Performing ... Art:
Tracing Fleshed Performance, the Live Body in Motion.

Submitted by
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Abstract

‘Performing ... Art: Tracing Fleshed Performance, the Live Body in Motion’ is practice-led research. This Masters thesis encompasses a performance and cross-disciplinary arts practice as well as analysis of works by other artists. The conceptual framing explores how the performer is also a spectator of works by other artists including live performance and its documented versions. The design of ‘Performing ... Art’ (the title of the live performance at Off the Kerb Gallery) accommodates a live performance for two audiences, the gallery exhibition of works on paper created during this event and the filmed event as a gallery installation. The live performance occurred on 2 March 2012 at Off the Kerb Gallery, Melbourne, and the works on paper and filmed installation were exhibited, 2–23 March 2012.

This thesis explores the phenomenological positioning of an artist-spectator in the making of live performance and works on paper. The scope of the research considers the physical and subjective experience of a performer in the process of making a new work. The thesis draws on Maurice Merleau-Ponty influenced theory concerning phenomenology and the body (Baldwin 2004, Steeves 2004, Tait 2000).

Live physical performances, as stand-alone events in gallery spaces, also developed in the visual arts, can be contrasted with theatrical performance. Some gallery performances leave a residue of the event in separate artworks, which offset the ephemeral nature of live performance. Concentrating the discussion on the arts practice of Frenchman Yves Klein and Australian Jill Orr, this research explores the ways in which they created works on paper from live events. These inspire and inform this thesis project. The theoretical exploration focuses on experiences of post-performance exhibited works by other artists as precedents for the creation of art with the body in motion. The challenge of ‘Performing ... Art: Tracing Fleshed Performance, the Live Body in Motion’ was to incorporate the perspective of both performer and spectator.
Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

That all research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the relevant Ethics or Safety Committee or authorised officer as appropriate.

28/11/2013

Rachael Thérèse Nolan       Date
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I am also grateful for the help and support from the following departments and people: La Trobe University Library, La Trobe University Media Department, Kathleen and Michael Nolan, and the La Trobe University Theatre and Drama Department.
Introduction

A dance, a play, or a musical composition is not immediately in the presence of the audience in a way that a painting or sculpture is; it must be performed in order to be made present.

(Bensman, 1970: 110)

This thesis project explores the experience of performance creation and its reception through theoretical analysis and practice, live performance and works on paper. It involves an artwork with two different outcomes of a live event and gallery exhibition, and draws on the arts practice and analysis of the performances of other artists from the perspective of spectator. Two main questions arise: is a performer always simultaneously a spectator, and how can spectatorship drive the creative process? The broader aim of the study is to consider the physical and subjective experience of the performer in relation to spectatorship, and through practice-led research.

This thesis project considers a series of questions, which are addressed by the performance and exegesis. How does a performer who is also usually a spectator view other performance? (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3). Can awareness of this process of viewing influence his or her own performance making? (see Chapter 4). How can a performer map out his or her own experiences and memories of spectatorship and training in order to draw on them during new performance creation? (see Chapter 4). Can the corporeal landscape of a performance and art exhibition space be designed and manipulated in such a way as to elicit particular reactions and responses from a live audience? (see Chapter 4). These questions are brought together in the development of a live performed event, which incorporates visual art and multi-media.

The thesis presents a written exploration of ideas as an exegesis (20,000 words) and a practical live event (20,000 words equivalent) for examination. The skills in conception, production and execution of the live event with collaborators are being presented for examination (see Chapter 4). The live event, in an exhibition space on 2 March 2012 at Off the Kerb gallery, involved the creation of a performance across two spaces, works on paper and filmed performance. The works on paper and film were then exhibited in the gallery from 2 - 23 March 2012. The use of practice-led research combined with research-led practice underpins this thesis and its approach to performance. Ideas of the live event experienced from an awareness of phenomenology of the body are analysed within a theoretical framework. The ideas implicate the body of the artist as performer.
and as spectator. This thesis additionally explores how a performer experiences, as spectator, a body-based performance by another artist, and subsequently creates a performed artwork with and through the body.

I will be examining some of the work of two influential artists in detail; one from the mid-twentieth century and the other a contemporary Australian artist. The performance experiments of the late 1950s and early 1960s by French artist Yves Klein provide a starting point for the artistic analysis as these bridge art forms. I explore some of the works by Klein which best demonstrate his relentless pursuit of the possibility that a visual artwork created live with the body, not only traces the event itself, but also takes on some of the physical elements of the live body in motion while rendering a complete work in its own right. The analysis of the performing body as an instrument for making visual art continues with a study of the work of Australian artist Jill Orr, who began working with the body in art and performance during the 1970s, and who continues today to focus her work on aspects of the body, location and environment. Orr creates a structure for her performances, which suspend improvised elements and create new artworks on paper. These two artists influence the main provocation for this thesis. As a live art creator, I am consciously aware of the influence of experiencing performance and being a spectator; that is, I am aware of being a performer as spectator. I am a spectator of the works of Klein and Orr, and I bring this awareness to my artworks as a performer. My inducement is to create a work shaped for spectator engagement with corporeal self-expression through action and reaction. The spectator becomes in effect a collaborator in the making of the artwork. As a female artist who places herself in the artworks, the researcher has been influenced by Orr’s artwork, in particular the centrality of the female body and the use of film and polaroid/photographic images. As a performer creating live action in a gallery space, the researcher has been influenced by Klein’s use of site-specific space and performed art choreography.

This thesis project explores the impact of physical body-based art and the subjective experience of a spectator, namely a performer as spectator. It explores how the body becomes an art-making instrument and it reveals insights into the creation and execution of a live event. This research will look into the way in which Merleau-Ponty derived theory concerning phenomenology can be applied to this topic. The understanding of the works of two artists, from two different periods in time, is informative research on the use of the live body as a means of physically aligning the visual and performing arts. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1964) theories concerning the phenomenology of the body can be applied to focus on the way in which performed works of art as visual texts, differ from conventional visual art due to the impact on a live audience being immediate and unique.
Performance encourages physical reactions to the work. Stanton Garner writes ‘... for it is through the actor’s corporeal presence under the spectator’s gaze that the dramatic text actualises itself in the field of performance’ (1994: 1). It is in the action of viewing live performing bodies that a spectator can physically engage with these experiences so that they continue to ‘exist as remembered e/motion’ (Tait, 2000: 2). Live physical performances as stand-alone events that originate in the visual arts, are in contrast to other forms of theatrical and traditional art-making processes. Adrian Heathfield explains:

... Live artists, somewhat like those of other visual artists, take the spectator into conditions of immediacy where attention is heightened, the sensory relation charged, and the workings of thought agitated. The artwork is alive. Such conditions, it seems, bring us as spectators into a fresh relation: into the now of enactment, the moment by moment of the present.

(2004: 8)

Some performances leave a residue of the event in separate artworks that become new art mediums. As such, they can provide a similar and simulated starting point for analysis, appreciation and critique. The ephemeral nature of performance can be offset by such works. This process is described by Baz Kershaw:

... theatre practitioners have had to change not just the future action of their audiences, but also the structure of the audience’s community and the nature of the audience’s culture. Paradoxically, the main lever for such changes has been the immediate and ephemeral effects of performance - laughter, tears, applause and other active audience responses.

(1992: 1)

The experience of a live performance can be re/membered (Tait, 2005) with separate artworks.

In March 2012, I created a new work Performing ... Art, performed at Off the Kerb Gallery in Collingwood. After research into the work of Orr and Klein and other artists, I conceived of a performance as both a visual artist and physical theatre dancer/performer and a mixed media project designed to explore the phenomenology of performer as spectator. I envisaged this with original music played live. This came together in creating a one-off performance art piece in front of a live audience. The broader aim of this performance-making and practice-as-research work considers the physical and subjective experience of a performer, specifically in relation to spectatorship of Klein
and Orr’s works. The project outlines how a performer maps out experience within experiences of spectatorship and training in order to draw on them during new performance creation.

The live performance created as part of, and as a result of, the research of this thesis project into the spectatorship experience of a performer, took place in an art gallery in an inner city suburb. The gallery space consisted of two areas separated by a small hall and enclosed stairwell, although acoustically they were connected and the sounds and movements that occur in one space could be experienced live in the other. Through mixed media and other technology, the physical performance took place in both gallery spaces; one at the front of the building facing the street and the other at the back with very little natural light present. The audience was encouraged to divide into two groups and take a seat in one of the two separated spaces. Neither audience grouping was able to see what occurred in the other space.

Each spectator/audience member had the experience of viewing only part of the live performed event. The two gallery spaces contained different visual elements and art mediums, and the live body of the performer moved in and out of each space although the musician remained in one. The musician occupied a corner of the front gallery and it was the live guitar and electronic sounds that were the only continuous and similar experience for the audience members in both spaces. At the conclusion of the performance, the artworks and photographs of the event created during the live action were exhibited in the performance spaces. This was intended to transform the two spaces back into a formal art gallery setting. The two audience groups were then given the opportunity to view the works on paper created during the performance and exhibited on the walls. Each spectator/audience member had the opportunity to physically encounter the ‘other’ gallery space in which they were not present during the live action. The two audience groups were offered different performances but the same works on the wall.

A body-based art-making process also allows the initial performance to maintain its creative momentum as its action is transferred into secondary art mediums. It might be argued that this momentum continues as each new spectator encounters the material ‘trace’ of the live performance. Its creation in front of a live audience is captured within the visual material with film and photographs displayed with other works on paper.

The combination of live performance, visual art creation and filmed record of both revises notions of the documentation of a performance. The material result of the performance and art pieces was also in photograph and film forms and these became part of the intention and execution of the
performed event. It might be argued that the documentation becomes an artwork exhibited in its own right.

Yves Klein was an important artist during a period of great change and shift in focus in the visual arts in the mid twentieth century. His work followed on from artists such as Jackson Pollock who developed his revolutionary ‘action/drip’ painting technique in the late 1940s (Lynton, 1999: 230). Klein, however, changed to focus on a conscious and sensible effort - on behalf of artists - in which they transform themselves from being unseen creators of material artwork to being visible as active participants physically involved in the visual art and performance-making processes. As a performance artist, Klein also removed the distance between artist and spectator; his belief in the ‘immaterial’ drove him to explore the concept that art, like dance and theatre and music, must be ‘performed’ in order to be made present (Bensman, 1970: 110). Klein dedicated his life and his art practice to the exploration and expansion of the physical experience of making art. This new understanding of the artist’s role convinced him that the body itself was the only instrument that could be used to truly capture and portray the human form. His philosophy on mark making - physically imprinting an experience onto or into an art medium - was to influence his creative oeuvre.

Jill Orr has made significant contributions to both the visual arts and performance art scenes with her iconic imagery and one-off performed events with photographic artworks, which challenge the way in which the body can be perceived by an audience. Her use of different art mediums and multi-media during her long artistic career has also pushed the boundaries of what it means to be ‘live’, and how a performer can manipulate the concept of being ‘present’ in the work but also create artefacts from live events. Her work invites an exploration of spectatorship in all its forms, and for its possibilities and limitations. Orr’s artworks are discussed as intended extensions of her live performances and which are called ‘performances for the camera’. It acknowledges that these are also documentations of the live event while also serving as pieces of art.

The connection between the live performance work with improvised movements and research involves questioning how a performing artist responds to the live reactions and the presence of spectators in a way that is different from rehearsed performances. Such a distinctive characteristic of physical performance in the live event imbues the visual artworks because they remain one-of-a-kind objects created in front of spectators of the live, one-off performance event. In drawing on theories that recognise ‘mediation’ as being ‘the medium is the message’ (Giannachi, 2004: 4), it is possible to identify a phenomenon of representing one medium through another (Giannachi, 2004:}
4). This research explores the role of the medium of live performance art creation, as it mediates the encounter between a spectator and a work of visual art.

**Methodology**

This thesis will follow a practice-led research/research-led practice model. As an artist, I feel compelled to understand what experiences influence the development of my own work. To some extent the two artists whose work is considered, Yves Klein and Jill Orr, offer a methodological precedent for this thesis project with their artistic practice. Baz Kershaw explains how the need for ‘practice as research’ as academic research arose in the context of academic study:

Towards the end of the 2000s ‘practice as research’ became a well-established approach to using creative performance as a method of inquiry in universities in the UK, Australia, Canada, Scandinavia, South Africa and elsewhere. In less than two decades creative processes had been established as providing crucial new approaches to research in theatre, dance, film, video, digital-media and performance studies, complementing and in some ways profoundly challenging traditional methodologies.  

(Smith, 2009: 105)

Hazel Smith and Roger Dean claim that in terms of the importance of practice-led research, there are two main arguments for this type of research, which are often overlapping and interlinked (Smith, 2009, 5). They begin by stating that ‘creative work in itself is a form of research and generates detectable research outputs’ (Smith, 2009, 5). They then continue by noting that practice-led research and research-led practice should not be seen as separate processes, but as ‘interwoven in an iterative cyclic web’ (Smith, 2009, 3).

As part of my research-led practice I conducted two interviews. In October 2010 I travelled to Paris and discussed Klein’s work with Philippe Siauve from the official Yves Klein Archives. In December 2010 I had the opportunity to interview Jill Orr in Melbourne. These assisted and informed the undertaking of the artist’s work and development of my own physical and performative aesthetic style.

My research produced a non-verbal one-off performance, Performing ... Art, that was performed in March 2012, at Off the Kerb Gallery in Collingwood, one of Melbourne’s inner city suburbs. This
live event drew on all of my experience as a theatre performer and visual artist as well as on my extensive gymnastics training. The process of production and creation of a live performance event and subsequent exhibition was extensive and is detailed in Chapter Four. For a period of 15 years I trained in, coached, judged and essentially lived and breathed gymnastics. I would approach any given task from a highly disciplined and choreographed position, traits defined by the sport. It was easy for me to recognise the importance of ‘being’ a gymnast; this physical influence still informs the starting point for all my performance-making today. Klein was influenced by martial arts. At the same time I have always found myself drawn to visual art; from classical to contemporary, from architecture to painting, from sculpture to the art of the tattoo.

As a live performance artist, I base my training and performance-making processes on physical discipline. Even with the removal of set apparatus, such as the beam or uneven bars, my body still tries to recreate the shapes and actions that I performed under competition pressure over a decade ago. Acknowledging this physical phenomenon - consciously mapping out my past performance experiences - aids in my understanding of the body as an instrument of both performance making and visual art creation. My body remembers actions it has already performed, whilst my visual memory compels my body to try new moves, actions and gestures based on images that influence me. This physical training is combined with the study of contemporary artists and performance art both in Australia and overseas.

I have modelled part of my thesis on the descriptive writing styles of Baz Kershaw (1992), Tim Etchells (1999), Nick Kaye (2000), as well as phenomenological descriptions such as that of Merleau-Ponty (1978) and to some extent those of Peta Tait (2000, 2013). I have incorporated a more poetic style of art and performance description and detail similar to these authors in order to create a sense of atmosphere as happens in their discussion and analysis of the visual and performing arts. I am trying to give a sense of the liveness of the event through text, and to possibly add to the artwork. The act of writing about the artworks and performances analysed in this thesis has become part of the general artistic practice.

