

Marta Kosieradzka

‘Home grown allure’

Solo dance performance and exhibition of ‘somatic drawings’ created as a final project at MA in Dance at Oslo National Academy of Arts 2023.



‘Home grown allure’ photo by Yaniv Cohen

PROLOGUE - JOURNAL FROM A LONG TRAVEL

Dream of my grandma: A giant bull chases her, runs into a deep forest, the animal keeps following her and coming closer and closer with each second. She does not know how to escape anymore, is out of breath and scared. She hugs a birch tree that is on her way. The tree lets her in, and she becomes a birch, set free from the human body forever. Her bones and muscles slowly turn into wood.

A strange attraction to skin-colored rooms, where, in my dream I move between the layers, through the rough surface of the bones and flow with the rivers of pumping blood, landing smoothly on the carpet made from patches of sensations, memories, stories, distractions and words.

Journal from a long travel, that I found in the drawer full of pieces of lace – delicate cloth with a myriad of holes made by twisting together fine threads of images.

PERFORMANCE

Dream number 1:

The first night I had a dream. I dreamed I was pure sight, with out a body or a name. I was suspended high above a valley at some undefined point from which I could see everything. I could move around my field of vision yet remain in the same place. It seemed as if the world below was yielding to me as I looked at it, constantly moving towards me, and then away, so first I could see everything, then only tiny details. I could see a valley with a house standing in the middle of it, but it wasn't my house, or my valley, because nothing belonged to me. I didn't even belong to myself. There was no such thing as 'I'¹ Olga Tokarczuk

My project is a solo performance, which integrates the elements of dance, drawing and sound. For the whole duration of the process and MA studies I have been working on it with a guitarist, pianist, and composer Adriano Fontana (Genova, Italy) with whom I've worked entirely online and with a set and costume designer and a graphic artist Zofia Jakubiec with whom I've worked during two weeks of residence at Bergen Dansesenter and Wrap Bergen, online and at Khio week before the premiere. I have also worked with an external mentor Cecilie Lindeman Steen, who has been present as an outside eye in the last four months of creation and internal mentors: Bojana Cvejic, Janne Camilla Lyster, Torunn Robstad.

The performance is accompanied by an exhibition of drawings inspired by my somatic experiences in dance. The research led to the development of many movement qualities, textures,

¹ Olga Tokarczuk ‘‘ House of Day House of Night’’ translated by Antonia Lloyd Jones, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill., 2003

body expressions. During the last three months of creation, I have focused on four different movement textures that I worked on in detail, which appear in the piece as separate scenes and to which I will refer in this text.

In the beginning of performance, the audience enters from the back of the space and watches the exhibition of 'somatic drawings. Spectators sit around the room, and the performance happens in various parts of it shifting the viewer's attention between spaces. The general lighting level is quite dark except for a few moments when it becomes brighter. There are several elements of set design in the space, which relate to the home interior or a house that appears in a dream or distant memory. In the middle of the piece there is a moment when the space becomes completely dark and the audience can only hear the recorded text from a prologue of Olga Tokarczuk's book 'House of Day, House of Night' read by Lou Ditaranto.

BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS

My motivation, creation and approach to this process has been influenced by the outburst of the war in Ukraine and last years of the pandemics- a huge change that happened in the life of people I know and the world order. Ethical ideas changed drastically, and the hierarchy of needs and things people value shifted from one day to another. This made me question power relations and the position that dance should take. I felt a need to return to the art that does not start from big and important concepts, but from humble and diligent work with the basic tool that serves us to experience the world, which is our body. Observing the reality, I knew slip from under my feet made me think of the concrete materiality of the body, that we are dependent on no matter how we try to rely on our controlling mind or different beliefs.

I see the main part of the process of creating the piece as a translation of movement developed through daily practice in which tasks were generated through working with images, texts, ideas, sounds into other art forms: costume, sound, set design, textile art. I was interested in how much the inquisitive, deep, and thorough movement work can be a tool for developing a coherent artistic universe that would be immersive for both a performer and the viewer.

I had a need to build a universe, which would be constructed or crafted from the very beginning and not use any ready-made things in it. In a way I wanted to make the material, the basic 'cells' of which I'm going to build the dance, choreography, and the whole performance. I was also curious how the body and me as a performer can be influenced by the surroundings and where is the real border between the physical material of dance and other things present on stage (sound, music, textiles, drawings).

MATERIAL DANCE IS MADE OF

The initial motivation for starting the process has been my will to connect to materiality of dance and find a strong and explicit physicality that would become an independent movement language. I was also very tired of precarious working conditions in dance, inability to really invest time in movement and training and having to compromise artistic vision because of work circumstances. Dance has lost its meaning to me because of fast and shallow working processes, where there is no time to really invest in developing a specific physicality. In the search of in-depth work in dance I've decided to connect to my drawing practice, a skill that I've studied for many years of my youth and childhood and that I've developed during my MA in Fine Arts studies in Warsaw that I've completed 16 years ago.

In my work as a material based visual artist it has always been clear that I work with matter and the matter responds to my actions, it is both a dialogue and a fight.

As a dancer, despite the fact of spending countless hours and years training and studying the body, I still felt a lack of connection to the material I am working with. As a visual artist I am creating my art using something outside of myself, my identity and history, something that is quite neutral and doesn't carry so much information, therefore it is easier to get to know its properties. In dance I work with something that both belongs to me and does not. While I choose to do a certain movement my body still does a lot of things by itself (for example physiological functions), it is placed in a certain sociologic and historic context, it carries a lot of information that I don't have access to (like traumas that are stored in the body memory) and it is so much more complex to understand it than clay or paper.

Both mediums I am working with drawing, and dancing offer quite immediate realization of a creative thought, both are quite ephemeral, fragile but also direct.

DRAWING

My project is both a performance and an exhibition of "somatic drawings", that are inspired by my experience of dance. I discovered how much my brain connects the movement to images during an "authentic movement" session I participated in a few years ago. We were asked to move with closed eyes for an hour. During that time, my mind bombarded me with images from art history, my own memories, images from the internet, books, and scenes from city life. Because I had no visual input while I was dancing, I had space to connect with the imagery inside of me. I had a feeling that my body disappeared under the heavy load of images, and I could not find a way in this labyrinth.

