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CAN BORA

RESPONSIBLE AUTONOMY:

FELT-SENSE & THE
ENTANGLEMENTS OF FASCISM,
SOMATICS AND EROTICISM

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RESPONSIBLE AUTONOMY:

**FELT-SENSE & THE ENTANGLEMENTS
OF FASCISM, SOMATICS AND
EROTICISM**

CAN BORA
MA PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

A Thesis presented by Can Bora to Master Performance Practices, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts in Performance Practices, 2022.

**HOME OF
PERFORMANCE
PRACTICES**

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SYNOPSIS

Responsible Autonomy: Felt-Sense & The Entanglements of Fascism, Somatics and Eroticism is a practice based research project. The research advocates for an expensive understanding of the felt-sense as the medium of re-interrogating systems that are considered as good or as bad. It therefore places the felt-sense within the discourse of responsible autonomy, which implies the practice of care as an ethical behavior and as an escape from the epistemic violence. Even though the bodies of fascism, somatics and eroticism have been studied by other theoreticians and artists, these three bodies have never been analysed together in any research before. My work intends to bridge this gap in the discourse by bringing them in relation to one another because, I argue that all three bodies have a crucial role in the production of self both externally and immanently.

Drawing from theories of performance practices, philosophy and new materialism, the research investigates the modalities of power within the body of fascism, somatics and eroticism. By practice research, it aims to demonstrate the liquefied transitions between these bodies.

The methodology is inspired by the somatic Moveable Cinema method invented by the Canadian educator and

choreographer Shannon Cooney and is based on Affect Theory. Using the performativity of the gaze and the sensorium, the research explores through the materiality of the body, the states of being and the intra-activity of the bodies, which circulate in systems such as fascism, somatics and eroticism.

Initiating a discussion on an expanded dance practice, where dance, performance art and theatricality interact in order to establish a minimalist piece with maximum sensoriality, the research proposes a transition from “me” to “us” which indicates a world processing within the principles of connectivity, receptibility and perceptibility.

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when it is needed.

I thank my old friend Dr. Aysen Sari and my lovely friend
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DECLARATION

I, Can Bora, hereby certify that I had personally carried out the work depicted in the thesis entitled, *Responsible Autonomy: Felt-Sense & The Entanglements of Fascism, Somatics and Eroticism*.

No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma prior to this date.

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INTRODUCTION

Istanbul, 2015. As a yoga practitioner and instructor, I'm excited to attend a yoga workshop by an internationally renowned yoga instructor from the United States. The six hour of workshop promises a self-discovery of the body through utilizing my own body.

The reason why I started to practice yoga in my twenties was to establish an intimacy with myself. By intimacy, I refer to a closer, compassionate and non-destructive relationship with myself. I can not remember "exactly when" I lost the intimacy with myself, but I can recall several events throughout my life. I was punished by my primary school teacher for illustrating Allah as a smiling Santa Claus (since I didn't know that in Islam it is forbidden to picture Allah). Like Billy Elliot, my desire to do ballet was rejected by my father because of the heteronormative discourse that stands up for: "real men don't do ballet!". The performances that I created in Istanbul emphasized an interdisciplinary aesthetic (where theatre, dance and video art cross each other) and were criticized and judged by some colleagues and theatre jurors since "they were neither theater nor dance". These examples reflect "epistemic violence" which refers to domination and violence exercised against and through knowledge. My reaction to epistemic violence was to lose self-intimacy by establishing a

disconnection between my body and my mind. Even though I was enthusiastic towards creating new artistic work, my mind never ceased to repeat that I was always wrong. In this way, a destructive and self-sabotaging relationship with myself was birthed, where I was “othering” my self.

Let’s return to the workshop. The place is a huge gymnasium and there are more than a hundred “yoga lovers”. Everyone seems happy. But, what I notice is that we are all looking “the same”: same brands of yoga or yoga props used by everyone. Then Chris, the instructor, climbs on a box (like a throne) and stands slightly above our eye level. Why this difference? Ah yes, so that he can see all of us.

The practice begins. But soon, it is getting on my nerves to repeat the sun salutation more than 25 times and stay in each plank position for more than one minute. I really want to shout out: “Why this kind of practice? Are we in an army? This practice is not somatic!” Of course, I don’t say anything. Instead, I sit on my knees taking a short break and observe people. They are determined and strong, they do exactly what the “master” says, like a machine. The practice, rather than yogic, seems like a cardio practice! Chris behaves really like a commander. With the microphone, he is not afraid to raise his voice and to push the physical boundaries of practitioners by repeating: “Do it, do it, come on, push the ground! Push it! Be strong!” I feel and witness an eruption of

virility from all the people around me, which makes me think if “yoga can be militarised”.

Meanwhile I continue to observe people, “well shaped men” attract my attention because they look like fitness models: pumped arms, thick legs... Some of them do the practice topless. I feel an erotic desire to show myself towards the “one” who smiles to me.

That day, I realized that my body could turn out to be three different bodies: fascist, erotic and somatic. Fascist because I did yoga asanas like a soldier, erotic because I was attracted to a sexy man, somatic because I wanted to improve my body-mind relationship through yoga.

I revisited these personal memories when I encountered on the internet, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in India. RSS is an right-wing Hindu nationalist organization which aims to exclude Muslims from the country¹. But the organization benefits also from yoga to increase their votes. “Our workers are visiting households across the state requesting people to come and join the yoga camps²,” says one of their functionary. It is substantial to underline that an organization that

¹ <https://observers.france24.com/en/20200302-who-are-india-rss-hindu-nationalists-accused-violence-towards-muslims> [accessed on 2th June 2022].

² <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/rss-takes-yoga-route-to-voters/cid/1478272> [accessed on 2th June 2022].

incorporates yoga also killed 2000 Muslims³. A new realization dawns upon me: the spiritual practice of yoga that dates back to 500 years, and which is currently receiving great attention all over the world can become a weapon aiming to exclude people who practice a religion than Hinduism. This case allowed me to notice how yoga, as one of the India's cultural heritages and as an old science seeking for both physical and spiritual well-being of humanity, turned into a military power in its country of origin. The relation between yoga practice and politics seems ambitious and paradoxical but this case in India points out how a somatic practice can be devised into a tool to maintain a fascist ideology.

