

about what they saw and about relationships, intimacy, depression, failure and love.<sup>19</sup> This scene from the performance *Town Hall Philosophical Living Color Drawing* (2008) evokes Carolee Schneemann's performance *Interior Scroll* (1975), during which she performed typical poses borrowed from nude studies on a table – kneeling, bending over and laying down – all the while quoting from her book *Cezanne, She Was a Great Painter*. She then pulls a roll of paper from her vagina and reads the text written on it, lamenting the oppression of the 'feminine' in art. On the other hand, Murray-Wassink's performance also reminds us of Annie Sprinkle's *Public Cervix Announcement* project in which Sprinkle invites the audience to inspect her vagina and cervix with a speculum and flashlight, then to discuss what they see afterwards.<sup>20</sup> The act of reading, speaking, proclaiming and discussing is common to all three performances. Their titles refer already to oral speech or written texts: the tradition of the town hall debate in the USA, public announcements or scrolls. They especially refer to embodied acts of speaking in an affective situation that produces a surplus of corporeality. The speech of a sexual, possibly aroused, possibly hurting, embarrassed, smelly body is thus the focus of all three performances. As a result, Murray-Wassink brings together artistic acts in the here and now that have become iconographic and anachronistic because they are considered to be part of a certain decade or tradition of feminism – the feminism of the 1970s, which is often seen as essentialist, or the pro-sex feminism of the 1980s. He connects these feminisms with a queer articulation of desire, thereby interpreting these acts and gestures as open and diverse – and, most of all, relatable.

In the opening scene of *Never Mind Pollock ... Women on Painting* (2008/2009), a sequence of re-performances by Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen of actions by other female artists, Cuenca Rasmussen takes on the persona of Yayoi Kusama, blending with her environment in an apparently perfect mimesis.<sup>21</sup> Wearing a polka dot costume that echoes the exact pattern of the surrounding walls and floors, she at first seems like a copy of a copy (a re-staging of an artist who, since the 1960s has staged herself in continually new variations as a mimetic copy). As Cuenca Rasmussen begins to paint her naked male co-performers with the same dots, as if trying to make them more like herself, and as they start to paint each other, she turns the process in on itself. The relationship between the original and copy, between the self and other seems to become more and more troubled. After a short, self-written rap about her position as a female artist, more re-performances follow. These blend into each other in a kind of sampling of short performance clips.<sup>22</sup> The performances are not, however, reinstated as seminal, auratic art works through their historically 'correct' restaging, but rather as mutually infecting gestures, as part of our collective cultural memory, repurposed in ever new constellations and assemblages, questioned,

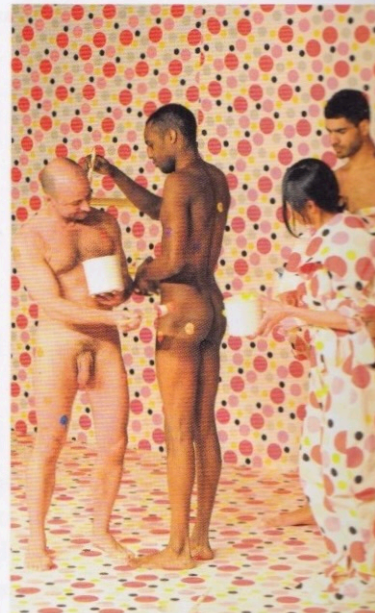


Faith Wilding, *Wait-With*, 2008, performance at *re.act.feminism - performance art of the 1960s and 70s today*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, photograph Jan Stradtman, courtesy cross links e.V.

ideal, standardised body that is present not only in art history, but also in today's science and genetic engineering, and the marginalisation of those who do not comply with this norm. Second, she tells the story of (mostly) Western body and performance art and the myths surrounding the 'heroic' auto-aggressive actions often carried out by male performance artists.<sup>25</sup> Finally, she invites the audience to approach her to observe precisely how she is being sewn to the metal frame, stitch by stitch. She invites them to photograph her and to post, use or work with these pictures – in short, to actively take part in the production and circulation of new images and myths. In this performance, Boryana Rossa appropriates the universalising and heroising gestures of art history, while at the same time subverting them, overwriting, recycling and sampling them while inviting the audience to become part of this collective process of reinterpreting history. Also, Rossa refuses to comply to a linear notion of history that locates radical body art in a certain era and geopolitical context and allocates it to certain actors with the result that she, as an Eastern European artist, is always made to appear 'to be too late' and anachronistic. In her version of 'feminist mimesis', which undermines the difference between original and copy, author and recipient, artist and audience, and places the main focus on dissemination, she thus refuses to comply with a Western chronology.

