

ST1

(Theoretical Sessions_FIVAC2015)

Movements of media in Yvonne Rainer's Hand Movie (1966) and Richard Serra's Hand Catching Lead (1968)

[...]

Shot while confined to a hospital bed, the 8mm black and white film *Hand Movie* (1966) by American dancer, choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer, is one of the few filmed artefacts that exists of her early work. Recovering from surgery due to a life-threatening illness caused by adhesions left over from a childhood appendectomy, she made the film with colleague William Davies (Lambert-Beatty 2008: 310). It is the first film of a set known as *5 Easy Pieces*, that for Rainer were seen as experiments rather than finished art works.

In *Hand Movie* there is a tendency for the movements and position of the hand to begin neutrally and then escalate in complexity, before returning again to a flat position of the hand. Rainer deliberately shows the hand from all sides, giving us a sculptural perspective. A single digit is often isolated from its relation to the rest of the hand or two fingers might interlock allowing a new freedom for the other digits. At times the movement is barely perceptible, a gentle splaying of the palm and fingers, or slow curling and uncurling. Rainer's articulation of her fingers often appears as if they are autonomous units no longer under the coordinating jurisdiction of the hand. They appear to be

involved with the task of untangling themselves—an action not normally associated with the everyday use of the hand. One of the key ideas associated with Rainer's work of the period is the idea of the materiality of the body, the body as a material to work with, as if it were plywood or steel. In her own words, Rainer questioned 'how to use the performer as a medium rather than persona' (Rainer in Lambert-Beatty 2004: 49). There is semiotic opacity at work throughout the film, in that the movements of the hand never crystallize into readable gestures; the fist never solidifies into a symbol of power; the fingers never form a peace or victory symbol. Rather, the hand is reduced to a state of non-signification. As I see it, this opacity of readability calls attention to the materiality of the hand, as well as questions its status as a medium of communication.

Where Rainer's *Hand Movie* unfolds along a temporal continuum of ever-changing movements, Serra's *Hand Catching Lead* is a three-minute exercise in repetition and rhythm a task-based experiment in which he attempts and frequently fails to catch falling pieces of lead. Although the movement remains the same from start to finish, the failure to catch the lead provides an indeterminate aspect to an otherwise predictable exercise. The result is a movement system composed of a human hand and multiple lead objects. [...]

ST2

(Theoretical Sessions_FIVAC2019)

Bodies Break the Silence: Gender Violence and Corporeal Politics in Central America

For the purpose of today, I will be focusing on the work of Guatemalan performance artist and poet Regina José Galindo as a point of departure, and most specifically on some of her pieces that directly address the atrocities of the Guatemalan Civil War as experienced by women, and by indigenous communities¹ and that engage with the CEH's (Commission for Historical Clarification/ La comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico) report.

To recall the context, the Guatemala Civil War lasted for 36 years, finally coming to an end in 1996. As excruciatingly documented in the UN report from the Commission for Historical Clarification – (La Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH), and echoed in the archdiocese of Guatemala's own report "Guatemala: Never Again!" (*Guatemala, Nunca Más*)² the armed conflict left over 200,000 people dead, the majority – over 80% - of whom belonged to one of Guatemala's many indigenous groups³; it is estimated that over 9,000⁴ women were raped during the armed conflict, with more than 90% of them being indigenous. The State was deemed responsible for over 93% of killings and human rights abuses during the war. As has been the case for many Latin American countries emerging from dictatorship and armed conflict, a culture of impunity largely has prevailed.

From 1996 and the transition to democracy thru today – Guatemala, along with its neighbors in the Northern Triangle of Central America, El Salvador and Honduras, is one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a woman – with alarmingly high rates of domestic violence, honor killings, rape and femicide, where one is targeted just for being a woman. Women, particularly indigenous and poor women, have almost no legal recourse or protection against the

¹ Galindo is an intensely prolific artist, having produced well over 100 works of art. Her work largely focuses (in some capacity) on the universal, ethical implications of social injustices related to racial, gender and other abuses involved in the unequal power relations. She has performed and shown videos of her performances throughout Europe and the Americas, receiving commissions and having been awarded multiple prizes both nationally and internationally. The artist notes the lack of support for artistic production in her native country.