"Somatic drawings" are inspired by the images that appear in my mind during dance practice. The images portray animals, objects, plants, house items, words, anatomic images of the body parts that combined make a composition with a certain narration and dramaturgy composed on a white sheet of paper. The line that I use in those drawings is quite ornamental, round, and curvy, I let my line follow the imaginary shapes and connect them in one organism living on the paper.



“Somatic drawings” series

For the purposes of this performance, I have printed the drawings on a semitransparent plastic sheet to make them fit the general atmosphere of the room and have light movement and transparent texture represented in them.

In the beginning of the process, I have been practicing the tasks based on the idea of translating the drawing to movement in a bigger space of the whole studio, later I’ve limited it to smaller surface and kinesthetic range to focus on more details. I discovered that the focus on the action of drawing and not on performing the dance changes my state of mind and the activation of the body as well as awareness of it, that is why it helped me to move freer and develop more interesting material than I would usually do.

The artist whose work have inspired me a lot during the creation was an American pioneer of video art Bil Viola. His work, as he says, is an attempt to use a ‘nonmaterial’ medium, technology that is disconnected from the body and physical reality to show things that are very tangible, material. He admires the power of the affirmation of human presence that lies in all the things we make, create and construct. Viola describes making art as an attempt to create things that will outlive us as individual humans and inspiration as a living force that transcends time and place.² Although I work with a medium, that is very material and tangible I can relate a lot to his words about a desire to make something that will live outside of myself or be a material reality on its own that I can be in dialog with.

² Bil Viola “The Movement in the moving image” lecture as the 2009-2010 Una's Lecturer at the Townsend Center for the Humanities, UC Berkeley <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0RCkNugozU&t=4752s>

The two works of Bil Viola, which have directly influenced my choreographic explorations have been ‘‘The Raft’’³ and ‘‘Deluge’’⁴. In the first one a group of people is hit by a huge stream of water, and they must surrender to the natural force. We see the image in slow motion and their bodies are being pulled or pushed, they try to resist the huge power of water, but they can’t. This image has influenced a slow-motion part in my piece.



Bil Viola ‘‘The raft’’

Bil Viola talks about a moment of falling into the lake, when he was 6 years old- he saw the underwater world moving in slow motion and described it as the moment, when he realized that there is more than just the surface. Water appears in a lot of his videos- he explains it as irresistible attraction to the flow and movement, which is the essence of life.⁵

Working with the image of water underlies many of my movement explorations and is a part of my dance language. In my studio work I practice different tasks that relate to floating, following the flow, placing the body on the surface of water, breaking the water surface tension, resisting the force of water. I like to connect to the idea of an external force, which is moving me in space

³ Bil Viola ‘‘The raft’’ Video/Sound installation 2004 commission for the Athens Olympics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lli9pvlxdk>

⁴ Bil Viola ‘‘The Deluge’’ (Going Forth By Day) 2002, 36’. Panel 3 of 5 panels from Going Forth By Day (2002).

Video/Sound installation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3VoMuwBPAAE>

⁵ Bil Viola ‘‘Cameras are the keepers of the soul’’ interview by Christian Lund, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, in London, 2011

or moving inside my body. I think of drawing as the act of touching the surface of things and connecting to the flow of water, which can move freely and explore different spaces.

“There is no way to make a drawing, there is only a drawing” Ricardo Serra⁶

When I draw, I feel the immediate translation of the sensation to the form (in that case a line). I look at the object I draw and sense its texture and three-dimensional form. I can see both what is on the outside of it and what is inside – spatial relations between the front and the back and the construction of each space inside of it. I’ve tried to apply the same principles to movement and create different tasks, which were first practiced separately and then layered. Main principles of the movement in the tasks related to drawing were multidimensionality, multicentricity, referring to the volumes of the body, playing between space around and space inside the body, switching the attention, repetition/reverse/tracing the movement back.

Movement tasks I worked with in relation to drawing:

- *Moving all body parts at a continuous pace, without acceleration or slowing down.*
- *Initiating the movement from several different points in the body at the same time.*
- *Drawing a line in space, on the floor or the surface of my own body with a particular body part or several parts at the same time.*
- *“Swallowing” the line: imagining it entering the body and traveling inside of it*
- *Reversing the direction of the traveling line/ looping the reverse*
- *Imagining the line, I am drawing in a particular color, connecting to associations with that color*

In that working process I have been interested in creating a three-dimensional image of the moving body, which is in constantly changing relation with the room around it and can give an illusion of being seen from multiple perspectives at the same time. During the practice and creation of that material I have also thought of time perception and how the focus of both the audience and the performer can shift between watching a specific image and moment in time to experiencing something, that resembles timeless and limitless space beyond the body.

BODY AS A HOUSE

A lot of the art works I have done in my life refer to home space and the topic of rebuilding, creating homes and recalling memories of it. I come from Warsaw, a city where the lack of homes and losing them has been an important topic. During the second World War the city was destroyed to ground zero and has been rebuilt by the citizens many years after, even today there are houses that belong to no one and ruins that have stood empty for 80 years. Many people have objects in their home that were found in ruins and belonged to the households which were

⁶ Quoted after Katharine Stout “Contemporary Drawing: From the 1960s to Now Tate Publishing 2015

destroyed. There have also been frequent expulsions of minorities in Poland whose houses were left behind and a lot of abuse of power that lied in ability to provide housing. All of that led people to treasure home space, which is a guarantee of safety and intimacy. For me, the body is a safe place and a free space for containing and caring for memories, building a space that gives independence and freedom.

„People are built like houses inside- they have stairwells, spacious halls, vestibules that are always too weakly lit to count the doors into the rooms, row upon row of apartments, damp chambers, slimy, tiled bathrooms with cast-iron baths, steps with handrails taut as veins, artery-like corridors, joint-like landings, passages, guest rooms, draughty chambers into which a sudden current of warm air flows, closets, twists and turns and cubby-holes, and larders full of forgotten supplies.’’⁷ Olga Tokarczuk

In 1946, after the war has ended my great grandfather, who was sent to a work camp in Siberia came back to Poland walking with the Polish army. They have entered a part of the country in Karkonosze mountains, where German minority lived. It was a summer resort for rich people- wooden villas, hot bathing waters, cafes, concerts, everything surrounded by amazing mountain landscape. As Germany lost the war the Germans were driven out of the houses were allowed to only take what they could carry they left all their belongings in the houses that were taken over by the polish soldiers. My great grandfather became the owner of a wooden house full of huge cupboards, chests engraved with flowery patterns, spoons and servettes with the initials of the owners suddenly taking over someone else’s living space. I remember this house and the smell of wood inside, complex structures of dark wood. Textures and structures of complicated history and memory, a space that contains many spaces inside, like a blurred and misplaced identity, which is hard to define.