*Matt und Schlapp wie Schnee* (Soft and Worn Like Snow) is a long-term project developed by Stefanie Seibold together with Teresa María Díaz Nerio and the art historian Patricia Grzonka, which has been presented in various formats since 2009.<sup>26</sup> This work explores the oeuvre and the reception history of Gina Pane, who is subjected to a critical re-reading based on extensive archive research, interviews, a critical reconstruction and deconstruction of gestures, sequences and performance objects from Pane's performance *Discours mou et mat* (1975), as well as experimental installations.

*Matt und Schlapp wie Schnee* emphasises the complexity and diversity of Pane's work, attempting to remove it from an over-deterministic interpretation that was also promoted by Pane herself as well as her partner and executor of her estate. This interpretation especially highlights Pane's extreme use of her body and frequent acts of self-mutilation. Without completely negating the importance of this aspect in Pane's work, Seibold and Díaz Nerio nevertheless express its "temporary rejection".<sup>27</sup> Their intention is thus to interrupt the dominant interpretation and make room for something different: the primary significance of the image and image production in Pane's work, the complex pictorial narratives with references to the history of painting and to queer images, the important role of the most diverse symbolic objects and abstract gestures in her vocabulary of signs, the political references to the Vietnam War and to the general structures of violence this entails, and the omissions and



Lilbeth Cuenca Rasmussen, *Never Mind Pollock*, 2008, performance at *re.act.feminism – performance art of the 1960s and 70s today*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, photograph Jan Stradtman, courtesy cross links e.V.



Sands Murray-Wassink together with Robin Wassink-Murray, *Town Hall Philosophical Living Color Drawing*, 2008, performance at Performance Saga Festival, Bern, photograph Martin Rindlisbacher, courtesy Performance Saga

translated, modified, deconstructed and reconstructed – as “recycling and sampling remains”.<sup>23</sup>

When Cuenca Rasmussen, after Janine Antoni in *Loving Care*, uses her body as a brush, painting the floor with her hair dipped in black paint and then, still dripping, invites the audience to cut away parts of her clothing, as in Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece*, the works cannot be read as separate and autonomous actions. Traces (of paint) are transferred from one work to the other, from artist to artist and then to the viewer. Traces serve two functions; they can be read as a kind of recording (notation) of past gestures and actions but also operate as a guide to (or incitement for) future action. Cuenca Rasmussen thus highlights the references, repetitions and influences inherent to every artistic act as well as the heterogeneity and instability of each ‘original’. In addition she is stressing their potentiality, by which

we might be encouraged to respond to, repeat, object to, deconstruct or reconstruct their gesture.

Thus, using a formulation by Elin Diamond, Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen’s work can be described as a “feminist mimesis” that is primarily concerned with production and transformation, rather than the reproduction of the status quo, an act of dissemination, not representation, “releasing the historical particularity and transgressive corporeality of the mimos, who, in mimesis, is always more and different than she seems.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, the feminist history of performance is collectivised, released from linear time and subjected to a ‘transgressive embodiment’.

A similar form of (mimetic) appropriation and dissemination is a strategy that can also be found in Boryana Rossa’s work *The Vitruvian Body* (2009), a live performance that, like Cuenca Rasmussen’s *Never Mind Pollock*, was shown in the context of *re.act.feminism* in 2009. Similar to the Philippine-Danish artist Cuenca Rasmussen, this appropriation takes place across cultural, gender and ethnic borders. In her work, Rossa refers to the teachings of the Roman architect Vitruvius concerning the ideal and universal proportions of humans as well as Leonardo da Vinci’s famous drawing, the *Vitruvian Man*. In her re-performance, Rossa contrasts her own body with this universal, harmonious body which is, of course, a very specific, white, male, historical body. Rossa stands naked with her arms and legs outstretched in a steel construction consisting of a circle and a square. Her hands and feet protrude through the circle in large round holes, encircled by much smaller holes. The metal construction is too small for her, she has to bend her head down a little and is not able to assume a comfortable, much less ‘harmonious’ pose. Oleg Mavromatti – her artist partner in the duo *Ultrafuturo* – sews her hands and feet to the framework, while Rossa talks to the audience sitting around her on the floor. Rossa interweaves two different stories in her monologue. First, she reflects on the desire for an