² Despite the overwhelming length and depth of the CEH's report, the then Guatemalan government of Presidente Cerezo did not acknowledge any accountability for the genocide, in the face of this blatant disregard for the report's findings and the subsequent culture of impunity (as well as the persecution of multiple priests), the Archdiocese issued its own report, serving as yet another source of verification attributing the vast majority of human rights abuses to the State.

³ Guatemala is a multiethnic, multilingual state – with over thirty different languages spoken, the largest group being Kakchiquel, but including as well M'am, maya-quiche, among others.

⁴ The CEH report includes documentation of 1400 rape cases, but estimates that over 9,000 women were raped, many of whom were subsequently murdered.

atrocities that they face daily. It is in this context that Galindo creates her work. As she herself says: “I live in a violent country, and that is where my violent art comes from.”

I want to turn now to use of gang rape as a weapon of war⁵. As Jean Franco reminds us in her article “Rape: A Weapon of War” as well as in book ***Cruel Modernity***, rape was utilized by dictatorships in Latin America as a collective, ritualized strategy – of form of gendered violence and torture that aimed to not only to terrorize entire communities, but also to eliminate future generations of potential resisters⁶. Women, she reminds us, were seen as dangerous as bearers and educators of future generations, and fetuses forcibly removed from them; this was particularly true in countries like Guatemala and Perú, with these tactics very specifically targeting indigenous women as part of a broader campaign of ethnic cleansing. Soldiers were trained to rape, and directly ordered to do so (rape under orders); those unwilling to participate in gang rape were themselves humiliated and punished. There is widespread documentation as well of family members and neighbors being forced to watch as a sister/mother/wife was raped by groups of soldiers, sometimes as many as 40.

⁵ There are numerous studies that show war-time rape – particularly that in group as a ritualized form of warfare – is not a new phenomenon, but we note, one that has received relatively little attention. Since the ethnic cleansing – and extensive use of gang rape – in Bosnia and Rwanda, more attention has been paid both in subsequent Truth Commission reports (such as Guatemala, where there is significant documentation, unlike El Salvador). The last years have seen a revisiting of the Rape of Nanking – Japanese of Korean and Chinese women for example.

ST3

(Fragment used for evaluation purposes during the MA Translation program at the London Metropolitan University)

Contemporary Art and New Media. Digital Divide or Hybrid Discourse?⁷

By Edward A. Shanken

Since the mid-1990s, new media art (NMA) has become an important force for economic and cultural development internationally, establishing its own major institutions. Collaborative, transdisciplinary research at the intersections of art, science, and technology also has gained esteem and institutional support, with interdisciplinary PhD programs proliferating around the world. During the same period, mainstream contemporary art (MCA) experienced dramatic growth in its market and popularity, propelled by economic prosperity and the propagation of international museums, art fairs, and biennial exhibitions. This dynamic environment has nurtured tremendous creativity and invention by artists, curators, theorists, and pedagogues operating in both domains. Yet rarely does the mainstream artworld converge with the new media artworld. As a result, their discourses have become increasingly divergent.

MCA practice and writing are remarkably rich with ideas about the relationship between art and society. Indeed, they are frequently engaged with issues that pertain to global connectivity and sociability in digital, networked culture. Given the proliferation of computation and the Internet, it perhaps was inevitable that central discourses in MCA would employ, if not appropriate, key terms of digital culture, such as “interactivity,” “participation,” “programming,” and “networks.” But the use of these terms in MCA literature typically lacks a deep understanding of the scientific and technological mechanisms of new media, the critical discourses that theorize their implications, and the interdisciplinary artistic practices that are co-extensive with them. Similarly, mainstream discourses typically dismiss NMA on the basis of its technological form or immateriality, without fully appreciating its theoretical richness, or the conceptual parallels it shares with MCA.

New media not only offers expanded possibilities for art, but also valuable insights into the aesthetic applications and social implications of science and technology. At its best, it does so in a meta-critical way. In other words, it deploys technology in a manner that self-reflexively demonstrates how new media is deeply imbricated in modes of knowledge production, perception, and interaction, and is thus inextricable from corresponding epistemological and ontological transformations. To its detriment, NMA and its discourses sometimes display a weak

⁷ This text is part of the volume: *A Companion to Digital Art*, First Edition. Edited by Christiane Paul. © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Published 2016 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

understanding of art history and recent aesthetic and theoretical developments in MCA. Due to the nature of NMA practice and theory, as a matter of principle it often refuses to adopt the formal languages and material supports of MCA. These are just a couple of reasons why it frequently fails to resonate in those contexts.

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