‘Performing ... Art’, in using multiple-angle digital recordings, electrified sound and photography to document the live event, sought to integrate technology and art. The exploration of the use of technology and multi-media within performance expands the possibilities and notions of ‘the live’ (Phelan, 1993 and Auslander, 1997). Liveness is an important aspect of contemporary performance theory, and has been key to the development of the practical performance component. As Tait
explains, thinking about the live event is inseparable from bodily processes and their technological framing:

Future opportunities for staging non-reflective liveness seem compromised by technology because of economies of scale, but they evoke possibilities for new viewings of alive as interactive. How the growing trend in performance to stage technology with live ... impacts on visceral responses requires further consideration.

(Tait, 2000: 4)

‘Liveness’ and the use of technological devices as part of a ‘live’ performance are explored in this thesis. Christopher Balme outlines Erika Fisher-Lichte’s writing on the body and her viewpoint on ‘the performative’ and ‘live’ as consisting of a ‘co-presence of performers and spectators as a basic pre-requisite for performance’ (2009: 84). In reference to the theatre and technology he notes that:

Fischer-Lichte argues that theatre and television may both be interactive media but that theatre with its potential for genuine intervention offers the more effective use of interaction.

(Balme, 2009: 85)

Kershaw explains the importance of the concept of shared experience in theatre:

... alternative and community theatre may have managed to mount an effective opposition to the dominant culture, and may have modified its values, however slightly. The practices of alternative theatre, viewed from this perspective, can best be described as a form of cultural intervention.

(1992: 6)

Physical performance, like dance and other non-verbal and non-textual creative works, contains complex body-based vocabularies that challenge ‘the view of human memory as a storehouse of linguistic propositions’ (Balme, 2009: 85). To paraphrase Smith, it is the creating and performing of physical art forms such as dance that involve a procedural and declarative knowledge of the body in motion which explore ideas not through spoken words but kinaesthetically and emotionally and through movement (2009: 85).

Gabriella Giannachi presents theatre and performance (including performance art) as being subject to artificial and removed simulation. Giannachi recognises that there are always elements and processes of appearance and disappearance present within the world of remediation, and notes that
it was Philip Auslander who first pointed out that ‘not only performance, but also mediatised work, are live and therefore subject to disappearance’ (Giannachi, 2004: 5). What this shows, according to Auslander, is that ‘(b)oth live performance and the performance of mediatisation are predicated on disappearance ... that the historical relationship of liveness and mediatisation must be seen as a relationship of dependence and imbrication rather than opposition’ (Giannachi, 2004: 5-6).

I have used the term ‘researcher’ throughout this thesis when referencing myself as artist and author. I have also used ‘her’ when referencing ‘the artist’ as a general concept.
Chapter One
Interpreting Phenomenology

Like crystal, like metal and many other substances,
I am a sonorous being, but I hear my own vibration from within ...
Maurice Merleau-Ponty
(cited in Baldwin, 2004: 260)

Merleau-Ponty and Body Perception

This chapter investigates the applications of the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, within the
discussion of artworks and performance including his concepts of the fundamental elements of
corporeal phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty’s relevance to the visual arts, and to some degree the
performing arts and dance, will be discussed in three parts. Firstly, Merleau-Ponty’s ideas
concerning ‘corporeal schema’ and ‘double sensation’ are situated within an artistic context and
discussed with reference to performance art; secondly, ideas of corporeal phenomenology and the
act of viewing by a performer as spectator are considered; and thirdly, aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s
philosophies on the body in motion with reference to the researcher’s personal experiences of
viewing are incorporated.

In a contemporary art gallery a visitor/viewer is to some degree made aware of the immense
significance of each work of art on exhibition. Each work on display has been selected by the
institution for public viewing and because of their assumed contribution to the art world. For no
apparent reason, however, certain works will appeal to, and capture the particular attention of a
viewer. A viewer may be physically drawn to some works. It might be argued that her body
imagery is also activated as she makes an immediate assessment of and connection to pieces that
are seemingly of no greater importance, either historically or culturally, than others. This might
also be applied to a living body.

What resonates with this engagement is an explanation given by Merleau-Ponty (Garner, 1994: 27)
on the concept of perception and human behaviour. An interest in a visual object might signify a
physical attunement to that object or phenomenon, and that this interest could be visceral rather
than a result of mental reflection. Merleau-Ponty states that being drawn to an object - in this
research a static work of art - is the initial response that is a result of our ‘corporeal schema’
knowing and having an almost simultaneous sensibility with our thought processes (Grosz, 1994:
91). The phenomena can be the reason behind the strong fascination with the human body and as
demonstrated in the works of artists such as Yves Klein and Jill Orr. The experience of walking
through, in Australia or overseas, a gallery or institution dedicated to modern and contemporary art,
exemplifies how art-forms such as painting, collage, sculpture, performance and multi-media
works, provide a spectator with the chance to reach ‘beyond the visual givens’ (Merleau-Ponty,
1964: 166) of the world in which they exist.

Merleau-Ponty states that human beings are ‘sonorous’ beings but that one’s own body is the only
object one is always aware of and must always perceive (Baldwin, 2004: 260); life is a constant
flow of experiences that will relate to one’s body first (Baldwin, 2004: 260). Therefore, as the
human body encounters all aspects of life through a physical filter, it can be concluded that ‘bodies’
have an impact on others surrounding them. Human beings are dependent on their bodies and the
physical relationship of a body affects understanding of physical limitations as well as abilities and
boundaries. Visual and performing artists use the body in motion as the vehicle for their ideas (Tait,
2000) and in ways that fill a gap between static visual art practice and rehearsed theatre
performance. They actively incorporate their physical surroundings into their work. The artist
explores and manipulates the live fleshed experience, directly challenging a spectator’s perception
of an ‘other’ body as well as physical experience.

Live performances also demonstrate the accuracy of Merleau-Ponty’s claim that we are ‘sonorous
beings’; a performer reacts to the atmosphere created by the presence of spectators. Merleau-Ponty
(1964) begins his analysis of artworks - and of artist Cezanne (Academia 2013) - with the argument
that an initial physical connection is required between viewer and artwork and that this connection
is not just aesthetic, but also a combination of personal factors. This is explained by James Steeves
as:

   Excitation itself is already a response, not an effect imported
   from outside the organism; it is the first act of its proper
   functioning.

   (2004: 16 -17)

External objects are located in space and Merleau-Ponty questions whether it is possible for
consciousness to establish a relationship of distance between itself and any surrounding objects
(Grosz, 1994: 91). How can an artist connect a performing body to its surroundings, if thoughts
have no physical spatial awareness? Merleau-Ponty’s answer to this question was that a mediating
term was necessary ‘to explain their interactions (between consciousness and external physical objects) and thus the development of the phrase “corporeal schema”, or body image’ (Grosz, 1994: 91). The concept behind the “corporeal schema” is that the human body ‘knows’ what its ‘muscular and skeletal actions and posture are in any movement or action, quite independent of any knowledge of physiology or how the body functions’ (Grosz, 1994: 91). Therefore, there is not always a direct conscious connection between our physical bodies and an action. A spectator of a live performance may be able to make connections with a performing body that are seemingly unconscious yet are inspired by a combination of past personal experience as well as perceived historical and cultural identities. In her analysis of embodied spectatorship, Peta Tait explains:

Prior kinaesthetic experience also makes an image of motion meaningful ... Each spectator brings his or her accumulated personal and social histories of body movement and motion to live and cinematic action, and these become absorbed into further live experiences of motion.

(2005: 144)

Steeves writes about the process of perceiving an object in order to open the mind to the invisible dimensions of experiences and other senses initially engaged by the visible (2004: 58). The human experience is one that is based on its physicality, demonstrating that ‘perception is not a matter of intellectual contemplation, but of active involvement with things’ (Matthews, 2002: 133). Our ability to perceive objects that are outside of the body means that we can understand and accept that we exist in a body, which becomes like a fleshed filter that is the human form. Eric Matthews (2002) discusses the basic concept behind corporeal phenomenology, by suggesting that objects on the outside of our bodies are not simply ‘presented’ to us, but are made more important because they inhabit the same space in which we exist. An object is not only perceived, but becomes real for its viewer as it promotes responses within our bodies and goes beyond being simply an aspect of our surroundings, becoming more than just a vague visual experience.

Merleau-Ponty makes a point in discussing the concept of ‘double sensation’, where, as one part of the body is sensed by another, each part of the body passes easily from the role of sensing to being sensed. Merleau-Ponty draws on the particular experience of a hand being touched by another hand. “This experience”, says Merleau-Ponty, involves “an ambiguous set up in which both hands can alternate the roles of ‘touching’ and being ‘touched’” (quoted in Steeves, 2004: 15). The body in live performance therefore may foster an even greater level of initial excitement from a viewer/audience member as the phenomenon of focus becomes one of ‘double sensation’. Our
bodies, unlike inanimate objects, have the capacity to simultaneously be object and subject; to be
touched and to touch; to be watched and to watch. From this point our other senses are inspired in
such a way as to elicit a conscious response. The viewing of a live performance, unlike the viewing
of an art object, enables the spectator to be the body that watches whilst being subject to the
possibility of being a watched body. A performer, to some extent, might develop an awareness of
the physical presence of an audience.

Steeves paraphrases Merleau-Ponty in pointing out that ‘experiences like that of anchorage and
double sensation are important ... because they point to some of the inadequacies of traditional
explanations of the body’ (2004: 16). Other schools of thought on the philosophy of the body, such
as those argued by behaviourists and intellectualists, according to Merleau-Ponty, fail to recognise
that not every ‘experience of the phenomenal body ... can be explained with reference to causal
mechanisms’ (Steeves, 2004: 16). As with the action of viewing a work of art, phenomenology in
general, demonstrates that the body is not a passive receiver of sense impressions but is vigorously
engaged in the act of perceiving objects (Steeves, 2004: 16). Arguing specifically against the
intellectualists’ view that ‘all experiences of the body are controlled by the mind’ (Steeves, 2004:
17), Merleau-Ponty believes that the body in fact ‘possesses ... an inner communication with the
world’ (Steeves, 2004: 17). Steeves explains Merleau-Ponty’s approach:

... intellectualism and behaviourism fail to explain the phenomenal
body because they assume that the body must be understood either
as an object or a subject ... Merleau-Ponty attempts to explain the
body as a global phenomenon that assumes both objective and
subjective characteristics. The body can be seen or observed and in
this sense it could be said to act like an object, but it also conceals itself
from observation and becomes the vehicle for perception on the subject that
sees. Rather than restricting the body to a particular realm of being,
Merleau-Ponty stresses that the body possesses both subjective and
objective characteristics and that this interchange between subject and the
object defines the phenomenal body.

(2004: 17 – 18)

This interplay between body/self as object and body/self as subject allows for an exchange of
interpretation and inspiration that might correspond with that happening between spectator and
performer. The ambiguity of physical identification during a live performance or event creates an
atmosphere of mutuality and exchanges in perception for the performing body and possibly the
spectator body. This invites consideration as to what extent ‘a spectator viscerally perceives the
physicality of another body (or other bodies) in a process of oscillating identification and disidentification with its cultural identity’ (Tait, 2005: 141). Steeves explains that:

The acquisition of habits is what allows a person to have a sense of freedom and personal existence because it extends the stock of general behaviours that he shares with others into unique ways of living. The body schema, Merleau-Ponty asserts, is not an inert set of habits, but “has something of the momentum of existence”.

(2004: 22)

It might be argued that a heightened awareness of the ‘body schema’ could allow a performer to go beyond standard behaviours and to create new ones based on the imagination as well as the viewing of other bodies and thus the creation of actions not yet personally experienced. This habituated body schema also means that the performer can attempt to manipulate a spectator’s possible interpretations of movement. The performer, as with any artist, endeavours to reveal the uniqueness of how they see and experience the sensible world around them (Steeves, 2004: 22). An artist/performer attempts to capture an aspect of the sensible world, and present it to an audience in a way that aims to promote engagement and possibly excite responses. Thomas Baldwin summarises Merleau-Ponty’s description of the process of the viewing of visual art and this can also be applied to the viewing of live performance. He explains:

So painting is the attempt to catch the ways in which the visible world shows itself to us, almost looking back at us as it reverses our vision of it; and the lesson to be learnt from painting is that the visible world is a world that opens out indefinitely before our eyes, which lend themselves to its expression, just as the painter lends his body to the world to change it into a painting.

(Baldwin, 2004: 291)

A performer as spectator can benefit immeasurably from this experience when he/she takes the opportunity to see how a fellow performer extends an interpretation of live action and communication with an audience. A performer as spectator, however, functions with the phenomenon of corporeal schema, and cannot but integrate these new visual viewing experiences into her body’s physical language store. As Baldwin discusses in reference to the visual arts, ‘…the painter, whatever he is, while he is painting practices a magical theory of vision. He is obliged to admit that objects before him pass into him’ (2004: 298). A painter, as with a performer who works
with the live body, does not need to ‘paint’, or create, from ‘nature, as he/she can draw on past encounters with the world to guide his or her own artistic practice ... he paints, in any case, because the world has at least once emblazoned in him the ciphers of the visible’ (Baldwin, 2004: 298).

In *The Primacy of Perception* Merleau-Ponty refers to the act of painting as a process of making the invisible elements of an environment or thought visible for the viewer. He writes:

> It (art) gives visible existence to what profane vision believes to be invisible; thanks to it we do not need a “muscular sense” in order to process the voluminosity of the world. This voracious vision, reaching beyond the “visual givens”, opens upon a texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesurae. The eye lives in this texture as a man lives in his house.

(1964: 166)

As live physical performance incorporates and often heavily relies on the ‘visual’, performance makers may be considered to be engaged in action akin to painting. Physical performance gives the language of movement an existence beyond a state of invisibility. ‘Performance’, like ‘art’, takes human actions and concentrates and transforms them, forging new experiences and new connections between imagination and the body in motion. Corporeal phenomenology, applied to creative practices, suggests that it is by viewing the figurative movements of a dancer or performer that the audience are able ‘to explore the aesthetic image not within the realm of the fanciful but in the virtual dimensions of their own embodiment’ (Steeves, 2004: 61-62). Performance styles that use the body in motion as a means of expression can make the imagery of the body an accessible way to communicate to an audience and to ‘disclose the creative power of embodiment’ (Steeves, 2004: 61-62).

