

HAUNTING: TEMPORAL DILATION

We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an idealty that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. José Esteban Muñoz

[CURTAINS OPEN sideways]

[CURTAINS OPEN sideways]

Brian Fuata once asked a small gathered audience and I to inhale amyl as he performed in a Melbourne studio underneath a white sheet cut with two eye-holes.

A shoddy spectre requesting us to levitate together.

If you are coming into this now, please know Frances invited me to be here.

A ghost is an apparition of the past haunting the present. A nebulous, enduring figure that binds the past, present and future. Often hard to see, ghosts are felt; hairs stand on end, temperature drops, anus dilates.

'Phrase Signatures' is a term Mitch Cairns came up with to describe a series of works on paper I did while in correspondence with two separate artists for my project *Call and Response (changing title 2010 to now)*. In these two bodies of work I combined printed text with handwritten text in a strange form of letter writing – a signature gathered from an extracted line of three to four words of the correspondent's text

Haunting is a curatorial project that explores the ways in which artists use materials and narratives of the past to create 'a world in vertigo'¹, producing temporal shifts that conflate the past, present, and future. 'Haunting' is the action of repurposing these historical materials; the embodiment, the performance, the making manifest of these 'ghosts'. Evoking and embodying our varied (often untold) histories is a way in which to interrogate mechanisms of oppression, reconcile trauma, and recognise lineages of resilience. 'Haunting' is a way to reimagine social relations under the present neoliberal capitalist, patriarchal, post-colonial state, and is a crucial political action towards a radical future. Ghosts are the chronopolitical at play; come take amyl with me.

In each of their works presented in this exhibition, Brian Fuata, Geo Wyeth, Laboria Cuboniks and Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz perform ghosts to propel us forward towards freaky, Xenofeminist, queered futures using strategies of drag², improvisation, collaboration, writing, and recorded documentation.

Phrase signatures takes on another literal meaning in the context of the ghost performances - where the ghost is previous iterations, signature gestures / lines / words are gathered inside the archive of its body, a collective local memory and the paratext of its various sightings / exhibitions / seances,

and loosely structured into a series of acts within 20 minutes.

In their video work, *Quartered*, Amsterdam-based artist Geo Wyeth travels to Hanging Rock (South Carolina, USA) to research their great-great-great grandfather, James Marion Sims, who was a gynecologist infamous for his experimentation on enslaved African-American women. Performing as an authoritative narrator, Geo recounts a story told by their mother about a beautiful but traumatised creature called The Shard of Light, who is also performed by Geo. It is revealed to The Shard of Light that Sims is her 'Father and Lover and the Man who had hurt her' and is 'the reason why she was so angry and it was all so damn confusing'. The Shard of Light begins to perform private rituals while travelling through the landscape. Throughout the video stories and images of maggots, ghosts, and witches allude to death, haunting, and transformation. *Quartered* is a performance document that is an attempt to reconcile historical trauma, and concludes with Geo – a biracial and transgender man – singing evocatively in the carpark of a Motel, a site of transit in the landscape of their ancestor.

The structure of these known things have spaces in between where fumbling begins, anxious flesh clings onto a skeleton of edifying bone – it holds the body up but unconsciously doubts it – it is where anxiety is its muscle and flesh.

Bhabha says its here where the colonized courses through as blood – here I can disturb the colonial movement, rupture its moving logic – undermine the ruling cadence. A natural order is no nature the colonial skeleton knows. It is in this claim of anxiety that I come to be; as "performance" itself;

In 2014 the technomaterialist transfeminist collective, Laboria Cuboniks, released *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation (XFM)*, a manifesto that draws out the intersectional concerns of the collective and provides a

¹ Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation*, 2014, <http://laboriacuboniks.net/> Accessed 21 August 2015

