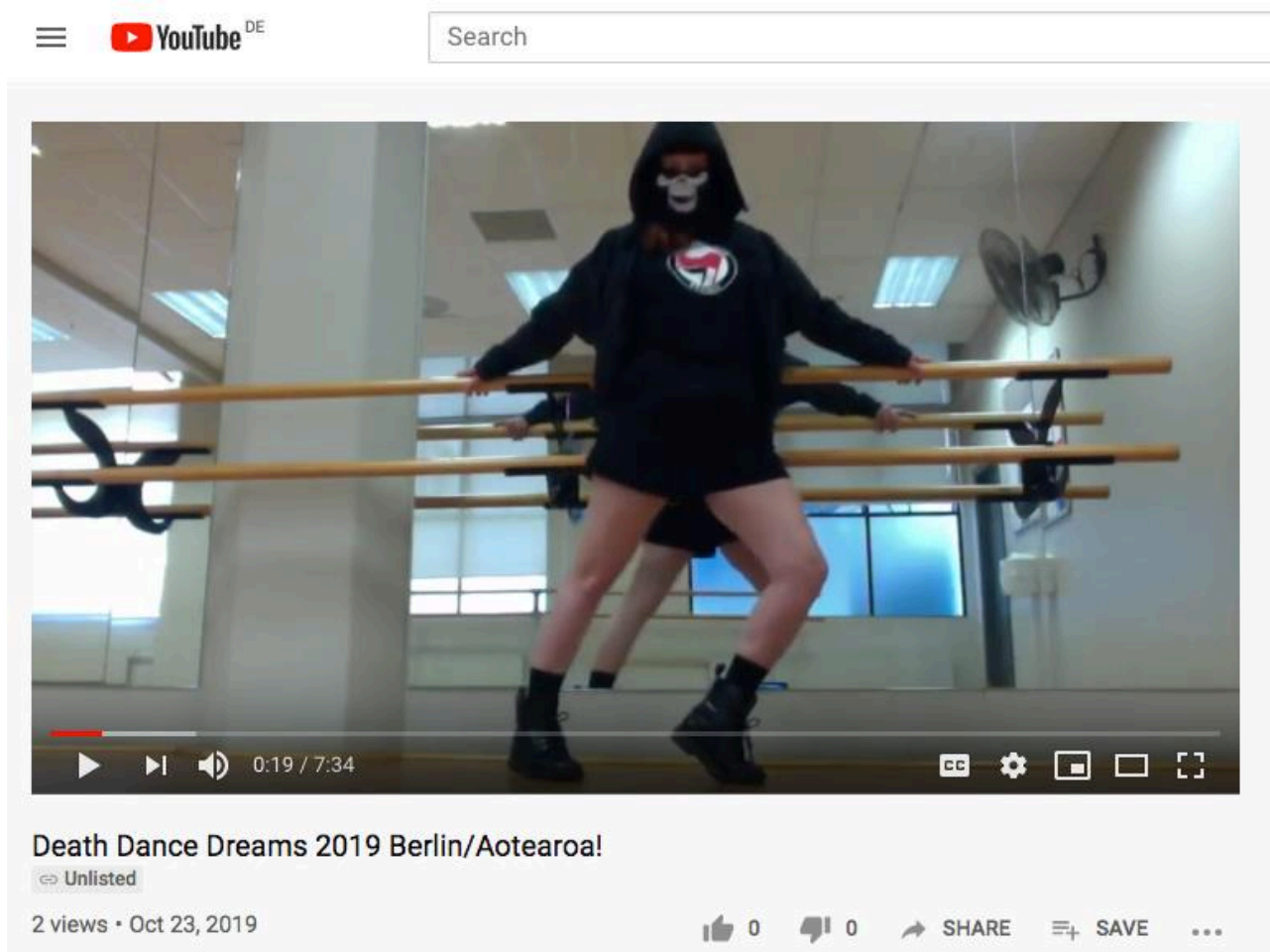


Description. Mode: *Self-improvement Video* and *Protest Activism Video* standing in stillness with a candle and Refugees Welcome t-shirt on in respect for the deaths of all beings and the environment this year in Aotea Square Auckland.