Then, I rewatched *Wild Wild Country* (2018), a Netflix series about the spiritual leader Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh known as Osho. Even though I am inspired by his writings and his somatic practices such as Dynamic Meditation, I experience another shock when I witnessed him promising: "I will go on trying to help people to be awake. The awakened man will be the new man!" He emphasizes the importance of spirituality and how regimes, cultures and politics dominate the human body by subjugating their self-expression. But the way he talks, determined and sure of his ideology, evokes the speech of a leader who defies big authorities, such as

³ <https://thewire.in/communalism/rss-behead-kerala-cm-gujarat-killed-2000-ranawat> [accessed on 2th June 2022].

the government of the United States. Something disturbs me. I then acknowledge one more time that somatics can be political and ideological at the same time. The cult of Osho has about fifty thousand followers (of which 10.000 people in Oregon, USA⁴) all over the world, constituting only of "people wearing red". Osho's rise to power lead also to an "othering", where a polarization between Osho's cult and the others (as the American people) occurred to the extent of leading up to the assassination of the mystical leader by the American government in 1990⁵.

Mentally wandering between fascist, somatic and erotic bodies, I wonder, as humans how many bodies do we have, if bodies are extensions of systems and regimes? Bodies are produced through systems as Elizabeth Grosz stresses: "The body is not outside of history, for it is produced through and in history" (1994, 148). Systems or structures circulate bodies into different states. Some of these states are seen as absolute good or absolute bad. Somatic practices promise for example a sense of freedom via the body-mind connection towards the repressive effects of culture on the embodiment

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/apr/07/cult-oregon-1980s-terror-netflix-documentary-wild-country> [accessed on 2th June 2022].

⁵ There a lot of speculative conspiracy theories about Osho. Some of them say that the Indian guru died by himself. According to other scenarios, the cult has been taken into custody by US government since the cult continued to gain much more power after winning the elections in Oregon. They are also accused by contaminating the restaurants in Oregon. Apparently, the tension between Osho's cult and the government is due to the empowerment of Osho and his increasing sphere of influence over the citizens in Oregon.

of self⁶. Besides, the body of eroticism ensures a self-intimacy as “the energy to pursue genuine change within our world (Lorde, 2020, 37). However, the body of fascism exposes a brutal ideology which aims to annihilate millions of people by committing genocide, in the case of Hitler. As I demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, the body of somatics can also be used in the service of the body of fascism. Or in the case of sex workers, the erotic body becomes an obligatory livelihood practice rather than “a creative energy” (Ibid., 32)

Therefore, a paradox arises as to what and how a system should be called good. Systems as ideologies always promise something “good” by canonizing the autonomy and asserting the freedom of its followers. Bodies circulate in and out of the systems as they have “choices”. But, is it really the case? What I want to highlight is that when bodies are circulated in these states, without their consent and without a defined ethical care, they may become destructive, such as in the cases of RSS and Osho. By looking at liquified transitions – I put forward a hypothesis that if bodies have responsible autonomy, they are able to produce an ethical care and escape epistemic violence, and thus deploy the states of being from their own lived and felt experience. I propose that the true power of

⁶ Moshe Feldenkrais, one of the pioneer of somatic practices says: “a free awareness that enables the critical and free operation [...] we can think of this as a process of de-conditioning - that is to say, ‘un-conditioning’. And then we talked about culture, which is stipulated by the possibility of conditioning” (2010, 173).

a body or “the dynamic nature of the body” - if I have to paraphrase Shilling (1993, 104) - resides on the responsible autonomy.

In the first chapter *Invasion and Resilience*, I begin by illustrating the fascist, somatic and erotic bodies and I analyse the modalities of power within each one. I explain the aspects of fascism reflecting on the Gezi Protest, which happened in Istanbul, Turkey in 2013. I classify the body of fascism as “the invading body” because its dominance comes from excluding other bodies by having monopolized power. I thus expose somatics and erotic bodies as “resilient bodies” against the body of fascism because they offer a subjective statement of an “I”. While the erotic body proves itself a personal sovereignty, either external or internal, the somatic body characterizes itself as a sensorial body being part of a wider ecology. I support my arguments by giving examples from performance practices. What I notice as a gap in the field of performance practices is that artists approached bodies of fascism, eroticism or somatics but worked only on one of them. I hope that the urgency of my research, which investigates these bodies all together within one study will help to fill this gap.

In the second chapter, I describe my methodology based on the performativity of the gaze and the sensorium. Affect Theory remains at the heart of my methodology since it allows

the internal embodiment of the bodies of fascism, eroticism and somatics and their intra-actions through the felt-sense. The reason why I address to Affect Theory is that even though in dance practices there are a multitude of theoretical discourses about the body, I believe that the materiality of the body in terms of its embodiment is missing. By practice based research, I aimed to answer two questions. (1) How do bodies feel when they embody the body of a system and how do they react to each other? (2) Do bodies morph into another in a sequential structure, or, do they follow liquified transitions like a rhizomatic structure since a rhizome “has no beginning or end?” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, 27). Simply put: when does one body start and the other end?

In the third chapter, I present the main important key findings, which lead me to discuss responsible autonomy and the epistemic violence. I underline the importance of ethical care within the responsible autonomy, because as Karen Barad argues: “Each of “us” is constituted in response-ability. Each of ‘us’ is constituted as responsible for the other, as being in touch with the other (2018)”. We share the same ecology with all the bodies (human, non-human and inhuman). This is why I find the responsible autonomy significant, since maybe it doesn’t concern “me”, “you” or “them” but it does concern “us”. Therewithal, epistemic violence erodes “us” in terms of the self-expression of the body.

CHAPTER 1 / CONTEXT OF STUDY INVASION AND RESILIENCE

1. THE INVADING BODY : THE BODY OF FASCISM

In my research, I identify the body of fascism with the aspects of : (1) sameness, meaning the erosion of self-expression (2) othering, in the sense of individualistic isolation and the exclusion of subjectivity and (3), the fetishization of body.