Performing ‘‘Home grown allure’ I imagine the body as a house with many rooms and in each of them an action is happening simultaneously (as if there were different creatures moving and living their own life there). I initiate movement from many places at the same time precisely imagining the space inside of the body – the volume of the rib cage, the shape of bones and angles of the inner structure.

In the summer 2022 in the National Gallery of Warsaw I saw a video artwork ‘‘Mom’s Move’’ by Susan Mogul. The famous American feminist artist made a film, those documents the moment, when her 88 years old mother is leaving the house, where she has lived for many years. The woman has been an amateur photographer, who through her long life has gathered a vast collection of photographic prints showing daily life, people around her, her house and objects in it, her own self-portraits, intimate portraits of her children. In her times photography was not a common activity among women, for her it was a hobby she did outside of being a housewife. Susan Mogul is watching through the camera lenses how her mom is cleaning and packing the objects, sorting out tons of photographic prints and packing up unused photographic paper. The film is a reflection on passing time, women, home space and life of an artist it shows how much

⁷ Olga Tokarczuk ‘‘ House of Day House of Night’’ translated by Antonia Lloyd Jones, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill., 2003

our bodies, dreams, memories are connected to our body and to the extended body, which is our house.⁸

This artwork made me reflect on how we assemble images, how our history and things we have observed during our lifetime are still with us when the time is passing. I see the act of performing dance, or watching someone perform dance as a constant exchange of those images that work both in the audience's and performer's mind and body. It seems, that we can never get rid of the images stored through the years, it is like we slowly build another body around our own and the space becomes a body built of dreams and thoughts, a "larger body" as Khalil Gibran describes:

"Your house is your larger body. It grows in the sun and sleeps in the stillness of the night; and it is not dreamless. Does not your house dream, and dreaming, leave the city for grove or hilltop?"

⁹

The use of the stage space in "Home grown allure" has also been connected to the idea of the house with many rooms. Some of the elements of the set were touching the wall making the impression as if they would grow out of it, so it suggested the presence of another "room" outside the stage. In the choreography I have used walls and shifted between different spaces of the room as if I was entering different rooms in an imaginary house.



Images from the art residency at Wrap Bergen – development of the set design

⁸ Susan Mogul "Mom's Move" / Video art 2018

⁹ Khalil Gibran "The prophet" (chapter 'On houses') April 14, 2003, by Rupa & Co

SOUND AS THE UNIVERSE IN WHICH DANCE HAPPENS

Working with sound and developing it simultaneously to choreographic material has been one of my main objectives in this work. Sound sets the space in which the body is moving, constructing the universe where dance happens. Over the two years of the MA program, I continuously worked with the composer Adriano Fontana, my longtime collaborator, trying out and testing different ideas and tasks. As we live in different countries the entire process happened online through written communication on messenger, which made the work limited but also more concrete, demanding attention and sharper in formulation of thoughts.

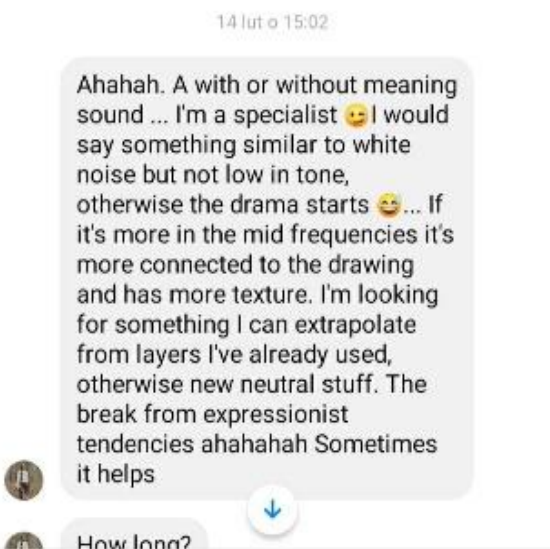
The soundscape used in the first scene of the piece related to the fictional animal/plant body was meant to take the listener on a journey from the sound of their own breath to faraway places. We wanted to fill the space with a sound that has motion in it and makes an impression of something that enters and leaves the body. The sounds that were used to make that piece were those of the house, street, animals, and the sound of nature that eventually became dominated by heavy breathing. We decided to make the breathing significant and to shift the attention from the outside space to the inside of the body.

In parts of work developed around the drawing we wanted to stay closer to the sensation of touching surfaces and moving with imaginary lines in space. The soundscape has been inspired by the sound of a pen drawing on paper and moving through its surface. We worked on a minimalistic “white noise”, that would give a sensation of wrapping the space around the body, creating a very particular and defined universe, that I could enter with movement and that would have a repetitive almost hypnotic pace that brings the audience closer to experiencing touching the surface, drawing, leaving a line on it.

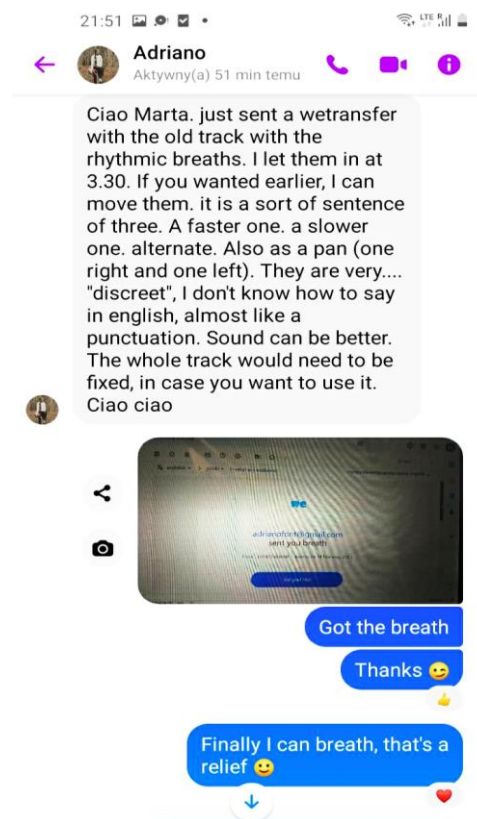
Making the last part of performance in which the glass sound appears and that is an attempt to work with alternating the texture of the body was the most time-consuming and challenging part of creation. My initial idea for the sound was to create something in contrast to the movement, instrumental and played by a human, not generated by computer. First, we chose piano music, but later we have realized, that introducing non-electronic music is not serving the piece and we’ve started the experiments with combining sounds of the human body (heart, cracking bones, breath) and sounds of different materials (wood, glass, plastic).