The internet has no national borders, and as a result I, along with anyone and everyone, can video on my phone and upload from anywhere in the world, where anywhere in the world can see it. My body as a home, which is mobile and nomadic, can find voice to and from anywhere in the world. We also see this with various female activists coming from parts of the world that are very restricted for women, who use the internet to voice their politics. The 2019 Christchurch Muslim shootings as a mass murder of 50 praying Muslims was live-streamed and in the manifesto of the killer he identified as *eco-fascist*. This is a highly unethical aspect of net use where instant attention can be achieved and go viral. This space between what is public and private is confusing, corrupt and dangerous as it is liberating and connecting. The main point is that these ideologies, consciously or unconsciously between individual and collective, self-improvement and activism *are* in conversation. Braidotti (2011) says of globalization in the early 21st century:

Globalisation is about the mobilization of differences and the deterritorialisation of social identity; it simultaneously challenges the hegemony of nation-states and their claim to exclusive citizenship and strengthens their hold over territory, cultural identity, and social control. It also produces a political

economy of disperse power relations known as: “scattered hegemonies”. Advanced capitalism is a surveillance society, a system of a centreless but constant security that pervades the entire social fabric. It installs a complex political economy of fear and consumerist comfort, which operates not only between geopolitical blocs that have emerged after the end of the Cold War but also within them. Postindustrial or information societies actively induce a qualitative proliferation of differences, for the sake of consumeristic consumption.⁹¹



Description. Mode: *Dance Video* layered with *Therapy Dream* video where I dance in an anarchist “Black Block” (Antifascist) outfit and skeleton mask to beats at the ballet bar in Auckland while listing poetically every dream this year from my dream journal.

In an article in *The Guardian* on in January 2020 called “*We need to move on from self-care to something that cannot be captured by capitalism*,” Brigid Delaney summarises my concerns and desires regarding self-care vs collective care in a neo-liberal climate:

In a world where so much is out of our control – from political events to climate catastrophe – what can we control? We can control the products we put on our skin and enrolling in a barre class and the food we put in our bodies. As a result, “self-care” – used as both an incantation and a declaration of rights, was a reclamation of sorts – mostly over women’s time, emotional capacity and agency... Yet the problematic nature of the term is rooted in its very linguistic structure: *self*. While looking after yourself is great, self-care is still an idea rooted in a neoliberal tradition of looking out for ourselves, rather than seeing ourselves, our health and our fates as inextricably linked to our fellow human beings. Collective care exists outside the market and can’t be captured by capitalism, turned into a product that we buy back and, by definition of its price, excludes many from participating in it... The fact that it’s collective, means it’s for everyone... Unless our care moves from the self to the collective (or ideally both the self and the collective) as a society, we will continue to be unwell.⁹²

⁹¹ Braidotti, 5-6.

⁹² Brigid Delaney, “We need to move on from self-care to something that cannot be captured by Capitalism,”

In Conclusion: Where to next?

With the theorists I have selected, there are tensions already apparent between activism and self-care or healing, which find themselves reflected also within the practice. Between the ephemerality and slipperiness of Braidotti's *nomadic subjects* (2011) and Deleuze and Guatarri's *rhizome* (2004) and the directness of Brown's *emergent strategies* (2017) and Klein's intersectional manifesto (2017), we find bridging Haraway's shifting *chthulucene* (2016). These tensions I see as generative given the contradictory nature of capitalism and how culture and nature both function with a fluid and ever-changing disposition. To reiterate, the embodiment of the complexity and multiplicity of these multi-position seen as displacing the oppressiveness of normalcy or "centrality" can be seen as supported in more direct or straight forward practical considerations by the political intersectional (non-hierarchical) manifestos of Brown and Klein focusing on interweaving direct action, social movements, with personal and social care. They are not mutually exclusive.

Within the unknown space of this rhizomatic, nomadic and interdisciplinary research project I have explored a range of videos that mimic, subvert, question, and embody dynamics inherent in internet tensions within the *politics of dreaming*. These emerge as being between activism and self-care as it embodies paradoxes of public and private, personal and political, collective and individual and the slipperiness of identity politics. The complexity of sexual difference including the multi-positionality of signifier or signified in digital form implied by Jones (2006) is supported by Braidotti and Irigaray (1985) in their understanding of the agency in changeable feminist subjectivities. The complexity of positionality within such digital performance works during this era is summarised by Jones's explanation of such different positions in the work of artist Pippilotti Rist:

The paradox is enacted: I feel "in" the work, seduced by it and immersed but I have to be "outside the image world produced by the piece in order to construct it as something I can engage that is other from myself... My desire, which pollutes the "frame" I have erected to distance me from the work's immersive effects, causes me to linger within the image/body/voice (the subject/object) that is Rist "herself."⁹³

Decisions to respond with quickly filmed DIY videos uploaded to YouTube as a channel speaks to the immediacy, risk, surprise, and chance elements of improvising a range of responses to current political events as rhizomatic and nomadic because the internet is both, which the project and research aimed to investigate as a methodology. The question of *political dreaming* within a politically chaotic and volatile climate in which the neo-liberal Capitalism within globalisation finds itself both exacerbated and challenged via digital embodiment and the internet, discovered