At around 6 p.m. on the 17th of June 2013, in Istanbul, a young man started to stand by himself facing the Ataturk Cultural Center in the main square of Istanbul, Taksim. In a very short time, this standing man went viral across social media with the hashtag #duranadam (standing man) while hundreds of people joined him by standing the same way. This social event soon spread to other districts of Istanbul and other cities of Turkey. The original standing man was Erdem Gunduz, a Turkish performance artist, who demonstrated a performative tool of passive resistance during Gezi Protests in Istanbul.

Gezi Protest has a significant meaning in Turkey’s recent history. It uncovered the politic and social tension between the citizens and the totalitarian regime of Erdogan. In the last week of May 2013, The President Tayyip Erdogan announced his aim to build a replica of the Ottoman-era Taksim Military

Barrack by demolishing the Gezi Park, one of the few remaining green spaces in Istanbul, situated in Taksim square. On the 1st of June 2013, people started to occupy Gezi. The initial cause of this "sit-in" involved ecological reasons protesting the urban development plan for the park. But the protests grew very quickly and turned into a spontaneous and unexpected civil resistance as well as a demonstration against Erdogan government. Over a three-week period, around 3 million people took to the streets across Istanbul and other cities of Turkey to manifest a wide range of concerns. "Many people protested against not only the government's urban development plans but also its refusal to allow citizens any influence over the restructuring of public urban spaces," wrote the Turkish scholar Zihnioglu (2019). But what was happening was far beyond that. "Others protested the government's intrusive practices, with its lack of respect for diverse lifestyles and more broadly, democratic rights and individual freedoms," (Demiryol, 2018). In three weeks, Gezi became a major act of rebellion against the oppressive regime of Erdogan, which also revealed a solidarity between people of different ages and classes. One of the most prominent slogans used in Gezi Protest was "Shoulder to Shoulder Against Fascism".

In his book *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*, the American professor of History Kevin Passmore describes fascism as a system that seeks to place the nation, defined in exclusive

biological, cultural, and/or historical terms in "a form of ultranationalist ideology and practice" (2002, 25). But fascism can also emplace the nation according to religion. Let's remember the case of RSS in India or the ideology of Erdogan, who is in power since 2003, to create a more "religious" national Turkish image built on "the moderate islam" policy. As all the fascist leaders who yearned to define the nation biologically, culturally or historically, Erdogan's ideology is to turn the secular Republic of Turkey into an extension of the long gone Ottoman Empire which was ruled according to islamic rules by a sultan-caliph. In addition to the obligation to have prayer rooms in official institutions (such as schools, hospitals, states offices, etc.), the giant mosque that was requested to be built in Taksim Square and the Military Barrack in Gezi Park are just a few of the architectural projects and practices of this conservative ideology.

During Gezi Protest, protestors faced excessive police violence using incessant teargas-bombings. "A totalitarian government imposes a set of beliefs on its people who must conform or face unpleasant, and often violent consequences," writes Hannah Arendt (1976, 416). Control, which is one of the significant components of fascism, revealed itself in Gezi Protest with more than 44.000 people taken into custody, 73 dead and more than 8000 injured. The reason of this excessive and violent police force was to stop those who had different opinions than Erdogan from expressing themselves.

With fascist coercion come the ideas of “sameness” and of “othering”. During protests, Erdogan threatened the “other 50 %,” who did not vote for AKP (Justice and Development Party), conservative democrat party founded by Erdogan in 2001. This other 50% represents all who participated in Gezi Protests, in which, according to Konda’s statistics, we can clearly see leftists, artists, LGBTQ+ communities, Kurds and people with a higher education level. Furthermore, Gezi protestors have been considered as “terrorists” by Turkey’s EU-Minister Egemen Bagis⁷ and “looters” by Erdogan. There is also a sarcastic coincidence that while I am writing these lines, on the 10th anniversary of Gezi, Erdogan mentioned Gezi protesters as “sluts” on 1st June 2022: “They are corrupt, they are sluts, they know nothing about a holy mosque⁸.”

I find the “50 % statement” important in two respects. On one hand, Erdogan’s speech indicates how a totalitarian regime requires a mass for its buildup since “the totalitarian movements aim at and succeed in organizing masses not classes [...] while all political groups depend upon proportionate strength, the totalitarian movements depend on the sheer force of numbers” (Arendt, 1976, 308). On the

⁷ Hürriyet, 16 June 2013, “Police to Consider Protestors in Istanbul’s Square Terror Organization Members: Minister”, Hürriyet Daily News, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/policy-to-consider-protesters-in-istanbul-taksim-square-terror-organization-members-minister-48875>. [Accessed on 3th June 2022].

⁸ <https://m.bianet.org/english/politics/262711-erdogan-calls-gezi-park-protesters-sluts> [Accessed on 3th June 2022].

other hand, this statement announces an extreme polarization between Erdogan’s followers and the rest of the citizens who belong to different ethnic, cultural and social classes. It is clearly obvious that Erdogan’s government’s tendency is to ignore all the people who think differently than his ideology, which points out the erosion of subjectivity. Sameness in the form of same ideological values, same benefits, same political and religious opinions perform as an umbrella under which the body of fascism resurrects since it seeks to reshape individuals into a mass. “The term masses applies only where we deal with people [...] because of sheer numbers, or indifference, or a combination of both” (Ibid., 311). Evidently, Gezi Protests demonstrated that the dynamic behind the sameness of mass is for the state or the leader to apply a total domination, in which the agency of individual is taken away and violently oppressed by the police attacks since the masses have to follow the leader and practice not their own autonomy but the autonomy of Erdogan. During Gezi Protests, people read aloud to each other, danced halay (a folkloric dance which is performed by a group), and even offered free yoga classes. I interpret all of these actions as the self-expression of bodies, who wished to support each other and to express their rights. However, the act of self-articulation within Erdogan’s fascism is always subjected to police violence.

This dynamic of sameness also relates to what French

sociologist Jean Baudrillard means by cloning. “The only thing cloning enshrines, by contrast, is the reiteration of the same: 1 + 1 + 1 + 1, etc [...] It is the abolition of all the otherness and of the entire imaginary sphere” (1993, 116). Erdogan’s government did its best to exclude the presence of diversity in Gezi Park. The deputy prime minister, Bulent Arinc, also threatened to unleash the armed forces against the protestors⁹. The body of fascism therefore conforms to sameness and aims to reject what is considered as “other”. In this manner, it intends to reduce all the people of a nation into one individual *like an earthworm cloning itself by dividing*, if I borrow Baudrillard’s words.