**The Art of Viewing**

Artists, as demonstrated in recent works by Orr, can draw inspiration from the ‘sensible world around (them) and the way that it already offers ambiguous meanings that guide the artist’s choice of colour and medium’ (Steeves, 2004: 57). This is relevant for a performer/performance artist, who allows varying influences and experiences to guide him or her during the process of location selection, scaling of work, movement and action and, but not limited to, the use of props and tools.
Jill Orr’s 2010 exhibition titled Vision, at Jenny Port Gallery in Richmond, a suburb of Melbourne, was the result of ‘participating performances scripted for the camera’ by students from Avoca Primary School (Marsh, 2010: 2). The walls at the gallery were lined with large-scale black and white photographs of children’s faces. Each child appears in two photographs hung side by side against the white walls, one with eyes open and one with eyes closed. The human form is reduced to being represented by the face only, and yet these photographs do not feel like ordinary portraits. Perhaps it is the repetition of scale, tone and facial imagery that draws the viewer in. These faces are not simply presented to the viewer as traditional portraits; the opposition of eyes closed and eyes open betray a sense of movement within the still frames.

The features of the faces place them in a stage of physical development which may be recognised in relation to the viewer’s own experience of ageing. The scale of these images, easily ten times that of life size, changes the perspective of the flesh that the viewer is given. Every freckle, every vein, and every hair is made visible (see figures 15 and 16). A thick white substance covers parts of each child’s face and may induce the viewer to recall memories similar to those experienced by the researcher; sunscreen, mud masks and Aboriginal body paint. Orr has, in her artistic process, revealed aspects of the sensible world, which she inhabits, and has given the viewer/spectator the opportunity to participate in this particular view. A performer as viewer/spectator of Orr’s exhibition may engage with the work on both an aesthetic and practical/technical level. The images on the gallery walls are the remains and results of Orr’s vision of what type of work she wanted to create. They suggest how she would have interacted with the primary school students; how she would have coordinated the application of the white clay to their faces; her relationship with the photographer; and the way she would have physically positioned each child for each shot. The post-production process involved scaling of the final images selected for exhibition, time to position each photograph within the gallery space and the often slow and meticulous task of adjusting the lighting for maximum effect. These are all elements that a performer as spectator may consider in his or her viewing because of past specialised production and performance-making experience.

Steeves summarises Merleau-Ponty’s observations on the process of viewing art, which may aid in understanding a performer - spectator’s viewpoint: ‘I would be at great pains to say where in the painting I am looking at. For I do not look at it as I do a thing; I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I see it’ (2004: 58). This statement qualifies the notion that visual works of art will appear differently to each spectator, as will live physical performance. Visual stimulation, be it from an art
object or the body in motion, will always recall similar previous visual encounters, enabling the spectator to comprehend and analyse the new visual cues.

As Merleau-Ponty argues, human bodies are always developing both objective and subjective characteristics, as experienced by the physical body and the conscious mind (Steeves, 2004: 18). Human beings make sense of what they see, feel and hear each moment because of the accumulated experiences of both body and mind. A spectator sees an artwork according to what associations they can make with it based on previous experience and knowledge. Steeves elaborates on Merleau-Ponty’s theories of experiencing an artwork; looking into the way in which the aesthetic value and significance of the work can be enhanced by showing how it relates to the human body (2004: 59). Steeves continues his explanation:

> The significance of the work, consisting of the logic of perception and its coherent deformation according to aesthetic style, is understood and communicated primarily through the imagining body.

(2004: 59)

A spectator ‘bodily’ views works of art and performance, and analyses them, according to accumulative experience. For example, he/she might have taken a painting class that allows him/her to participate in a visual discourse on colour palette, brushstroke and perspective. Did he/she train as a dancer and can understand, therefore, the subtleties of physical movement? Steeves goes further and examines how Merleau-Ponty’s idea of ‘body schema’ can have another stage in this physical phenomena, which he calls the ‘virtual body’ stage:

> Without the virtual aspect of the body schema, the body’s original set of abilities could not be developed into more complex modes of behaviour. This realm of possibility exists through the virtual body, which is an embodied mode of the imagination.

(Steeves, 2004:23)

A spectator’s interaction with a work of art thus becomes enhanced by his or her ability, however limited, to imagine bodies performing, or attempting the actions that are seen. It is through this imagining body that the ‘virtual body’ is projected. It is the virtual body’s ‘imaginative ability to consider alternative uses of the body and to assume different perspectives from which to observe a situation’ (Steeves, 2004: 22). This is of importance to the live body-based performance maker.
Merleau-Ponty (1964) contemplates the idea of painting a self-portrait, which is relevant to this discussion. For the artist this is a way to explore the act, her act, of creating a visible image of ‘Being’ for ‘Others’, and as well, the act of self-portrait painting allows her to be the ‘Other’ as well as a subject (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 168). Merleau-Ponty explains how:

Artists have often mused upon mirrors because beneath this “mechanical trick”, they recognised, just as they did in the case of the trick of perspective, the metamorphosis of seeing and seen which defines both our flesh and the painter’s vocation. This explains why they have so often liked to draw themselves in the act of painting ... adding to what they saw then, what things saw of them. (1964: 168-169)

When relating this theory to a live performance and the unique relationship developed between the performing body and that of the spectator, it is possible to find a specific type of mirroring. Merleau-Ponty’s idea of mirroring is: ‘Hence my body can assume segments derived from the body of another, just as my substance passes into them; man is mirror for man’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:168). This concept of ‘self imagining’, as explored by Merleau-Ponty, can be related directly to the use of the physical. The idea of intimacy with a spectator cannot but be inferred during performances which depict the body in highly evocative and emotive poses and actions whilst in the close presence of others. Indeed, nudity and/or close physical encounters are usually associated with ‘the lover’s caress’ (Steeves, 2004: 106). Steeves explains:

The experience of the caress introduces a paradigmatic proximity of the other. The reversibility of self and Other is expressed, for instance, in the subject’s desire to exist for the freedom of the Other and to risk rejection or abuse. Such exposure allows for an intensification of sympathy in which the adult is able to relinquish his self-interest and to surrender himself to the command of the other. In the caress, the “internal weakness” of a person’s anonymous collectivity is developed into a reciprocal relation between two individuals. (Steeves, 2004:106)

A reciprocal relationship between two individuals, the performer and the spectator, is the way that a physical performance can impact on both parties’ understanding of, and experience of, a live event. They might encounter in each other a sense of vulnerability in order to surrender to the other’s command of movement, moment and feeling. Baldwin makes a point in stressing Merleau-Ponty’s
understanding of the way an artist must submit to a type of physiological truth that her surroundings pass to them before going through them and into their work (Baldwin, 2004). In this way, it can be surmised that a spectator, when confronted with a live body in motion within close physical proximity, might take this visual encounter bodily, before allowing her conscious mind to think about this process. For the human mind to process a live body in motion, a person will need to surrender to a certain level of vulnerability. She must identify with the performing body, and therefore might try to imagine her own body attempting the actions she is watching.

**Phenomenological Experience**

It may seem that painting only concerns itself with vision, and that the rest of the body is unimportant to the art form. But Merleau-Ponty suggests that implied in any aesthetic experience is the rest of the body as the background for that experience. The artist expresses his own embodied relation to the world, and his own manner of completing its vague meaning in the visible form of the painting or sculpture.

(Steeves, 2004: 62)

A blue *Monochrome* painting by Yves Klein hangs at the end of a wide corridor at the Centre Pompidou. As the researcher admires it, she is reminded of other International Klein Blue (IKB) works that she has viewed in the past. Next to the blue *Monochrome* painting is a beautiful IKB sponge sculpture, representing a combination of Klein’s artistic periods, and this too encourages the researcher to make associations with sponges seen and felt before. The sensation of viewing these works engages the senses, and has activated memory recall. It is the researcher’s first visit to this particular gallery and yet, because of prior experiences and the phenomenon that is like ‘corporeal schema’, she brings to this new experience her accumulated personal and social histories, which have now become part of a new live experience and from which she will no doubt draw again during future viewings. The static pieces in the gallery also take on a seemingly different form. They seem to be in motion, because previously viewed footage of Klein working with and performing his art creations informs the viewing experience. The new physical works in this gallery are seen through an embodied filter of all of her previous encounters with Klein, and any other related content present is internalised. It is a layering process that she experiences where none of the existing layers of experience is removed or replaced, but compacted in order to grow.

The body as an instrument of art-making has the potential to have a two-fold effect whereby the actions of the live body in motion will activate physical memory, whilst simultaneously, the
Watching of live art creation with the body aids in furthering a spectator’s physical and conscious experience. This will not necessarily result in a greater appreciation of an individual artwork by the spectator, but it has the capacity, through accumulated experience, to offer physical and conscious additions to memory. It suggests an alternative perspective about the process of creative art making.

Steeves explains that Merleau-Ponty proposes that the grounding of aesthetic value on the body is most obvious in physical art forms such as dance and mime, as the whole body ‘becomes the medium for the artist’s expression’ (2004: 59). This carries over to other types of physical performance, including styles that incorporate mixed and multi-medias, as demonstrated in the works of both Klein and Orr. This exposition of the performance process aims to persuade a spectator to consider the infinite possibilities for creating an action and that leads to the making of a mark in Klein’s example. It enlarges an understanding of performed events and visual artworks. It is also demonstrative of the remediation of medium and message, and is an example of how artists can take a live event, ‘which is unique in time, and transform it into something more or less permanent’ (Giannachi, 2004: 6).
Chapter Two

Viewing Klein

I will be a “painter.” People will say of me: that’s the “painter.” And I will feel myself to be a “painter,” a true one, precisely because I won’t paint, or at least not in appearance. The fact that I “exist” as a painter will be the most “formidable” pictorial work of the present age.

Yves Klein
(Klein, 2007: XV)

Influences

This chapter considers a selection of Yves Klein’s performance and visual artworks (Brougher and Vergne, 2010). It looks at a small sample of his work that has inspired spectators for more than five decades after his sudden death at age 34 in 1962. This chapter outlines how the researcher’s experience of Klein’s art spans commentary and embodied viewing and post-performance photograph and gallery exhibitions. It remains an embodied phenomenological encounter long after the live events that made works were performed. For the researcher the experience of the gallery is inseparable from the viewing of the works.

Klein’s influence on both the international visual and performing art scenes will be divided into three separate parts. Firstly, he is situated within an historical and artistic context as discussed with reference to the recent essays by Kerry Brougher and Philippe Vergne (2010), and previous texts by Nicolas Charlet (2000) and Sidra Stich (1995). Secondly, a sample of his works is examined in reference to corporeal phenomenology; and thirdly, his philosophy on art practice and theory is analysed. Since the broader aim of this study is to consider the physical and subjective experience of the performer in relation to spectatorship, physical training and creative practice informs this analysis of Klein’s work.

Klein was born in Nice in 1928 and benefitted from a childhood spent in a household with two painter parents Fred Klein and Marie Raymond. They lived in Paris between 1930 to 1939, but then relocated to the town of Cagnes-sur-Mer, near Nice, by the Mediterranean Sea during the Second World War to live with Marie Raymond’s sister Rose (Weitmeier, 2001). Klein was immersed in a
creative environment that enabled him to develop a strong sense of creation, sensitivity and a thirst for life. Charlet comments that:

Full of life, enthusiastic, joyful, his eyes sparkling at every detail in the surrounding landscape, Yves first awakened to the beauty of nature on family outings along the coast or in the parched hills of the hinterland. Freedom and sensitivity characterised his childhood.

(2000: 12)

This love and passion for the natural environment of the Côte d’Azur was to impact directly on his artistic practice. The sea and the sky, constant sources of inspiration for the youthful Klein, became of great spiritual importance to him, and were critical in his quest to create the perfect ‘blue’ with which to paint. He was endlessly fascinated by the colour that had dominated his physical surroundings as a child and later, and he would often quote Gaston Bachelard when describing his Monochrome philosophies; ‘First there is nothing, then there is a deep nothingness and then there is a blue depth’, (as quoted in Chartlet, 2000: 68). Klein went on to create his own blue pigment naming it ‘International Klein Blue’ which was later shortened to IKB.

Not only did Klein benefit from having both parents as artists, but also more importantly, they were from two different artistic schools of thought, which widened his exposure to artistic styles and network circles. Fred Klein was a landscape painter of modest success whilst Marie Raymond concentrated on lyric abstraction painting receiving ‘notable recognition’ and even the ‘prestigious Kandinsky Prize in 1949’ (Stich, 1995: 13). Growing up in a family of practising artists would have affected Klein’s developing ‘corporeal schema’ as part of an accumulated artistic experience.

Klein, surrounded by such a large and diverse group of artists who in the mid to late 1940s were actively involved in the Paris art scene, was possibly exposed to and became well versed in, exciting new developments in the arts from all around Europe and the USA. Artistic movements such as action painting and Expressionism would probably have been discussed at length at Marie Raymond’s Monday evening sessions, and the works of Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst would have been noticed. After the war in Europe, however, as Brougher explains, there seemed to be a desperate need for a more fearless and audacious provocateur who could lead the way to a new metaphysical and imaginative realm, the likes of which were yet to be seen (2010). It appears that Klein seldom made reference to, or openly discussed, painters of note, even if he were aware of the trends and advances made in post-war
European and American art scenes. One exception, however, was the painter Eugène Delacroix, whose use of strong colour Klein felt attracted to and highly appreciative of (Brougher, 2010). Klein’s early explorations into monochrome painting can be viewed as a combination of appreciation for the strong use of colour by artists such as Delacroix and his parents, as well as his overpowering desire to challenge the common ‘notion that art had to be a material object separate from human experience’ (Brougher, 2010: 22). As an artist Klein was considered to be ‘untrained’ in that he received no formal art education or training and self-identified as a ‘painter of space’.

Klein’s upbringing combined French Catholicism and a free thinking family and might have influenced his identity as an alchemist-mystic, who was at ‘times appalled by the vertiginous prospects that the cosmic scope of his thought opened up before him’ (Chartlet, 2000: 7). He was sensitive to the idea of the spiritual experience as much as he was to the aesthetic one. He would describe his experience of the ‘fear of God’ in the form of critical feedback from peers and the public’s lack of understanding of the true message in and of his art (Chartlet, 2000: 7). Klein was blessed with a gift to see the world differently from those around him, but cursed in that his artistic creations were not always easily accepted or fully comprehended. However, he believed that it was his faith in God, and his dedication to Saint Rita (the patron saint of desperate causes), that gave him the strength to progress towards the ‘absolute’ truth with each exhibition and exploration, despite public responses often being far from what he had hoped (Chartlet, 2000: 7).

Another strong influence on Klein was Judo. In 1947, when Klein was living in Nice, he discovered the sport. He had begun training in French boxing, but switched to Judo after a demonstration given at the local police athletic league (Stich, 1995: 16). Judo became a passion for Klein, who did not have a natural talent for it but, according to his friend fellow artist and judo participant Arman, ‘Yves was initially not very supple. He was like a dog … the least gifted of the three of us … but he was persistent and became the best’ (Stich, 1995: 16). Judo was to remain a major part of his life, and a consistent presence in his art-making process. It can be claimed as a physical discipline from which Klein developed a philosophy of the body as an instrument and as an imprinting tool (see figure 1). He was fascinated by the impressions bodies would make on the judo mats during training and competition (Siouveau Interview, 2010). These were elements in his development as a visual and performance artist.