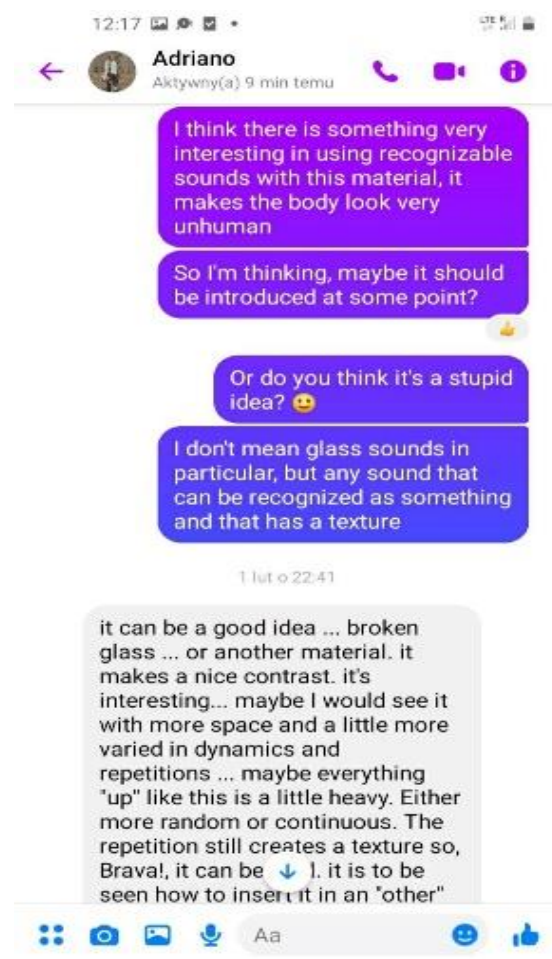
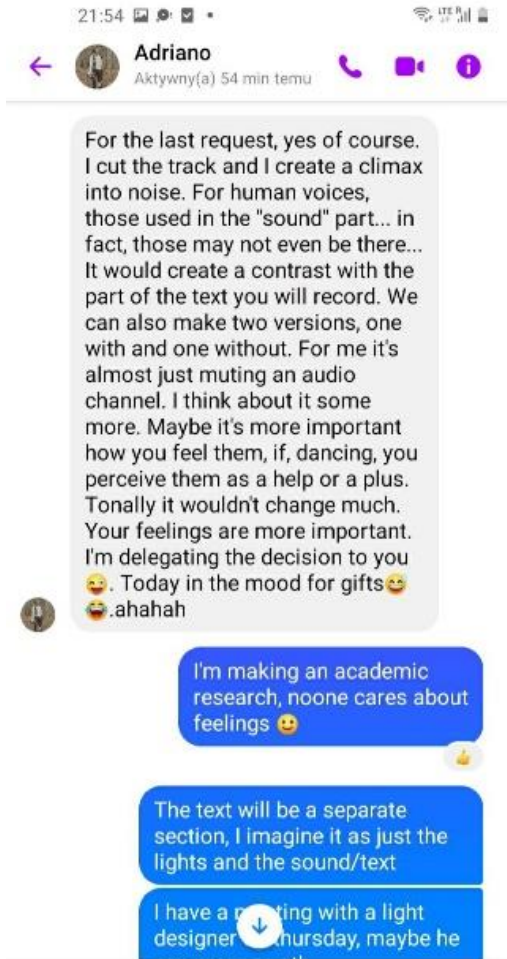


‘Home grown allure’ photo by Yaniv Cohen



Eventually the music used in the piece was a combination of the body sounds, electronically generated ones and the glass sound that strongly influenced the movement in the last phase of work. In this lengthy process I have learned a lot about the function of sound and the way I want to use it in performance. It is a medium that is not visible, it does not have a 'body' that could be attached to a very particular place, it can move faster than other elements and is more difficult to grasp and locate. In a way it can touch space, be an 'extension' of movement or performer's body and it can also be a scenography, or an imaginary landscape painted on stage.





Documentation of the communication between me and Adriano during creation of the music



Somatic drawing series

DREAMS and THOUGHTS

*“All over the world, wherever people are sleeping, small, jumbled worlds are flaring up in their heads, growing over reality like scar tissue. There might be experts who know what each of them means individually, but no one knows what they all mean collectively.”*¹⁰ Olga Tokarczuk

Memory number 1:

Memory of my grandma from a period of Nazi occupation of Warsaw: A bomb falls on a huge factory of buttons in Warsaw’s district Powiśle, near Vistula River. The colorful buttons blown in the air form a huge and spectacular button cloud, that slowly falls into the ground when the impact of the explosion is finished. People from the neighborhood ran into the factory ruins to collect the buttons.

(I do not know whether this memory is true. My whole life I have been wondering whether the button cloud really existed. Whether it did or not this real or fake memory is one of those that have entered my body and mind forever, although it does not belong to me.)

When do the thoughts leave the body and enter space?

Is space a landscape filled with thoughts?

Is dancing filling the space with embodied memories?

Those questions make me think of traces that dance leaves and interconnectivity of all things that I experience and witness a lot in movement. I see dance as a perishing art, which disappears quickly, while the body that performed it continues to exist. We cannot really touch dance it or remember it exactly. I cannot relate that much to my own dance that happened a while ago, I can reproduce only the movement (not precisely) but I cannot enter the same body I had in the past or connect to the sensations, memories or thoughts from that time. Dance, for a person that performs it is a journey through patches of sensations, memories, stories, distractions, words, and emotions, which form a texture like a carpet full of woven images. It lasts for the moment it is done and then remains a memory.