² For definitions of radical, transtemporal and abstract drag; Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art; A Freak Theory*, (London; Transaction Publishers, 2012)

framework of goals for their project. The XFM reclaims the modernist trope of the manifesto, introducing 'abstraction, virtuality, and complexity' as 'a wager on the long game of history'. This text draws influence from other radical manifestos, however what differentiates the XFM is that it isn't a dogmatic, hermetic document, instead it operates as a provocation, a feedback mechanism calling for a response in order to continue the evolution of their project. If we recall the *Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* (1991) of the formative Adelaide-based cyberfeminist collective, VNS Matrix, we can trace a lineage to Laboria Cuboniks' approach to gender, the virtual, and technoscience. But the world and its web has since changed. So although Laboria Cuboniks utilise a similar tactic as VNS Matrix in the form of a manifesto, there is a critical repurposing of cyberfeminism. Demands for gender abolition, the embrace of alienation, feminist rationalism, and universalist politics identify new strategies to 'hack' our current commodified digital environment and concepts of nature.

Performance, let's cover this – this bone, flesh and muscle – of the same body, the same machine. Let's take a bed sheet, like a sheet of paper as another performance and another performance and another performance – I like calling them acts. Someone else said that, I forget. It was about a conversation of 'performance' vs 'performativity'

A bed sheet a sheet of paper a queer failure, draped over my body as a dumb type. Demonstrative, you'll see, you'll hear it. I basically do what I say I'm going to do.

A revelation of the mechanics - the wizard behind the sheet pulling his bells and whistles - a performance of process is then actually a type of theatre - The Wizard of Dorothy !

Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz examine mechanisms of oppression through the staging, re/performance, and documentation of historic photographs, texts, choreographies, or, in the case of *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation*, musical composition. Often Boudry / Lorenz work with materials that show bodies that have been marked as 'other', freaky, perverse, racialised, or socially outcast' and through performance and the filming process actively challenge the ways in which these bodies have been devalued and denigrated.³ Boudry / Lorenz's approach to historical material is a relation of 'contagion' that seeks to entangle the viewer as a participant in denormalising practices.⁴ *To Valerie...* is a single-channel video (Super 16mm film transferred to HD video) depicting six performers 'pushing towards a paradigm shift in the future'.⁵ The performers – Rachel Aggs, Peaches, Catriona Shaw, Verity Susman, Ginger Brooks Takahashi and William Wheeler – follow the experimental score titled *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in Recognition of their Desperation* written in 1970 by American composer Pauline Oliveros. In this piece, pitches and modulations are determined by three shifts of light and imitation of each other's sounds. Inspired by the egalitarian feminist principles of Solanas' *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*, Oliveros' score depends on the responsiveness between performers and the repeated instruction to 'always blend with the ensemble'. No one performer can dominate the piece as the work is dependent on processes of 'careful listening'⁶ – an embodied, concerned and self-determined form of communication – to inform the production of collective sound.

On this sheet. Hold it while you possibly watch me under another one. Watch this sheet your holding and its relay of the live performance programed on Wednesday 2nd September 2015 from 6:30pm or whenever the audience is enough, what Della Pollock says of performative writing being nervous as coming from "...a specifically Foucauldian sense of history as a discontinuous recurrence of disciplines and practices, of "interpretations" incorporated in history as events."

Acts...he preferred to call them acts. I forget who it was.

I read it in an online i think, i can't remember

As an Australian national I can't help but contemplate what ghosts are needed to be evoked here, now. What histories need to be remembered, embodied, felt? We have a traumatic, unresolved history that is institutionally repressed and silenced, and this haunts us through the continued denial of First Nation's, Queer, Refugee, and Women's rights.

We need artists to remember, exhume, and inhale.

With love,
Frances Barrett

Brian Fuata

³ Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, 'Stages: A Conversation between Andrea Thal, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz', in *Temporal Drag*, (Ostfildern; Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011), p 1999

⁴ Renate Lorenz, *Queer Art: A Freak Theory*, (London; Transaction Publishers, 2012), p 17

⁵ <http://www.boudry-lorenz.de/to-valerie/> Accessed on 21 August 2015

⁶ *Towards a careful listening: Sound, gender, feminism, activism*, https://soundcloud.com/anja_k/towards-a-careful-listening Accessed on 21 August 2015

16. Willow Smith and Daniel Satele on island mysticism and dolphin identity

Phrase Signature #3 as taken from

"..my new year's resolutions include to become the owner of a smart phone and to start using twitter."

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Include To Become". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

Include To Become