Klein’s positioning of himself in the role of spectator of the experience of seeing colour is evident. His bold and dramatic quest for his own style began on a beautiful sun covered beach in Nice in 1947, where he was bathing with his two close friends Arman and Claude Pascal. According to
Arman’s recollection of the day, Klein had been looking up past the clouds, imagining floating to the other side of the sky where he could sign his name and claim the entire view as being his creation; ‘the blue sky is my first artwork’ (Brougher, 2010: 19). It was evident, even from these humble beginnings, that Klein was a step ahead of the rest conceptually. In a short text written about his upbringing in a house of painters, Klein recognises that he had a different way of approaching thinking about art, and what it meant to create art; perhaps even renegotiating what modern art was:

In 1946 I was painting or drawing either under the influence of my father... or ... my mother, an abstract painter of compositions of form and colour. At the same time, “COLOUR”, the sensuous pure space, winked an eye at me irregularly, yet with stubborn persistence. This sense of the complete freedom of sensuous pure space exerted upon me such a power of attraction that I painted monochrome surfaces to see, with my own eyes to SEE, what was visible in the absolute. I would not consider at the time these attempts as having pictorial potential, until the day, around one year later, when I said to myself, “WHY NOT”. The “WHY NOT” in the life of a man is what decides everything, it is destiny.

(cited in Brougher, 2010, 22 - 24)

Klein continued to push the boundaries of art practice and exhibition format and style, even location. As he was a dedicated master of Judo, it is not that surprising that the first real exhibition of works by Klein is considered to be his 1955 installation of monochromatic wall mounted paintings that he had installed in the judo school he ran for a short time in Montmartre (Brougher, 2010: 24). The large-scale blue, white and pink works, were encouraged to be seen as both art and meditation devices (Brougher, 2010: 24). Klein was already setting himself up to be recognised as a conceptual visionary in the contemporary Parisian art scene. In an interview with Klein’s wife Rotraut Klein-Moquay by Greta Tüllman and Hannah Weitmeier in 1994, Rotraut recalls her first impressions of Klein’s work, seen before she saw the man himself. This confirmed that she believed his work to be quite revolutionary, and of lasting impact:

I felt the excitement and the calm that these paintings brought into the room. But from my own feeling about life, I couldn’t place these works in time. I imagined the artist who had made these paintings as a saint from another age or as a wise old man who came from far-off Asia, as a genuine Zen master with a long white beard.

(cited in Klein, 1998: 83)
Figure 1: Yves Klein performing Judo moves

Figure 2: Yves Klein pigment installation (pink, blue and gold) Nice, France, 2010
Klein’s dedication to the exploration of spirit and faith went beyond attending mass, and creating small gifts (in honour of Saint Rita) to place in churches. His selection of colour in all his works was also an example of his faith in and understanding of a Christian God; a trinity that is God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. His representation of the trinity was a version of the primary colours yellow, blue and red. Klein’s trilogy of colour reflected Gold as Father, Blue as Son and Magenta/Pink as the Holy Spirit (see figure 2). Klein understood these colours to be three elements that were all part of the one state of being, ‘each impregnated in the other, all being perfectly independent from one another’ (Stich, 1995: 194).

**Yves Klein Live**

It was a single photograph from a live performance that introduced the work of Klein to the researcher (see figures 3 and 4). The image showed large sheets of white paper laid flat and overlapping on the floor of a formal gallery space. Three nude women, paint covering their torso and thighs, make their way around and on top of the paper, their movements directed by a young man wearing a tuxedo. His right hand is raised, his palm flat, his fingers apart. This simple gesture suggests a command to the painted, and painting, women. Three buckets sit unobtrusively on the paper on the floor in between the action. In the background, cast in semi darkness and sitting in a seemingly sombre silence, a crowd of formally attired guests watch the performance in front of them. Positioned in a line along the back wall, to the right of the audience, is a group of male musicians, instruments in hand. A man’s shadow falls upon the white paper on the floor, cutting off the bottom left hand corner of the photograph. One precise and profound physical moment in time has been captured in the still image.

The photograph reproduced a fragment of a performance called *Anthropometry of the Blue Epoch*, which was part of Klein’s *Anthropometry* series of body imprinting works. It was at 10 o’clock in the evening on March 9 1960 that this performance took place at Count Maurice d’Arquain’s luxurious Galerie Internationale d’art Contemporain on Paris’ Faubourg Saint-Honoré, one of the premier streets on the Right Bank (Stich, 1995). Stich describes how:

> At the appointed time ... the audience of well-dressed patrons arrived and were seated on gilded chairs facing an empty space in the main room of the gallery. Sheets of white paper covered the floor of the stage area and one large sheet hung on the front wall. An air of solemnity prevailed as nine men – three violinists, three cellists and three choristers – entered and took their places at the side of the stage area. Next, Klein, wearing a tuxedo with white tie and the Maltese cross from his Saint Sebastian brotherhood,
Klein shifted the focus of his monochrome blue painting experiments into an exploration of the body as art maker and instrument through a performed piece of visual art. Klein was realising his idea that the paint brush was no longer required in the process of making art, and that it was, for him, almost obsolete when trying to capture the unique and immediate qualities of the human body. He sought to use ‘the flesh to convey the phenomenological presence of the body’ (Stich, 1995: 176). This *Anthropometry of the Blue Epoch* performance enabled Klein to retain his desired distance from traditional techniques of painting with handheld brushes, which he considered to be too psychological, and to use instead an instrument that was truly alive (Stich, 1995: 176). Klein had rejected the use of brushes when painting long before the *Anthropometries* and had been experimenting with rollers:

I painted with the more anonymous roller, trying to create a “distance” – at the very least an intellectual, unvarying distance – between the canvas and me during the execution. Now, like a miracle, the brush returned, but this time alive. Under my direction, the flesh itself applied the colour to the surface, and with perfect precision.

(Stich, 1995: 176)

The particular method of mark making that Klein explored reaffirmed his belief that to capture successfully the essence of the human form one needed to express the way in which the body imprints time and space; that the body is an ‘evocative presence but also only a trace – the incorporeal vestige of a material form that no longer (exists) in real time’ (Stich, 1995: 176). And yet the blue paint on paper imprints left behind continues to have an evocative and energetic presence easily discerned by the gallery viewer. When the three nude models walked out into the performance space on that particular evening, each carrying a bucket of ‘International Klein Blue’ paint, and began sponging themselves all over with the paint, the effect on the audience and indeed on the individual models would have been immediate. The atmosphere of the small gallery space, and the way in which Klein conducted the models’ movements, had the potential to be most striking, as the photograph demonstrates. The nude models and the formally attired Klein would have been a powerful presence in the otherwise modest space. Added to this was Klein’s original *Monotone Symphony* which was played live during the gallery event by musicians manipulating cellos and violins (see figure 5). It was a score that he had been working on since 1949 and comprised of ‘twenty minutes of imperturbable one-note music followed by twenty minutes of
silence (Stich, 1995: 174). The music became an integral part of the performance, as Klein describes:

My old Monotone Symphony of 1949, which was performed under my direction, by a small orchestra on March 9, 1960, was destined to create an “after silence” after sounds had ended in each of us who were present at that manifestation.

(cited in Brougher, 2010, 68)

This particular Anthropometry performance had originally been organised by d’Arquain to be an action spectacular, however, as the evening was a creation of Klein’s, it became something of a spiritual event too:

The body-printing ritual assumed a religious atmosphere. The public and protagonists were variously baffled and fascinated; a few of the people present were deeply moved; all found the experience exhausting.

(Charlet, 2000: 152)

Klein’s developments with his Anthropometry performances helped announce the arrival of a ‘new genre of post-war art’ (Hopkins, 2000: 81). It had begun with a dinner party performance by Klein on June 5 1958 (Stich, 1995). This first performance piece, which saw one nude model covered in blue paint, move around on top of a white sheet of paper placed on the floor, was initially viewed by those present as something which Klein was to later parody; the ‘confirmed … inflation of the creative ego, seen as linked, inextricably, with masculinity’ (Hopkins, 2000: 81). It was of utmost importance to Klein that his performances were not seen as outrageous or obscene, but rather as he had intended, to reflect the changing ‘roles of the artist and model and (to) emphasise that he viewed the body as flesh – not in sexual terms but related to a belief in the resurrection of the flesh (Stich, 1995: 175). Klein’s artistic and philosophical ideals were intertwined with his faith as a Catholic, and it was through his attempts to visually convey his beliefs, that his unique style and practice evolved (Brougher, 2010). The nude body was more than just an instrument with which to depict in art, for Klein the body was the art.

In the true sense of the Christian faith, which says: “I believe in the incarnation of the word; I believe in the resurrection of the body,” the body is the true sense of the theatre of the word: the word is flesh!

(cited in Brougher, 2010: 275)
Figure 3: Yves Klein, *Anthropometry of the Blue Epoch* performance, 1960

Figure 4: Yves Klein *Anthropometry of the Blue Epoch* performance (close up), 1960
With Klein retaining a certain physical distance from the models he was able to remain anonymous during the performance execution, and he made sure that his hands stayed clean as the artwork completed itself in front of him, with the absolute collaboration of the models (Yves Klein: With the Void, Full Power, translated by Klaus Ottoman). This goes back to a claim that he was a ‘true painter’. Klein did not paint directly onto the surfaces he wished to impregnate with his ideas, nor did he wish to give the appearance of doing so (Klein, 2007).

Klein’s obsession with theatrical events, exemplified in his staging of the Anthropometries, did, however, require him to participate in rehearsed movements in order to ensure the success of his performances. He explains:

The models and I practiced a perfect and irreproachable scientific telekinesis and it is thus that I presented ‘The Anthropometries of the Blue Period,’ first privately at Robert Godet’s in Paris, in the spring of 1958, and then again, in a much more perfected form, on March 9, 1960, at the Galerie international d’art contemporain. (Yves Klein: With the Void, Full Powers, translated by Klaus Ottoman)

Klein continued to develop his live body imprinting process of the Anthropometry series working with shroud like materials that the researcher had the opportunity of seeing in Minneapolis in January 2011. The exhibition, hosted by both Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the Walker Art Centre, was titled Yves Klein: With The Void, Full Powers, and has been to date, the largest retrospective of Klein’s work ever shown. Collectors and Galleries from all over the world donated their works to the exhibition co-ordinators in order to create this spectacular visual indulgence.

The retrospective was beautifully curated. The display and layout of the varying pieces of Klein’s work paid tribute to his sensibility of colour and his sensual nature. Boldly coloured works were given the space they required; there was no crowding of images or sculptures, each item inviting the viewer to consider it as if it was the only object in the room. A combination of Anthropometries and Shrouds, Klein’s 1961 Suaire de Mondo Cane (Mondo Cane Shroud) (ANT SU 8 I and 8 II) (see figure 6), is a painting/imprint made with dry pigment and synthetic resin on two light sheets of gauze. The two almost transparent sheets hang down along the wall, the back sheet sitting around 50cm lower than the one at the front. The material is untreated; blue torso prints have been made across the bottom half of the top sheet, but otherwise the gauze is untouched.
Figure 5: Yves Klein *Monotone Symphony* score

Figure 6: Yves Klein, *Suaire de Mondo Cane (Mondo Cane Shroud) (ANT SU 8 I and 8 II)*, 1961
The application of the paint onto the models’ bodies appears to have been the same as with Klein’s works on paper and canvas, but the effect on this work is unique; the paint has gone through the gauze and there is subsequently no variation in colour. Patches of paint have gone through to the second sheet, and as the two are hung slightly apart, there is a sense of depth created through actual space rather than painterly techniques. The circular marks created by female breasts being pressed up against the gauze allows the eye to travel across the sheet, while the vertical leg and thigh prints allow the eye to travel down and onto the back sheet. Scattered hand prints move along the top of the body imprints, seemingly from right to left, from the way the handprints are tilted, inspiring a feeling of movement and rhythm. The lack of saturated pigment in this work, unlike so many other works by Klein from the same period, gives a ghostly transparency to the piece and an essence once again of a shroud. The gauze moves just a little with each movement and change in airflow, and presents the work as if it is in motion. The overall effect is that this work feels like it is timeless; it could have been made yesterday or 2000 years ago.

The live action that created the imagery has been transferred onto this secondary medium. The work exemplifies how Klein was able to represent a sense of the human body with the use of just the torso. Perhaps the painted imprints reflect the physicality of the body as ephemeral and insubstantial. As Philippe Vergne states:

Klein conceived of his work beyond its physicality ... works that function on a phenomenological level. Each of his canvases could be understood as a sliver of space made solid. Therefore, the space that truly interested Klein was not delimited by the canvas, but was, in fact, experiential space.

(2010: 50)

On January 26 1962, Klein held an intimate performance on the banks of the Seine in Paris. An extension of a project that had begun in late 1959, this performance was one of at least three that occurred over a ten-day period. It was his Zone of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility performance art piece. Klein had designed and printed a series of receipt books, all of which served as ‘vouchers that verified the existence of unseeable works of art (that) served as proof that a formalised sale of art had transpired’ (Stich, 1995: 155). Klein was expanding his concept of immateriality and the sense of the void represented through colour and action by creating these 'transfer ‘events, which were ceremonies that became ritual in nature. The documentation of these events was planned however, with a photographer being employed to document the exchange between the spectator/buyer and Klein (see figures 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11).
Figures 7 and 8: Yves Klein *Immateriality* performance (signing receipt and gold bar payment), Paris 1962

Figures 9 and 10: Yves Klein *Immateriality* performance (close up of gold bars and burning of receipt), Paris 1962
A series of black and white photographs frame Klein and his fellow participants as they make the exchange. A fragment of each riverside performance action has been captured. The photographs viewed at the Walker Art Gallery as part of the Yves Klein: With The Void, Full Powers exhibition depict different men making the art purchase; each photograph shows Klein and the purchaser going through the motions of paying for the immaterial artwork. Each man watches on as Klein throws the small gold bar payment out into the massive river beside them. The photographic documentation is the only remains of the event, outside of the memory of the participants and spectators. The gold leaf was thrown away, and the paper receipt was completely burned. Klein explains the process of and concept behind these immaterial exchanges:

The mining of the pictorial immaterial zones, extracted from the depth of the void, which I possessed by that time, was of a very material nature. Finding it unacceptable to sell these immaterial zones for money, I demanded in exchange for the highest quality of the material payment - a bar of pure gold. Incredible as it may seem, I have actually sold a number of these pictorial immaterial states.

(cited in Brougher, 2010: 116)
The Artist in retrospect

The corridor leading into the circular gallery chamber which houses the permanent Yves Klein collection at the Musée d’Art Moderne et d’Art Contemporain in Nice, France, is filled with biographical details and photographic images of Klein and his work practice. His smiles are combined with an intense gaze and focus; a handsome young man full of energy, full of ideas and full of life. Many ideas and artistic concepts are documented, and his oeuvre seems to be fitting for someone who has had a long and distinguished career. And yet, in reality, Klein only practised as a professional artist for seven years before his life was cut short, the result of a series of heart attacks. The gallery space feels peaceful as the combined natural and artificial lighting picks up on the intense colour of both the paintings and sculptures that is unique to Klein’s work. It is a vibrant combination and manipulation of the three primary colours. Klein’s ambition was for his works to concentrate on the physical as a means to access the spiritual and spatial.