Got a message from Adriano in the evening, together with a link to downloading a part of the soundscape for my performance: ‘Living near the sea has its pros and cons. Few. Maybe. Damn saltiness.’ I live by the sea too, but it is much colder than the one in Genova.

¹⁰ Olga Tokarczuk ‘House of Day House of Night’ translated by Antonia Lloyd Jones, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill., 2003

Next day I woke up with the memory:

Memory number 2

I am seventeen years old, spending summer on a youth exchange in a Turkish province Hatay, where I live with a local family. I am totally ready to abandon my life in Warsaw and stay there forever. Amazing sun, incredible blue water so salty, that the skin itches when you swim. Kurdish women in dark clothes covering their whole-body bathing, wild donkeys wandering around the surrounding hills. Early morning, before 7 am, the only time when it's not too hot on a beautiful beach. A girl runs out of the water screaming, a few seconds later the waves spit out the dead body of a giant turtle, a little crowd of curious kids gathers around it.

My body has never felt so grounded ever again, sometimes I think I left a part of my heart there the memory keeps coming back to me all the time.



One of the tasks I have been working with during the process was what I call "automatic dancing" (in resemblance to "automatic writing" technique) - trying to distort my usual coordination, connect to the stream of thoughts and aim for discovering new movement patterns. I would set the timer and play an upbeat piece of music at a high pace and perform every movement that comes to my mind without interruptions of stops. I would often limit the space of the studio to only a

few meters to be less distracted with directions and lines in space. The idea behind this practice was to keep the high pace and connect to every thought that passes my mind, then immediately, without judging or selecting perform the move. After practicing this for a while I have noticed that there is an endless stream of thoughts going through my mind, which is a mix of movements coming from different dance techniques I've learned as well as movements and fragments from repertoire I've learnt for the last 20 years. There were also pieces of memories and images from the internet, daily life, even fragments of imagined conversations. I could not perform or react to all of those, so on one hand the body became out of my control and on the other in full control. At the same time this exercise allowed me to enter a different state and level of concentration than usual.

Connecting to memories has been an important part of the creation of set design for "Home grown allure". The set included a hanging wooden installation with combs attached to it by a skin color transparent piece of fabric, flowerpots filled with beans, forks, and a bedroom lamp and many textiles of diverse colors and textures. Some elements had resemblance to house items. The choice of beige/white/sand color pallet was supposed to enhance the 'dreamy' feeling of an old memory that is stored in the body, connect to the colors of the body and its tissues.



Images taken during the residency at Wrap Bergen – building the texture and color palette.

TENDER NARRATOR

I have been interested in the concept of “tender narrator”, introduced by Olga Tokarczuk, because I feel, like the contemporary world is becoming all about very defined identities and giving value to the subjective point of view as the only point of reference. Obviously, the performer exposes his/her body and personal views on stage and it’s not possible to change that, but now I’m interested in aiming for a broader perspective and acknowledgment, that there is a lot that we don’t know about ourselves, and the interconnectivity of things is an essential feature of our reality and of the dance.

“Seeing everything also means a completely different kind of responsibility for the world, because it becomes obvious, that every gesture ‘here’ is connected to gesture ‘there’, that decision taken in one part of the world will have an effect in another part of it, and that differentiating between ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ starts to be debatable.”¹¹ Olga Tokarczuk

The question of the narration of the movement and its relation to language has been one of my interests during the process: how much an abstract movement is also conveying the story, how much the rhythm, direction, shape contributes to it and how can it be altered and developed. First person narration has one direction, one center of attention. I do not see the body as one unit, rather as something that is constructed from many connected elements, so I was wondering how that can influence the narration that it creates on stage.

¹¹ Olga Tokarczuk Nobel Lecture in Literature 2019 at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm.
<https://culture.pl/en/article/olga-tokarczucs-nobel-lecture-the-tender-narrator>

Olga Tokarczuk in her Nobel prize lecture mentions the concept of a “fourth person narration”:

“I also dream of a new kind of narrator- a ‘fourth person’ one, who is not merely a grammatical construct of course, but who manages to encompass the perspective of each of the characters, as well as having the capacity to step beyond the horizon of each of them, who sees more and has a wider view, and who is able to ignore time.”¹²

The book I was inspired by and a fragment of which became a part of the piece is ‘House of Day, House of Night’ by Olga Tokarczuk, who writes prose, which is a unique vision between encyclopaedical descriptions of historic events, characters and places, fairy tale like, surreal stories.

She describes a life of a small village in Silesia, an area that has been a part of Poland, Germany, and the former Czechoslovakia in the past. The narrator tells the stories merging a surreal reality of dreams, thoughts, memories, and beliefs with detailed descriptions of daily life. The book takes the reader from one place, which is a small village, on a journey through different connections between people, nature, culture, showing that the history of any place is universal. It is an example of a text that blends the border between the world of thoughts, dreams and memories and material reality. The writer looks at the world through a microscope- building a larger tissue from the smaller fragments- precise descriptions of details as something that leads to more universal topics. In my dance practice, movement research as well as choreographic and sound related work I have been inspired by the way O. Tokarczuk creates her texts. I have been interested in developing very detailed and peculiar movement qualities. I have also worked on choreographing both small movements in each separate body part as well as the movement of the whole body in space, switching between the ‘panoramic view’ of the body and ‘zooming’ on the details.

“There are two ways to look. With one you simply see objects, things that are useful to mankind, honest and concrete, you immediately know how to use them, what they are for. And then there is a panoramic view, more general, with which you can see the links between objects, their rebound nets. Things stop being things, the fact that they are used is a matter of secondary importance, it’s only appearance. Now they are signs, they indicate something that is not there in photographs, which lies beyond the edges of the images. You must focus to be able to maintain that look that is essentially a gift, a real grace”¹³ Olga Tokarczuk

The costume I wore during the performance has also been inspired by the idea of the microscopic view and going under the surface of visible things. We chose color, which is close both to human

¹² Olga Tokarczuk, Nobel Lecture in Literature 2019 at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm.

¹³ Quote from ‘Pietro Pascarelli From Psychoanalysis to Literature: Olga Tokarczuk’ European Journal of Psychoanalysis

skin as well as earth, sand, wood, natural materials. The pattern that was pressed into the fabric has been designed by Zofia and inspired by different images of tissues seen under the microscope – muscle fibers, tissue of the human tongue and cells of sweat. The idea was to create a sort of ‘second skin’ that would be both like the natural one and strangely deformed. While watching the dance the viewer sees the total image of the body- it’s shape, directions, and relation to space, but also details of movement and the costume.