The Gezi Protest shows how in fascist movements, the expression of oneself is strictly forbidden and banned. Any subjectivity related to the self-articulation that does not conform to the state’s ideology becomes a rejection, accompanied by a legal or social punishment. The autonomy of body doesn’t belong any more to its owner, but rather to the state:

Abandoned to this indeterminacy, the subject is neither the one nor the other - he is merely the Same (...) And whereas the other may always conceal a second other, the Same never conceals anything but itself. This is our done ideal today: a subject purged of the other, deprived of its divided character and doomed to self-metastasis, to pure repetition (Baudrillard, 1993, 122).

⁹ <https://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/147673-arinc-gerekirse-asker-gorev-yapar> [Accessed on 7th June 2022].

I therefore think that, one of the primary goals of fascism is the social regeneration which is achieved through the rejection of individualism and difference. In fascism, the body becomes an object that needs to be moulded into a certain shape according to the fascist leader.

If I go back to the story of the Standing Man, which was “a silent, stubborn and dignified protest¹⁰”, this symbolic social performance as a passive resistance acted against the body of fascism. Gunduz himself declares¹¹:

We [the protestors] are neither enemies, nor combatants; we are the citizens of the same nation and we want our voices to be heard. We want several specific rights back. Every government comes to office by promising to protect our rights, but later this government turns into a dictatorship, and people die. If this system produces dictators and gunfire on the street, the system must be flawed.

Gunduz’s performance was short-lived because the police detained him. Besides, the piano of the Italian pianist Davide Martello¹² who performed in Taksim square, was taken hostage by the police. Even though these people wanted to perform their subjective ideas by a fair, non-violent, humanist and artistic approach, Erdogan’s regime demonstrated that there was no place for subjectivity.

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22949632>. [Accessed on 3th June 2022.]

¹¹ Hürriyet Web TV, 18 June 2013, “Taksim’deki Duran Adam Erdem Gündüz konuştu”, <http://webtv.hurriyet.com.tr/20/51050/0/1/taksim-deki-duran-adam-erdem-gunduz-konustu.aspx> [Accessed on 3th June 2022].

¹² <https://m.bianet.org/biamag/siyaset/147906-durursam-polisin-mudahale-edeceginenandim-caldim-caldim> [Accessed on 17th June 2022].

There is also another aspect of fascism that is not covered in the frame of Gezi Protest, but which I find important: the fetishization of bodies.

Fascism certainly took the sporting body seriously. Especially during the time of Hitler, fascist aesthetics and physical ideologies were embodied by an emphasis on the virile, masculine, strong and athletic body. The body itself becomes the embodiment of a performed ideology. Hitler enunciates:

In my castles a generation of young men will grow up who will be the terror of the world. I want forceful young men, majestic, awesome, fearless; without weakness or gentleness... I want my young men to be strong and beautiful. They should have a physical preparation in all sports. I want them to be athletic. This is first and foremost (Vertinsky, 2007, 40).

It is incontestable to mention that the physical fascist body imagined by Hitler constituted just the seed of militarization of people since “the ultimate fascist aesthetic experience was war” (McDonald in Vertinsky, 2007, 72). However, even though the dominant tendency in fascist movements was anti-feminist, the case of Tresbisonda Ondina Valla, a female Italian swimmer who became one of the Italian fascist icons after winning the gold medals in athletics in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, was also used by Mussolini as a demonstration of the strength of the Italian race and to project Mussolini’s “The Fascist Superman and Superwoman” (Gori, 2011). Gilroy states:

Physical strength, sport, combat, competition and their accompanying values may not be the core components in a generic fascist aesthetic. But

the way they present the relationship between national and racial identity and physical embodiment lies at the center of what distinguished the fascist movements of the past and what remains fascistic in their influence on contemporary culture (2000, 175).

In this regard, the body of fascism fetishizes a masculinized, disciplined and athletic body to show as evidence of a country’s strength. But Cammelli, in her article *Fascism as a Style of Life*, touches on the cultural dimension of fascism. Quoting from Gingrich & Banks and Anderson, she describes fascism as “a social phenomenon” and “a cultural and dynamic process involving a sharing imagination” (2017, 90). In the European culture, “looking good” has become a very big trend. People join more and more into sportive activities (mainly fitness, cross fit, yoga and zumba) to look “athletic and fit”. It underlines the fact that fascism can also act as a trend, in which people feel obligated to have “the right body proportions”.

2. BODIES OF RESILIENCE: THE SOMATIC AND THE EROTIC BODY

2.1. THE SOMATIC BODY : “TO BE IS TO BE EXPERIENCED”

The body, which is a complex structure, uses another medium of connection besides the verbal language to communicate, explore and dialogue with itself and the world around it. This language is the sensorium. In 2021, I created an online

meditative performance entitled *Eyes of The Skin*¹³, which aimed to activate the senses of the participants. In order to stimulate the felt-sense in the body, the performance started by showing some colorful and vibrant collages involving some elements of nature such as river, trees and landscapes. The second step in the performance was a guided meditation based on a deep physical relaxation. During the meditation, participants were invited to connect to a body of nature. "Just stay with this body of nature, and let your focus alternate between your own body and the body of nature you choose," I said during the meditation.

Meanwhile the participants were invited to explore the subjectivity of their bodies with each of them experiencing different sensations. The main aim of the performance was to explore how body image could sensorially be expanded through establishing a connection with nature as a part of a wider ecology.

The American philosopher Richard Shusterman entitles the somatic body as "living, feeling and sentient body". He contextualizes it "as a site of sensory application" (2008, 1).

¹³ The performance is firstly created with the aim of showing the works of Home of Performance Practices' students for accreditation of our master program. Then in October 2021, it has been performed in On-Live Festival, in Arnhem. After developing the project simultaneously during 2022, the performance has been shown in Hapaka.com, a web site that offers personal growth's seminars and will be continued to be shown in different channels. Between September and November 2023, the work will be presented alive in Performistanbul, the main performance art space of Istanbul, in Turkey.