The Guardian, January 30, 2020. <https://amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/31/we-need-to-move-on-from-self-care-to-something-that-cannot-be-captured-by-capitalism>

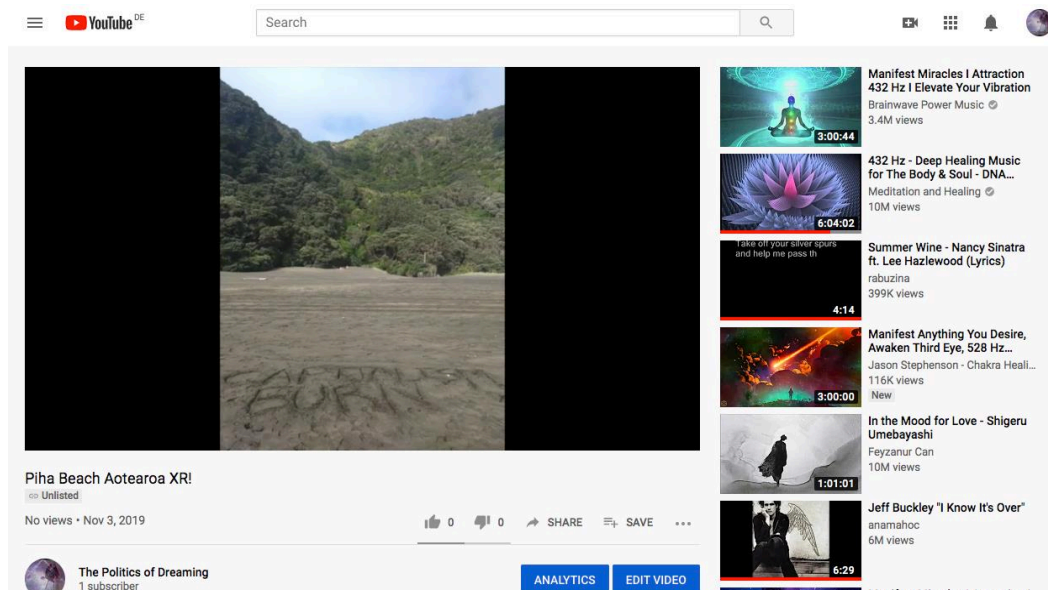
⁹³ Jones, 12.

generative tensions about internet activity, identity, embodiment, political perspectives, and engagement.

This project is unresolved and opens up questions for me to further investigate. These processes compel me to want to dive deeper into both live performances, which is removed from the internet investigating such themes, to see how it alters them, as well as continue to move further into this form of internet video work. This could take the form of a more professionally filmed video performance art web series involving other performers, which is scripted and could be screened in either a multi-screen projection exhibition context or a film screening context, as well as online. My explorations honour the breadth of my art practice as dancer, choreographer, performance artist, video artist, writer, curator, therapist and as a mature practitioner with a sociological and philosophy theory background rooted in media/film and gender studies, enabling me to push the edges of my practice.

Conceptually, I am interested in the tension between an agency that is creative and feminist freedom, and responsibility. These paradoxes have emerged in conversation with broader philosophical political questions out of the project in terms of a relationship between individual freedom (e.g. self-improvement) and collective responsibility (i.e. activism). These tensions pervade my artistic practice as a feminist artist, sometimes finding reconciliation, sometimes not. Some of these tensions can find landing in the theoretical points of similarity and difference between Irigaray's joyous and personal multiple pleasures, as I understand them in terms of art-making, which offers feminist emancipation, and Braidotti's commitment to a political feminist agency, which understands and includes in its doctrine a wide plethora of intersectional subjectivities and perspectives.

A framing future research question is: *How can I inform action, advocacy, and impact for others and other communities through questions, which are both emergent, pressing, and requiring transformation whereby art can be effective?* In being open to divergent and disparate forces, as a nomadic, rhizomic, interdisciplinary and intersectional practice can be, around notions of *political dreaming* in 2020: how can I further activate and build on these creative conditions and questions? In which such seemingly different modalities or contradictory actions can I generatively create conditions for transformations like wildfire's urgency, as Brown says, using *emergent strategies* (2017) for collective and collaborative intelligence as in nature. How can I continue to dare to dream also with others, creatively and with intersectional care, in this climate?



Description. Mode: *Music Video, Protest video*. I drew in the sand on Piha Beach "Capitalism Burn", "Colonisation Burn", "Patriarchy Burn", "Not Earth", mimicking slogans I saw at Amazon Fire Protests, Berlin.

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