” Home grown allure’ photo: Yaniv Cohen



Body painting photo: Zofia Jakubiec

The first try outs of the costume ideas took place during rehearsals at Bergen Dansesenter, where we tried body painting attempting to alternate the look of the skin and experiment with animal-like patterns and shapes. The idea was to make the typical human look disappear and to break the symmetry of the body with asymmetrical patterns. Later, during a week of residency at Wrap Bergen we have experimented with attaching layers of tissue to the costume, sewing different textures to it and bleaching it with chloride to come closer to the textures present in the natural world and the thought of seeing under the microscope and through the layers. The idea was to underline the fictionality of the body I wanted to create and make it fit less to the standard human figure perception and make the cultural or social associations with the costume less graspable for the viewers.

PLANT/ANIMAL BODY- SENSING THE SPACE

Memory number 3

A small painting on a wooden board painted on a blue background portrays a little girl, dressed in a court gown and a white headpiece with deadly serious, expressionless face staring at something far away with an absent gaze. She holds the dead body of a gray sparrow in her both hands. She looks like she has just left a painting by Velasquez or a movie by Tim Burton. A piece of glass covers the painting separating the uneven texture of a wood board covered with varnish from the viewer's senses. The guides from the Musee Royal d'art ancient in Brussels call her "Mona Lisa of Brussels". the unknown Flemish painter of the 16th century has trapped female anger, childhood nostalgia and incredible amount of violence in a thirty centimeters square blue image ignored by most visitors, who rush to see a nearby famous Tower of Babel by Breughel. Unlike many images of women holding a dead body she doesn't express her pity, desperation, or grief, she ignores the death and decides to step out of this moment into her imagination or thoughts. Young woman and an animal trapped on a wooden board for over 400 years almost became one body.

A theme that interested me in the book of Olga Tokarczuk was the assimilation of the human body into space, dissolving the human identity in nature, animals, or plants. The author describes the body as a house with many rooms, corridors, cupboards, hidden spaces, but also something that is larger than just the physical body, it extends into space around us and the environment we live in. These thoughts and the work around them have been an inspiration for the first scene of the piece.

One of the characters from a book says, that "if you find your place you will be immortal". I found this sentence very intriguing as the main place we live in is our body, but at the same time the body is mortal, and the existence of our place will be finished at a certain moment. This thought has been with me through the entire process and set the background for many tasks I have used in the performance. I have been questioning the meaning of "space" and "place" in relation to the body and time. I have been looking at how can I use both space in the room and inside the body asking myself which of those is more private, more public, more temporary, or more long lasting. One of my tasks was to move continuously without any stop and inside this general layer find small spaces in the body, which could move at a faster pace for a moment, creating small "explosions" or accelerations that happen only in a very specified place in the body, so there would be two different realms that exist at the same time. In the movement research I have been looking for a transformation of the human body I live in into a fictional body, that somehow differs from it. I was curious how animal and plant movement can be translated into human body without being a direct imitation of it.

The tasks I used for the movement were:

- *Floating; connecting to the body, which is always lifted by the water, doesn't let go to gravity fully.*
- *Covering the face/eyes and expanding the idea of watching into other body parts (hands/feet), shifting the attention to 'seeing' with the whole body*
- *Using the hands without activating the fingers, removing the typically human gestures, and moving the hands from the elbow or the whole arm, not from the hands*
- *Relating to spiraling, multidirectional shapes, which resemble plants and their curves.*
- *Melting the collar bones, a body part that is not fully developed in many of the animal skeletons.*
- *Attacking movements, which come without preparation, like in the animal activating itself to attack.*
- *Moments of restlessness, explosive outbursts, fast breathing*

I have been inspired by Butoh artists and their disappointment with humanity and a will to merge with the plant and animal World through a horizontal alliance, not through representation of it. Practices of transforming into organic structures, the experience of *ma* (the space 'between' in Japanese) is more important than the visible in Butoh. The dancers want to surpass human nature not by becoming mechanical or brutal, but by connecting to the essence and metaphysical aspect of things. This approach is an anti-anthropocentric position and puts human life equal to the non-human one. During initial weeks of working on the movement my thoughts were also on the art of Islam and Judaism, religions, which forbid picturing human body or in some cases bodies of creatures that have a soul or a spirit. I have attempted research on dance, which blurs the human figure and shifts the importance of different body parts and creating a fictional body of a creature between plant and an animal. I have also worked on the idea of sensing the space with the whole body instead of watching it or touching it with hands has led me to exploration of different textiles and their relation to this body. Set design, that I developed with Zofia used in this part was an 'island' with curvy edges made from woolen felt covered with different textiles: thick, soft, transparent, textiles that resemble lace, white table clothes and fabrics used in houses, which created a contrast to the natural fabrics. I imagined that place as a natural environment of the creature I have created. I start the piece on it, leave it later and then come back to it marking the difference between familiar, natural place and a space that is outside of it and somehow unknown.



‘Home grown allure’ photo by Yaniv Cohen

The concept that has been present during the development of the choreography was idea of ‘Umwelt’ developed by Swedish/German biologist Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944) who believed that every living creature inhabits a world of its own. ‘Umwelt is the environment that a species of animal perceives according to its unique cognitive apparatus. Animal behavior can thus be best explained if the environment is understood as a sphere subjectively constituted by an animal species’¹⁴

CRACKS IN / BREAKING THE SURFACE

I have been interested in the connection between physical, material objects around us, our relation to them and the connection of materiality of our bodies to the world of thought, concepts, decisions, and ideas that we consider big and important.

One of my main inspirations has been a book ‘Cracks in Existence’ by Jolanta Brach-Czaina often referred to as a Polish ‘Bible of feminism’, which discusses a role of women, the meaning of our everyday, habitual existence and simple tasks we are constantly busy with. In the book the author turns the attention to the home space, the body, and daily actions, often the ones, that we consider dirty or ugly and searches for ‘cracks’: moments, which connect us to the metaphysical space.