Perhaps this resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s writings on ‘corporeality and the embodiedness of consciousness’ in relation to performance (Garner, 1994: 25). Klein’s work is centred on the notion that it is only through the body that a body can truly be represented, and to accurately create a spiritual mark of the performing and performed body.

During my interview with Philippe Siauve at the Yves Klein Archives, it became clear that the key element to comprehending Klein’s work, and indeed the most important aspect of his practice and philosophy, was the relationship between, and combination of, the body and the notion of sensitivity. Siauve explains that because of his extensive Judo training, Klein had a heightened awareness of, and sensitivity to, body movement and sensation of the body in motion (Siauve Interview, 2010). After watching a few short clips showing Klein in action as he performed a series of acrobatic Judo moves, it was easy to see that he had an advanced aerial awareness and that physical tracing was an important element in the way he created his art.

Siauve also referred to the fact that Klein was aware of the historical context of the nude figure in art. Klein’s sensitivity was not only restricted to his personal bodied experience, but he was also guided by a sensitivity to subject matter and the fact that historically, it was women in paintings, and not men, who were more frequently depicted as nudes (Siauve Interview, 2010). Siauve also mentioned that he believed that Klein had spoken openly about the fact that the female body was,
and is physiologically, more sensitive than a man’s, as it has more nerve endings in the pelvic and genital region. Whether or not this denoted difference or even essentialism, the framing of the male artist as manipulating the action of female bodies with paint, was open to interpretation of an awareness of gender in the making of the works. It made greater sense to Klein to deploy the female nude form to create the majority of his painting body imprints and anthropometry pieces (Siauve Interview, 2010). It must be noted, however, that Klein still did not consider his works to be sexual, but rather, as portrayals of sensuality and sensibility.

As indicated, Klein was dedicated to his faith as a Catholic and was passionately spiritual and sought a sensitive connection to his faith through his creative practice (Siauve interview, 2010). For Klein, it was necessary to make art that was connected in some way to the body and the fleshe experience of being a human being (Siauve Interview, 2010). It became obvious that the body was incorporated into most works. The Monochrome series were understood to be a portrayal of the human essence and representation of spirit. The Anthropometry and Shroud series became an opportunity to directly manoeuvre and depict the live human form. Even Klein’s Fire Paintings and Sponge Reliefs came to represent living energy and the possible formations of life.

Klein’s belief that the body ‘is’ spectacle, as well as existing in a constant state of immateriality, (even as it traces a moment in time), impacted on the way he created performed and performance works. He took the body as an instrument to mean more than just body as art-making tool. He understood that the human form was both physical and spiritual and that the space surrounding the body was as important as the space occupied by the body. As a conceptual artist he was breaking new ground. His claim that in calling himself a ‘painter’ he therefore becomes a painter, demonstrates his willingness to be considered active in role-playing himself as an artist in ways that preceded Warhol’s experimentation. The embodied expressions of art and physical training were inseparable from Klein’s artworks.
Chapter Three

Perceiving Orr

‘The process ... evolves in time ... I mean nothing is captured in the same time, so inevitably new things come, you have new responses to ... the same issues, or to different issues.’

(Orr Interview, 2010)

Locating Orr

This chapter explores a selection of Australian Jill Orr’s performance and photographic pieces; a small sample of her work that has, so far, spanned five decades. As a female artist who places herself in the artworks, Orr’s artwork has directly and indirectly influenced the approaches in ‘Performing ... Art’; in particular the centrality of the female body and the use of Polaroid images with gallery exhibition. Orr’s influence on both the visual art and performing art scenes will be discussed in three ways. Firstly, she is situated briefly within an historical, performance and artistic context within selected scholarship including Marsh (1993, 2003), Goldberg (1998, 2004) and Tait (2013). Secondly a sample of her work is examined and linked to an artistic phenomenology, and thirdly, her own words on art practice are discussed. A broader aim of this study is to consider the physical and subjective experience of the researcher as performer, but specifically in relation to spectatorship of Orr’s work; the analysis of Orr’s works and general practice will concentrate on a phenomenological viewing of her performances-for-the-camera and her post-performance photographs usually exhibited in gallery spaces.

If performances engage in the live event, to what extent can ‘documentation’ of these events effectively represent and extend the performances? How might forms of media effectively record, transpose, add, contain, alter, extend and/or document a live sequence of events? While discussion concentrates on the visual as a means of communication, it is apparent that these do not have the capacity to reach everyone in the same way, given audience membership is made up of people from differing cultural, racial, social and economic backgrounds.

When asked specifically about her way of creating new works, Orr described how she recognizes her method as a ‘process driven through a depth of inquiry that comes ... in (a) sense (from) ... a
response to the environment ... to a question’, even to an experience (Orr Interview, 2010). Orr began her career in the 1970s as a visual artist and a performer, and she has been a consistent and influential force in the Australian art scene. Her work predominately focuses on the way the human body intersects with, and relates to, the environment. An awareness of the fragility of the human body in combination with that of the surrounding landscape has enabled Orr to continually challenge and connect with audiences over an extended period of time. RoseLee Goldberg describes Orr’s practice, within a broader global context, as an ‘evocative image-maker, whose dream-like performances make visceral connections between her body and the Australian Landscape’ (2004: 111). Orr’s early work has also been described as ‘shrill rites of passage ... suggesting that the artist was involved in some sort of initiation rite or shamanistic practice’ (Marsh, 1993: 121). It should be noted, however, that there was only early critical analysis at the time of these performances that looked at the relationship between the feminine and natural Australian landscape:

The patriarchal myth of woman as a passive and receptive body, that became the object of the male gaze, was not addressed by a feminism that sought to celebrate feminine culture.

(Marsh, 1993: 122)

As an artist who works mainly with figurative visual narratives, Orr concentrates on strong imagery to ‘speak’ to a spectator, rather than relying on text and words. Anne Marsh describes her development as an artist (up until the early 2000s) as follows: ‘an opus of performance work in the 1970s followed by self-portraits in painting and drawing in the 1980s and a return to performance in the 1990s’ (2003:201). In Orr’s carefully planned and well presented website she has chosen not to display her complete works, but only the most significant, and perhaps the most consistent, works from the late 1970s through to the present (www.jillorr.com.au). She is careful about representing her art. The best and most commonly used phrase ‘performances-for-the-camera’, is the way that Orr describes her current practice and how she lists many of her works on her website.

Orr’s early photographic and performance pieces, such as the Bleeding Trees series, established her within the Australian art scene as an artist renowned for her body-based performance art, which deals with the presentation of a mute and often victimized body (Marsh, 1993: 121). This is often placed within barren landscapes and these themes are still present in her work in the 2000s. It is important to note that even though Orr uses her body in her work as a major visual element and
narration device, there are critical issues raised in relation to straightforward feminist analysis. For example:

In this performance (*Bleeding Trees*), represented solely by the photographs taken by Elizabeth Campbell, which were used as projections during the live event, the frozen image of the female body became a kind of screen upon which the audience could project their fantasies. This created problems in terms of a feminist critique of the work since the female body appeared to be represented, yet again, for the pleasure of the male gaze.

(Marsh, 2003: 201)

While Klein did not want his works to be considered highly sexual, Orr did not want her works to be considered only in relation to feminist commentary, even though such interpretations of each are possible. Whilst many of her performances have dealt with issues of sexuality and representations of the ‘female condition’ (Marsh, 1993: 122), Orr stresses that her work is predominately about a greater context of relationships with both populated landscapes and the natural undeveloped environment. Orr explains:

*Bleeding Trees* is an early environmental work where the body is used as an 'emotional barometer' placed in empathy with the natural and unnatural life cycles of trees. The empathy enlisted through the viewer is through identification with the human body. As female, the early feminist critique places the naked body as 'pandering to the male gaze'. In an environmental sense it is a gaze towards all.


Orr demonstrates that her intentions are more closely connected with exploring issues of the human body in the environment that extends beyond gender identity. When describing *Bleeding Trees*, however, she alludes to the fact that this work is about the highly topical debate over the ownership of the nude female form and related discussion concerning the ‘male gaze’. Yet it is a reaction to the relationship every human being has with the environment. Her naked body immersed in the earth seems androgynous and is demonstrative of the human condition, both male and female, and how we the species connect, or choose to disconnect, with our natural environment. It also suggests death in this image of being buried alive.
In response to the early criticism and theoretical interpretations of her artistic intentions, Orr developed a series of ‘other’ identities, ones which seem to grow from the ‘filmic’ doubles created during her live performance pieces and their photographic extensions (Marsh, 2003: 201-202). These identities allow Orr to continue to pursue her original concepts and ideas, whilst embracing elements of the female body as represented in art and society in general that had been raised during the ongoing critique of her as a female performance artist. It is a rich layering of ideas of the Other, the gaze (male and female) and the spectacle of the body that become entangled with issues of environment and location of self during Orr’s performances (Marsh, 2003: 203).

**Development**

It was a single photograph from a live performance-for-the-camera that introduced the work of Orr to the researcher (see figure 12). The image was powerful. It showed a pale white woman, her head half buried in the dirt, with back arched and breasts exposed, writhing on a brown, dusty and loose ground. Her arms, presumably outstretched, are cut from the shot, existing somewhere out of the frame. Most of the woman’s body is pushed into the foreground, only a suggestion of trees and bush landscape peek up from the background over her pelvis. Her mouth is open, as if taking a final breath before submerging completely into the earth. Clay and grit and dirt cling to parts of her torso, legs and face. There was extreme movement and an intense feeling of stasis in this still, seemingly quiet, picture. Yet an atmosphere of sound and imagined wind and human cries are created and the image prompts the viewer to feel almost transported there, into this foreign but somehow familiar landscape.

*Bleeding Trees* was Orr’s breakthrough performance and photographic series and it was also the researcher’s breakthrough discovery of a different form of visual art in performance. A spectator of this work may experience a physical response; the athletic and naked figure directly connected with the researcher’s gymnastics background. The naturally sensual physicality was disrupted. As a performer, the researcher could immediately sense the physical actions that would have been undertaken during the original photo shoot. Some part of the live action outside the post-performance photograph has been imprinted in the image.

The viewing of a live performance enables the framing of the spectator’s body (as engaged in watching a performer), to some extent, to be made aware of the physical presence of other bodies. Therefore, a performer may bodily react to a live audience, and this reaction impacts on the performer and overall performance. Performer and spectator share in the live event. Art on paper
created during such a live performance, however, cannot capture this. Instead, the still photographic images of Orr capture her ‘performances-for-the-camera’, and can thus be viewed as a record of an elusive liveness that situates them somewhere between two artistic genres - performance and visual art. Accordingly it can be argued that they stand in for the presence of both performer and spectator. Orr’s original performance-for-the-camera from *Bleeding Trees* reflects the physical presence of ‘others’, of ‘spectators’, of ‘crew’, who were on site in 1979. These photographic images were also projected during a secondary live event. *Bleeding Trees* was performed by Orr as part of *European Dialogue* during the Third Biennale of Sydney hosted by the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1979, with the final images being shot by photographer Elizabeth Campbell (Marsh, 1993: 119).

Often a creative performance or post-performance photograph can leave an imprint on the performer/artist’s mind, replaying itself in memory. It might even influence the body to recreate its actions. A one-off performance-for-the-camera becomes part of a process of physical and mental re-enacting of a past event so that, in a sense, an artist is appropriating her own previous work in order to make a new work. This can be considered an important refining technique used in rehearsal of a performance.

In *Walking on Planet Earth*, 1989 (see figure 13) Orr creates the persona of a colonial woman forcing the viewer to re-consider the historical context of current environmental and social issues. She walks forward towards the viewer holding her flaming umbrella with a firm grip; she is clothed in a dark and dirty dress and matching hat, her face grim yet determined. In this image the female figure is a symbol of strength and determination. But she is a woman walking on a surface that could be out of this world. The title, which offers an explanation, suggesting that earth is within a galactic context, perhaps alluding to something much greater than just ‘ourselves’. Perhaps the lone woman is a direct reference to ‘mother’ earth; a symbol of endurance as she battles with the flames engulfing her umbrella, her shelter. What the viewer sees is a woman battling with an everyday, inanimate object that was originally designed and built to offer protection but instead offers an impression of danger, fear and loss (Young, 2013). The figure is also at the mercy of her barren surroundings and in this particular photograph, the landscape offers little protection or promise. The rough and hilly terrain is a sandy brown, not a tree or trace of vegetation in sight; the earth is just a block of even colour placed underneath a beautifully complementary blue sky with no clouds. This might be a pioneering woman alone in the elements.
The series introduces a viewer to a more direct and recognisable narrative created by the performance and shown to an audience and captured as photographic documentation after the live event. In other photographs this female figure encounters a bulldozer, which has seemingly been employed to clear the land for construction, to make way for development and progress. The female figure seems fragile as she approaches the machine and it is clear that she is obviously inadequate for a confrontation. Perhaps she calls upon a greater power, a shaman, and sets her umbrella ablaze as she attempts to use a kind of magic to help save the earth from destruction at the hand of its own kind (Marsh, 1993: 128).

Orr’s ability to create and perform stunning imagery is evidence of her skill, patience and vision. The Walking on Planet Earth performance project was to remain such a strong image, and twenty years later Orr re-visits it herself. The result of this continuation of imagery can be found in the bewitching 2009 Southern Cross - To bear and behold series.

In the Southern Cross series, however, Orr creates the persona of a missionary, a character she created for the series Faith in a Faithless Land, which was also performed in 2009 and also at the Mitre Salt lakes in Western Central Victoria. For Southern Cross (see figure 14) the figure of Orr is dressed in white and is trudging through an even more barren, salt encrusted landscape. The lone androgynous figure, walking into the foreground, grips onto an umbrella that is almost completely consumed with bright yellow and red flames. This solitary figure dressed all in white, almost blends into the flat, barren white salt lake on which she stands. The angle of the photograph is such that not even a glimpse of the sky is visible.

The brilliant flames and the deep footprints made by the missionary identity are the only elements that offer any real colour contrast within the frame. Even though text is not present in the works, it was a single piece of inspirational text that led Orr to develop Walking on Planet Earth and it was then used again in pushing this creative sequel through to completion in Southern Cross; ‘The land is hot, so hot your protection bursts into flames’ (www.jillorr.com.au).
Figure 12: Jill Orr, *Bleeding Trees*, 1979

Figure 13: Jill Orr, *Walking on Planet Earth*, 1989
Merleau-Ponty’s (1964) consideration of the process of viewing art supports an interpretation that visual works of art will appear in different ways to each spectator, as might a live physical performance. Visual stimulation, from either the art object or the body in motion, might recall similar previous visual encounters. Thus the spectator comprehends new visual cues from prior experience. Orr’s 2010 aforementioned exhibition at Jenny Port Gallery in Richmond, titled *Vision*, was the result of an invitation and associated funding to produce a work with primary school students from the rural town of Avoca. This creation of a performed piece for the camera differed from Orr’s usual practice of placing herself in the image. But this particular body of work demonstrates Orr’s extensive involvement in her performances-for-the-camera, from concept to gallery presentation almost as if functioning as a director.