Therefore, the somatic body is the body that "experiences" itself in terms of sensations. During the meditation in the performance, the first invitation was to give attention to different body parts and to witness how these body parts were feeling. The second invitation was to explore the circulating sensations in the body after establishing a connection with a body of nature.

Asking simple questions such as "how do you feel your feet?" or "what are you feeling on your chest?" allowed participants to experience a reciprocal communication. Thomas Hanna, the American philosopher who invented the term "somatic", advocates: "reciprocity between sensing and moving is at the heart of the somatic process" (1986). Sensing because participants became the explorer of a sensation. Moving because focusing the attention to a body part activated the sensorial motors of the body. This interactivity underlines the characteristic of the fact that the somatic body is at the same time a tool and the user of this tool. "I thus both am a body and have a body" (Shusterman, 2008, 3). The body is a tool because it reveals itself as a locus of exploration and discovery. Besides, the body also uses its self-consciousness as the user of this tool in order to establish a sensorial connection with itself. In *Eyes of The Skin*, participants explored how their body image could be sensorially expanded through their own bodies.

As Thomas Hanna emphasizes, the perception of the first person in somatic processes is highly vital since it features the subjectivity of the body. The autonomy of the body therefore comes from being the source of the information itself. In somatics, knowledge is not derived from an external source, but on the contrary, it comes within by means of “the intelligence of the flesh” (Blackman, 53). At the end of *Eyes of The Skin*, some people conveyed their experiences by describing their bodies “as heavy entity”, “lightened as if in the air” or they said: “I feel relaxed but at the same time I feel somehow bigger”, meaning that the somatics offer a knowledge, which is not experienced by the mind but rather through felt-sense.

2.2.1. THE BODY OF EROTICISM : EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL STATEMENT OF AN “I”

I identify the erotic body as a statement of an “I”. But I approach it in two separate dimensions. While the external “I” emphasizes its power through its sexual self-expression, the internal “I” resides beyond the external identities attributed to the self. I interpret this “I”, which is immanent, as the sensorial embodiment of the feeling of a union that occurs by the intensity of an erotic act.

The image is unusual. A bride and three young grooms. The situation is also unusual: the demonstration of a Turkish

woman’s polygamy. In *Married With Three Men* (2010), the feminist Turkish performance artist Sukran Moral points out issues such as the subjugation of the sexuality of the female body, the place of women in the Turkish society and the oppression of the freedom of individuals. In her work, she pushes social and political boundaries by performing a bride marrying three virginal young men, set in the district of Mardin in Southeastern Turkey.

Unfortunately, there is still a cultural tradition that has not lost its validity in Turkey, especially in the eastern rural regions, where co-wife marriage still exists despite declining numbers even though it is prohibited by Turkish civil law. Under the patriarchal structure, some men still have polygamous relationships. More than that, under the title “bride price (dowry)” tradition, some parents “sell” their daughters to the father of the groom. In these circumstances, the autonomy and the role of women are reduced to taking care of the house under the yoke of their husband and their only duty is to produce children. With other words, women are considered only as machines for reproduction. In addition to that, in a speech given on the International Women Day in 2008, the president of Turkey Tayyip Erdogan recommended to Turkish women to make at least three children on the pretext that “the foreign forces want to demolish the Turkish people¹⁴”.

¹⁴ <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/en-az-3-cocuk-yapin-8405007> [Accessed on 3th

In another speech he gave in 2016, he repeated the same recommendation, this time pointing out that “a woman who rejects motherhood, who refrains from being around the house, however successful her working life is deficient, is incomplete¹⁵.”

The American scholar Gayle Rubin, in her book *In Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality*, articulates how sex is oppressed in Western society, especially in United States. She advocates that “sexuality is a human product” since sex is institutionalized as a monogamous activity for married people with the aim of reproduction (2006, 149). Therefore, the sexual expression of the self in an erotic sense remains repressed within the society – as it is still the case in Turkey. In that sense, the erotic female body becomes subjected to play the role of reproduction in a heteronormative culture.

I consider the erotic body as a living entity that has a right to feel joy and pleasure through its sexual desire. Because, finding satisfaction within life is a natural state of a human body. It gains its power by articulating itself through intense and erotic emotions, and with a state of *joie-de-vivre*. Andre Lourde states: “this [erotic] body doesn’t become any more

June 2022].
15 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/06/turkish-president-erdogan-childless-women-deficient-incomplete> [Accessed on 4th June 2022].

docile, loyal or obedient, or neither externally defined” (Lorde, 2020, 34). The erotic body thus becomes resilient when it uses its own potential based on the freedom of its sensuality because it demonstrates a resistance to any kind of sexual oppression and gender subjugation since it embodies the claim of an expressive “I”, as states the Peruvian writer Llosa: “Eroticism is inseparably individualistic. It has its own moral justification because it says that pleasure is enough for me. It is a statement of the individual sovereignty” (Cohen, 1990).

On one hand the power of the erotic body comes from reflecting its expression of joy and pleasure from inside out, on the other hand it derives from the articulation of the immanent self, from outside in.

2.2.2. THE IMMANENT BODY: AN INTERNAL IDENTITY

When it comes to a sexual act, there is a dichotomy between individuals as “you” and “me”. In his writings, the French philosopher Georges Bataille relates eroticism, “the most intense of emotions” (2000, 384) to the concept of ecstasy. According to Milan Kundera:

Ecstasy means being “outside oneself,” as indicated by the etymology of the Greek word: the act of leaving one’s position (stasis). To be “outside oneself” does not mean outside the present moment, like a dreamer escaping into the past or the future. Just the opposite: ecstasy is the absolute identity with the present instant, total forgetting of past and future (1993).

And Bataille underlines the role of sacrifice, in the

establishment of sexual intimacy:

The principle of self-sacrifice is destruction [...] The sacrificer's prior separation from the world of things is necessary for the return of intimacy, of immanence between man and the world, between the subject and the object (Botting & Wilson, 1997, 210.)

In the ecstasy of an erotic act the sacrifice is needed in order to reach a state of union. Reaching to a temporary trance state through ecstasy, individuals "sacrifice" their self, meaning their external identities given by societal authorities. So this trance state leads to the revelation of a wider self by saturating the boundaries between "you" and "me".