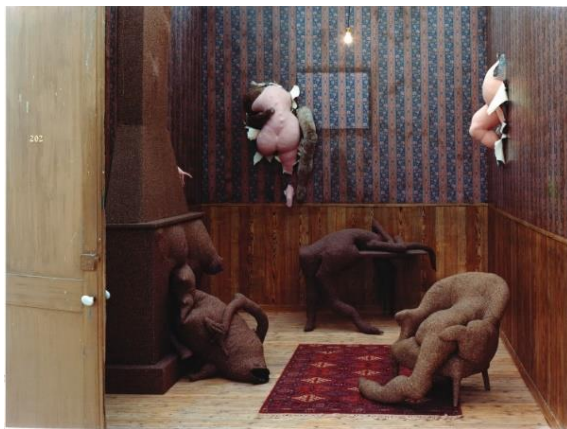
“So, we have 'something', particles of being, states of affairs, events, existential facts and meetings with them, surrendering to their influence, an effort to understand the meaning that they are able to suggest to us - and all this requires realizing that existential concrete has a metaphysical dimension”¹⁵ Jolanta Brach- Czaina

¹⁴ ([https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Jakob_von_Uexk%C3%](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Jakob_von_Uexk%C3%99)

¹⁵ Jolanta Brach – Czaina ‘Szczeliny istnienia’ (‘Cracks in existence’) Wydawnictwo Dowody na Istnienie, Warszawa, 2022

For me being a dancer is strongly connected to what she calls ‘*realizing that existential concrete has a metaphysical dimension*’. In ‘*Home grown allure*’ I have used this idea for developing the movement and calling the associations to the home space and objects that fill it. I have worked with touching both the real surfaces of my own body, floor, walls, and imaginary ones in space. The middle section of the piece, an evolution of the slow-motion part, that evolved from the idea of drawing and multicentric body has been built around different ways of touching, sliding, cutting, and interacting with imaginary surfaces as well as a centrifugal motion that takes the body into space and makes it always suspended and never finding a stop or a vertical balance. I’ve started the process of working on the movement in that part from connecting to different gestures that made me interact with space in a very direct way that I’ve slowly developed into dynamic and spacious choreography. My idea was to open the space, actively shift it, change it, and use the whole body instead of dividing it into many centers that work independently and to focus on the limbs, extending away from the center. After a lengthy process of defining and alternating this material I decided to keep the arms extended to the sides and parallel to the floor marking an imaginary surface. I have alternated the position of the hands between palms of the hands facing up and down, bent and extended the elbows. The movement later took inspiration from whirling dervishes, which turn around with arms extended to the side to achieve religious ecstasy.

The fact, that in the book of Brach-Czaina the philosophical, metaphysical reflection happens around home space has made me think of introducing objects and elements of home interior on stage, so that a space, which is often considered unimportant, pragmatic, separated from art and philosophy became a part of the performance.



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Works of female surrealists, Dorothea Tanning and Louise Bourgeois that have been an inspiration in the process.

¹⁶ Dorothea Tanning *Hôtel du Pavot, Chambre 202 (Poppy Hotel, Room 202)*

¹⁷ Louise Bourgeois *Femme Maison (1946–47)*

CENTRIFUGAL FORCE

Centrifugal force is an 'apparent outward force on an object that is *moving* in a circle'.

I have an endless fascination with circularity in movement and in drawing lines, I hardly ever use sharp or angular shapes. Centrifugal force is what drives the movement in my drawings and in my choreography, the circle always has a defined center, and everything appears in relation to that.

*'But pure perception doesn't exist, we are written only as we write, by the agency which always already keeps watch over perception, be it internal or external.'*¹⁸
Cy Twombly

In 'Home grown allure' I had an intention to introduce cutting, flat and sharp movements and lines, but eventually I have ended up connecting to the circular movement in space and a dervish like spins. Centrifugal force is a fictitious force and I see it as a force that is caused by the movement and not intentionally produced to cause an action.

BECOMING MATERIAL – DANCE AS ENTERING A FICTIONAL BODY

Memory number 4

Warsaw Opera House, waltz of the snowflakes in the Nutcracker – Clara dances with the prince accompanied by a crowd of 'snowflakes', Styrofoam snow is falling from the ceiling. 1500 people in the audience, uplifted by the Christmas mood, watch the show in admiration. Suddenly, right when the prince lifts Clara a huge piece of Styrofoam falls in a wavy movement from above, the couple gracefully manages to avoid the obstacle and still makes it to the fake sledge before the light is off at the end of the scene. It becomes clear that their love, the ecstatic dance, and the winter is not real. The audience members gasp, and several kids start crying loudly.

I see the making of a dance performance as a creation of a fictional body and its surroundings. Connecting to the materiality of it for me is a way of diluting the feeling of 'fakeness' of performing situation. Entering a fiction, a world constructed through the work of imagination makes the performing situation more fluid and unknown to both me as a performer and a viewer. Since it is not possible to erase the meaning behind gender, age, level of skills and other elements that me as a performer bring to the stage it is an attempt to create a specific form of theatricality that would go beyond a very defined and literal interpretations.

¹⁸ Katharine Stout Contemporary Drawing: From the 1960s to Now Tate Publishing 2015

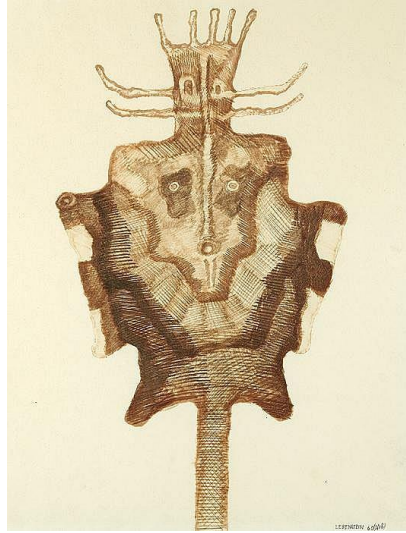
I have been working on very specific tasks, which were inspired by the idea of the body becoming another material – wood, glass, paper, stone. As a dance maker I have always questioned where the border between the artist and the material lies, so I have decided to make it an inspiration or a driving force for physical research. Working on the last part of the piece- the scene with a glass sound I have been looking for distorted, transformed body, which enters states related to varied materials. With time I slowly started to add other tasks to the quality achieved through ‘automatic dancing’ that I have described previously to work on transformation of the body into different textures. I worked with the tasks of the movements being performed not by me, but me being moved by an external force alternating this with having control over movement, so there would be a visible switch between those two qualities. The attempt was to make the body surreal, where certain similarities to known gestures, patterns and rhythms could be traced, but not fully recognized because of the distortion.