As portraits are usually created in order to portray something unique about the subject, these images that Orr creates, invite the viewer to imagine greater possibilities of narrative and action rather than to give an assumed personality to the subject. The faces of Jessica (see figures 15 and 16) looking out to the viewer are calling on them to participate in what seems to be a ‘performance’ of the eyes. Once again, there seems to be an underlying narrative that Orr has set up within these seemingly simple shots. Orr is working with the bodies of others and *Vision*, as a photographic exhibition, would not have developed in the same way as Orr’s other work, if the children were not present as performers for the camera.

In her most recent work *The Promised Land* (2012) Orr creates the figure of a boat person dressed all in white attempting to paddle the skeletal remains (or perhaps beginnings) of a boat to ‘somewhere’ that is presumably ‘the promised land’ as the title of the series suggests (see figure 17). She is yet again a lone figure that stands bright against and in high contrast to the natural muted tones of the bushy Australian landscape that appears to enclose her. Perhaps the figure could be an extension of the missionary from the *Southern Cross - To bear and behold* series. This visually challenging image asks the viewer to make sense of such a strong, provocative yet simplistic narrative of the title and action of the image. Where has the figure come from? Where is this ‘promised land’ to which the figure goes? Is this image an oblique comment on the topical issue of the Australian Government’s treatment of refugees and boat people? Through the use of landscape and the characterization of the human form, Orr implicitly uses the photographic performances to point to a broader context.
Figure 14: Jill Orr, *Southern Cross - To bear and behold*, 2009

Figures 15 and 16: Jill Orr, *Avoca (Vision), Jessica* (eyes open and eyes closed) 2009
The use of costuming gives the viewer a sense of ‘staged’ performance, and this gives the viewer the opportunity to find cultural associations. When a series of photographs coming out of performances-for-the-camera are presented in a gallery space, a narrative potentially emerges and a viewer is prompted to question ‘what happened before’ and ‘what will and can happen after’ (see figures 18, 19, 20 and 21). A viewer may seek to continue a narrative in his or her own imagination, adding new elements to the visual encounter, based on past experiences. The photographic exhibition, as with any viewing of visual or performance art, will continue to exist beyond its viewing time, and as well as going beyond the limitations of space and time, it is relived and re-imagined in relation to the spectator’s incorporated corporeal schema.

To situate ‘performances-for-the-camera’ such as Orr’s work within a broader artistic framework, it is necessary to consider how different forms of media attempt to record, add, contain, extend and document live events. Digital ‘trapping’ or ‘capturing’ of an event or live performance such as Orr’s allows for further extension of the life of an artwork. Orr’s photographic works have a physical existence as well as a digital one; her artworks are also online, their life extended beyond their original intention for performed action. This important aspect of digital media representation is not lost on Orr and she describes her current practice as ‘performances-for-the-camera’; but she anticipates that the live action be captured on film first and then exhibited as a photographic display to reach a wider audience. Therefore an online continuation is perhaps the logical next step. In this way, Orr expands her live performance event by designing the way in which individual images are placed within the computer screen layout, as well as allowing the website as a whole to provide a form of documentation and as an archive, as well as continue to deliver an exhibition.

If, as Tait argues, in relation to Orr’s artworks with dead animals, human beings are sensorily attuned to other bodies and bodied actions, then this orientation becomes an uninterrupted physiological habit (2013: 3). Orr’s works do not use text as a means of communication but they nonetheless are effective because of her physical presence and capacity to reach spectators on a physical level. Orr’s ‘performances-for-the-camera’ do not readily answer the question as to whether or not body-based performances communicate to spectators of differing backgrounds, but they do endeavor to engage a spectator on a corporeal level.
Figure 17: Jill Orr, *The Promised Land* - moving, 2012

Figure 18, 19, 20 and 21: Jill Orr, *The Promised Land* - flag, walking, becoming, moving, 2012
The Artist’s Own Words ...

In an interview with Jill Orr in December 2010, I asked her a series of questions relating to aspects of her work history and creative process development. Our discussion expanded into a dialogue on the questions and the tangential possibilities these offered. The substance of the interview is reorganised here into a chronological framework starting at the beginning, the late 1970s, and the creation of Bleeding Trees.

The issue of the female artist who uses her own body to make art and feminist theory was invariably raised, since it remains such a topical issue. Yet Orr remonstrates that she is, and always has been, more interested in focusing on process and issues of environment, rather than confronting the objectification of the male gaze:

That 1979 period of time (was) ... peak feminist, second wave feminism ... early environmentalism ... we’ve got feminism ... representing the body and the male gaze is implicated in that representation. Obviously, historically, male artists used female artists as models only. There weren’t any ... well, not many (female) artists in their own right, so I thought, if I’m in charge of my own body, I don’t care about the male gaze.

(Orr, 2010)

Orr makes it clear that whilst she recognises that contemporary issues in art, such as those raised by feminist theory and commentary on works including the nude and naked female body, she feels a sense of control and complete ownership over her own physicality which allows her to negotiate the way that her own image is viewed by the public. In creating different personas, she gives a subtle and more performative edge to her work. By becoming a character, a ‘protagonist’, Orr expands the themes explored in the pieces she creates.

Orr has been a protagonist of performance art, from her early iconic works such as ‘Bleeding Trees’... she has explored such issues as the resonances of land and meeting of cultures. Her work has focused on the psycho-social and environmental facets with a deep commitment to humanity, a compassionate openness and depth of vision which embraces, engages and inspires curiosity and contemplation.

(Art world women, 2012, Jill Orr, The Promised Land, part 1)
In retrospect, Orr recognizes that the use of materials, location, and on-site resources (such as clay and dirt), were an early form of costume, and a way in which she could make a connection with environmental concerns and back into the earth as well as maintain a designed sense of a unique aesthetic (Orr Interview, 2010). The use of the natural landscape, and the various types of ‘earth’ found in Australia, have remained consistent themes and visual elements within Orr’s ‘performances-for-the-camera’. She also explains how important it is to have a strong visual image in her mind before the project begins. Orr explains:

... those sort of processes ... going back to a methodological process ... its evolution is driven by two ways of making ... and one way which is like the Bleeding Trees, is that I work through performances for the camera ... (they) are driven by a powerful ... imaginative image. I know what I’m after ... so, that imaginative image governs how I go about (it) ... it’s a bit like a film still ... I just go and get it.

(Orr Interview, 2010)

The human figure is introduced into each work as an integral tool used to highlight both the ‘live’ similarities of body and landscape, as well as the differences between the two. By using her own body as visual signifier, Orr bridges the gap between performance art and the static quality of visual photography. To probe further into methods of creative practice and idea development, I asked Orr to describe the specific process of devising the performances for Vision, which offered a different set of limitations and challenges as compared with her usual self-devised and funded projects. She explains:

... Vision photographs were ... quite one out of the bag for me ... to work with primary school kids through an artist in schools program ... we split them up into thirteen little groups ... to actually get the idea of what sustainability is ... I thought I would start (then) off with ... their bodies. And so ... I got some clay from the local area ... and we took it to school and ... each kid plastered themselves with clay, and ... I brought up ... one photographer ... and a wonderful assistant, and myself ... directing, and I wanted the shots to be close and I asked the kids if they could look straight at the camera ... no smile ... then the other task was ... if they could close their eyes and imagine ... imagine something beautiful in the future ... the images really show ... the difference between looking direct and then just this softening of the face, in another space.

(Orr Interview, 2010)
When refining her ideas about how this particular performance art project would look, Orr drew on her experiences of the Australian environment, as well as from past performances. Orr says:

I drew on all the performance works I’ve done, and I’ve worked with clay ... heaps!, and I know it might appear indigenous, but at the same time, in terms of the *Bleeding Trees* you’ve mentioned ... for me the clay ... I used really as a ... kind of ... costume. And also as a connection back into the earth, but at the same time it was ... aesthetic. So it’s an aesthetic as well that drove that..

(Orr Interview, 2010)

Orr describes her process as being thoroughly planned out with each ‘performance-for-the-camera’ being illustrated prior to photographing and, occasionally made into a model and developed fully as a storyboard.

... for my own ... performances for the camera, it’s storyboarded, it’s discussed ... maybe even a model is made ... it’s very specific so that it’s all set up, wherever it may be, ready ... so that the camera really has to go click.

(Orr Interview, 2010)

The result is that a clear ‘performance’ plays out in the sequence of the photographic stills. Each image, however, can stand alone in its own right, which is the intention of the artist. Orr describes her creative process as being governed by an initial imaginative image that ‘(is) a bit like a film still, and ... I just go and get it’ (Orr Interview, 2010). She has an idea based on a still image that stirs in her imagination and then she does what she can to make it into a fuller artwork. Orr notes that:

... my performances-for-the-camera make the artwork … it remediates from a live state into the artwork.

(Orr Interview, 2010)

One particular aspect of Orr’s work that has inspired the researcher as an artist is the way in which she brings a sense of the environment within her photographs into unrelated and distant spaces such as an art gallery. When asked about how she connects with her surroundings in order to perform in and with them, she explains that an initial excitation and interest for a chosen environment is essential. She says:
... sky, water, sand, body. It’s ... four things ... but because the body is in relationship to that place, that place for me, must have some significance. Like the salt lakes, where they are symptomatic of climate change ... salination is happening everywhere. Or Bleeding Trees, it was about the idea of ... the empathy of natural and unnatural destruction of trees ... And so those sort of environments ... speak as much about the place and the tree as it did about the body.

(Orr Interview, 2010)

Orr, like Klein before her, has a consistent conceptual force that drives the creation of her art. Both artists have been keen to use and experiment with a range of materials and media that can be incorporated into their art-making processes, although the human form remains central to the art-making process and its aftermath.

On occasion, an image is so strong, that it stays in Orr’s mind, refusing to be pushed away. The compound effect of a previous performance piece or an image on Orr’s creative process has, as discussed in this chapter, enabled her to develop an extension of an original project. The imprint of a past live event on the performer’s subsequent imagining replays in new work. The artist might be remembering the original actions and movements performed so that it also becomes bodily remembering whilst maintaining the imagining of the creation of new actions and imagery. Orr explains:

... (images) that are worth doing just stay there ... you’re trapped by them, unless you do them, they’re stuck there in this peculiar frustrated state. So the task is to really enrich them, imaginatively, and hold them there ... until the earthly practicality is going to actually do them ...

(Orr Interview, 2010)

Orr suggests that the phenomenon of condensing experience into imagery can affect, and has affected, both audience members and herself as a performer. She says:

... what I’ve found over the years is that ... it takes at least ten, fifteen years, to bump ... into someone from the audience who then describes not only the performance but their ... emotional connection ... those that have expressed it have really expressed a change. Something’s quite ... impacted (on) them.

(Orr Interview, 2010)
Orr continues her analysis of a performed event in relation to the live performance and how the very nature of liveness means that an artist cannot have the same control. The possibility of control over the reactions of individual audience members is limited (Orr Interview, 2010). Orr intimates that, even though the physical body is present in the secondary art medium of post-performance exhibitions, there is a distinction, for her as an artist, between works that are intended to be first seen as still image sequences in a gallery, and embodied performances that are first seen as live installations. She says:

in my sense, the performances-for-the-camera ... the photographs become the artwork ... I think there’s a real distinction between ... video (or photographs) that (become) the most powerful remediated artwork

(Orr Interview, 2010)

Orr remonstrates that for her, it is the nature of a spectator’s encounter with her work that will determine their level of engagement, with a live experience being of greater significance because of the dynamics of physical and sensory proximity to her. The artistic body is both as art instrument and object. When Orr notices herself becoming a spectator of the spectators - during the live action - her awareness of her bodily self as performer is heightened.

It is intriguing to note, however, that Orr makes distinctions not only between staged photographic images, but also with her ‘performances-for-the-camera’ and live performance. When detailing her process, Orr reflects that there is still something resembling control with her photographic performances; she still conducts the ‘performance-for-the-camera’ works as if they were intended to be in front of an audience, but acknowledges that there is a difference, even if it is just a realignment of priority. She discusses the process of shooting the Southern Cross series:

... so in terms of, will I take this shot myself? ... No ... it’s virtually thirty seconds with this flame, which I did think was going to melt the cameras and the photographers ... that was really specific and we had to do it on the spot, but I knew, ok, this is how it will be ... But the beauty also of ... performances for the camera, is that you can talk and say, oh how did that go? ... you know we can discuss ... so it’s not like a live performance where actually you have to give preference to the work ...

(Orr Interview, 2010)
Although Orr makes a good case for photographic performances being different from live performed events, she does admit that her still images retain something of her presence that makes them stand on their own. She returns to a discussion of *Bleeding Trees*:

... how do you take an environment into a gallery, so I thought... slides! They were 35mm slides ... this is way pre-digital age for sure. So that’s what we did, we went out and took the images in the landscape, then I took it to one of the Sydney Biennale’s, performed it there, using the slides as a backdrop, and kind of repeated the actions live. But the images are so strong in themselves, that turning it into a live performance was neither here nor there ... they stand on their own.  

(Orr Interview, 2010)

Through the use of her body, costuming, narrative and location as well as her ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with other performing bodies and photographers, Orr has developed a unique style of art making. Similarities between her work and the work of Klein can be seen on a number of creative levels, from their philosophical discussions to their dedication to combining art forms - the key being the body. When asked about her thoughts on Klein’s belief that the only way to truly represent the human body in art is to use it as the creative instrument with which an artist can leave a trace of the live body on a static object, Orr exclaims:

... the body being represented by the actual body … comes from a philosophical stance (and is) where my skill(s) lie … and I think when you pare everything back … what you’re left with and what you can do is (only) what you’ve been given.  

(Orr Interview, 2010)
Chapter Four

Performing ... Art

I think ... that people in the audience often felt drawn to get up and join in with this very physical and probably dangerous bit ... you could see it in the twitches and energy of people in their seats.

(Etchells, 2005: 15)

This chapter is divided into three parts; firstly, the process of initial concept creation through to production design and the final layering of improvised performance, music and visual art is discussed by the performer and from a performer-as-spectator viewpoint; secondly, the live event is detailed and located as a site-specific performance; and thirdly, the chapter will conclude with an analysis of the Performing ... Art audience’s comments on their own experience as expressed through survey feedback. Commentary is included on how the performer’s thinking oscillates between accommodating the position of spectator and performer in live performance.

This chapter explores the phenomenological positioning of an artist as performer and as spectator in the making of live action to music and works on paper. It demonstrates how the performer attempts to present her experience of the sensible world around her. Physical performance gives the language of movement an existence beyond what ‘vision’ might reduce a state of invisibility (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 166).