With the loss of the external self, the erotic body encounters a new self, giving birth to an internal identity of an "I" since "eroticism is one aspect of the inner life of man" (Bataille, 1962, 29). The erotic body therefore proposes another self-articulation, which can not be easily described with words, but rather can be sensed and felt. This immanent body, as an internal expression of the self, becomes also resilient to the conventional human relations dictated by the normativity. This internal "I" is therefore a form of self-articulation beyond the concept of "me" as an isolated individual approved by the society.

CHAPTER 2 / METHODOLOGY THE GAZE AND THE SENSORIUM

1. THE PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

I position the dance practice as the central methodology since I maintain that dance "exemplifies the doing side of living" as asserts Elaine Clark-Rapley (1999, 89). Dance is an art form, which is embodied, sensual and sensuous (Wiebe & Snowber, 2011), I thus approach the dance or movementbased research as a form of inquiry and intervention .

The research is about the embodied experience within the practice, so, it has taken a phenomenological undertone. Phenomenology asserts the importance of the individual's subjective and perceptual experience of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2004). I, therefore, use the sensorially experiencing body as the site of my research since "it is through our senses that we come to know" (Wiebe & Snowber, 2011, 111). Therefore, the sensorially experiencing body becomes the producer of knowledge about the embodiment of the bodies of fascism, eroticism, somatics and their relationality. I anchor my methodology on the performativity of the gaze and the sensorium.

2. EMBODIMENT : THE GAZE AS THE EXTENSION OF TOUCH

In my methodology, I interpret the gaze as an extension of touch. As Marinetti advocates, “the touch is also the means by which some people sense and view the interior of bodies - an interoceptive ability apparently functioning without the mediation of X-Ray technology” (Fisher , 166), the act of looking processes as an operation of touch, thus a medium of sensing. Using the Moveable Technique, based on the felt-sense in the visual field according to the different parts of the brain, the gaze generates the internalization of each body. According to its performativity, I divided the gaze in three tabs: the surrounding, the mutual and the fascist gaze.

2.1. MOVEABLE CINEMA TECHNIQUE

Moveable Cinema is a somatic dance technique created by the Canadian dance educator and choreographer Shannon Cooney. and it integrates the approach of the CranioSacral System¹⁶. This method aims to expand the-felt-sense in the visual field and consciousness of vision while in movement. The practice, during which the body tunes in with the present, investigates forms of movement based on the self-articulation of the sensorial body.

¹⁶ I had the opportunity to participate into Cooney's intensive workshops three times between 2014-2018 in Istanbul. This year, while she is my external mentor for my research, I also experienced her audio classes and followed her physical classes in Berlin this year.

I approach Moveable Cinema as a technique for “training the eye and the sight”. In the technique, the practitioner doesn't use words to label what they look at. Instead, the practitioner processes to see the things with four essential parameters: color, shadow, (geometrical) lines and light.

Technically, this way of visually sensing the bodies operates through the activation of the parietal lobes of the human brain, which are the field of the visual attention and spatial reasoning. These lobes are situated at the back of the skull and they are the parts of the brain that receive and process somatosensory information from the body itself.

2.1.1 THE MUTUAL GAZE

Mutual Gaze consists of two bodies interacting with each other in silence through the medium of their eyes by focusing on the parietal lobes for a certain amount of time. The aim corresponds to explore the possibility of space where bodies dialogue sensorially. For this practice, I also took advantage of the instructions in Will Johnson's book, *The Spiritual Practices of Rumi: Radical Techniques for Beholding the Divine* (2007), in which the author emphasizes the importance of the mutual gaze as a medium for reaching a transcendental state.

2.1.2. THE SURROUNDING GAZE

Surrounding Gaze carries all of the characteristics and

instructions of Cooney's Moveable Cinema technique¹⁷. I use this gaze for two reasons: (1) to investigate the relationship between the space and the dancing body (2) to inquire the relationship between more than two bodies while they are in movement. In the scope of my research, the space was the studios of Theatrium and Zaal 1 where we took some rehearsals. Then; walls, light bars, windows, seats, ground or the body parts of the dancer with whom we collaborate, the clothes, the micro details on the skin of the bodies... each element existing in the space becomes a material to awaken the felt-sense-in-the-visual-field.

2.1.3. THE FASCIST GAZE

Fascist Gaze focuses on the use of the frontal lobe of the human brain. This lobe is the place of logic and mental faculties such as solving a problem, giving a decision, planning, controlling emotions and motor skills. I also interpret this lobe as the field of focusing on a task in order to get it done, by which I would like to point out the characteristic of "doing" rather than being, in the sensorial meaning of the term. According to our discussions with my external mentor, we also agree that this side of the brain is the place of judgement, where we categorize what is right and what is wrong. This is the reason why I preferred to call this type of gaze fascist since it

¹⁷ For more information about the relationship between the technique and the dance practice, please check: shannoncooney.org

works as a fascist statement of an "I" that relies on "doing", on defending its thoughts in a dogmatic way and on separation, thus "othering". Again, the use of this method is not for investigating the movement, but rather to create a psychosomatic state of authority and superiority towards the gazed bodies.

2.1.3. GAZE AS INTERACTION: THROUGH RELATIONALITY

On the atomic level, the touch doesn't refer to a physical dimension as we are taught to imagine. Atoms, following the law of attraction and repulsion, do not ever touch each other since they are always separated by a distance. The only way they touch each other is by exchanging their electrons. Karen Barad advocates that "touch, for a physicist, is but an electromagnetic interaction" (2018, 153). From this regard, as I refer the gaze as touch, the gaze therefore operates as the locus of interaction. On that account, to articulate the investigation of the intra-actions between three bodies, I refer to Affect Theory.

3. RELATIONALITY: THE SENSORIUM

Lisa Blackman declares that "the affect is disclosed in [...] gut feelings and embodied reactions and in felt intensities and sensations" (2015, 25). Affect is hereby a bodily state, with other words, a sensorial embodiment. Therefore, since the affect is like "a process that binds people together" (Ibid.,

52), it leads to investigate the relationship between bodies through the use of sensorium.