The choreographic ideas in the last part of performance were:

- *Unpredictability of movement*
- *Avoiding the symmetry (for example not moving both arms in the same direction or pace)*
- *Discoordination of the gaze and arm movements, making them not functional (eyes does not follow the arm)*
- *‘External forces’ moving the body from the outside or from the inside unexpectedly.*
- *Being lifted/pulled from the floor by different body parts, being dropped or released unexpectedly (like a ‘puppet’)*
- *Being dragged in space by an external force*
- *Using the surfaces of the floor, the wall in a nonfunctional way*
- *Taking a certain shape and moving within the shape by impulses inside the body or rapid gestures*
- *Alternating the tension within the body, from high tension to a total release*
- *Distorting the gesture – for example reaching and not finishing the reach, leaning against the wall in an atypical way etc.*
- *Keeping the ‘staccato’ quality, rapidity, quite fast pace and going from a total stop immediately to a fast speed*

One of the art works I’ve referred to during the choreographic process was the series of works of Jan Lebenstein ‘Figure Axiale’ (Vertical Figures)¹⁹ which are images of a tokenized human figures centered around the axis of the spine. They are deformed and restructured human figures, that show the internal emotional states in a frame of the standing spine centered images, which portray both tension, stability, and symmetry. Sometimes the image is a blend of animal, insect, organic shapes, and geometric shapes distorted but clearly referring to the verticality of human figure. Lebenstein survived World War 2 and lost his family in it and observed a collapse of the world around him and all the violence that happened. ‘Vertical figures’ are a reaction to that distortion.

¹⁹ Jan Lebenstein ‘Figure Axiale’ 1960-1961



Jan Lebenstein "Figure axiale"

Our body is constructed in a symmetrical way, which of course is not possible to be altered during choreographic process, every asymmetry needs a point of reference and an axis to which the elements relate, taking the example from Lebenstein I've been playing with alternating the relation between different body parts and the central axis, which is one of the most recognizable human features.

I have been rehearsing two different modes of performing this part- one was an idea of an external force moving me and the other one of me performing the movements and the gestures, eventually I chose to move only by using the imaginary outside force. In developing the movement quality and the character I have been inspired by two choreographic works, that I've seen many years ago and that came back to my memory recently because of similar fragmented or distorted quality of movement. One of them was a solo "Aurora" by an Israeli Brussels based artist Meytal Blaynaru²⁰ and the other was movement quality from a piece "primero erscht" by Lisi Estaras.²¹

FUTURE

My plan for working further on this piece is to develop the connection between the exhibition part of it and the performance, which can be developed depending on the space it will be performed in. I imagine the piece both in a gallery space and a black box type of theatre and I would like to explore different spaces. I would also like to work further on performing each separate movement material, that I worked very thoroughly on for many months to make it more organic and owned by me as a performer and to elaborate on the dynamics and movement

²⁰ Meytal Blaynaru "Aurora" dance performance 2017

²¹ Lisi Estaras "primero – erscht", dance performance by Les Ballets C de la B 2010

dramaturgy in them.

During the process of creating ‘‘Home grown allure’’ I got interested in working with fabric and translating different movement qualities or textures to textile objects and vice versa- this interest grew out of the question about the tension between materiality and ephemerality.

The question that remains interesting for me is what is material that dance is made of and how can I translate the movement qualities deeply rooted in sensations, memories, and subjective experiences to something outside of myself, a separate art object.

I am planning another project, which will be an ‘‘offspring’’ of this one, where I will collaborate with Zofia on textile sculptures that will be translation of different choreographic materials.

I will also work on movement tasks and ideas developed in relation to drawing and build a practice or a method that could serve for creating performances with more dancers or as an educational tool that would draw the knowledge both from visual arts and dance.

Video documentation of performance:

<https://youtu.be/Rs15bHWGudU>

Credits:

Dance, choreography, drawings: Marta Kosieradzka

Music: Adriano Fontana

Set design, costume: Zofia Jakubiec

External supervisor: Cecilie Lindeman Steen

Internal supervisors: Bojana Cvejic, Janne Camilla Lyster, Torun Robstad

Lights: Eirik Lie Hegre

Fragment of the book ‘‘House of Day, House of Night’’ by Olga Tokarczuk in the translation of Antonia Lloyd- Jones read by:

Lou Ditaranto

Duration: 35 min

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- 2) Jolanta Brach – Czaina "Szczeliny istnienia" ("Cracks in existence") Wydawnictwo Dowody na Istnienie, Warszawa, 2022
- 3) Bil Viola "The Movement in the moving image" lecture as the 2009-2010 Una's Lecturer at the Townsend Center for the Humanities, UC Berkeley
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0RCkNugozU&t=4752s>
- 4) Bil Viola "The raft" Video/Sound installation 2004 commission for the Athens Olympics
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ili9pvlxdk>
- 5) Bil Viola "The Deluge" (Going Forth By Day) *Bill Viola*, 2002, 36'. Panel 3 of 5 panels from Going Forth By Day (2002). Video/Sound installation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3VoMuwBPAE>
- 6) Bil Viola "Cameras are the keepers of the soul" interview by Christian Lund, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, in London, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3VfWLlkuRI>
- 7) Susan Mogul "Mom's Move" 2018
- 8) Kahlil Gibran "The prophet" (chapter 'On houses') April 14, 2003, by Rupa & Co
- 9) Olga Tokarczuk Nobel Lecture in Literature 2019 at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm.
- 10) Quote from Pietro Pascarelli "From Psychoanalysis to Literature: Olga Tokarczuk" *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*
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- 12) Katharine Stout *Contemporary Drawing: From the 1960s to Now Tate Publishing 2015*
- 13) *Jan Lebenstein "Figure Axiale" 1960-1961*
- 14) *Meytal Blaynaru "Aurora" dance performance 2017*
- 15) *Lisi Estaras "primero - erscht" Les Ballets C de la B 2010*
- 16) Dorothea Tanning *Hôtel du Pavot, Chambre 202 (Poppy Hotel, Room 202)*
- 17) Louise Bourgeois *Femme Maison (1946-47)*