‘Performing ... Art’ provided the challenge of trying to work across both the frames of performance and spectator. Included in this investigation are reflective journal entries (presented here in italics) and spectator feedback from anonymous surveys completed immediately after the live event in the gallery (Appendices 9 and 10). Just as the three-week exhibition at Off the Kerb was an extension of the live event ‘Performing ... Art’, so too is this thesis an expansion of the artworks. It offers an opportunity to reflect on the past live experience through text, still images, live recordings and other forms of documentation.
Preliminary Work and Production Process

After an analysis of the work of Klein and Orr, the researcher decided to create an extension of the live performance experience that blended the positions of the performer and spectator during the live event as well as experimenting with how the performer can inhabit both roles through physical spaces and in a site-specific space. ‘Performing ... Art’ was to be an event that incorporated the mapping of the performer’s past physical training, visual arts studies and performance viewing experiences into live action in front of an audience. Performance and art-making processes were to be exposed, and the concept of experience and participation of both performer and spectator was to be explored. Therefore it was crucial to the performance experience of a spectator and the performer that two designated gallery/performance areas were separated and set up with distinct effects. Off the Kerb gallery is a terrace building and, by nature of its architectural limitations, provided the most suitable performance space. It has three indoor exhibition spaces: two downstairs on street level, and one small space upstairs.

The live performance on Friday 2 March marked the end of an extensive planning process to develop the creation of the new artworks in the gallery space. The process took close to two years, from original concept development to opening night. A phenomenological perspective, however, might suggest that the process drew on past experiences over many years.

It was essential for the performance, and for the research, that two spaces were incorporated into the live action and spectator experience. Klein and Orr’s work in gallery spaces, and their recordings, influenced ideas for a mapping of the physical performance. The finding of a suitable gallery to enable the separation of the spectators into two groups, in order to have the live action take place in different spaces, was paramount. Off the Kerb gallery’s ground floor exhibition spaces were the most appealing, as, even though an enclosed stairwell physically separated them, they were acoustically connected and allowed for a small corridor and line of sight from one space into the other. (The pricing structure for the two spaces was also within budget, and was a necessary consideration). The next step was to prepare an exhibition proposal and organise the filming of a preliminary experiential performance work to send to the gallery to obtain acceptance of the project. Although an exhibition period was initially sought to coincide with the October 2011 Melbourne Fringe Festival, the two downstairs galleries at Off the Kerb were not both available during this time and a later date was required. The performer undertook intensive dance training for the May 2011 performance piece that was filmed and sent in as part of the application to Off the Kerb. It was an exploration of movement that, in part, explored what the intentions were for the March 2012
live gallery performance. The submission to the gallery process, however, was not a guarantee of acceptance, and so application enquiries to other spaces were also made.

Four main elements of the performance concept were identified during the planning process; live physical action improvised by the performer, music and musician as performer; visual artworks on paper and photography and digital recordings. This indicated that there were to be four main persons involved in the live performance: the performer, the musician, the photographer and the technical assistant. Four different briefs were designed and given to each artist and assistant.

The brief that was given to the musician was to create an original score that would be without human voice or lyric, and that would be played for the entire duration of the performance. Sound would provide one constant element of the piece. The use of a popular or known piece of music could have promoted previous associations for spectators, which may have confused the performance experience. August Skipper, musician and artist, was approached by the researcher to compose the desired original score. The researcher had heard the musician’s previous solo work as digital files and hand held recordings and believed that it fitted in with the overall concept of the proposed live event ‘Performing ... Art’. It was considered helpful that the musician had the ability to work with little direction and within a short time frame: there was only eight weeks between the briefing and opening night. A degree of professional and artistic trust was needed, as the performer didn’t wish to hear the final score until the week before the live performance. ‘Performing ... Art’ was to remain as unrehearsed as possible.

An extension of the brief given to August, instructed him to perform the music live in the front gallery, in the same space being occupied by the performer.

The physicality filled the space … Gave shape and fluidity to it. The vibrancy and modulation of the music blended and gave a sense of stimulus and initiation to the movement. (Anonymous respondent to survey)

The final brief given to Amy Tsilemanis (photographer) was detailed during the gallery bump in two days before opening night. Amy, an experienced artist in ambulatory performance, had the ability as a photographer and performer to work in response to the environment. She was to remain in the back gallery at the front of the designated audience area and shoot 10 small instant Polaroid photographs during the live action. The basic action of the improvised piece was summarised...
before the event, although Amy was given no further direction about when to take the photographs. She was in control of the images captured during the performance that then became part of the three-week exhibition.

The final brief for Julian Potter, technical assistant, was given during the hours directly before the live performance. He was to help set up and place the three digital cameras throughout the gallery spaces, and was in charge of co-ordinating the multi-camera filming during the performance.

The conceptual framing of ‘Performing ... Art’ explores how the performer is also a spectator of works by other artists including live performance and its documented versions. This extends to the work of the musician and photographer collaborators chosen to participate in the live performance creation. The way in which the performer wanted the live action and visual artworks to be created during the event necessitated the involvement of, and collaboration with others. As Peggy Phelan explains in the forward of Tim Etchells Certain Fragments (2005), to include photographers and other external collaborators eliminates the singular focus a performer may have on his or her own work, enabling them to ‘see exactly what we (are) doing’ (cited in Etchells, 2005: 14). As the performance was unrehearsed, and Amy’s brief (in particular) being to simply ‘capture 10 moments on film’, this echoes Etchells’ notes about Forced Entertainments’s photographer Hugo Glendinning’s shooting of their 1993 Club of No Regrets performance. He remembers:

He shot without looking - a flash gun in one hand and the camera in the other - ... never certain what he’d get ... but a part of the action. The resulting photographs seem not so much to contain the event as to hunt it ... And seeing these images ... was also a really vital part of the making of this piece - because in seeing the photographs we could see, for the first time, what exactly we were doing.

(Etchells, 2005: 110)
Figure 22: Performing *... Art* close up of footprint made during the opening night performance at *Off the Kerb* Gallery, 2012

Figure 23: *Off the Kerb* Gallery view of the outside from Johnston Street, 2012
Although improvised, the performer’s preparation was involved and complicated. There were particular elements seen in use in the works of Klein and Orr that appealed to the performer and were thus included in the concept development; in particular, the use of the body as an art-making instrument responded to Klein’s use of the body as brush and the use of a white powder paint similar to the use of white clay in Orr’s work; the photography and film as an extension of the artwork as well as a documentation tool as used by both Klein and Orr in their various works. In addition to this was the combined background of the performer as gymnast, dancer, visual artist and spectator. The design of the space (and the choreography of the movements of performer, collaborators/performer participants and audience) was central to the creation of the ‘Performing ... Art’ concept. They would encounter the works on paper and film recording installation from the same position during the event. The inclusion of other artists in the creation of the live event as a whole, as well as the exhibition hanging process taking place in front of the audience, ensured that the performer viewed the newly formed works on paper at exactly the same time as the spectators. In that moment, the performer became a spectator of her own work.

**The Live Event**

At 7:30pm sharp, on Friday 2 March 2012, ‘Performing ... Art’, a live performance at Off the Kerb Gallery, began. Located at 66B Johnston Street Collingwood, opposite the Melbourne music landmark The Tote Pub (see figure 23), invited guests/spectators and curious passers-by alike became willing participants in the event. Opening night began at 6pm with casual drinks from the bar and finger food on offer for all those who arrived on time. August had already set up his music equipment in the front gallery, having done his final sound check for ‘Performing ... Art’ earlier that afternoon (see figure 24). For the performer, the time spent conversing with potential audience members and moving about the gallery spaces, was the preliminary warm-up action for the performance. ‘Performing ... Art’ was a live event designed for a specific location and, like site-specific works, promoted an exchange between the performer, musician, spectators, artwork ‘and the places in which its meanings are defined’ (Kaye, 2000: 1). Thus engaging with the audience in the gallery in an informal capacity before the live action informed their experience of the performance.

... (There was an) increased interaction with the exhibition space because you can see the imprints left on the walls and floors and imagine being in the performers place.  

(Anonymous respondent to survey)
Figure 24: *Off the Kerb* Gallery, the performer (Rachael Thérèse Nolan) and musician (August Skipper) in the front gallery viewed from outside on Johnston Street, before the live event, 2012

Figure 25: *Off the Kerb* Gallery view of internal staircase, which transformed into a site of both performance and spectatorship during opening night, 2012
The front gallery had three works hanging on the walls closest to the street front window when the first few spectators arrived. The performer had produced these white prints on black paper during the gallery bump in and music soundcheck. They were a prelude to the live performance, but these three works aided the initial encounter for the spectator with the gallery - a conventional art gallery with works on paper applied with precision on clean white walls and track lighting above.

The front gallery played host to the musician August, his sound equipment and one digital camera. In the back gallery there were two digital cameras as well as a Polaroid camera held and used by Amy the photographer. Each gallery space had its own specific visual elements, assistant participants and equipment. It was the intention to use different visual art mediums in the two separated spaces: black A2 sheets of thick paper were stuck to the floor of the front gallery and were for dancing around and on top of, and leaving foot and hand prints with white powder paint. A blue yoga mat was laid down on the floor of the back performance space and roughly cut A4 sheets of thick white cartridge paper were at the ready to have the small polaroid photographs stuck to them.

The event was designed so that there were two audience groups. In the moments before the live performance, guests in attendance for Guy Phelan’s exhibition opening in the upstairs gallery were asked kindly to remain upstairs for the duration of the live action, which would be approximately 20 minutes. The result of this added element was that a third unexpected group of spectators was created. Two men stood and watched from the middle of the internal staircase (see figure 25), experiencing parts of the performance as the performer occasionally crossed the narrow corridor in between the two downstairs gallery spaces.

It was out of these physical and conscious contemplations and limitations that the performance and material traces were created. The duration of the live event framed the way in which the artworks were executed and completed. They would not have developed in the same way without the audience present.
Figures 26 and 27: Photographs of the performer’s foot making imprints with white powder paint on blue paper taken as part of a small photo shoot to create images that could be used for possible invitation graphics, 2012

Figures 28 and 29: Performance Programs on display on opening night at the entrance of the gallery; invitations affixed to the glass door of the gallery, 2012
As I was moving about the gallery space during the live ‘Performing ... Art’ event, I was acutely aware of the physicality of the audience. The performance space had become like a corporeal landscape and was rather cramped and tightly packed with people. The distance between the performer and the musician and the spectators was minimal. I had to concentrate on retaining a heightened spatial awareness whilst focusing completely on the execution of physical actions. I had to maintain control for the safety of performer, the musician and the audience, and yet the piece needed to realise its artistic potential. I was visually aware of the audience for every second audience members were watching me. It didn’t occur to me before the performance that there might be people watching from the stairs. I didn’t notice them until I stalled in the corridor just after my first full turn. Two males drinks in hand were smiling at me. It made me conscious of the fact that I no longer had a semi ‘backstage’ preparation area anymore.

The three spectator groups became part of the physical site within which the performer, musician and photographer created ‘Performing ... Art’. Spectators didn’t simply attend the performance and watch from a distance. There was no seating aside from one permanent bench in the front gallery, and a few scattered black milk crates. The way in which each individual placed him or herself informed the performer, photographer and musician’s movements. There were two white tape lines stuck to the floor in the two downstairs galleries that served as a safety line for both performer and spectator. This, however, was the only indication that there was a temporary performance area set within the gallery space. The photographer’s accessibility to parts of the back gallery was also determined by the positioning of the spectators. The result of this pre-determined crossover of performance and audience space was that spectators become participants of the action rather than just witnesses (Etchells, 2005). The performer considered each spectator body as much at length as she did the music, the creation of works on paper, and her own live actions.

The spatially disjointed choreography of the work, and the incorporation of secondary mediums and digitised images, and the literal appearance and disappearance (Giannachi 2004) of performer and action were part of the event. In considering the live performance and the exhibition it is interesting to ask which elements remain constant, and which ones will come and go. What did remain were the two tasks; how to effectively blend in the creation and hanging of visual artworks and photographs as part of the live action, and how to later incorporate a recording of the event.
Figure 30: View of the front gallery at Off the Kerb one week after the live performance; the white tape safety line still in place and visible, 2012

Figure 31: Polaroid photographs pinned with precision to paper on the wall in the back gallery at Off the Kerb, 2012
**Performer as Spectator**

In developing a live performance, it is interesting to speculate about whether the corporeal landscape and location of a performance and exhibition space can be designed so as to promote physical reactions and responses from a live audience; the separation of the two designated audience spaces; the limitation of the viewing of the third grouping on the stairs; disappearance and reappearance of the performer. *Performing ... Art* drew a crowd of approximately 80 - 100 spectators present at the live event with a total of 40 anonymous surveys completed directly after the performance (see Appendix 9). The audiences’ reactions to this event were an important extension of the live actions performed by the artist.

The space feels more intimate. I can relate to the artwork much better after the show ... on a more personal level.

(Anonymous respondent to survey)

*Performing ... Art* fostered the participation of the spectator rather than just the witnessing of live action. The performer, in mapping out past experiences in a new work, may have enabled the spectators to do the same as they experienced a new performance. As Phelan explains in reference to the ‘process by which a public event arrives in the spectator’s consciousness’ in the foreward of Etchells (2005: 12):

Mapping space and time in this manner transforms history... into an actively composed set of personal stories and not a passively experienced set of external events and locations.

(Etchells, 2005: 12)

A performer has the training and the physical knowledge that enables her to break down actions: the body in motion might flow towards movements for future works and actions. The performer as spectator, however, can consider alternative uses of action and movements. The act of viewing extends a performer’s body schema, but it is the captured filmed body that enables the physical realisation of the stored visual information. As an artist, she cannot but absorb everything she sees into her physical and visual memories. A spectator, who has not performed for an extended period of time, can also continue to participate in this memory recollection process:
(The performance) recalled memories of performing on stage as a dancer and how different it is performing at a venue when you can’t see the audience compared to having to have the audience directly in front of you.  

(Anonymous respondent to survey)

The concept of ‘self-imagining’ can attempt to explain this type of audience feedback; that members of the audience felt an intimacy between themselves and the researcher as physical performer could be a result of their imagining-body surrendering to mine, possibly making them as vulnerable as I. We both become the ‘Other’ at indeterminate and surprising moments. A one-off performed live event may engage a spectator in many ways, all of which will remain unknown to the performer. It is uncertain what memories, physical or emotional, will be recalled by a person watching an event in the flesh, or, after the live action has concluded. To what extent any ‘documentation’ of a live event can effectively represent and extend the actions performed live, remains unclear unless an audience member chooses to speak out about his or her experience.

The practical component of this thesis project suggests that there was a seamless transposing of awareness of self into the perspective of spectator and that of performer during the live performed event. A process of reaction and movement in response to the immediacy of an audience in the live moment, however, meant that the performer drew on previous patterns of action in an act of mapping out new ones.