My intention in using affect is not to investigate “what affect means but what it does” (Thomson, 2009, 6). Therefore, the feeling or the experiencing body becomes the site of research in order to embody the bodies of fascism, somatics and eroticism and to investigate the relationality between them. By the feeling or the experiencing body, I refer to the sensorium, which is “the entire sensory apparatus of the body”. Therefore, I interpret the sensorium as the locus of sensorial manifestations, or as “forces and intensities” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, 1), which circulate between bodies. Affect Theory also helps to inquire the transition(s) between the states of being as fascist, somatic and erotic bodies in their encounters since “affect arises in the midst of between-ness” (Ibid.)

CHAPTER 3 / FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

FROM ENTANGLEMENTS THROUGH RESPONSIBLE AUTONOMY, EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE AND CARE

1. FINDINGS

In this chapter, I share the findings of my research that I gathered through the methodology that I administered. The sensorially experiencing body constituted my source of knowledge as well as the research site. Primarily, I will present my findings by describing the liquified transitions within the multiple body, and then I will continue with the findings which are related to the responsible autonomy, epistemic violence and care.

For my final performance, I collaborated with two dancers: Amit and Kadri. So, I worked as both a choreographer and a performer. I aimed to structure U_____S (2022) as a performance of minimalism with maximum sensualism. My choice of collaborating with dancer bodies consists particularly of their sensorial capacity since they are body practitioners. My intention was to break the concept of traditional choreography, in which “good dancers” perform in order to show themselves off by fascinating the audience by their technicality and materiality. In order to achieve to

achieve transubstantiation of the traditional choreography into a movement-based performance where the felt-sense is performed, the final performance involved improvisational scores.

1.1. LIQUIFIED TRANSITIONS : THE MULTIPLE BODY & THE AGENCY

In the first score, Kadri and I looked to each other for a certain amount of time in order to establish a sensorial connection between our bodies. The score aimed to keep eye contact while alternating our bodies between vertical and horizontal positions. Using the mutual gaze, we embodied the somatic body.

During the research, many times I felt the urge to physically approach and touch Kadri. She also mentioned that "her body felt ready to get into more physical contact with mine." We agreed on the idea that the urge to be closer and to touch each other was emerging organically. This finding demonstrates how the somatic body has the ability to appear as the erotic body .

Moreover, in this score, the actions of sitting and lying down emerged from the principle of sameness (since bodies move in the same positions), which suggests to embody the body of fascism. But this sensorial score also revealed the fact that the body of somatics can exist within the body of fascism.

In the continuation of the same score, Amit joined our duo and Kadri turned her gaze towards him using her agency. By "agency", I refer to the freedom of choice. Therefore, a new sensorial connection was established between Kadri and Amit, which excluded me as a result. This finding indicates how the sensorial body can convert to the fascist body in the sense of othering.

The last score of the performance consisted of a choreography in its traditional sense. Inspired by the militarization of the physical yoga practice, I created a sentence whose vocabulary originates from fitness movements and techno culture. Aimed to point out the aspect of sameness and to experience the virile masculinized body, the choreographic sentence operated to embody the fascist body. During the research, I investigated what would happen if we repeat (more than four times) the choreography. As a result, Kadri and I embodied a semi-ecstatic state through the repetition. The focus that was directed outward in the beginning of the score diverted completely inward and created a body-mind connection in terms of a raising energy in the body. I therefore translate this finding as the ability of the fascist body to morph into the somatic body.

The findings in these scores illustrate that (1) one body can embody the bodies of fascism, eroticism and somatics

one by one, (2) a body can morph into another in liquified transitions, also meaning that the body is multiple, (3) the transitions between bodies may fluctuate depending on the agency of the bodies.

1.2. EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE

The content for the first score was to use ordinary everyday's "neutral" positions (of sitting and lying down). Even though the instructions were simple and clear, as a participant, the sensorial connection between Kadri and I failed several times during the first score. Looking at the films of the rehearsal recordings, I observed that the sensorial encounter is interrupted when the body's awareness is focused on an external factor such as its plasticity and aesthetic appearance. During rehearsals, Kadri continued to show tendency to move as "a good dancer", who attaches more importance to the physical shape and the positioning of her body of dancer. I translate this experience as an epistemic violence exerted on the personal level since Kadri believed that a good dancer "must" show how aesthetic her body is.

As a choreographer, I also had a similar experience. In February, I decided to work as a choreographer for the first time for my final performance since it created a challenge for my artistic practice. During two months, I really tried to achieve a choreography in its literal sense. After having a nervous breakdown (because my felt-sense was not indicating that I

was on the good path), I threw away all the choreographic material that I created and I got the courage to create a new structure based on minimalism. It was a personal experience where I had exerted epistemic violence on myself since I was thinking that I was not on the right track.

1.3. CARE & RESPONSIBLE AUTONOMY

The first score with Kadri also illustrates the fact that shifting the care towards herself instead of the space between bodies, broke the reciprocity of the relationship. When using the word (term/notion) "care", I refer to the ability of bodies to act and to move in a harmonious relationship with other bodies without losing their own autonomy and being subjugated to an external force. As a result, in the absence of care as the tool that sustains a reciprocal relationship, the body becomes individualistic (or egocentric) and isolated.

In the previous section, the example illustrating the event of othering in the trio of Kadri, Amit and I, the autonomy of the body consists of making a choice. In the score, Kadri autonomously chose to her gaze towards Amit. However the absence of care resulted in a destructive state where the third person, who was a part of the shared ecology, was excluded. By this means, I would like to point out that the responsibility may disappear while the autonomy may appear.

Another finding is that bodies felt -consciously or

unconsciously- the tendency to approach each other while using the surrounding gaze. One day in the studio, Kadri and Amit practiced an improvisational dance score, during which they were dancing disconnected from each other. But as an observer, once I proposed to use the surrounding gaze, they started to approach each other. I joined as a participant and we repeated the same steps when I got involved as a participant. The result was the same: bodies shared a collective shared space, in which we were taking care of each other. We danced freely in our own styles (meaning that we did not lose our subjectivity of self-expression) still forming a collective body.

2. DISCUSSION: US.

As Karen Barad argues, we live in an intra-active ecology, where actions pursue reactions, which re-lead to actions. "We are not outside observers of the world. Nor are we simply located at particular places in the world; rather, we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-actions" (2003, 828). We live in an ecology where human, inhuman and non-human bodies are interconnected and form a network. This means that in our world knitted by interactions that follow each other in a chain process, our actions have effects.