It’s mid afternoon as I walk in the gallery. The front room is filled with natural light, and I’m surprised to find myself alone, as my head is full of noise and people. It has been over a week since my live performance at Off the Kerb, but I am immediately taken back to the opening evening as I look upon the static black and white imprints hanging silently on the walls. I am, at this moment, a spectator. But I will also always be the performer who created the works on display that I now view as a spectator. Therefore the images I recall and the muscle movements I feel at the moment of secondary spectatorship shape my experience. I move into the back gallery space. It is the first time that I have actually entered the space after the installation of the edited digital recording loop of the performance. This back room is dark; only one wall illuminated by the video and one small window in the corner. I stand to the side. I almost do not want to see myself; will I develop an altered view of what the live actions looked like viewed from the perspective of the other spectators? The strength of the performance experience, however, ensures that the addition of this new visual perspective is not in competition with the original perspective of a performer, but complementary to it.
Figure 32: Photograph of the digital loop of the front gallery performance screening against one of the walls in the back gallery at Off the Kerb, 2012

Figure 33: Performing ... Art footprints made during the performance – the piece that was later referred to by many as the “kissing couple”, 2012
Conclusion

This thesis sought to investigate, through a combination of practice-led research and research-led practice, two main questions: is a performer always simultaneously a spectator, and how can spectatorship drive the creative process? The broader aim of the study was to consider the physical and subjective experience of the performer in relation to spectatorship, in particular the spectatorship of works by artists Yves Klein and Jill Orr.

Through the analysis of the art and performance works of Klein and Orr, in combination with the research on Merleau-Ponty based theories on corporeal phenomenology, the performer developed a more informed understanding of the phenomenon that is the viewing of artworks from a position of being a creative artist. The artist as researcher became aware of the many ways the images of the artworks of Klein and Orr have influenced her body, her work and her way of making art.

There may not always be a direct connection between physical bodies and visible action and meaning. A spectator of a live performance may be able to make connections with a performing body that are seemingly unconscious, yet are actually a combination of past physical experience and perceived responses to historical and cultural identities (Tait, 2005). A person’s ability to incorporate external impressions also allows absorption of images that might become assimilated into past experience. Over time this might be refined into significant highlights.

The theoretical research conducted by the artist, as well as the audience feedback from the live ‘Performing ... Art’ event, demonstrate that the nature of memory and spectatorship remains an oscillating process between alteration, addition, contortion and mapping. The use of different mediums and technologies may allow a performer/artist to enhance particular aspects of an event and/or exhibition, however, the reaction and response of the spectator will remain an individual experience that may only manifest meaning long after the encounter with the live action. Similar to the remediation process of transposing one medium into another, a spectator’s experience of live body-based performance and subsequent art installation will rely on a balancing act of memory appearance and disappearance (Giannachi, 2004). The artist/performer as researcher and spectator encounters her creative art making in the same way. Past events and/or images may present
themselves as memories or physical actions that may not be able to be pre-determined, and yet will remain a constant and ever-present part of the performers’ ‘body schema’.

*I am a performer who is also a spectator.*
Appendices

Appendix 1. Timeline of Events

2010
July
Visit to Jenny Port Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

September
Visit to Musée d’Art Moderne et d’Art Contemporain, Nice, France

September
Interview with Yves Klein archives Paris, France

October
Visit to Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

October
La Trobe University Research Grant Application submitted

November
La Trobe University Research Grant approved

December
Interview with Jill Orr, Melbourne, Australia

2011
January
Visit to Walker Art Gallery Minneapolis, USA

May
Recorded short performance for exhibition proposal to Off the Kerb Gallery, Collingwood, Australia

May
Submitted exhibition proposal to Off the Kerb Gallery, Collingwood, Australia

November
Commissioned musician August Skipper to write a musical score for Performing ... Art

December
Attended ‘The Audience Through Time’ conference at Queen Mary, University of London, UK

December
‘Performer and Audience’ studio development, Salzburg, Austria

2012
February
Dance intensive/two-week workshop at Dancehouse, Carlton, Australia

February
Meeting with musician to listen to final score for performance

March
Performing ... Art live performance and spectator survey conducted, Off the Kerb Gallery, Collingwood, Australia

March
Performing ... Art three-week exhibition, Off the Kerb Gallery, Collingwood, Australia

March
Exhibition Installation Photo shoot

July
Presented Performing ... Art paper at ADSA conference at QUT, Brisbane

2013
April
Viewed a recording of Jill Orr’s 2012 A promised Land performance at Venice International Performance Art Week

July
Presented From One into Another paper (via Skype) at ADSA conference at Flinders University, Adelaide
Appendix 2.  Listing of Yves Klein’s works (Basic Chronology 1951 - 1962)

Monochromes
Monopinks
IKB Monochromes and Sculptures
Sponge reliefs
Sponge Sculptures
Anthropometries
Monogolds
Fire Paintings
Fire-Colour Paintings
Cosmogonies
Planetary Reliefs
Immaterial Sensibility
Air Architecture

Appendix 3.  Listing of Jill Orr’s works (Basic Chronology 1978 - 2013)

Response - 1978
Lunch with the Birds, Bleeding Trees and Pain Melts - 1979
The Digging In & The Climbing Out - 1982
Walking on Planet Earth - 1989
Love Songs - 1991
Raising The Spirits and Marriage of the Bride to Art - 1994
Myer Windows - 1997
The Hunger - 1998
Exhume the Grave - 1999
Presence - 2000
Family Ghosts - 2001
The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters and Ash - 2002
From the Sea - 2003
A Prayer and The Crossing - 2007
Cubbies, Faith in a Faithless Land, Vision - Avoca Primary School and Southern Cross - To
Bear and Behold - 2009
Between Somewhere and Nowhere - 2011
Still Moving Despite the Tide and The Promised Land - 2012
Appendix 4.  Jill Orr Interview Questions 2010

1. This exhibition *Vision* is a beautiful combination of your performance with a group of students from Avoca Primary School and a photographer capturing the event. Could you explain, with specific reference to the current body of work, the process you go through to get from an initial idea to the actual performance and photo shoot?

2. Has this process always been the same, even in your earlier pieces, for example in *Bleeding Trees*, which was my personal introduction to your work?

3. What creative process happens after the performance/event? How much control do you keep with the development of the photographs/video editing?

4. The relationship that a person has with the landscape is an important reoccurring theme in your work. Do you believe that the physical attributes of your chosen landscapes transfer effectively into a secondary medium, or are you still keen to explore new methods of capturing your performed works?

5. Do you believe that the exhibition site is an important aspect of the final work, and if so, do you consciously consider this site when creating the body of work?

6. The body is a main feature in your work, and this continues in the current exhibition, however this time you have depicted the faces of the primary school students instead of incorporating your own image. Do you believe this changes, or in some way manipulates the narrative of images into something more challenging for the viewer, considering the particular theme of future ‘vision’?

The following questions are more directly related to my specific area of study:

7. What, if any, physical training did you have when you were at school or in early adulthood?

8. Do you believe in the concept of muscle memory, and if so, have you actively incorporated physical elements of past training into your work, for example in *Marriage of the Bride to Art*?

9. Do you believe that physical training helps control and isolate parts of the body so that you can stimulate and simulate emotions on demand in a performance, thus enabling to have greater control over the atmosphere created in your work?

10. I am also looking into the work of French artist Yves Klein, who believed that the only way to truly represent the human body in art is to use it as the creative instrument with which an artist can leave a trace of the live body on a static object. I would venture to say that your work reflects a similar belief. Am I correct, or, do you approach things differently, and do you also believe that a physical trace of a performed live event can be left behind in a secondary art medium?
Appendix 5.  *Performing ... Art* Production Schedules/Floor plans

A sample of my draft worksheets and hand written logistics schedules, as well as the small container of Tempura Powder Paint used during the gallery bump in and the live performance.

A close-up of the schedule and gallery floor plan.
The original gallery floor plan illustrating the performance area as being in a straight line with the musician being situated by the window in the front gallery. After numerous site visits and discussions with Shini, director of *Off the Kerb*, it was decided that a different mapping of the space was required to allow for better audience flow and positioning of artworks.

The final performance and exhibition map/floor plan.
Appendix 6.  Performing ... Art Promotional material
Appendix 7.  *Performing ... Art* Invitation

Whilst ‘*Performing ... Art*’ occupied the ground floor galleries, Melbourne artist Guy Phelan hosted his ‘*The eyes see nature, but the heart sees colour*’ painting exhibition in the second floor gallery (see figure 29 for Guy Phelan’s invitation design). The two groups of spectators in attendance, those who came to see my performance and those who came to see Guy’s exhibition, mingled well and appeared to enjoy the different spaces and experiences.
Appendix 8. Performing ... Art Programme – print layout
Appendix 9. Audience Survey Questions 2012

Performing ... Art: Tracing Fleshe Performance, the Live Body in Motion

Audience Survey Friday 2nd March 2012 - Off the Kerb gallery, Collingwood

Have you participated in any formal physical training in the past? (Please circle)

Yes  No

If yes, have any of the following activities been included in this training? (Please circle the physical activities you have previously trained in)

Gymnastics  Aerobics/Sports Acro  Circus
Dance  Theatre  Ball sports
Acrobatics  Swimming/Water sports/Diving  Track & Field

What was your initial response to the performance and exhibition space? (e.g. Was this your first visit to an art gallery? Was the space smaller or larger than you had imagined?)

Did you experience any physical sensations/feeling responses/reactions to the actions of the performer whilst watching the performance event?

Did watching the performance event recall any memories of past actions/events/performances/training that you have experienced?

Has your interaction with, or reaction to, the performance and exhibition space changed now that you have experienced/watched the performance event?
Appendix 10. Audience Survey Data Analysis

In order for me to be able to gauge the impact of my event *Performing ... Art* on the viewers present on the opening night, without having to rely on the individual to come directly to me, I believed that an anonymous and voluntary survey of the performance was useful. My research into corporeal phenomenology, combined with the analysis of both Klein and Orr’s work, gave me a solid understanding of the history of performer/spectator relations, but hadn’t yet allowed me to pursue the concept of personal performer experience or spectator experience; a survey of the audience of my own work might be insightful. There was a crowd of approximately 80 - 100 spectators/audience members at the live performance, divided into a number of groupings as discussed in chapter 4. Out of that number of people, I was happy to receive a total of 40 completed surveys. A short survey, with only six questions, was made available to any and all of those present at Off the Kerb Gallery. At the conclusion of the performance/exhibition installation, I personally invited all spectators to fill out a survey if they were interested in helping me with my research. It was important to inform the audience as a whole of my intentions for the work as a live event, as well as being a research component of my Masters.

As I was devising the survey I was aware of a number of pre-conceived ideas about what I thought the audience would feel in response to the live actions that were going to be performed in front of them. Even though the performance itself was an unrehearsed event, I knew the limitations of my body as well as the self-imposed expectations of actions that would be incorporated during the live creation of the artworks. My research had led me to understand the nature of corporeal schema and memory recall, and so I believed that those audience members that had physically trained in some formal capacity, would have a greater connection to their bodies and bodied sensations in relation to the actions they were watching. The survey questions were developed in such a way as to guide the spectator through the process of analysing a live event, and to try to get them to reflect on the performance in a personal way. The first two questions related to whether or not a spectator had had physical training, and if yes, what type/discipline. The third question was how the spectator initially responded to the gallery space, which led into the fourth question which asked the spectator to detail any specific physical sensations/feelings or responses/reactions to the actions of me, the performer. The fifth question then prompted the spectator to reflect on any memories that this event helped recall, and the final question asked the spectator if their interaction with, or reaction to, the performance and exhibition space changed in any way after they had experienced the live performed event. Going through the answers on all 40 surveys, (a significant numerical
representation of the audience as a whole), I discovered that my initial expectations of the answers was proven to be correct; those audience members who had had some level of formal training were able to engage with physical reactions to the performance, whereas those who had not had any formal physical training identified with the performance on a more visual and comparative level. Out of the 40 surveys, 30 were filled out by spectators who had had some formal physical training and 10 were filled out by spectators who had not had any form of formal physical training. Research into Merleau-Ponty and his views on corporeal phenomenology gave me the expectation that the majority of audience members would feel a development in the way in which they would see and engage with the gallery space after my live performance and exhibition installation. 31 out of the 40 completed surveys listed the space as having changed in some way at the conclusion of the event. One survey even noted that the exhibition space felt more alive and ‘lively’ because of the actions that had taken place within the space. Mostly, the surveys that had been filled out by spectators who did feel a change in the way they were able to relate to the artworks and the performance space, commented on how they had developed a sense of intimacy with me as a performing body.

Below are a series of pie graphs showing the results from a sample of questions form the survey. These graphs aid in giving a visual analysis of the break down of audience reactions to the performance, the performer and to the gallery site based on the anonymous feedback provided.
70%  Percentage of spectators (without training) who experienced some physical response
30%  Percentage of spectators (without training) who experienced no physical response

65%  Percentage of spectators (with/without training) who experienced memory recall
35%  Percentage of spectators (with/without training) who did not experience memory recall

78%  Percentage of spectators (with/without training) who experienced a change in response to site
23%  Percentage of spectators (with/without training) who did not experience a change in response to site

Below is a sample of answers from anonymous respondents relating to questions from the survey:

What was your initial response to the performance and exhibition space?

A beautiful contrast between the music and body. The space was smaller than thought but added to the intimacy of the overall presentation.

I found the split performance space an interesting concept that worked well. I was in the space with the guitarist so I always felt engaged.

The exhibition space was well used during the performance. It was my first visit to the gallery.

I have been to Off the Kerb before. I found the use of the downstairs space amazing. A very well thought out concept that worked lovely at O.T.K.
Did you experience any physical sensations/feeling responses/reactions to the actions of the performer whilst watching the performance event?

Slight shivers to music change.

I felt at times out of breath on her behalf. The music was intense and dramatic. The darkness of the second space was so effective to obscure and allow for the imagination to run wild.

Yes, feelings of admiration at the performer’s ability and feelings of jealousy that I can’t create a similar work with my own body.

I sat on the floor – contact with concrete and wall. And next to the vibrating speaker. Was intrigued by choice of orientation of paper when mounted on the wall. Astonishment when “kissing couple” picture went up.

Did watching the performance event recall any memories of past actions/events/performances/training that you have experienced?

Watching gymnastics as a child.

Yes. The combination of sound and movement seemed to have brought back many of my past memories of being nervous, afraid etc. There was a sense of darkness here.

For me, it completely pushed all the boundaries and opened my mind to completely new approaches to performance and art processes.

The preparation, tension before performing. Looking/checking that everything seemed ready for the action to start. Wondering if everyone was comfortable/could see the action.

Has your interaction with, or reaction to, the performance and exhibition space changed now that you have experienced/watched the performance event?

I felt closer to Rachael, and almost involved.

It was not until the end of the piece that I truly appreciated the use of the black paper and the images that the performance created – Amazing and really thought provoking.

I almost felt involved emotionally with the performer.

I have noticed aspects of the space which before were unnoticed – and the space feels larger but more intimate.
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