From a phenomenological approach, Merleau-Ponty argues the reversibility of touch. With the term reversibility he

mentions that the one that touches something/someone also becomes touched by who/which that it touched in the beginning (2014). By interpreting this point of view in the context of action, I may point out that bodies inter-touch each other. In terms of affect, these inter-actions place the felt-sense to the forefront.

The felt-sense brings an epistemic care to the epistemic violence. I resume the epistemic violence as violence on the knowledge level. Enrique Galván-Álvarez states:

Epistemic violence, that is, violence exerted against or through knowledge, is probably one of the key elements in any process of domination. It is not only through the construction of exploitative economic links or the control of the politico-military apparatuses that domination is accomplished, but also and, I would argue, most importantly through the construction of epistemic frameworks that legitimise and enshrine those practices of domination (2010).

Thus, the felt-sense promises a personal and subjective knowledge whereas a point of view considered as fascist asserts as if there is only one absolute truth. Therefore, felt-sense, deriving from the body-mind connection, may offer a different knowledge against (or for) what is considered as absolute good or absolute bad. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the felt-sense re-interrogates the knowledge accepted as truth by the bodily experience through sensorium. Knowledge therefore takes the form of a state of being, which allows to find out and discover what is "really" (or personally) right, true or harmonious for each of us. The crux of the concept of autonomy is the ability to take responsibility.

By responsible autonomy, I refer to the ways of self-articulation of the body within the ethics of care towards the ecologies (human, non-human, inhuman) it lives in and is part of. I see the responsibility as one of the significant components of our lives as Alphonso Lingis writes: "Responsibility is coextensive with our sensibility; in our sensibility we are exposed to the outside, to the world's being, in such a way that we are bound to answer for it" (2018, 20). Hence, responsibility brings an urgency to recognize the Other since, as Levinas writes, "without the Other there is no basis/foundation for the subject to express themselves" (Shepherd, 2014, 42). I consider the notion of hospitality significant since the relationship that I have with the Other constitutes the foundation of all the intra-actions spreading over our macro-ecology.

In tandem with my findings and their interpretations, I concur that bodies have responsible autonomy to embody other bodies since they have the freedom of choice. Based on the felt-sense experience, they can interrogate their states of being within the systems. Therefore they are able to produce an ethical care and escape epistemic violence in order to create a hospitable ecology without hostility. In this way, as Barad advocates, "it [the responsibility] is a relation always already integral to the world's ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming" (2018), we can carry out our existential and ethical responsibilities towards the world that we are part of. It is neither for me nor the Other but for US.

CHAPTER 4 / CONCLUSION & SUMMARY

SELF-INTIMACY AND SELF-EXPRESSION: AUTOPOESIS

In this artistic research, I engaged with bodies of fascism, eroticism and somatics and I analyzed the liquified transitions between them to offer an expansive understanding of the felt-sense in relation with the responsible autonomy and the epistemic violence. I proposed that systems that circulate bodies without their consent can be constructive or deconstructive when it comes to the states of being. For this, I suggested that the felt-sense experience becomes a medium of re-interrogating systems or disciplines that bodies are extensions of.

As an artist whose background consists of somatic practices, this research allowed me to claim the space for the felt-sense and the thinking-and-feeling body to be valued and considered as a mechanism of decision and choice, but also as a modality of self-expression. I argued that the importance of the felt-sense underlines the autonomy of the body. Instead of accepting any knowledge as an absolute truth, the process of felt-sense underlines the fact that any knowledge is first experienced corporeally and only then offered to the body to use its autonomy in order to give the final decision. Therefore, I suggested that the true power of a body resides

in its capacity of sensorial experience. Also, I realised that without care, the felt-sense or the lived experience wouldn't possess much significance.

Therefore, the concept of care occupies an important place, where responsible autonomy and epistemic violence intersect, because care is an ethical behavior that guides the individual from "me" to "us". Care is an act of touching, therefore, an interaction, which implies both the giver and the receiver. Hence, instead of an egocentric and anthropogenic universe, care shows us the way to a world where every body (human, non-human and inhuman) interacts with each other within the principles of receptibility and perceptibility. Manifesting intimacy and connectivity, care reduces the power of the epistemic violence. Besides, it ensures the dimension of response-ability to the autonomy.

The methodology that I used, which is based on the experiencing body as the site of research allowed me to investigate the modalities of power within each body since "our bodies, our selves; bodies are maps of power and identity" (Haraway, 2016, 65). But more than that, I hope that the experiencing body provided a more complete analysis to the theoretical framework of the bodies that I mention in my inquiry by bringing the materiality of the body.

The challenges that this research practice brought allowed

me to embody and embrace my subjectivity more. Reflecting deeply into what intimacy really means for me, discovering that the epistemic violence first begins in the individual was a huge discovery. Through this revelation, my research practice ensured me to reshape the entire structure of the final performance, U_____S, since the epistemic violence may cause the individual to lose its own self-intimacy by damaging its self-expression. Based on the sensorial experience, I aimed to make a piece that exists beyond the prescribed codes of dance.

U_____S proposed a space where we can see how different agencies act and react, touch and be touched. Although I investigated the embodiment of bodies of fascism, somatics and erotics and their intra-activity, I still reflect on the ways to extend my research. From an artistic approach, I wonder how I can bring the intra-active nature of these bodies establishing an interactive relationship with the audience. Apart from that, the embodiment and the practice of care reveal themselves as the first notions to be re-interrogated as the extension of the research practice. Questions arise: how are can lead to the autopoiesis (Plotegher, Zechner, Rübner, 2013, 25)? How can it be a resistance tool? How can care emerge and enhance our forgotten and oppressed sides by systems and disciplines? How can it establish a sense of self-intimacy not only with our bodies but also with our ecologies? But for now, I expect to show and explore the research in

different artistic practices. Reducing the three bodies into one and still inviting the audience to an “experience” for my Portfolio – which will be constituted by three channels of video – I’ll be working with ways of articulations and expression of the bodies within the responsible autonomy as an artist.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

For the recording of the final performance U_____S
(2022), please click on the link below:

<https://vimeo.com/711134571>

password: canbora2022

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